

THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

VOL. LXXXIX

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2023

ISSUE NO. 5

Thousands of Students Join Nearly 300,000 Americans in Washington

By JONATHAN LEVIN

This article was originally published online on Nov. 16

Over 2,200 Yeshiva University staff and undergraduate, graduate and high school students joined nearly 300,000 Americans for a rally in support of Israel in Washington, D.C. Tuesday.

Following an early morning Rosh Chodesh *shacharit*, students boarded 43 buses from the Beren and Wilf campuses and YU's high school campuses, disembarking at the outskirts of Washington to take the metro to join hundreds of thousands at the National Mall.

Attended by an estimated 290,000 people, the rally was the largest pro-Israel event in U.S. history, with Americans of different faiths joining from across the country. Attendees, many of them waving Israeli flags and bearing signs with pictures of Israeli hostages, voiced their support for the Jewish state, calling for the release of the hostages and an end to antisemitism.

The rally took place on the National Mall from 12-4 p.m. and featured numerous speakers, including leading Democrats and Republicans, university leaders, actors, diplomats and the families of hostages.

"Eighty years ago, Jews came out of Auschwitz and vowed 'Never Again,'" said Israeli President Isaac Herzog. "As the blue and white flag was hoisted over our ancient homeland, we vowed 'Never Again.' Forty days ago, a terrorist army invaded the sovereign State of Israel and butchered hundreds upon hundreds of Israelis in the largest massacre since the Holocaust. Let us cry out, together: Never Again. Never Again is now."

"History shows that when antisemitism rears its ugly head, if it's not dealt with forcefully and directly, it grows into a deadly force," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, who led the crowd in chants of "USA" and "Never Again." "But my friends, history reminds us also of one thing: that

even in its darkest days, the United States has always stood with Israel and we will

" Hamas brutally attacked Israel on Oct. 7 because Hamas wants to wipe Israel off

let me be clear. We will never let that happen! Congress will continue to support in a bipartisan way the State of Israel and Israel's unequivocal right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state always and forever."

"It is my hope that this gathering today serves as a reminder to the entire world — but also those within our own borders — that the United States stands proudly with Israel and the Jewish people forever," said House Speaker Mike Johnson.

Other speakers included Sens. Joni Ernst and Jacky Rosen; Reps. Kathy Manning, Chris Smith and Ritchie Torres; refusenik

"It is my hope that this gathering today serves as a reminder to the entire world — but also those within our own borders — that the United States stands proudly with Israel and the Jewish people forever."

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson

do everything to see that that never ever changes!"

the face of the earth," said House Minority Leader Congressman Hakeem Jeffries. "So

Continued on Page 3



Nearly 300,000 Americans joined the "United for Israel" rally in Washington Tuesday in the largest Pro-Israel rally in U.S. History

ELISHAMA MARMON / THE COMMENTATOR

Over 1400 YU Students and Faculty to Attend Pro-Israel Rally in DC; Classes Cancelled

By ELISHAMA MARMON AND RIVKA BENNUN

This article was originally published online on Nov. 8

Over 1400 Yeshiva University undergraduate and graduate students and faculty will attend the "March for Israel" rally in Washington D.C. Tuesday, joining what is anticipated to be a crowd of tens of thousands of people to show support for Israel.

Approximately 30 buses, sponsored by YU, will depart from both campuses at 6 a.m. and will be limited to those who register in advance via CampusGroups, a recently launched online platform through

which students register for various activities around campus. Registration will close at 5 p.m. Wednesday.

First announced by President Ari Berman on social media Sunday with the caption "See you in Washington," Berman's announcement was accompanied by the cancellation of classes for the day.

"There are times when Hashem invites us to participate in the unfolding of Jewish history," Berman told the Commentator when asked about why this trip was so important to him and to YU. "This is one of those times."

Tuesday's classes will be rescheduled as Friday classes, replacing the Friday schedule originally scheduled for Nov. 21, with YC midterms being pushed off to the next class.

"In today's world, political activism is

essential, and we have the power as an extended YU family to show the strength of

"There are times when Hashem invites us to participate in the unfolding of Jewish history. This is one of those times."

President Ari Berman

our numbers and to be heard — sharing and showing our values in action," stated an email sent by multiple YU deans to students Tuesday.

The March for Israel, organized jointly by the Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, will take place on the National Mall. The goal of the rally is to demand the return of over 200 hostages being held in Gaza following Hamas's terrorist attack against Israel Oct. 7, condemn rising antisemitism around the world and thank Congress and the Biden administration for their support of Israel.

"The March will be an opportunity for all Americans to come together in solidarity with the people of Israel," Jewish Federations of North America announced in a press release, "To demonstrate our

Continued on Page 4

FEATURES | 7

Slogans Unmasked

OPINIONS | 13

What Makes Stern College Unique

BUSINESS | 17

The Internship Shortage

ARTS & CULTURE | 19

Soviet Rock and American Dreams

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

From One Journalist to Others: Check Your Bias on Israel

By JONATHAN LEVIN

"The pen is mightier than the sword," or so the expression goes.

Following Hamas's massacre of Israelis on Oct. 7, the pen has often proven to be mighty, fueling and influencing attitudes towards Israel across the world.

It is important to recognize that liberty depends upon the freedom of the press, but it is crucial to accept that morality depends upon the responsibility of the press.

It is the pen, wielded by journalists, that led credence to Hamas' lie that Israel killed hundreds of Palestinians in a missile attack on a hospital, creating a wave of anti-Israel hate across the world. It is the pen, wielded by journalists, that has portrayed Rep. Rashida Talib's censure as an injustice towards the sole Palestinian-American in Congress, rather than a damning indictment of her terming Hamas's actions "resistance" and her calls for the destruction of Israel. Finally, it is the pen, wielded by student journalists, that portrays Israel as the aggressor in its war against a State-Department-recognized terror group, making Jewish students feel unsafe on campus.

While we student journalists understand that and have answered the call of "moral clarity," taking a strong stance with Israel and against terror — we call Hamas "terrorists," veering from the AP style we normally keep — journalists at other campuses do not.

Unlike other papers, we will never release deeply antisemitic editorials — as student journalists at the University of Utah and McGill University have — stating that Israel is committing "genocide" against Palestinians or that Hamas's actions were "retaliation" against Israel. We will never, like the Harvard Crimson, defend antisemites or support BDS, and unlike other papers, our coverage will never ignore antisemitism.

We have heard many stories of student papers refusing to publish articles from pro-Israel students, many of whom have been forced to approach other papers — including one student from UPenn who contacted

The Commentator after The Daily Pennsylvanian refused to publish their article (The Times of Israel published it in the end).

Our team at The Commentator takes our job and position seriously. As then-Managing Editor Elisheva Kohn wrote in 2020, we do our best to highlight student voices, and we wouldn't unilaterally reject reasonable

views from any students — whether they are pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian. We understand that as journalists, our pens can influence the campus climate, and we take our responsibility to the YU community seriously.

The Commentator is guided by journalistic principles, a desire to cover stories in the most accurate way possible, a commitment to our community, and most of all, an understanding that we answer to a higher authority. We understand that the pen wielded by journalists is mighty and what journalists say matters.

When writing about the Israel-Hamas War, journalists need to know that their words matter. When reporting on Palestinian deaths in the Gaza Strip — and all innocent lives lost are tragic — it is important to mention that the Gazan Ministry of Health is also the Hamas Ministry of Health. It is not a seemingly independent organization in "Hamas-controlled Gaza." It is Hamas.

Hamas's numbers don't distinguish between combatants or innocents — and Israel has said its clearing operations have killed thousands of Hamas terrorists. It doesn't distinguish between victims of the hundreds of misfired rockets that have landed in Gaza or Hamas' human shields. If you don't mention that Hamas hides rockets near schools, hospitals or under children's beds or if you bury the fact that Hamas's assets are located among civilian infrastructure, you are excluding crucial context and lending credibility to claims that Israel is targeting civilians.

When reporting on anti-Israel rallies and slogans, don't whitewash

obvious antisemitic slogans as pro-Palestinian activism. "From the River to the Sea," is the same as "Ho, Ho, Israel has got to go" and "We don't want a Jew State, we want 48."

Calling to destroy Israel is most certainly "aspirational." It's just as aspirational as Hamas's desire to repeat Oct. 7 until Israel is destroyed and every last Jew on earth is exterminated. Legitimizing it means mainstreaming it. Asking White House officials to comment on chants of "Genocide Joe," as if it's a legitimate question, only normalizes dangerous rhetoric. The same applies to questions addressed to Israeli officials about whether Israel is "happy to kill children" or whether its hostage release terms with Hamas demonstrate that Israel ascribes lower value to Palestinian lives. Journalism is not a shield to mainstream hate.

Many American papers have been doing a fine job reporting on the war, but there is always room to improve. The overwhelming majority of people reading about the conflict are not experts on Israel, the Middle East or the Arab-Israeli conflict. What journalists choose to include and the choices they make about paragraph placement has a tremendous impact on how readers form their views towards an issue, especially one as sensitive as this. "Burying the lead" is not balance.

The pen is mightier than the sword precisely because it is those who wield the pen that can cause the sword to be sheathed or unsheathed. It is high time that the journalists in our country and in the world over understand that, and make sure to cover Israel's war against Hamas in the most moral way possible. It is important to recognize that liberty depends upon the freedom of the press, but it is crucial to accept that morality depends upon the responsibility of the press. Journalists, the world's only Jewish state is currently at war. Recognize your influence and the might of your pen.

THE COMMENTATOR

2023-2024

Editors-in-Chief

RIVKA BENNUN & JONATHAN LEVIN

Managing Editor

ELISHAMA MARMON

News

Senior Editor

SRULI FRIEDMAN

Junior Editors

RINA SHAMILOV,

RIKKI ZAGELBAUM

Features

Senior Editor

DOV PFEIFFER

Junior Editor

HANNAH MAMET

Opinions

Senior Editors

NADAV HELLER

Junior Editors

REBECCA GUZMAN,

JOSH SHAPIRO

Business

Senior Editor

SHMUEL METZ

Junior Editor

TANI LEWIS

Arts & Culture Staff

REBBECCA GUZMAN, RIVKA KRAUSE, LIEV

MARKOVICH, SAM WEINBERG

Layout

Senior Editor

AZRIEL BACHRACH

Social Media Manager

Senior Manager

MICHAEL BESS

Associate Editors

MOSHE CORONEL, RAMI LEVIN

PDF Editor

NAOMI KLINGHOFFER

Website Manager

EZRA MUSKAT

Photographer

EZRA ROSENFELD

Business Managers

Senior Manager

DANIELLA KATZ

Junior Manager

SHIRA ADLER

Layout Staff

YITZHAK GRAFF, JESSIE TUCHMAN

Staff Writers

CHLOE BAKER, EZRA BARON, YOSEF BLUTH, GAVRIEL FACTOR, JONATHAN FELMAN, AVRAHAM FROHLICH, YITZHAK GRAFF, ALLIE ORGEN, HANNAH POLLAK, NATHANIEL SIMANTOV, FLORA SHEM-TOB, SAM WEINBERG

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



1

Third Belfer Elevator Works

That only took half a year. Maybe President Berman was tired of waiting for the elevator...



2

Thanksgiving

A well-deserved break after midterms. Chanukah will be soon too!!



3

Operation Torah Shield

Just imagine that force field that was created.



4

Political Calls for Israel

Every shiur on Wilf called up members of Congress and other elected officials for Israel last week and overall, YU has been mobilizing. (YUPAC is going to DC this week!) Keep it coming!!



5

The Biden administration and congressional support for Israel

Thank God we live in America.



6

2200+ Students go to Rally in Washington for Israel

History was made two weeks ago. 300,000 people!!! That is insane!



7

Most Beautiful College Campus in NYC?

The travel.com ranks YU as the most beautiful college campus in the city: "Yeshiva University's modern campuses feature green spaces to bond with nature." If only.

300,000
Continued from Front Page

and former Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky, U.S. Antisemitism Envoy Deborah Lipstadt, Israeli Ambassador Michael Herzog and Dillard University President Rochelle Ford. Ford mentioned that she and YU President Ari Berman have been planning to build a partnership between YU and Dillard's National Center for Black-Jewish Relations for several months.

The Maccabeats, Ishay Ribo, Omar Adam and Matisyahu also sang multiple songs, including "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Hatikvah."

Of the 2,200 students and staff that attended the rally, 1,452 — or 67% of YU's undergraduate student population — went on YU's buses. Approximately 600 came from YU's high schools and 92 from the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmud/Tanach Studies (GPATS) and Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS). They were joined by 75 undergraduate *rebbeim*, staff and faculty, as well as 40 students and staff from other graduate schools.

The logistical effort on YU's side began days earlier, with supplies being stockpiled in Weissberg Commons days prior to leaving, Director of the Office of Student Life (OSL) Jonathan Schwab told The Commentator. Supplies were organized, gathered into boxes purchased specifically for the trip, and delivered to Beren Campus by UHaul.

On the day of the rally, housekeeping and facilities arrived at 4 a.m. to pack buses and get things prepared, with each bus being packed with enough supplies to ensure it would have what it needed in case it couldn't join the same location as the rest of the buses. Housekeeping and facilities remained on site until midnight, hours after buses returned, to help unload buses and unpack.

"This was a massive effort not just in planning what was needed, but ordering, dividing, packing and loading all of the buses," said Schwab. "It was several full days of work just to get all the supplies delivered to Weissberg Commons.

"I cannot overstate that this is the largest-scale complex undertaking I've ever seen us do, and in an incredibly short amount of time," said Schwab.

Altogether, YU ordered and distributed 2,500 sweatshirts, 6,600 water bottles, 1,980 catered dinners and 363 boxes of snacks and other materials for the buses.

Many students told The Commentator that they found the rally to be meaningful.

"Can we think for a second how surreal Tuesday's rally was?" said Yael Tangir (SCW '25). "I couldn't stop thinking on my way back home how this idea of what started as a simple pro-Israel march became the biggest gathering of Jewish people in U.S. history, all of them advocating peacefully for a single objective — the well-being of humanity. What a nation!"

"It was nice to be reminded that with all the bad, the horror, and the darkness the Jewish people can come together during hardship and shine a light onto the world," said Isabelle Adler (SCW '25).

"It can sometimes feel like the IDF is fighting a war and I'm in America and I have errands to run," said Shmuel Barg (YC '26). "That is not the case. We are all a part of this. We are all under attack and we all have the privilege and responsibility to help. We rally, we pray, we do acts of kindness, we study Torah, because we are one united family. If my left arm is cut, my right does whatever it can to help. That is my job. That is our job."

7 UP By Commentator Staff DOWN

Operation Torah Shield 3

How many times do we have to say that Operation Torah Shield 3 happened in March 2003? Although technically, it is the third one this century...

1



Finals scheduled

Surprise! Some happen after New Year's!

2



Rubin Elevator Down

We almost had a full week...

3



Macs lose double header at home

Remember that 50-game win streak?

4



YU only orders L and XL sweatshirts for Rally to DC

Why did they ask for sizes anyway?

5



Shenk Roof Collapse Hoax

Security and Facilities banned SCDS from entering and soon, the hoax spread: Shenk's roof collapsed!! (Nothing collapsed)

6



Rats

Don't we love them?

7



New Chabad of Washington Heights Runs First Shabbat Programming

BY MATTHEW MINSK

This article was originally published online on Oct. 23

The new Chabad of the Heights held its first Shabbat programming after Sukkot, hosting both a Friday night meal at the Chabad House near Wilf Campus and a shabbaton in Crown Heights the following week. The events follow the grand opening of

the Washington Heights East Chabad House in early September.

About sixty students — a maxed-out crowd for the physical location and more than student leaders expected — attended *kabbalas Shabbos* and dinner at the new building, located at 390 Audubon Ave. between 185th and 186th streets, on October 20. “You could feel the spirit of Shabbos in the air,” Ariel Lotman (YC ‘26), co-president of the Chabad club, told *The Commentator*. “It was a very incredible inaugural Shabbos dinner.”

A week later, Chabad of the Heights took fifty students on a Shabbaton to Crown Heights, the headquarters of worldwide Chabad-Lubavitch. Students were hosted by local families and ate Friday night dinner with their hosts. On Shabbat day, the students were based in Oholei Torah, a Chabad yeshiva, where they davened and ate their meals together. Aiden Feinberg (YC ‘25) de-

personally grow as well.”

Monsano, whose parents both became involved in Chabad on their respective college campuses, welcomed the beginning of formal Chabad programming at YU. He expressed hope that Chabad could “reach students that YU hasn’t been able to reach” and “enhance” Shabbos on campus, a time when there “isn’t so much going on” for some

“This past year we moved on Shlichus to Washington Heights. It is an honor and privilege for me to be living in a place that facilitates so much Torah with tremendous talmidei chachomim and roshei yeshiva where there is so much I can personally grow as well.”

Rabbi Levi Sputz, Chabad of Washington Heights

scribed, “It was great to see YU students from all programs coming together during one Shabbos to learn and experience Chabad.”

Although the fall semester marks the first with a permanent Chabad House and *shlich* at YU, the Chabad@YU club has existed in the past as a student-led effort. Ariel Monsano (SSSB ‘25), the Wilf Campus Co-President of the club, said that the club has held events on significant days on the Chabad calendar and public megillah readings on Purim. The club has also independently held annual Crown Heights Shabbatons.

Aside from the physical locale, the new Chabad presence on campus also includes *shlichim* Rabbi Levi and Leah Sputz. Rabbi Sputz, who grew up in Crown Heights and received his education and semicha from Chabad *yeshivos*, has served as the temporary rabbi for various communities, including in Brazil, Poland, Germany and recently at Columbia Medical School.

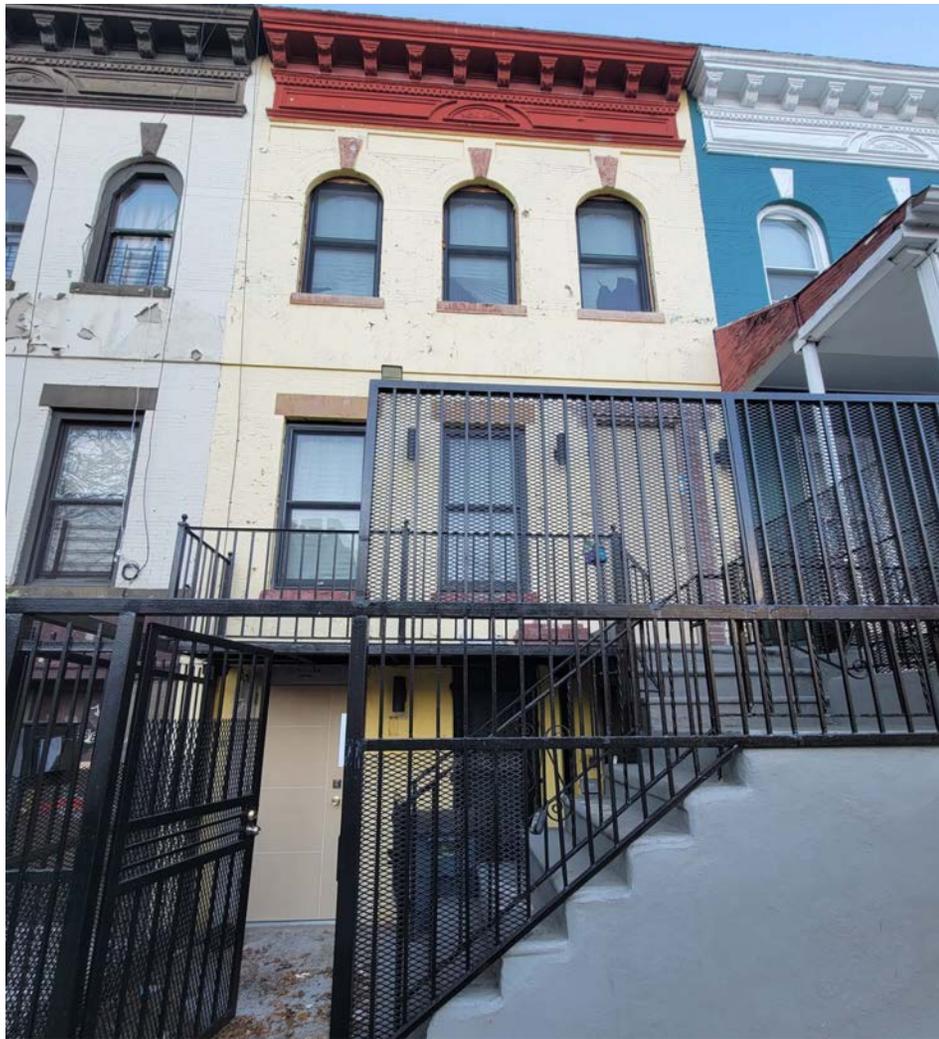
“This past year we moved on Shlichus to Washington Heights,” he said. “It is an honor and privilege for me to be living in a place that facilitates so much Torah with tremendous *talmidei chachomim* and *roshei yeshiva* where there is so much I can

students. He anticipates that the new Chabad House could be “really a home away from YU for the students who live on campus.”

Eitan Leitner (YC ‘26), who has informally helped setting up for Chabad events, had high praise for Rabbi Sputz. “Rav Sputz is a big *talmid chochom* and full of *ahavas Yisroel*,” he told *The Commentator*. “He has a real passion and talent for inspiring those around him.”

Leitner also thought that a “large number of YU students” can benefit from increased exposure to Chabad. Monsano, the club president, and Leitner each estimated there to be only about 10-20 Lubavitchers on campus; the vast majority of those engaged with Chabad come from other backgrounds.

Nevertheless, Rabbi Sputz did not think it would be too difficult to familiarize YU students with Chabad. He predicted, “Hi, I’m Levi, a local Chabad Rabbi,” will speak for itself.” Chabad of the Heights plans to start weekly minyanim, in addition to *farbrengens*, Torah classes, Purim and Chanukah parties, and more. “The students and locals are ... very much looking forward to what’s to come,” Rabbi Sputz said.



The Washington Heights Chabad House

SRULI FRIEDMAN / THE COMMENTATOR

RALLY

Continued from Front Page

commitment to America’s most important ally in the Middle East, to condemn the rising trend of antisemitic violence and harassment, and to demand that every hostage be immediately and safely released.”

Rosh Chodesh davening will take place in various locations on Wilf Campus at 5:25 a.m., with *Shmonah Esrei* and *kriyat hatorah* taking place at the earliest *zman*, followed by Hallel and Mussaf on the buses, according to MTA Menahel Rabbi Shimon Schenker. Hundreds of MTA students will attend the rally as well.

The rally, officially announced on Monday, will be held from 1-3 p.m., with gates at the National Mall opening at 10 a.m. Buses are expected to park at a distance from the rally, with students taking the D.C. metro to the National Mall. Food will be brought on the buses.

The rally is expected to have a similar impact and attendance as a 1987 rally in support of Soviet Jewry and a 2002 rally supporting Israel during the Second Intifada, which drew crowds of nearly 100,000. Students from other schools in the New York area will be attending as well, along with others from across the country.

A pro-Palestinian rally, attended by a few thousand people, was held in D.C. Saturday and according to the Anti-Defamation League, featured antisemitic speeches and iconography.



The National Mall in Washington D.C.

STEPHANIE RHEE / UNSPLASH

Yeshiva University Runs 75 Hours of Learning in Support of Israel

By AVRAHAM FROHLICH

YU ran a 75-hour-long global learning and mitzvah initiative in support of Israel last month, with students learning without interruption.

75 for 75, corresponding to the 75 years since the foundation of the State of Israel, was run from Oct. 19 to 22 by The Office of Student Life and the YU student government

and organized and implemented in large part by Moshe Nasser (SSSB '24) and Rabbi Herschel Hartz, program director for Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS).

The program encouraged students and other members of the YU community to pledge to do a particular mitzvah or study a section of the Torah during the 75 hours. The initiative aimed at finishing the entire Talmud, Mishna and Tanakh over the course of the program.

Nasser told The Commentator that this program was a way for the broader YU community to “help give back” and support Israel during the ongoing conflict while focusing on the importance of learning Torah. He also explained that the idea stemmed from a

encouraged students to participate in the program in the merit of Israeli soldiers fighting in the war.

In YU itself, many *rebbeim* and *Roshei Yeshiva* gave *shiurim* during the 75 hours, including Rabbi Schachter and Rabbi

“Our spiritual learning can have a physical impact on the safety of our soldiers ... We have to do our part to help connect ourselves to Eretz Yisrael, the Jews in Eretz Yisrael, and to help support them in whatever way we can. We are all united. We are all connected.”

Rabbi Herschel Hartz,
program director for Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS)



YU ran a 75-hour-long global learning and mitzvah initiative in support of Israel last month

JONATHAN LEVIN / THE COMMENTATOR

section in *Masechet* Megillah that discusses the importance of having someone learn Torah at all times.

YU sent out emails about the program to alumni, Yeshivas in Israel and shuls around the country. The program was also promoted through the YU Torah website.

Roshei Yeshiva Rabbi Meir Goldwicht and Rabbi Herschel Schachter publicly supported the initiative through video messages uploaded to YouTube and other social media platforms. In his remarks, Rav Goldwicht stated that this program was an “opportunity to become part of the war” in Israel and enabled students to “give [a] shoulder to their brothers.” Similarly, Rav Schachter

Goldwicht, as well as, Rabbis Josh Blass, Daniel Feldman, Aryeh Lebowitz and Mordechai Willig. The nearby Shenk shul also hosted some *shiurim* for Beren students as part of the program.

Reflecting on the importance of 75 for 75, Rabbi Hartz told The Commentator, “Our spiritual learning can have a physical impact on the safety of our soldiers,” and that the initiative was a great way to show our connection to the situation in Israel.

“We have to do our part to help connect ourselves to Eretz Yisrael, the Jews in Eretz Yisrael, and to help support them in whatever way we can,” said Hartz. “We are all united. We are all connected.”

YU Holds Azkara for Those Lost in October 7 Terror Attack

By ADIN BLUMOF

Around 150 students from both campuses attended an *Azkara* last month in memory of the over 1200 killed in the Oct. 7 terror attack in southern Israel.

The event, held at 7 p.m. outside of Ruben Hall on Wilf Campus Oct. 25, took place around electric candles arranged in the shape of the Star of David. Students received

Mishna by middle school and completing Shas by 17.

“Ariel Eliyahu, *Hashem Yikom Damo*, believed so much in what he was fighting for. In what he ultimately gave his life for,” Bitton said. “He was deeply in love with the land of Israel and considered himself more lucky than our prophets as he was seeing our Geula, our redemption, come to life. He contributed to it.”

Other students who spoke included Ayala Terenyo (SSB '25), Leel Alkobi (SCW '24),

Daniel Levin and Lior Morgenshtern (SSB '25) — an IDF veteran — who described the losses they incurred following the attack. Beren Campus Student Government President Avygayl Zucker (SCW '24) hosted the event and introduced the speakers.

The *Azkara* also included the prayers for the IDF, State of Israel and the captives, said by students Yedidya Schechter (YC '24), Avraham Frohlich (YC '25) and YSU President Zakkai Notkin (YC '24).

The event had a noticeable police presence

following a sharp increase in antisemitism across the United States. Students had to show their IDs to enter the event and wear a blue wristband. There were no security incidents.

The event was followed by an event hosted by YUPAC and the J. Dunner Political Science Society about the state of Israel's military security. The event's guest speaker was Professor Chuck Freilich, a former deputy Israeli National Security adviser.

“Ariel Eliyahu, *Hashem Yikom Damo*, believed so much in what he was fighting for. In what he ultimately gave his life for. He was deeply in love with the land of Israel and considered himself more lucky than our prophets as he was seeing our Geula, our redemption, come to life. He contributed to it.”

Tehila Bitton (SCW '24)

candles and took turns lighting them, each reading the name of a different victim.

At the *Azkara*, Tehila Bitton (SCW '24) spoke about Ariel Eliyahu, who had been killed Oct. 7 while fighting in his tank division near Kibbutz Be'eri. Eliyahu's family, who had served as the *shluchim* at Bitton's middle school, described him as “energetic,” “passionate” and “full of grace.” He also was very studious and “had filled his life with Torah,” having gone through the entire



Candles lit up in memory of those killed in the Oct. 7 attack

ROSENFELD STUDIOS

Yeshiva University Student Council Sponsors Tickets for Nets V. Maccabi Ra'anana Game

By GAVRIEL FACTOR

Yeshiva University students displayed their support and advocacy for Israel by attending a preseason basketball game with 100 tickets sponsored by the Yeshiva University Student Council and the Office

"It was incredible and meaningful to all come together, Jews and non-Jews, and show support for Israel in a beautiful way."

Yedidya Schechter (YC '24)

of Student Life. The game, between the Brooklyn Nets and the Israeli team Maccabi Ra'anana, took place shortly after the Hamas terrorist attacks on Oct. 7.

Students received partially sponsored tickets Oct. 12 to show support for Maccabi Ra'anana in light of the terror attacks. Yeshiva Student Union President Zakkai Notkin (YC '24), upon hearing of the event,

wanted to show support for Israel and worked with the Office of Student Life to provide 100 subsidized tickets for students to attend the event.

Maccabi Ra'anana, a professional Israeli basketball team from the southern town of Ra'anana, was visiting from Israel to play in a preseason matchup against three NBA teams, experience international basketball and showcase themselves to American fans.

Throughout the game, there was a lot of support and unity for Israel from both teams and the fans. Though the Nets won the game, 135-103, students felt that attending the game was important.

"It was incredible and meaningful to all come together, Jews and non-Jews, and show support for Israel in a beautiful way," Yedidya Schechter (YC '24), told The Commentator. "To show our *achdus* (unity), there was an uplifting *kumzitz* after the game with hundreds of all different kinds of people which was deeply heartfelt."

"During the game, the atmosphere was truly beautiful with signs, Israeli flags, white and blue, and a strong sense of Jewish and Israeli pride," Shoshi Fogelman (SCW '24) shared. "It was really really special. The crowd's enthusiasm, regardless of which team scored, made it feel like a big, heartwarming embrace from the entire

community. It was so beautiful to see everyone coming together and all the *ruach* (spirit) despite everything that was going on

in the world. The Brooklyn Nets also showcased incredible support, making it a truly special and fun experience for everyone."



Brooklyn Nets and the Maccabi Ra'anana at the Barclays Center

GAVRIEL FACTOR

LOOK THEM IN THE EYES
IT'S OUR DUTY TO BRING THEM BACK
#BringThemHomeNow

HOSTAGES AND MISSING FAMILIES FORUM

Leading Through Sympathy: YU Leadership Scholars Hear From Family Members of Hostages

By **BAT-TZION ATIK**

On October 24th, the YU Leadership Scholars, a cohort scholarship program that promotes leadership activities and skills, attended a communal meeting at the Central Synagogue in Midtown, Manhattan with the families of hostages currently held captive by Hamas. We heard from Rachel and Jonathan Goldberg-Polin, parents of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who is currently being held hostage by Hamas in the Gaza strip; Moshe Lavi, whose brother-in-law Omri is being held hostage; and Ruby Chen, whose son, Itai, is a hostage.

This is what was shared:

Rachel Goldberg spoke about the little current information she knew about her son. She said that her son, Hersh, was at the music festival with his friend Honor. Following Hamas' attack, they ended up fleeing to a bomb shelter with twenty-nine other people. Hamas terrorists came to the doorway and started throwing in hand grenades. Honor managed to throw out eight of them but three of them detonated. The terrorists then came in with weapons and began firing. Rachel said that there were very few members of the group in the bomb shelter who survived. Hersh was one of the survivors, although he lost an arm in the fire. The terrorists forced the survivors to stand up and walk out despite the injuries that they had sustained, subsequently taking them hostage. Jonathan, Hersh's father, noted, "In this world where I try to look for optimism and strength anywhere I can find it, I find some in the video [depicting him being X] where he looked composed and in shock, but from that I took some strength and continue to say I hope that it's carrying him forward."

Moshe Lavi spoke about his sister and her husband Omri. Omri is the father of a two-year-old girl and a six-month-old baby. His sister's entire family was held captive for six hours in their home in Nachal Oz and then grouped with other families in another house before they were liberated. They all

witnessed the horrors that occurred. When speaking about his niece, he pointed out, "It's a trauma that will be with her for the rest of her life".

Ruby Chen spoke about the bar mitzvah his family made for his other son, Alon, a few weeks ago, shortly after Hamas's terror attacks. He noted that family and friends

me a lot of *chizzuk* [strength]. In addition to increasing our davening and learning, we also need to put our efforts toward calling congresspeople and keeping this in the front of their minds."

The program concluded with everybody, representing every religious denomination, singing *Acheinu* and *Hatikva* together.

"We need people to keep this front and center. It has to stay in the news."

Jonathan Goldberg

who haven't attended synagogue in over a decade showed up to his family's simcha at their shul in support of their family.

When all of the family members were asked by the audience what Americans in the United States could do to help, they unanimously agreed that we should be politically active in calling and emailing our elected officials constantly.

"We need people to keep this front and center. It has to stay in the news," Jonathan Goldberg said. "We have to have people talking about it sharing it on social media ... it helps to call your elected officials every single day ... this is what I would ask people in this room to do."

"We are the voice of these people," Chen added. "It's you guys. You talking to the senators. You talking to your congressman. We need you to amplify the message."

Rachel added that she wanted everyone to call a political office every morning while boiling water for coffee. "It can really be one minute every morning ... It's one minute, but it's one minute from all of you ... for now it's that little mosquito that when you're trying to sleep you're like, shoot that's so annoying. We want you to be that mosquito" to the politicians you speak to, she continued.

Dani Minkove (YC '26), another leadership scholar, afterwards reflected, "It was incredibly empowering to hear from the families what we could do. For them not to despair and think, here are concrete steps we can be taking, was inspiring and gave

Eli Novick (YC '26) reflected that, "The most beautiful part was the *achdus* (unity). There were Jews from every single denomination sitting together, listening to the stories of our brothers and sisters together, singing *Acheinu* together. Just like biological siblings, even though we all have our differences and we occasionally don't get along,

we know how to come together for the things that matter most: family."

A key message of the event was that in addition to fundraising, davening, tehillim and taking on extra mitzvot, it's crucial that every single one of us becomes that "mosquito," advocating for our brothers and sisters. If every single one of us contacts our congresspeople, then we can make such a big difference in the lives of those who are struggling. Rachel Amar (SCW '26) shared, "That is why I feel our role as Leadership Scholars to fundraise and spread awareness is crucial—the war is not over, and it is our job to bring it to the forefront of everyone's minds, just like the agony that has sat anxiously in the hearts of so many families for 18 whole days."

Sometimes it can be difficult to connect with the struggles of our brothers and sisters in Israel when they are so far away. But this event really made everything feel so much more personal and close to home. We showed these families that they are not alone. We are all family, *Acheinu Kol Beit Yisrael*.



A family member of a hostage talking with attendees

RABBI MORDECHAI SCHIFFMAN

Slogans Unmasked: A Global Wake-Up Call to Antisemitism's Resurgence

By **RIKKI ZAGELBAUM**

From Uncle Sam's "We Need You!" to Nazi Germany's "Sieg Heil," slogans have historically been utilized as an effective and powerful tool in spreading propaganda, rallying the masses, and imprinting indelible messages onto the collective consciousness of societies around the world.

In the wake of Hamas's attack on October 7th, the deadliest massacre on Jewish lives since the Holocaust, global support for Palestinians has skyrocketed at a record pace, propelled by slogans at the forefront of the movement. Pro-Palestinian rallies are rife with the use of these catchy, easily memorable slogans, which, more often than not, are replete with antisemitic implications, calling for violence and the destruction of the only Jewish state in existence.

As use of these slogans has surged in major cities like New York and London, so has antisemitism, which has seen a 388% increase since the Hamas massacre, according to the ADL. These two crises are profoundly connected; they are aided by the world's decision to turn a blind eye — and ear — to the thinly disguised hateful rhetoric voiced

freely during Pro-Palestinian rallies, on college campuses, and in the media.

To help decode these troubling slogans, here is a guide to understanding some of the popular ones being used by supporters of Palestine:

Palestinian slogans may be catchy, easily digestible, and enthusiastically chanted by those unaware of their implications, but the sophisticated sentiments expressed in them are dangerous.

#1 "From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will be Free"

Perhaps the most frequently used slogan, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," is a call for the establishment of a Palestinian state extending from the Jordan River on Israel's east coast to the Mediterranean Sea on its west coast, free of Jews. Accomplishing this would require the destruction of the State of Israel.

The chant dates back to the origins of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), founded in 1964. The slogan was primarily a call for the establishment of a Palestinian

state based on the pre-1948 borders of the British Mandate, notwithstanding the Oslo Accords attempt to move towards a two-state solution.

Yet, despite Oslo's creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a govern-

ing body in the West Bank, and the PLO formally recognizing Israel's right to exist in the 1990s, the chants continue. Today, the slogan continues to represent a call for Israelis to be forced out and for Israel to cease to exist. And in case someone stopped to wonder where the 7.1 million Jewish citizens will go after this mass return, Hamas leader, Mahmoud Zahar, has an answer:

"We do not recognize the Israeli enemy, nor his right to be our neighbor, nor to stay (on the land), nor his ownership of any inch of land ... Our principles are clear: Palestine is a land of *Waqf* (Islamic trust), which can not be given up."

Palestinian supporters will often contend

that the slogan represents a call for equal rights for all individuals under a unified Palestinian state. In the words of Michigan Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, (who was censured by the House November 7 for her use of the phrase): "From the river to the sea is an aspirational call for freedom, human rights, and peaceful coexistence, not death, destruction, or hate." Indeed, when put like that, the phrase does seem relatively mild.

However, Hamas, the terrorist organization responsible for the brutal October 7th massacre and kidnapping of thousands of Israeli civilians, interpreted it quite differently in 2012. "Palestine is ours *from the river to the sea* and from the south to the north," Khaled Mashaal, the group's former leader, said that year in a speech in Gaza celebrating the 25th anniversary of the founding of Hamas. "There will be no concession on any inch of the land."

#2 "Globalize the Intifada" / "There is Only One Solution: Intifada Revolution!"

Globalize the Intifada is a slogan that

Continued on Page 9

How the Hostage Crisis Brought our Campus Together

BY HANNAH POLLAK

After a few semesters on the Beren Campus, I struggled to find a cause or common thread that unified us all. While the campus is composed of young Jewish women, I lamented the fact that oftentimes, the sense of community was missing. I felt that while Beren is nominally one campus, it was hard to find real factors that made us one unified entity. Some connect to their Stern experience through their sports teams. Others through specific clubs or societies. Others see Stern as a place of academic accomplishment, where their dream career begins to actualize. Many see Stern as a place of Talmud Torah and religious connection. However, I wondered if there would be one thing that would bring us all together ... until two weeks ago.

On Thursday, November 14th, we discovered that love for the Jewish people and its land — what Rav Soloveitchik refers to as the inescapable shared fate of the Jews — is essentially what unites all of us. On a Thursday afternoon, many students decided to stay in school and attend an event to show solidarity and support for the family of one of Hamas' hostages. Instead of there being just a small crowd, the *beit midrash* was filled beyond its full capacity, with students representing the diverse demographics of the Beren campus. We all gathered to welcome Rinat Har-Sheleg and Natalie Har, two sisters whose father, Luis Norberto Har, was taken hostage along with four other family members during the devastating attacks of October 7. The assembly was arranged by Rabbi Shay Schachter and was hosted by Rabbi Azi Fine and Dean Shoshana Schechter.

Setting the appropriate tone, Rabbi Fine opened the event by introducing the Har sisters, explaining why they are here as well as expressing how important this event is — especially our coming together as a community to listen and ultimately to comfort the Har sisters. Rabbi Fine proceeded to

lead everyone in tefillah, reciting several chapters of Tehillim and the *Mi Sheberach* for the captives. Dean Shoshana Schechter then addressed the audience and the Har sisters, sharing that she had just returned from Israel and that she had never felt so connected to the Jewish people as in these

What was powerful about it was the sensory experience. It was seeing these women and their pain in their facial expressions. It was listening to the brokenness in their voices. It was hugging real people, real human beings, who were going through hell right in front of us.

days. Along these lines, she said on behalf of all those present, "*Imachem anachnu betzarah*," showing our empathy by borrowing the words of David Hamelech. After Dean Schechter, Rabbi Shay Schachter spoke about the urgency of our times and how our response should be a simple and desperate screaming out, leaving all rational considerations and calculations aside. Finally, Rinat and Natalie stood up to share their story, expressing how they lived normal lives up until this tragedy and how they are forever changed since that painful day. They spoke in English and Hebrew, assisted by Mrs. Yael Lewitinn, a woman who has been a major source of emotional and practical support for them during this dreadful experience.

Rinat and Natalie flew overseas, leaving their young children at home, to appeal for this urgent need. While they officially came to speak at a press conference for the Hostages Families Forum, they came to Stern College to tell their story, to publicly lament the loss they have gone through and to show the delusional segments of the American population that the over 200 individuals being held hostages in Gaza are real human beings with real family members. Natalie noted that what she lost in this attack was irreversible. She described her personal trauma, how she will never be the person she once was. She

presented her family loss, how her children will have to pay the price of their single mom being psychologically injured forever. She expressed the communal loss, how the kibbutz where she lived for so many years, and her extended family had been dismantled forever. Rinat shared how speechless and

beyond shocked she had been when she heard the news of the capture of her father and relatives, how devastating these past weeks have been and how connected she felt to those present along with the entire Jewish world, sharing in her pain. She emphasized several times that the Jewish people are one and that we are all in this together.

After their remarks, those of us present

started a *kumzits*, singing together songs of pain and mourning but also faith and hope. The event officially ended with the recitation of Hatikvah, as requested by the Har sisters. After the event ended, many students went to personally acknowledge and embrace Rinat and Natalie, expressing how pained they felt from their horrible struggle, and how grateful they felt coming to us despite their mental and physical exhaustion to share their message and their resilience. Others just approached them speechless, without anything to say after being exposed to such a dystopian reality.

In any case, the essence of that afternoon cannot be expressed verbally. What was powerful about it was the sensory experience. It was seeing these women and their pain in their facial expressions. It was listening to the brokenness in their voices. It was hugging real people, real human beings, who were going through hell right in front of us. The visceral burden over our shoulders, as we went through the bittersweet feeling of a shared fate, which is sometimes indescribably painful.



Stern students listen to the Har sisters tell their story

RABBI AZI FINE

Rabbanit Henkin Visits Stern College

BY AVIVA KLAHR

On Wednesday, November 8th, students at the Beren Campus had the honor of welcoming Rabbanit Chana Henkin to address the tragic situation in Israel. Rabbanit Henkin, a graduate of Stern College for Women, is the founder and dean of Nishmat, a widely acclaimed Jewish educator, and a leader of women's Torah scholarship.

Rabbanit Henkin began by stating that she was not interested in putting on a performance or giving over a *shiur*. Instead, she opened the floor to questions, enabling students to express their thoughts and feelings, which she proceeded to address with powerful sincerity. Although Rabbanit Henkin was rushing to catch her flight back

to Israel later that night, she spoke calmly and passionately, giving attention to every student's questions.

When asked for a source that learning serves as protection, Rabbanit Henkin rejected the concept as a blanket statement and

She powerfully described that she chooses to put her personal destiny together with the destiny of Am Yisrael and the destiny of Medinat Yisrael.

exclaimed, "Mitzvot always help but God is not an ATM machine! ... We believe in divine protection, but it is not an insurance policy." Rabbanit Henkin mentioned her family's personal encounter with Hamas, when her son and daughter-in-law, Eitan and Na'ama

Henkin, were killed in a terror attack in the West Bank eight years ago. She explained that while this is something she will never get over, such losses do not shake her *emunah* because she does not understand her Torah or mitzvot to be an assurance of reward or

protection. Rabbanit Henkin emphasized the danger of such an association and similarly pushed against searching for metaphysical reasons behind tragedy.

Rabbanit Henkin expressed that she is inspired to remain hopeful by seeing righteous people and witnessing good deeds. She added that she feels that the current unity of *Am Yisrael* is stronger than the divided society that has existed in Israel for the past couple of years, and Rabbanit Henkin feels confident that we will not return to that past state.

Students asked how fear of the rising antisemitism in *Chutz La'aretz*, as well as that of terrorism and dangers in Israel, should influence one's decision to make *aliyah*. Rabbanit Henkin's response to both questions was the same; fear should be a non-factor in either way. The true reason for going to Israel and committing to its land, Rabbanit Henkin explained, must come from within and be for its own sake. It is not to flee antisemitism, nor should it matter that there are

dangers to a life lived in Israel. When asked if she would have still made aliyah had she known her son was to be murdered, Rabbanit Henkin responded yes. Rather than "follow which way the wind is blowing," Rabbanit Henkin believes in making decisions "based upon something far deeper, and accepting the consequences." She powerfully described that she chooses to put her personal destiny together with the destiny of *Am Yisrael* and the destiny of the *Medinat Yisrael*.

Tehila Bitton (SCW '24), a student of Rabbanit Henkin and coordinator of the event, reflected and told The Commentator that she believed Rabbanit Henkin had a powerful message to share. "I believe that Rabbanit Henkin's message might be a hard one to digest, but is ultimately the correct path to take," she said. "Especially during these times when so much is being taken away from us, we cannot use it as an excuse to turn away from God." Eliana Diamond (SCW '25), another student who attended, shared, "Simply having a part of Eretz Yisrael speak with us gave me *chizuk* and brought tears to my eyes as it sparked my emotional longing for my homeland."

Rabbanit Henkin concluded by stating that it is our responsibility to make good things come out of this war and reminding us that tragedy and pain are not indications that God has abandoned us. She blessed us and expressed her excitement to return to Israel, the eternal home of the Jewish people. We were privileged to have Rabbanit Henkin speak and share her strength, honesty, and inspiration with us.



Rabbanit Chana Henkin of Nishmat addresses Stern students on November 8

TEHILA BITTON

March for Israel: The Ultimate Dichotomy

By SARA COHEN

Ever since Hamas' unprovoked, horrific October 7 attacks on Israel, a feeling of helplessness, yet a desire to take action, have blazed amongst the American Jewish community. These emotions, combined with the alarming number of pro-Palestinian protests raging throughout America, fueled the extraordinary turnout of almost 300,000 attendees for the March for Israel rally on November 14. Although the rally's official purpose was to "March for Israel, March to Free Hostages, and March Against Antisemitism," it was much more than that; it was the definition of unity itself. Before entering the rally, Shaina Trapedo, an assistant professor of English at Stern College

for Women, explained to a group of Stern students that although we were in high spirits, we should not forget why we were here — the somber reasons that led us to Washington Tuesday.

"Boys and girls shall once again play in the streets of Be'eri and Sderot, and the elderly shall sit peacefully by the walkways of Nahal Oz and Ofakim."

Issac Herzog, president of the State of Israel

However, the rally itself was the ultimate dichotomy — of remembrance, grief and indignation, mixed with love of the Jewish nation, appreciation for the State of Israel and the IDF as well as hope — hope for a better

future. In fact, some of these sentiments were reflected by many of the speakers, which included politicians Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Sen. Joni Ernst (R-IA), Speaker of the House Mike Johnson,

was the countless number of posters that read "kidnapped" with the name and age of the captive. There was even a moment of silence for the hostages, as the crowd held up their signs, filling the sky with a sea of white and red.

The feeling of unity was palpable.

Even from a sideward glance, one could see the broad range of Jews present, from Chabad and Bais Yaakov schools; YU and other Modern orthodox institutions; and secular and traditional Jews. However, the usual religious and political labels and divisions disappeared as they stood together as one nation.

The crowd sang Hatikvah as if it was one Jewish soul.

In regards to the rally, YU students reacted with a range of emotional reactions. Elan Koshner (SSSB '24) felt, "It was incredible to join a rally of over three hundred thousand people all in support of Israel. Thank you Congress for standing strong with Israel."

"Before this I never thought I could conceptualize what 300,000 people looked like," said Raimy Vogel (SCW '25). "It was really cool that so many people from so many walks of life were together all there for the same cause."

"It was such a gathering of all types of Jews, which was so amazing," said Jessica Friedman (SCW '24). "*Mi k'amcha Yisrael*. We just want our people home."

I too, witnessed unbelievable unity, especially when I overheard one Chabadnik comment to his friend that he found two secular Jews who had yet to put on tefillin. "Mendy, I've got one!" he exclaimed, rushing over with his tefillin to help two secular Jews fulfill this mitzvah.

I was overwhelmed with love for the Jewish people at full display at the rally.

As Alayna Higdon (SCW '25) put it, "I felt like I was a part of history. It was truly awe-inspiring."



American and Israeli flags are proudly waved during the March for Israel rally on November 14th

SHOSHANA ESCOTT

SLOGANS

Continued from Page 7

advocates for a global uprising in support of Palestinian resistance against Israel.

The word "Intifada," which means "shaking off," refers to the use of violence to "shake off" or eliminate Israeli security or political control. The word has come to represent the series of devastating and deadly Arab attacks against Israeli troops and civilians, first occurring between 1987 and 1993 (First Intifada) and then again between 2000 and 2005 (Second Intifada). These attacks combined resulted in the deaths of over 1200 Israelis, evoking a painful comparison to the October 7th massacre, which too saw an estimated 1200 Israelis brutally murdered in the name of resistance.

"As Palestinians continue to bravely confront ethnic cleansing and genocide, it's time to globalize the Intifada," writes Within Our Lifetime, New York City's leading Palestinian-led organization, on their website. "Globalize the Intifada expands the terrain of struggle by creating new points of leverage for our movements based on the interconnectedness of our struggles ... To those who participate in, and profit from, the oppression of people here in the U.S. and around the world—your days of comfort are coming to an end." Although they may claim that they intend for peaceful demonstrations, the decision to use a word associated with terrorist "resistance" is quite telling.

#3 "Glory to Our Martyrs"

The Palestinian Authority Martyrs Fund, often referred to by critics as "Pay For Slay," is a fund operated by the Palestinian Authority that pays monthly cash stipends

to the families of Palestinians killed, injured, or imprisoned while carrying out violence against Israelis. Despite the US passing the Taylor Force Act in 2018 (which significantly restricts non-humanitarian US aid to the PA until it ends this program), it has continued to operate with total impunity.

The fund was introduced in 2004 in order to motivate and support Arab Israelis and Palestinians who were participating in the Second Intifada. "It is the right of

all of the prisoners and martyrs who have struggled and sacrificed for Palestine to receive their full salaries from the PA," said the spokesman for the Palestine Liberation Organization's Commission of Prisoners and Released Prisoners' Affairs, Hassan Abd Rabbo, in 2017.

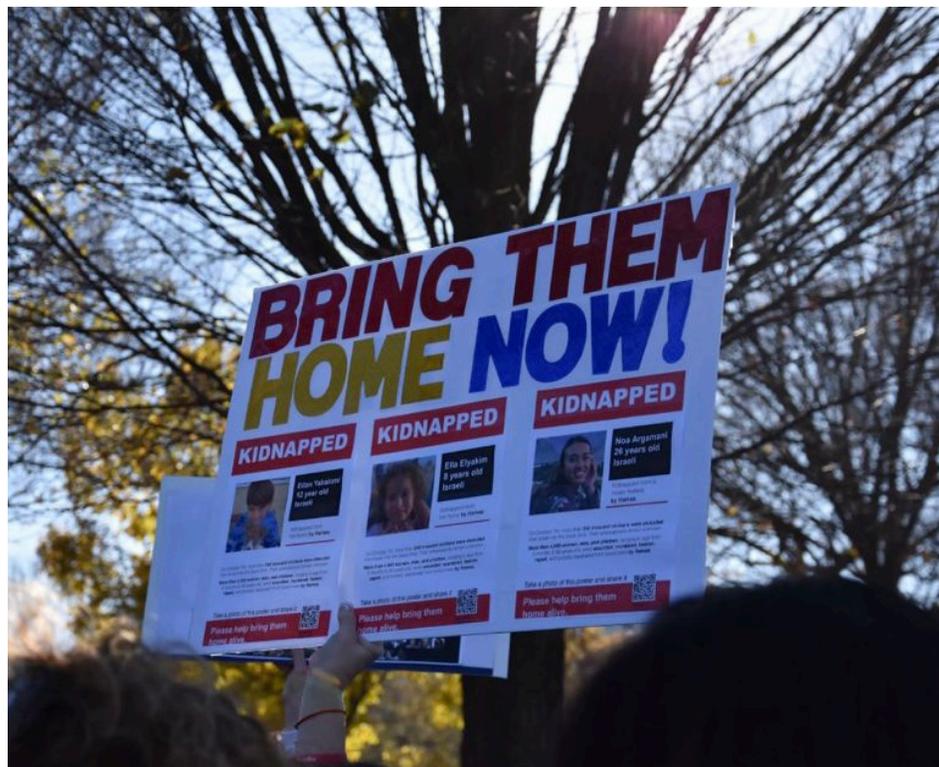
The celebration of terror and violence does not stop there. Glorification of Palestinian "martyrs" extends even to the Hamas terrorists responsible for carrying

out the October 7th attacks on Israel. This is whom current protesters are often referring to when they shout slogans such as "Free our martyrs! Free them all! Zionism must fall!"

This fact was brazenly admitted in many of the statements released hours after the attack, such as that of SAFE UMich, an anti-Israel group at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. "In an unprecedented series of events, the Palestinian resistance has broken out from the siege on Gaza by force and have taken down military stations and settlements alike," they wrote in a post to Instagram on Oct. 8. "We call on our people in the far diaspora in Detroit and beyond to honor the resistance, *honor our martyrs* and uplift the call for liberation."

...

Slogans possess a formidable ability to distill complex ideas into succinct and simple expressions, wielding the power to shape opinions and mobilize movements. Palestinian slogans may be catchy, easily digestible and enthusiastically chanted by those unaware of their implications, but the sophisticated sentiments expressed in them are dangerous. By educating supporters on how the chants pose a significant threat to Jews and Israelis worldwide, they may be persuaded to stop using them. Or, at the very least, the world may realize the severity of their words and cease to ignore it.



"Bring Them Home Now" posters are raised at the March for Israel rally on November 14

MINNA KATZ

My Experience on Torah Tours and Why You Should Do It Too

By YOSEF BLUTH

“Your brother is going to be in PHX for Simchat Torah.”

My brother Dovid forwarded me this text along with an accompanying “What?” I hadn’t actually informed my siblings that I was doing Torah Tours, because it still hadn’t really registered with me. My brother

The community is one of the most incredible ones I’ve ever had the pleasure of visiting.

heard about it from his friend who lives in Phoenix, and reached out to me to confirm it. Up until that moment, it hadn’t really hit me just what I had signed up for, but from this point on it was really “real.”

The Aaron and Blanche Schreiber Torah Tours program is an initiative that sends YU students to different communities around the United States and Canada for Shmini Atzeret and Simchat Torah, and sometimes Shavuot. These students help their community in many ways, including with holiday prayers, programming and adding to the festive atmosphere. The community gets a few students to help out, and the students get to visit a community that they have probably never visited before.

Torah Tours was something I had known about for several years. Two of my *rebbeim* in Yeshivat Migdal Hatorah, which I attended in my gap year, had participated in the program during their time at YU and spoke about it fondly even years later. When

I saw the email announcing it for Simchat Torah, I knew I had to sign up.

While we didn’t get to choose which community we would be visiting, I requested to be sent to a community outside of the New York area. I ended up in the group going to the Beth Joseph shul in Phoenix, Arizona with one Wilf and two Beren students. After a brief meeting where YU faculty involved in Torah Tours — David Mitzner Community Dean for Values and Leadership Rabbi Ari Rockoff, Program Director of the Office of Torah and Spiritual Life Haviva Tirschwell and Program Administrator for Undergraduate Torah Studies Rabbi Herschel Hartz — went over some basic guidelines with us we were put in touch with the community and basically told us to have fun.

Transportation to and from Phoenix was arranged by the Rebbetzin Rachel and Rabbi Yisroel Isaacs, the rebbetzin and rabbi of the shul. We flew into Phoenix on Thursday, two days before *Yom Tov*. That night, the shul had a “Meat and Greet” event, a barbeque where we had the opportunity to meet various members of the community, introduce ourselves and give *shiurim* to the teens. Afterward, we went with kids and teens to Bam Kazam, which is a combination between an escape room and an obstacle course. We all had an incredible time together and it was really fun to meet the kids of the community.

Friday was spent preparing for Yom Tov. The Jewish community in Phoenix is large and vibrant and therefore they were not so reliant on us to make a *minyán* or lead in services. Instead, they asked us to focus on improving the *ruach* of the shul during the *Simchat Torah* dancing, running activities

and playing games with children to assist in encouraging their participation in shul. We planned it all out and then got ready for the *chag* to start.

Shemini Atzeret was very nice. We had dinner together at the Rabbi’s house along with what felt like half of the community (but was “only” about 30 people). It was just cool interacting with so many different kinds of people, whether it was the rabbi and rebbetzin, older members of the community, younger members who had just moved in or teens who had grown up there. During the day we ran a small Jeopardy game for the teens, which was a relaxing and fun activity for everyone involved.

Unfortunately, not unlike many communities’ celebration of *Simchat Torah* this year, ours was quite unusual. Before we started *hakafot*, we began hearing that something was going on in Israel, but we had no idea how bad it truly was. We started off by saying a few *perakim* of Tehillim. We then moved into the dancing, where we tried to help everyone enjoy *Yom Tov* despite the worrying news. The dancing itself was very nice, and the community was fully involved. After davening, the entire community stayed at the shul to have dinner together. Although we ate at a table with the teenagers, I had the incredible opportunity to walk around and talk with different members of the community. I got to meet one of my mother’s friends from her time in Stern College, as well as the parents of one of my friends.

Hakafot on Simchat Torah day was very lively, filled with unique experiences. I was able to convince some boys to join in the dancing and had the opportunity to *lain* for the first time when we broke up into smaller

groups to allow everyone to receive an *aliyah*. This was especially meaningful for me as I had never done it before, and getting to do it during this trip felt incredible.

I’m so grateful to the Phoenix community and YU for giving me the opportunity to participate in Torah Tours. The community is one of the most incredible ones I’ve ever had the pleasure of visiting. The people were all so nice, and seeing the community interact so nicely with us and with each other was remarkable to experience. I genuinely hope to have the chance to go back at some point, and am thankful for this opportunity.

That brings me to two final questions: Would I do Torah Tours again? Would I recommend it to others? The answer is easily “yes!” Torah Tours provides one the opportunity to visit other Jewish communities and help them while hopefully enjoying yourself. You have the chance to have fun while also participating in something very meaningful. While I understand not wanting to spend some of your vacation off of school in a different community, I think it’s something very worthwhile. I hope that you will consider participating in Torah Tours as well!



Torah Tours provides a unique experience, says the writer. YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

תסתכלו להם בעיניים
חייבים להחזיר אותם הביתה עכשיו
#BringThemHomeNow

מטה המשפחות להחזרת החטופים והנדדדים



FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

(April 10, 2003; Volume 67, Issue 11) — “Students Organize Operation Torah Shield III with Record-Breaking Speed”

By KEVIN CYRULNIK

Editor's Note: Following the conclusion of the latest "Operation Torah Shield" trip in Israel this week, The Commentator has republished an article about the last such trip, also called "Operation Torah Shield 3"

In just six days, three Yeshiva students successfully organized Operation Torah Shield III, a solidarity mission that transported 100 Yeshiva Students to Israel for a week. The organizers planned the trip with the specific goal of arriving in Israel on Monday, March 17, the day President Bush set as his deadline for senior Iraqi officials to relinquish power, to express their solidarity with Israel.

Yeshiva College junior Yisrael Schachter first approached Yeshiva Student Union Vice-President Yaakov Green with the request that the Student Union help organize a mission to Israel for the then-upcoming Purim holiday, on Tuesday, March 12. "I laughed at the idea," says Green, "and told [Schachter] it couldn't be done - we didn't have the money."

Despite Green's initial skepticism, Schachter decided to search elsewhere for funding. While speaking to MSDCS Coordinator of Youth and Outreach Services Rabbi Ari Rockoff, Schachter learned that Ramaz High School had assembled a delegation of approximately 100 students that was set to depart on Sunday, March 16 and cancelled their trip for security reasons. Rockoff suggested that Schachter broker a deal with El Al airlines for those very 100 seats.

Within the next few hours, Schachter, Green and Sy Syms junior Eli Renov secured the seats and began searching for funding. Flyers urging students to sign up via the internet for Operation Torah Shield III sprung up on the the Wilf and Midtown Campuses shortly after.

The sign-up sheet was posted online at 9:30 P.M. By 11:30, Green reported that 260 people had signed up. By night's end, there were 380 reservations for 100 spots. Students were then selected on a first-come-first-serve basis, with two mitigating criteria: The trip had to be divided evenly between both campuses, and as many of the Israeli Yshivot as possible had to have student representation, as a major component of the trip was studying at students' yeshivas in Israel.

The event came together with astonishing speed. Schachter attributes that to the fact that "We all wanted it so badly, and we never for a second lost focus." Schachter went on to reveal that funding for the expedition was not secured until the Thursday night prior to the date of departure and was not actually received until Friday, one day later. The

donor, who resides in Florida, also financed Operation Torah Shield I and II, the blueprints for the most recent mission.

The students departed JFK on Sunday, March 16, after receiving a lavish farewell celebration hosted by El Al airlines. Many members of the Yeshiva community accompanied the delegation to the airport, including President and Rosh Hayeshiva Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm and Roshei Yeshivas Rabbis Hershel Schachter, Mordechai Willig and Zevulun Charlop. Additionally, Roshei Yeshivas Rabbis Reichman and Feldman accompanied the students to Israel as part of the mission. Finally, Dov Heikand, Brooklyn state Assemblyman, and Jerusalem Reclamation Project President Joseph Frager, who was the middleman for securing the large subsidies, also accompanied the students.

After arriving in Israel on Monday, the

group hastily made their way to a ceremony at the Kotel. The Ministry of Tourism facilitated the trip, providing gas masks in case of an Iraqi scud missile attack and assurances that the students would be attended to in case of emergencies.

Citing the themes of past Operation Torah Shields as part of the motor for their success, this year's organizers chose to combine the themes of the past two missions for this year's. "Whereas the theme for (Operation Torah Shield) I was learning during the Gulf War, and for (Operations Torah Shield) II it was touring Israel for the purpose of showing solidarity, we did an excellent job incorporating both," noted Schachter.

On Wednesday, the students reassembled from their sixteen respective yeshivos for what was undoubtedly the trip's climax. In honor of Shushan Purim, 600 terror victims and their families were treated to a festive

meal and a carnival in Be'er Sheva. "I will never forget that day and what we did for them," said one participant. According to another student, "This not only had an impact on them, it had a tremendous impact on me."

Both Schachter and Green simultaneously proclaimed Wednesday to be "the absolute highlight of the trip."

Other activities included delivering Sahlach Manot to soldiers and hospital patients, a blood drive on Friday, and a Shabbaton in the Kings Hotel with guests Rabbi Kevi and Shani Taragin, residents of the Alon Shevut settlement of Gush Etzion. Finally, Saturday night featured a Chaim Dovid concert capping off a long and arduous week of incessant activity.

Summing up the success of the mission, Schachter said, "It was a life-changing experience for all."



The Commentator Archives

YITZHAK GRAFF / THE COMMENTATOR

Got something to share?
 Email editor@yucommentator.org

NEVER. STOP. COMMENTATING.

Adio Querida

By AVIEL PARENTE

The Jewish people's history is marked by perpetual wandering. Even when we established ourselves in the promised land in biblical times, we often oscillated between following the Torah and committing heinous sins. The feeling of longing for stability despite never truly finding it is an inherent part of the Jewish experience. It is a feeling that I resonate deeply with, especially in light of recent experiences.

My paternal grandfather's family, originally from Salonika, Greece, traces its Sephardic heritage back to 1492, when they fled the Spanish Inquisition. Salonika developed into a thriving Jewish city, and by the late 1800s, 80% of its population was Jewish. Its Jewish presence was so strong that it was commonly referred to as the "Jerusalem of the Balkans." In 1943, the Nazis obliterated the community, erasing customs, traditions and centuries-old heritage. Many decades later, the erasure of our family's rich historical identity sparked a great deal of confusion for us, which prompted me to embark on a year-long quest to uncover my roots and learn about Salonika's Jewish traditions. During this journey, I discovered a Ladino song, "Adio Querida," a beautiful ballad that captures the pain of exile through the metaphor of a fractured relationship.

The historical context of this song provides a deeper understanding of its meaning. Spanish Jewry had become so comfortable and integrated that they had forgotten what exile meant. The Inquisition served as a harsh reminder of their true status and culminated in "Adio Querida" as an outpouring of the pain they experienced when Spain, a place they considered their home, rejected them:

By not seizing the opportunity to return to Israel — an opportunity that we as a nation have waited two millennia for — we are actively choosing to continue to experience exile.

*Tu madre cuando de pario
Y te quito al mundo
Corazon ella no te dio
Para amar segundo*

*Adio
Adio querida
No quero la vida
Me l'margastes tu*

*Va buscate otro amor
Aharva otras puertas
Aspera otro ardor
Que para mi sos muerta*

*Adio
Adio querida
No quero la vida
Me l'margastes tu.*

When your mother delivered you
and brought you to the world
she did not give you a heart
to love with

Farewell
Farewell, my beloved
I do not want to live
you made my life miserable

I'll go look for another love
knock on other ports
in hope there is a true hope
because for me you are dead

Farewell
Farewell, my beloved
I do not want to live
you made my life miserable.



Exile is part of our identity, but we have the opportunity to stop wandering — the choice is ours.

AVIEL PARENTE

This song serves as a reminder of the Jewish people's history of wandering, abandonment, and the constant search for a new home. The miraculous return to our true home in 1948 fulfilled the song's message — we, the Jewish people, no longer have to go "knocking on other ports" because we found one in our true home. Our days of searching for "another love" are in our past as we have finally been granted the opportunity to return to the land of our ancestors.

It's time to bid farewell to the places we call home, as history has shown that they will reject us too. It was wonderful while it lasted, and many places treated the Jewish people relatively well. Saying goodbye is always difficult, especially where there is such a deep-rooted connection. As difficult as it might be, I want to maintain positive memories of the place I have called home all my life, without the scar of rejection. Jews all over are enduring levels of antisemitism that we haven't experienced in a very long time. Jews have been spread to every corner of the world; we have been thrust into exile against our own wishes and we are now feeling the brunt of it. I recognize this destructive, recurring pattern of endless wandering and displacement, and I know that a timely exit and finding refuge in a true home will indeed end this vicious cycle of exile.

It seems that it is somehow safer for a Jew to live in Israel even in a time of war than anywhere else around the world. By not seizing the opportunity to return to Israel — an opportunity that we as a nation have waited two millennia for — we are actively choosing to continue to experience exile.

I don't want to have to go through what our ancestors perpetually went through. I desire stability and a sense of belonging. The proper home of *Am Yisraelis Eretz Yisrael*. The era of Jewish wandering will come to an end so long as we make the choice for it to end. We must now decide whether we want to feel comfortable and stay where we are, or prefer to end our exile and go home.

Don't Flee to YU

By NADAV HELLER

I've always thought that the term "secular college" was kind of funny and backwards. Outside of our community, it's just called "college." Why would YU be the foil for every other educational institution? And yet, in the past month, this term has begun to feel strangely apropos. As student bodies around the country unite against Israel, Jewish students feel alienated from their

friends, teachers and ideals. When their peers cheer "global intifada" and "glory to our martyrs," Jewish students have to grapple with the deeply non-Jewish and in some cases explicitly anti-Jewish attitudes of their "secular" colleges.

A Jewish friend at Columbia University recently expressed doubts about finishing her degree there. "If you asked me four weeks ago, I'd have said I believe in the value of attending secular college, but now I'm not so sure." Another friend at York University

said she worries for her children when they eventually attend college. "I no longer feel a need for my kids to go to a secular college and learn to be proud Jews in a non-Jewish space. I now think that's overrated." Israeli professor Shai Davidai proclaimed that "if my 2-year-old daughter was now 18

"It is especially at times like these when Jewish people must maintain a presence in the places we are least welcome."

years old I would never, never send her to Columbia, because I know that she will not be protected."

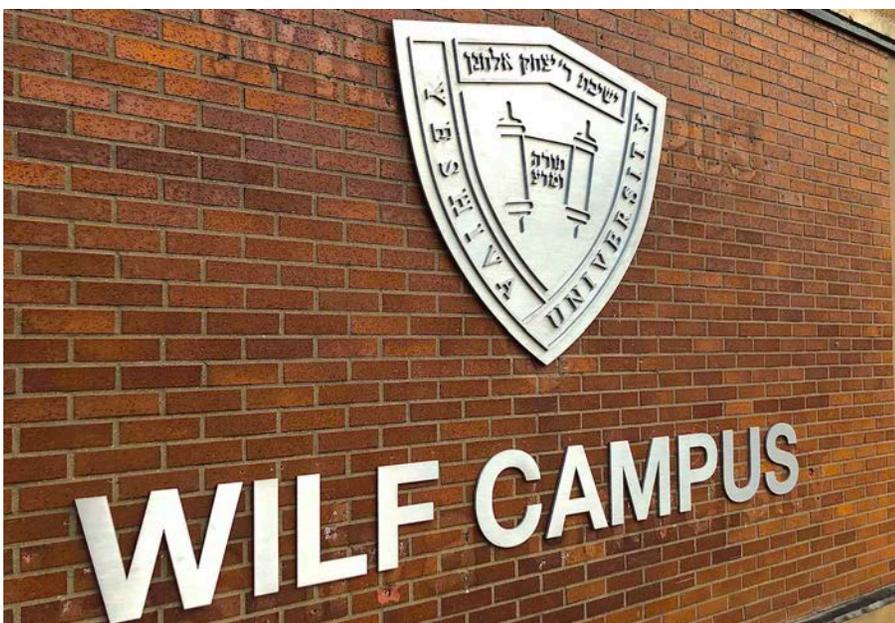
This is not only true among the student body, but among alumni and donors as well. Philanthropists have halted funding to or cut ties with prestigious universities, and some have even refused to hire graduates who openly supported Hamas. There is a growing feeling that prestigious universities are especially hostile spaces for Jews. We have never been as disenchanted with institutions of higher learning as we are now.

In contrast to their peers, students at YU feel safe on campus. We do not fear assault by fellow students; we do not worry that teachers will assign extra credit for attending pro-Palestine rallies or that student organizations will blame Israel for the massacre of its own civilians. In the wake of the past month's events, we should expect that more

and more Jewish students will recognize that when the Ivy League rebuffs and threatens them, Yeshiva University provides a reassuring alternative.

But YU cannot become a refuge for students fleeing hostility on college campuses. Jewish fear only weakens us and emboldens our enemies. If campuses become places where there are no Jews to protest and no dissenting voices, hatred will continue to fester. There is nothing that hatred loves more than a timid victim.

When the Jewish people went to war in biblical times, the priest would address the nation and say "Listen, Israel! Today you approach war with your enemies. Do not allow your hearts to soften! Do not be in fear, panic, or dread before them! For it is Hashem your God who marches with you to fight for you against your enemies to save you" (Devarim 20:3-4). The Mishnah (Sotah 8:5) commands all Israel to fight in an obligatory war (*milchemet mitzvah*), even a groom from his room and bride from her wedding canopy, and Maimonides clarifies that an obligatory war is any war which is waged to "assist Israel from an enemy which attacks them" (Laws of Kings 5:1). He further writes that it is a biblical commandment for soldiers not to fear or become frightened of the enemy during war (Book of Mitzvot, Negative Mitzvot 58). This means that according to Maimonides, all of us are obligated in the war effort, and all of us are **forbidden to**



The Yeshiva University emblem near Belfer Hall, emblazoned with the dual values of Torah and Mada (general studies)

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Continued on Page 13

The Power of Jewish Activism: 1987 to 2023

By RIVKA KRAUSE

On November 14th, 2023, standing shoulder to shoulder with my fellow American Jews, I partook in history. Holding an American and Israeli flag in each of my hands, I felt pride in my identity as an American Jew and was deeply aware of what a privilege it was to do so. I could not help but think of previous moments in American Jewish history in which we filled the National Mall. One of which, on December 6th, 1987, has intense personal significance. Often called Freedom Sunday for Soviet Jewry, that day was the culmination of years of work.

The struggle to free Jews from the Soviet Union was a broad activist movement that captured the energy and passion of young Jewish Americans from the mid-1960s until the collapse of the USSR in 1991. One of the most successful protest movements in history, it achieved tangible American policy change through the Jackson-Vanik amendment of the early 1970s. The amendment tied trade credit with Soviet Jewish emigration, and let the Communist government know that America was serious about supporting Soviet Jews. In "When They Come for Us We'll Be Gone: The Epic Struggle to Save Soviet Jewry," Gal Beckerman argues that the movement even helped hasten the fall of the Soviet Union. As the daughter of

Russian-speaking Jews who found refuge in America after the collapse of the USSR, that history was at the forefront of my mind throughout the day.

"We do not know what sort of echoes November 14th will have, but we must know that it will echo, and others will hear it."

There are moments in history that reverberate in our present, the echoes of which we cannot shake off. With my feet on the hallowed ground of the National Mall — a patch of land that has cradled the American hope for a brighter future — I listened to Natan Sharansky address the 290 thousand souls gathered. When I heard his familiarly accented voice, I was ready to cry because he reminded me of where I come from. He reminded me that I was able to stand where I stood because of the American Jews who marched on the National Mall on December 6th, 1987 to free my family. He reminded me that he was able to stand on that podium in 1987 and 2023 because of our collective power.

Throughout the day, as I heard various smatterings of Russian, I felt so proud that

we showed up. As a community that directly benefited from Jewish activism, we realized that we have the privilege to stand in the American capital in support for our brothers and sisters in Israel.

In all honesty, there were moments on November 14th when I felt cynical about what we were actually accomplishing. Are we really going to change the outcome of

this war? Does our presence here actually matter? I do not have a satisfying answer to those questions, but I do know that we made history, and I do know that the history that our parents and grandparents made on December 6th changed the fate of my family. We do not know what sort of echoes November 14th will have, but we must know that it will echo, and others will hear it.



On November 14th, 2023, standing shoulder to shoulder with my fellow American Jews, I partook in history.

TALI PINSKER

What is Stern College All About?

By KAREN BACON

Editor's Note: The following is based on a speech the Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon gave at the Stern College for Women Open House on Sunday, November 12

With your indulgence, I would like to share a few thoughts about a college education generally and how Stern College fits into this picture.

So, what is college supposed to be about? A transition period from adolescence to adulthood? An opportunity to develop an appreciation for disparate ideas at a sophisticated level? The gift of creating a community of lifelong friends? The acquisition of skills necessary to be a contributing member of society? I think all of this, and so much more, was, and should still be true. But if there is a common denominator to all of this, it is that a college education should be about building, not destroying; about dissecting problems to find solutions, and not about demeaning and demonizing. The college experience should be about asking big questions about life: the role of family, the importance of justice, the nature of work, the lessons of history. It should be about helping students face the challenges of the future: poverty, technology,

the environment. College should be about looking outward and inward, confronting our limitations, recognizing our opportunities, guided by the wisdom of the past, the values of our community, and inspired by

Stern College is about looking to the future with optimism. Stern College is about building.

the models of faculty who embrace these goals. It is on this basis that Stern College, a proud member of the Yeshiva University family, stands.

Guided by our biblical values, our students learn about themselves and about the world, in an environment that encourages exploration, not uniformity; that values the voice of the individual and the belief that there are ways to discuss differences of opinion with civility. Stern College is about looking to the future with optimism. Stern College is about building.

How do we do this? Of course, we do this through a dual curriculum and the engagement with sacred texts. We do this by emphasizing that writing well and speaking with authority is the result of prior careful analysis. We do this through courses in political science and psychology, philosophy and history, biology and physics, English and computer science, and the list goes on. The Stern College woman is not narrow in

her education. She has breadth and depth, and as a result she can speak with confidence based on competence.

More than ever, we need leaders who can speak out about things that matter. The SCW

education does that: It speaks to things that matter. And, at the end of the day, our graduates move out into the world, religiously inspired and committed, and prepared for greater and greater success. Whether they become physicians or nurses, lawyers or educators, psychologists or social workers, speech therapists or computer scientists, engineers or journalists, media specialists or executives in the nonprofit world. All of them are inspired mothers, professionals and lay leaders.

If this model speaks to you — the model of an exciting Torah-based education that encourages breadth, engagement, optimism, openness and career development — Stern College is for you, and no other place makes sense.

I end with the words from a popular song that I believe encapsulates the decision you are asked to make. The words are from the song "From Now On:"

"For years and years, I chased their

cheers; the crazy speed of always needing more.

But when I stop and see you here, I remember who all this was for.

And from now on, these eyes will not be blinded by the lights.

And from now on, we will come back home. Home, again!

And we will come back home. Home, again! From now on!"

Am Yisroel Chai!



The education at Stern College for Women speaks to what matters, says Dean Bacon

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

*DON'T FLEE TO YU
Continued from Page 12*

be intimidated. When Israel's enemies converge against her, she must stand up and hold her head high with the greatest zeal, pride, and fervor she can muster.

I recognize that this is a lot of talk from my cushy ivory tower here at YU, and I hope I don't seem insensitive to the plight of students on other campuses. I understand that there are real dangers, that safety comes first and that it can be unimaginably isolating to be surrounded by detractors. I understand that students experience real trauma and that it's essential for us to provide one another with robust and loving support systems. I understand that some individuals

have unique circumstances (unharvested vineyards, unconsummated marriages...) that may make on-campus life impossible at this time. I do not address these students. I respect and support their efforts to take care of themselves, and would not criticize any one person's decision. And nonetheless, I feel it is critical that those of us who are able remain steadfast.

As students, we are not equipped to go to war in the conventional sense; we have no training and belong to no army. Part of the way we contribute is by fighting the culture war waged every day on college campuses. We cannot afford to abandon our universities, allowing them to become strongholds of antisemitic sentiment. It is especially at

times like these when Jewish people must maintain a presence in the places we are least welcome. A friend of mine attending Brown University told me that she bought a dozen Israeli-army-themed sweatshirts and wore a different one every day as an expression of her indomitable solidarity. A friend at Yale sent me pictures of a Jewish student, wrapped in tefillin and an Israeli flag, singing and praying amid a sea of Palestinian flags and anti-Israel posters. This is what it means for students to join the *milchemet mitzvah* we now face. This is what we mean when we say it is forbidden to be intimidated.

Incoming students: if you want to come to YU because you think it's the best place for your emotional, spiritual, and

intellectual development, welcome. I love Yeshiva University, I'm proud to call myself a student here, and I wouldn't discourage you from joining me. If, however, you want to come to YU because you fear discrimination and threats elsewhere, I beg you to reconsider. If Jews flee at every sign of conflict, we perpetuate an internal narrative of ghettoized fearfulness and defeat ourselves before our enemies get the chance. We cannot grant hatred any more victories than it has already won.

Am Yisrael Chai.

Why You Must Register to Vote

By AKIVA GARNER

Acheinu Bnei Yisrael currently find ourselves in perhaps the most precarious situation our people have faced in decades. After the ineffable massacre of over 1,200 innocent people at the hands of Hamas on October 7th, we have seen the unfolding of a war and the perpetuation of an existential threat facing the only sovereign Jewish state in modern history. This threat is most palpable in its physical manifestations, but the acuity of its socio-ideological development across the world — taking the form of mass gatherings of people calling for the ruin of the State of Israel — has begun to take center stage as well.

I presume that an article highlighting that this perilous moment in time is an inflection point in the trajectory of the Jewish people is not necessary. Instead, this article's goal is to highlight and encourage an arena of civic engagement in which we can — and should — collectively do better to facilitate that this inflection point reinforces our trajectory, and not — God forbid — subverts it. This arena is that of voting.

Rambam, in his *Hilchot Melachim* (laws of war) identifies that one of the scenarios which triggers the harrowing reality of a *Milchemet Mitzvah* (an obligatory war) is “*Ezrat Yisrael MeYad Tzar She’ba Aleihem*” (assisting Israel from an enemy which attacks them). Undoubtedly, we find ourselves in the midst of such a description. As developed recently by Rabbi Itamar Rosensweig, what this scenario engenders is Halachic imperatives in the categories of *Hilchot Taanit* (laws of fasts), as well as *Hilchot Melachim*. The category of *Hilchot Taanit* — consisting of intensified *teshuva*, *tefillah*, Torah learning, fasts, etc — given our past and/or current educational institutions, is quite familiar to us. The responsibilities imposed by the category of *Hilchot Melachim* however, are both more amorphous and more foreign.

This discrepancy has naturally led to the response from many of us to be an amplified commitment to our *Hilchot Taanit*

obligations — as it should be; the least appropriate thing to do right now would be to digress from our unwavering, undiluted, and immutable commitment to engagement and belief in the power of *Talmud Torah* and *Tefillah*. The Halacha however did not stop there in its calling upon Man to respond;

that candidates who will best represent your values are elected. At worst, voting in elections is a way to ensure that politicians are aware that your voice is potentially consequential at all; elected officials pay close attention to the demographics of who is registered and who participates in voting.

“If those who participate in moral relativism are likely voters, but we are not, can we expect that our ideals will have political representation? The stakes are clear, we ignore them at our peril.”

our *Hilchot Melachim* obligations beckon. These obligations fall upon every member of the Jewish people, and for those unable to actively serve in combat, these obligations still include the *paradigms* of “arranging battle implements” and “providing (the army with) necessary sustenance.”

While opportunities for engagement in these obligations are many, one that is abundantly clear is the responsibility to register to vote and participate in elections. The practical arguments for voting are clear and simple: at best, it is an opportunity to ensure

They heed large voting blocks even after being elected — they must if they wish to retain their position come next election cycle. Moreover, this point serves as an important counter-argument to the claim that since we are not in election season, there is no point in registering. To anyone thinking this, I reiterate: the willingness of politicians to work on certain projects is heavily impacted by the demographics of registered and likely voters; make sure that you are doing your part to influence that willingness. High voter registration and voter turnout will ineluctably



Ballot box

UNSPLASH

lead to our community's needs being taken more seriously now and in the future.

As for the argument that a single vote will not make a difference, this has long been a misguided conclusion. First, it should be understood clearly that it always takes a group of *individuals* to accomplish anything for which a group of people is needed. If 290,000 individuals decided that they wouldn't be needed for Nov. 14th's pro-Israel rally in D.C., no one would have been at the rally. Secondly, the importance of being a part of a voting block and the opportunity it offers cannot be overstated. We are all responsible for ensuring that the Jewish community's block reaches its maximum strength. Countless other rejections of this argument exist.

The possibility of combatting the societal trend mentioned in the opening paragraph begins with ensuring that our voices are loud and heard, decisive and formidable. If our voices fade to silence then the vacuum of space we once maintained will soon be filled by those who oppose the values so dear to us. If those advocating for a ceasefire are likely voters, but we are not, the political support for Israel may begin to tarry. If those justifying the actions of Hamas are likely voters, but we are not, can we truly defend the comprehensiveness of our commitment to support of Israel? If those who participate in moral relativism are likely voters, but we are not, can we expect that our ideals will have political representation? The stakes are clear, we ignore them at our peril.

We hold a moral and religious obligation to do *all* that we can to elect politicians who will make it their responsibility to, among other things, pass bills ensuring that Israel receives the financial aid and public political backing that it needs to do what it must; that is the least of what we can do to fulfill our obligation of “providing (the army with) necessary sustenance.”

Register to vote now, please do not wait.

The ability to vote has long been an opportunity that has received heavy attention and encouragement from Rabbinic authorities and communal leaders in both America and elsewhere. Among them was R. Moshe Feinstein who, in a celebrated letter, argued that due to both the value of demonstrating *Hakarat Ha-tov* for the United States government, as well as the need to “contribute to the continued security of our community,” voting is a “fundamental obligation.” Furthermore, R. Hershel Schachter maintains that voting is an obligation as part of our responsibility to exercise personal effort (*Hishtadlut*) in affecting positive change. To add to the picture, R. Jeremy Weider has argued that “if you have the opportunity to vote, and don't exercise that opportunity, it's a *Keffiyat Tovah* (rejection of kindness) to the *Ribbono Shel Olam*”.

Despite the apparent unanimity of this sentiment — one echoed by religious and non-religious authorities — in surveying 100 Wilf students, only 62 students were registered to vote. That number, six points below the national average of 68% eligible voters being registered, is not only unsettling but is tantamount to negligent Halachic, civic and moral responsibilities; worst of all, it reflects missed opportunity. Given what is at stake as well as the potential benefits of voting registration — both articulated above — merely matching the national average should not satisfy anyone. More than being 6 points below the national average, we are 38 points below what we should expect of ourselves.

To those who are already registered, thank you. For those who have yet to, I implore you to take the time to register.

B'birkat V'Natatei Shalom B'Aretz, U'shechvatem Vein Machrid

Brandeis

HORNSTEIN JEWISH
PROFESSIONAL
LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

NOW is the time to lead. Will YOU step up?

The Hornstein Jewish Professional
Leadership MA Program
trains change makers

- *MBA, MPP, EdM and MA dual degrees
- *Generous scholarships for ALL
- *Outstanding job offers at graduation

Applications for Fall '24 are now available
Contact us to learn how Hornstein can launch your
career as a successful Jewish professional leader
hornstein@brandeis.edu,
www.brandeis.edu/hornstein



WeWork's Downfall

By MOSHE CRANE

WeWork, hailed as one of the most groundbreaking startups of its time, was once bestowed the prestigious status of a "unicorn" and achieved a staggering valuation of \$47 billion at its peak. Its commitment to revolutionizing the corporate workspace led to comparisons with industry giants like Apple and Microsoft. The vision of WeWork extended beyond traditional office spaces; WeWork sought to create a "physical social network" that seamlessly connected companies.

The initial hype surrounding WeWork attracted prominent investors like SoftBank and followers who believed in its corporate

culture. Investors who believed that one day WeWork would take over every type of space. That everyone's life would one day revolve around WeWork. They have already begun to rent out space for a school.

bankruptcy, leaving investors in the dust and disappointing those who once fervently believed in the vision?

The early signs of WeWork's downward spiral emerged during its attempted IPO

How did a company with such grand ambitions and valuation suddenly find itself filing for bankruptcy, leaving investors in the dust and disappointing those who once fervently believed in the vision?

However, just a few years after this corporate phenomenon burst onto the scene, WeWork declared bankruptcy on November 6. How did a company with such grand ambitions and valuation suddenly find itself filing for

in 2019, when the due diligence process exposed holes in the company's narrative. Far from being revolutionary, WeWork was just another subletting office space firm. Their outrageous claims of being in the tech

industry are what threw off investors to believe they are the next innovation. Co-founder Adam Neumann's management style also sparked widespread skepticism among investors. This skepticism resulted in a series of setbacks, leading to the company's valuation plummeting to \$10 billion and replacing Adam Neumann as CEO. This downward trend was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as demand for co-working spaces dwindled. Although the demand and revenue declined, the rent owed to landlords didn't, and WeWork was operating at a massive loss. The rapid decline in its profitability set the stage for a financial struggle that would characterize the subsequent demise of WeWork's story.

All of this led to \$16 billion dollars in losses by June, and WeWork's filing of Chapter 11 bankruptcy this month. The demise of WeWork prompts a reflection on the factors that led to its fall from grace. At the heart of the issue was the company's rapid and excessive expansion, signing long-term leases that proved unsustainable when the market dynamics shifted. WeWork's vision of creating a "physical social network" was nothing more than a nice idea. The harsh realities of poor decision making and market conditions tore apart the theory. While Adam Neumann's captivating personality caused him to be viewed as a visionary, his lack of managerial competence contributed to the erosion of investor trust. The COVID-19 pandemic served as the catalyst that exposed the vulnerabilities in the company's business model. WeWork's downfall stands as a stark reminder of the delicate balance needed between ambition and financial prudence and will serve as an example for future startups against the twin threats of overextending and underestimating the importance of flexibility in an ever-changing business landscape. The story of WeWork should also stand as a cautionary tale to investors in making decisions based on statistics rather than trusting their gut and believing a fairy tale.



WeWork logo

PIXBAY

FTX Gone South

By JUDAH TROODLER

FTX, a cryptocurrency exchange that faced bankruptcy in November 2022, has initiated legal action against Bybit Fintech, a Dubai-based cryptocurrency exchange, and its affiliated entities in an attempt to reclaim assets totaling \$953 million. This move is part of FTX's broader strategy to recover

withdrew assets from their FTX accounts, leaving many withdrawal requests unfulfilled as the company entered bankruptcy.

The legal complaint also reveals that Mirana, Bybit and affiliated entities received transfers totaling \$953 million from FTX.com and FTX US in the months leading up to the bankruptcy. Of this amount, approximately \$500 million was transferred in the days just before FTX ceased withdrawals

company has been actively exploring avenues to sell assets and repay creditors. Earlier this month, FTX announced its intention to seek court permission to sell assets worth \$744 million, including holdings in Grayscale and Bitwise.

This legal saga adds to FTX's challenges, with the bankruptcy code being invoked to potentially recover payments made in the months leading up to the filing. The lawsuit targets Mirana, Bybit, and affiliated entities and individuals, accusing them of

receiving transfers of digital and fiat assets in the period preceding FTX's collapse. FTX's new management has been vocal about misappropriation of customer funds by the former executives, including founder Sam Bankman-Fried, who was recently found guilty of fraud against FTX customers by a New York jury and awaits sentencing. As FTX navigates this intricate legal landscape, the cryptocurrency community watches closely to see how the proceedings unfold.

Customer deposits amounting to roughly \$9 billion remain unaccounted for, and the company has been actively exploring avenues to sell assets and repay creditors.

funds for creditors following its collapse. The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Wilmington, Delaware, alleges that Bybit's investment arm, Mirana, utilized its VIP connections to exert pressure on FTX employees, expediting the withdrawal process and prioritizing its requests over those of average customers.

According to the court filings made on Nov. 10, FTX contends that Bybit, designated as a VIP customer, not only benefited from concierge support and increased access to FTX employees but also had control over certain FTX assets. This control enabled Bybit to maneuver towards the front of the withdrawal queue, exacerbating delays for other customers. As concerns about FTX's stability mounted, Mirana and its affiliates swiftly

on November 8, 2022. The suit claims that Mirana's VIP connections were leveraged to pressure FTX employees to fulfill withdrawal requests promptly, further diminishing the funds available for non-VIP customers.

In addition to freezing FTX assets held on the Bybit exchange, the lawsuit alleges that Bybit is withholding over \$125 million from FTX until Mirana can withdraw its remaining \$20 million balance from the bankrupt exchange. Bybit has reportedly insisted on this condition, creating a complex situation for FTX in its attempts to recover assets during its restructuring.

FTX, now under new management, has been struggling to recover assets and address the aftermath of its abrupt collapse. Customer deposits amounting to roughly \$9 billion remain unaccounted for, and the



A picture of the word FTX in a black box in front of a red arrow pointed down

ROKAS91 / DEPOSIT PHOTOS

Industry Experts: Navigating Career Exploration in YU for Personalized Growth and Success

By SARAH ROSENFELD

College is a place of discovery for students. It is a stepping stone that connects teenage years to adulthood — a period of curiosity, exploration, and trial and error. However, although this period consists of personal enlightenment, it is also extremely complicated and stress-inducing for students. According to a survey done by Ellucian, 51% of students lack confidence in their professional paths when enrolling in college. 68% of Gen Z and 63% of Millennials, the current and most recent generations in the young adult schooling system, have found selecting a major extremely overwhelming.

When I began my first semester on campus at Sy Syms (I am now in my third semester), my focus was geared towards acclimating to life as a college student. I prioritized excelling in my classes, meeting new people and balancing healthy habits beyond my academic requirements. When I started to consider my career path after my sophomore year, little did I realize I was already behind. Lacking a functional resume, traditional work experience and a realistic vision of career opportunities that matched my skill set and interests, I struggled to identify my first steps. As I began to research different industries, I felt intimidated and besieged. According to my research, not only was I expected to already have a career path in mind, I was also expected to begin making

professional connections and actively pursue an internship for the following summer.

As I tried to rectify my period of uncertainty, I realized the importance of identifying reliable professionals with whom I could

The process of learning about career opportunities does not need to be disorganized and unduly stressful; it should be a time of exploration and personal enlightenment but with structure and ease.

confide in about the process. I consulted with my professors, alumni of Sy Syms, and members of my community to discuss career paths and learn about their experiences. I collected and assembled a list of questions that I would ask each person I spoke to, which in turn further increased my curiosity and professional network. I actively began to seek opportunities that could benefit my career journey including intentional course selection, participating in productive extracurriculars, forming relationships with professors, and overall maximizing the resources I had access to.

When I reflected on my experiences, I acknowledged that the process of learning about career opportunities does not need to be disorganized and unduly stressful; it *should* be a time of exploration and personal enlightenment but with structure and ease. I wanted to ensure future students did not fall into the same initial state of being

overwhelmed that I had experienced.

In light of these developments, my classmate Liorah Yaghoubzar and I decided to create a club at Yeshiva University called Industry Experts. The goal of Industry

Experts is to introduce students to different industries early in their college experiences so they can begin their career exploration in the most efficient and least stressful way. Each event isolates a 'spotlighted industry' varying from accounting, banking, consulting, law and real estate, amongst others.

Our club will invite professionals from these industries to come in and speak to topics like their career journey, obstacles in the workplace, benefits of the job itself and provide perspective on their company culture. By hearing from and connecting with professionals, students can learn whether the industry sparks an interest in them and create connections with speakers. Beyond the potential for career opportunities, Industry Experts also allows students to learn more about different industries from an information-seeking standpoint. Liorah and I expanded this club to reach both campuses, with YU students Yoni Schneider and

Harrison Tassler serving as co-presidents of the Wilf Campus. Now, we are planning our first event and are thrilled to launch Industry Experts.

When it comes to the future, information and preparation is essential. By being exposed to diverse opportunities earlier rather than later students can make conscious and intentional decisions to identify mentors and work towards their desired career paths. College is not a place to be pressured into a one-size-fits-all industry; it is a place to explore and discover. Through Industry Experts, students can maximize their resources and find their unique path, tailored to their strengths and passions.



Industry Experts is a newly founded club at Yeshiva University that will help students with career exploration

Israel's Start-Ups: Navigating Post-Attack Challenges

By DANIEL WEISS

Israel has gained widespread recognition as a hub for innovative ideas and groundbreaking inventions. Prominent among the nation's contributions are successful startups such as Wix, Mobileye and Waze, which have significantly influenced the modern world.

According to TechCrunch, approximately 14% of Israeli citizens are employed in the high-tech sector, with a significant portion working for the country's 9,000 active startups. These workers, largely comprising younger individuals, are typically army reservists, and as such, are more likely to be called up by the IDF. Additionally, it is noteworthy that a substantial 18% of Israel's GDP is derived from the technology industry, underscoring the nation's concentration and

reliance on the tech and start-up ecosystem.

Following the devastating attacks on October 7th, it is unsurprising that a mobilization effort, involving 10-30% of these workers, is underway to defend our homeland. Among those not currently serving, numerous individuals within the tech world have been dedicating substantial time and effort to volunteer in the collective fight against Hamas.

This significant reduction in human capital has had a profound impact on startups, especially those dependent on a limited workforce for their operations. Noy Leyb and Danielle Eisenberg, co-founders of Bachplace, exemplify this impact. Following the attack, Mr. Leyb was called up to duty, while Ms. Eisenberg took the initiative to fundraise for Israel. The simultaneous absence of both founders has compelled them to temporarily pause business operations.

While not every story is as extreme as Bachplace, many startups are still feeling the pain. According to a survey from the Israel Innovation Authority, 70% of Israeli tech firms and start-ups are facing disruptions in their operations. According to one venture capitalist in Israel, "At least one person in every company has been called up." Losing skilled workers, particularly in the critical early stages of a company, can be a pivotal factor that greatly influences its success and trajectory.

A steadfast constant persists — the unwavering support of the Jewish people for each other.

Another significant aspect is the massive toll these attacks have taken on people's emotional well-being. "People lost relatives and friends, said Isaac Gili, CEO of Shuffl. "You can't just go back and work on stuff, you can't code when someone died."

Due to the country's small size and interconnectedness, many people personally know victims of October 7th. The familiarity with these victims intensifies the emotional struggle, making it nearly impossible for individuals to channel their focus into work amidst the overwhelming grief and profound loss.

The last difficulty facing start-ups that I would like to address is their ability to raise capital. Without the help of 10-30% of their workers, startups have struggled to organize funding from venture capital firms. Lack of cash flow, especially for companies that have not yet generated strong revenue, can lead to financial trouble and potential bankruptcy.

The combination of these factors has posed significant challenges to one of Israel's key economic pillars. While facing these

challenges, a steadfast constant persists — the unwavering support of the Jewish people for each other. Numerous organizations have emerged during this war, actively engaging in initiatives to assist struggling start-ups.

A notable group of entrepreneurs and venture capitalists has captured attention by establishing a collective known as "Iron Nation." The primary objective of this group is to raise \$20 million in funding for early-stage start-ups facing challenges in securing financial support following the October 7th attacks. Driven by a shared vision for Israel's recovery, Iron Nation's efforts serve as a beacon of hope, showcasing the resilience and solidarity within the Jewish community during challenging times.

On the home front, Yeshiva University has also contributed its efforts to assist Israeli start-ups. On October 25th an email was delivered to Sy Syms students, "In partnership with the Israeli trade group Retail Innovation Club, the Sy Syms School of Business and the Shevet Glaubach Center for Career Strategy and Professional Development have teamed up to match the temporary needs of tech start-ups in Israel with available Syms students in order to fill gaps created by employees being called up for military service". Volunteering students are required to commit to a minimum of 5 hours per week for a duration of one month.

Amidst the trials faced by Israeli start-ups in the aftermath of the October 7th attacks, a resilient spirit and unwavering support have emerged as guiding forces. From the establishment of initiatives like Iron Nation to the collaborative efforts of educational institutions like Yeshiva University, the Jewish community stands united in the face of adversity. As Israel navigates the multifaceted challenges posed by terrorists, the ongoing dedication and selfless endeavors showcase a profound determination to overcome obstacles and pave the way for a robust recovery.



A night in Tel Aviv, Israel's start-up capital

UNSPASH

The Internship Shortage: Why Students Are Being Faced With Immense Rejection Before Even Entering the Workforce

By LIORAH YAGHOUBZAR

The summer internship application process is more competitive than ever before. It is hard to believe that a short while ago employers were not only on the hunt to hire employees, they were doing anything they could to simplify the application process. Today, however, students across the world

are dealing with the most difficult and competitive job market in years. These students are not the only job seekers concerned about today's market. Research shows that 60% of Gen Zers are not confident that they will find a role that they are satisfied with in 2023. As students continue to watch the volatile and unpredictable economy with widespread layoffs, it's understandable why Gen Z's confidence in the job market is so low. Students have been forced to increase the volume of their

at candidates on a rolling timeline. Getting your application out early can significantly increase your chances as many positions are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

2. Do your research! Identify and research potential industries that you might be interested in, and then research companies and positions that would be a proper fit for you. Look

beyond the popular firms and programs, and find opportunities with smaller firms or startups that align with your interests. Lastly, make sure to understand and research the company values and role requirements in order to tailor your application to align with the firm.

Students across the world are dealing with the most difficult and competitive job market in years.

3. Stand out! Thousands of students are applying to these applications, causing many applications to just get lost in the mix of applicants. Don't let your application look like another student's in the large mix. Draw attention and speak about your unique skills and background and what you can bring to the company that any other student can't.
4. Network, Network, Network! Make sure to spend a significant amount of time speaking to people at the companies in which you're applying to. Not only will you benefit from learning if the company or position is a good fit for you, but it will also show employers that you are highly interested in the position.

And for those struggling, just know that we students are the future of the job market. Regardless of all this struggle and frustration, one day we will have the power to make systematic changes and ensure that all voices are heard and given a fair chance. The only way to secure our future is to keep on trying and never give up.



The summer internship application process is more competitive than ever before.

ARTISTICOPERATIONS / PIXBAY

are dealing with the most difficult and competitive job market in years.

Summer internships are highly sought-after and rewarding experiences for college students, especially in corporate America. They usually consist of anywhere from 7 to 11 weeks of long workdays, invaluable learning opportunities, team-building exercises and an insider's look into the realities and intricacies of the workforce. For years these internships have served as a direct path for college students into the industry they aspire to join. However, in recent years securing a summer internship has become extremely difficult and often dissuades college students.

I had the opportunity to speak with a number of YU students who, like most college students, have struggled immensely with securing an internship in the current job market. One student told me, "It's the most frustrating and tiring process ever. I've applied to 30+ internships and have only been faced with rejections." Another student I spoke to said, "I'm at the point where I'm just sending out mass applications to any job opening I find. Any job that I'm even remotely interested in, I'm forced to apply to." Students are forced to put their aspirations and interests to the side and settle for whatever specialization will give them the time of day.

"The process is extremely frustrating, you put hours of your time and effort into networking and getting referrals, only to be rejected," said another student.

The current internship market is creating an atmosphere of defeatism in students before their journeys even begin. "Getting rejected time after time makes it extremely difficult to not give up and continue to put in the work," said another.

applications, with an average of 60 applications being sent out per student.

Many companies have been cutting back on their summer internship programs, as the concern for a global recession remains prevalent among employers. For example, Amazon considered reducing their internship program for 2023 by 50%.

According to a Harris Poll conducted by TIME, it was discovered that 52% of applicants with a bachelor's degree complete their interview process without receiving an offer, showing just how competitive the job market is for current college students. This not only poses a problem for students applying to these internships but also, as a direct result of candidates being forced to apply to any program they can regardless of interest or compatibility, the job market becomes even more saturated and employees are faced with thousands of applications to sort through. Employers are forced to turn to softwares in order to sort through the mass amount of applications they receive, causing many qualified students' applications to be rejected before even being seen by an actual employee at the company.

The power dynamic in the job market has clearly shifted and today the future of our students is in the hands of the employers who are forced to reject thousands of qualified applicants creating this cycle of over-rejection and over-application.

Of course, the question arises of how college students can succeed in this highly selective, and at times random, job market that exists today.

1. Don't wait! Many summer internship applications open more than a year in advance, and many look

Collaborative Minds

PSYCHOTHERAPY LLC

Therapy for Teens and Adults

In person and virtual therapy options



We treat teens, college students, and adults with anxiety, depression, trauma, ADHD, Autism and general life stressors.

(201) 252-7689

intake@collaborativeminds.net

121 Cedar Lane, Teaneck NJ 07666

collaborativeminds.net

Using evidence based modalities such as CBT, DBT, IFS, EMDR, ACT, and Group Therapy



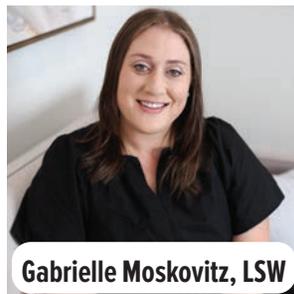
Sara Schreiber, LCSW



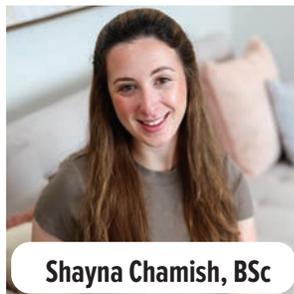
Shira Somerstein, LCSW



Max Kirshblum, LSW



Gabrielle Moskovitz, LSW



Shayna Chamish, BSc



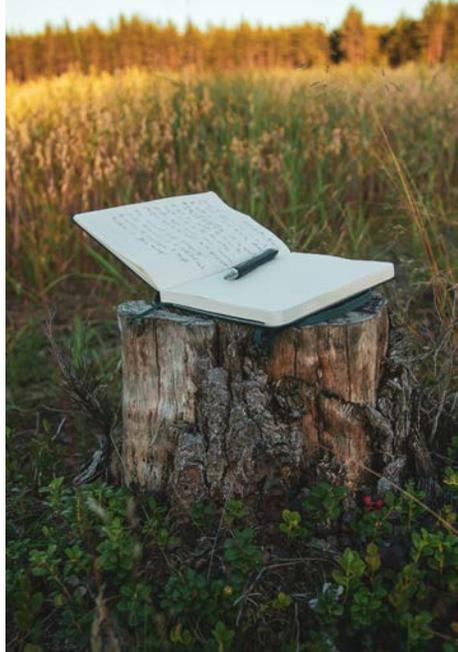
Yasilet Fernandez, BSc

Chassidus & Poetry: Attaching the Mind and Heart Through Verse

By SCHNEUR FRIEDMAN

Do you believe that Hashem exists? Does your conduct - permitted or not - sometimes contradict this belief?

I - and I'll bet many others - answer yes to both these questions. This seeming paradox is not new, having existed about as long as organized religion. The Alter Rebbe - Schneur Zalman of Liadi - sought to address this contradiction in his revelation of the Tanya. One of Tanya's core concepts is that most people, even if they have an earnest intellectual belief in G-d, don't view G-d as real on an experiential, emotional, or visceral level. To better understand this idea, let's step away from formal language in favor of a



In my own life, poetry has been an important method for continuously renewing my connection with G-d

NICOLAS MESSIFET
/ UNSPLASH

mundane example. Suppose your friend eats junk food in excess. They probably know - perhaps better than you - about the food's negative health effects. However, this detached knowledge doesn't necessarily translate into a sincere aversion to un-

- and focus on it to the exclusion of all else, an act known as active Hisbonenus.

The result of both passive and active Hisbonenus isn't a permanent change in one's personality. Rather, the love and fear of G-d it generates merely helps us act with

When I feel inspired by a concept from Tanya, an essay by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, another piece of Torah, or a particular part of tefillah, I try to write a quick poem, roping in related experiences and ideas.

healthy eating. Similarly, rational belief in G-d doesn't always directly translate into sufficient motivation to think, speak, and joyously act according to His will. If such a disconnect between mind and heart exists with vices that our senses can perceive directly, such as junk food, how much more so with G-d, whom we typically cannot perceive directly?

Tanya offers practical guidance in solving this dilemma. In chapter 14 of Tanya the Alter Rebbe proposes that developing a habit of contemplating G-d is the first step in bridging the mind-heart gap: "Furthermore, habitude reigns supreme in any sphere and becomes second nature. Therefore if he accustoms himself to despise evil, it will to some extent become despicable in truth; similarly, when he accustoms himself to gladden his heart in G-d, through reflection of his greatness [...]." If we contemplate G-d constantly as we go about our day, our initially detached belief extends into the realm of emotion. In addition to a more passive, habitual reflection, it is important to dedicate time to deeper contemplation. The Alter Rebbe uses the word Hisbonenus - literally "reflection" - which might be better understood as meditation. Traditionally, Chasidim take a concept - such as an idea from Chasidus or a passage from tefillah

the necessary excitement in the short term. This is why Hisbonenus is a constant endeavor, not a one-and-done change in an individual's psyche. In my own life, poetry has been an important method for continuously renewing my connection with G-d. I've found that the best way to understand and emotionally enliven a concept is to rewrite it in my own way. Poetry allows my mind to generate imagery and comparisons to my personal life, even disregarding lingual conventions in order to express ideas in a unique, intimate manner.

When writing poetry on a subject, one necessarily emphasizes certain details and excludes others. Suppose I describe a bird: its smoky hue, its tucked wings, its resemblance to my roommate. In such a description, I neglect a multitude of characteristics: its talons, how it relates to the tree branch, my mother's opinion on its appearance, the makeup of its macromolecules, etc. The details, both included and excluded, reflect the individual's unique relationship with the subject. In any endeavor, from academic assignments to physical projects, the difference between good and great results is often one's interest in the subject. The contemplation of Hisbonenus is no different; if one can connect their meditation to their personal life via composing a poem, they'll have an

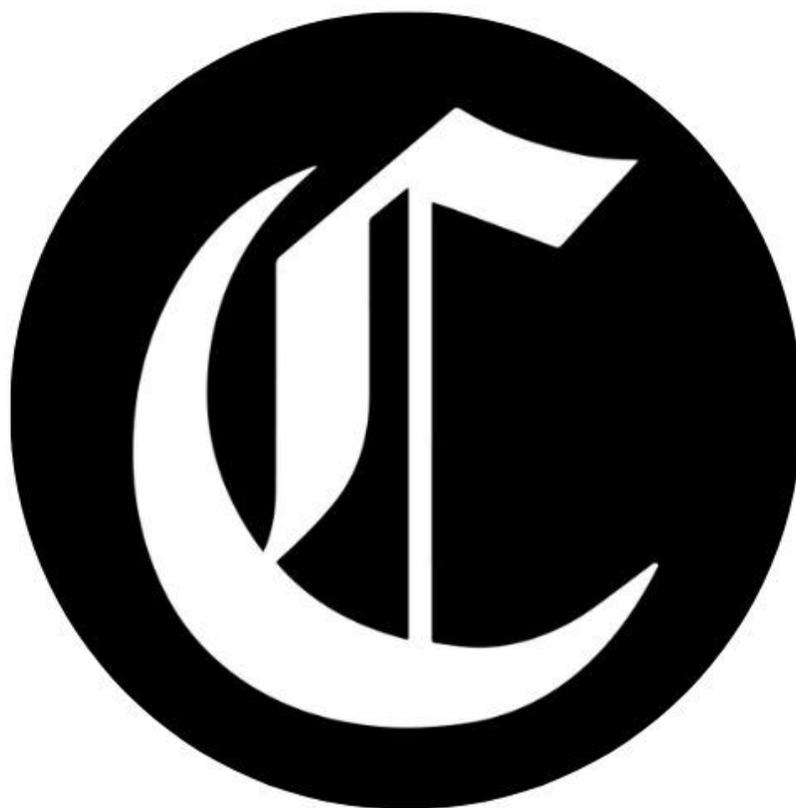
easier time emotionally connecting to G-d. In this sense, poetry helps in the process of Hisbonenus by bringing to bear the whole of one's personality in the contemplation.

When I feel inspired by a concept from Tanya, an essay by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, another piece of Torah, or a particular part of tefillah, I try to write a quick poem, roping in related experiences and ideas. For the time being, I have no intention of sharing them, but nonetheless, I strive to write them such that a reader can understand them, as even simulating writing for an audience makes my poetry more precise. I then use my poetry as an aid in traditional active Hisbonenus. By recalling the poem, one recalls the emotions and ideas that entered one's mind as they composed it. It's important to note that while the poem serves as a jumping-off point, it shouldn't distract from exploring the original concept - one relating to Hashem. In the best of cases, this develops into a repeating cycle of poetry aiding meditation, which aids poetry.

Poetry isn't a substitute for traditional Hisbonenus but rather an aid I've occasionally found helpful. It may not work for everyone. I wouldn't recommend forcing it if poetry doesn't speak to you. I suspect that people who are already interested in poetry stand to gain the most from this approach, but I could imagine this working for other art forms. One could argue that Niggunim - "Hasidic Melodies" - represents the musical equivalent of the approach described above.

If such an approach interests you, I encourage you to research Hisbonenus further. As with many things, Chabad.org isn't a bad place to start. In regards to practical techniques, I'd recommend Jewish Meditation by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan. At that point, it's up to you to pick up a sefer such as Tanya or Likkutei Sichos in one hand and a pen in the other. I wish everyone hatzlacha in their journey, connecting their mind and heart and living a rich, meaningful religious life.

ADVERTISE WITH THE COMMENTATOR



PRINT & WEBSITE SPACE AVAILABLE

ADS@YUCOMMENTATOR.ORG

Soviet Rock and American Dreams

By RIVKA KRAUSE

As an avid reader, I am far too familiar with the experience of entering into a reading slump — one of those weeks or months in which no book can cut it and nothing is interesting. Recently I discovered a new phenomenon: a music-listening slump. Luckily, an antidote arose, but it came from a surprising source: Soviet rock music.

Under the rule of the Communist Party, all art and culture were subject to extreme censorship. As the Soviet government knew, art has the power to disrupt political constructs and undermine conventional power structures. However, despite their attempts — disrupting Western radio broadcasts and confiscating prohibited writings — to limit exposure to capitalist culture, Western music, style and movies snuck in through the Iron Curtain. Slowly, contraband inspired a generation of underground Soviet artists who began forging a new sound. Like all things illicit, their music slowly spread through bootleg recordings known as *magnitizdat*.

The secret dissemination of foreign music continued until the 1980s, when the government began to liberalize. In 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev rose to power, rock music was no longer banned. As the leader of the Communist Party, Gorbachev began to reform the economy and culture of the

USSR through a series of policies known as *perestroika* (Russian for “reconstruction”) and *glasnost* (Russian for “openness” or “transparency”). At that point, rock music became more prevalent in popular culture. After the Chernobyl disaster, artists staged a massive benefit concert in 1986 in order to raise funds for disaster relief. While not

was aware that his generation was standing upon a precipice. The lyrics describe a city that has been cycling through destruction and rebirth for 2000 years, a city whose sky is blocked by clouds and whose residents are warmed by intermittent rays of sun. Tsoi wrote and performed this song in the dying days of the Soviet Union, and I cannot help

With Tsoi’s low and powerful voice in my ear, I imagine my mother when she was my age. In my mind, I see us on a split screen: she is walking through the streets of Minsk, and I, Manhattan.

officially sanctioned, Western press and ambassadors were invited.

One band from that era, Kino — derived from the Russian word for movie — struck me with their maudlin and simple sound. Kino was formed in Saint Petersburg in 1981 by Viktor Tsoi, Aleksei Rybin and Oleg Valinsky. They enjoyed widespread popularity throughout the Soviet Union, released six albums and even performed across the Eastern Bloc. Their most famous song, “Zvezda Po Imeni Solntse” (Russian for “A Star Called Sun”), captures the ethos of young Russians in the eighties and has been listened to 22.8 million times on Spotify. The song is mournful and introspective, almost as if Tsoi, the lead vocalist and songwriter,

but hear the lyrics through that lens.

Kino broke up in the summer before the collapse of the USSR due to Tsoi’s death, but their sound still captivates young Russian speakers today. Even 25 years later, Kino racks up close to 800 thousand monthly streams on Spotify.

With Tsoi’s low and powerful voice in my ear, I imagine my mother when she was my age. In my mind, I see us on a split screen: she is walking through the streets of Minsk, and I, Manhattan. We are both young with dark hair, full of hope for the future. We are listening to the same song, but for her the lyrics are in her native tongue, familiar and accessible with an immediacy that I can only long for. For me, the lyrics are in a language

that I understand but speak with difficulty. Listening to Kino, I start to feel nostalgic for an era of history that I did not live through, but that intimately shaped my own life. As a first-generation American, listening to the music of my mother’s young adulthood connects me to a culture that has shaped me. Russian-speaking Jews live in constant tension with our Soviet past, but despite this tension, we experience a degree of affinity for the culture of those years. I know that Belarus was never my home, but I still want to feel connected to my past, and listening to Russian music helps me do so.

At its best, art opens us up to worlds that we would not otherwise experience. When we step outside of the dominant culture that we are rooted in, we can find new avenues of fulfillment. Listening to foreign music does this quite well because we experience the sound of a culture, without fully grasping what it means. When I listen to Kino, I put myself in my mother’s shoes, a girl walking the streets of Belarus, a young Jewish woman coming of age in the Soviet Union. Music lends texture to the past, and as I listen to Tsoi’s voice, I am reminded of the homeland I have never been to. I am also reminded of how lucky I am to call America my homeland. Walking the streets of Manhattan as a young Jewish woman, proud and unafraid, I am living one of my mother’s dreams.



Guitars hanging on a wall



קרן תקווה
TIKVAH

M.A. in Jewish Classical Education

An opportunity for future teachers.

Tikvah is recruiting aspiring and established teachers who want to develop an expansive teaching repertoire and transform their Judaic or General Studies classroom. Our M.A. program will prepare you to equip the rising generation with an understanding of the exceptional place that the Jewish people have held in the human story. With personal mentorship from master teachers, substantial scholarships, and prestigious fellowship and placement opportunities, Tikvah's M.A. program represents our commitment to teachers who are shining a Jewish light in the modern age, transforming one student, one classroom, one day school at a time.

STUDY FROM ANYWHERE

Online seminars & in-person summer intensives

PART TIME OR FULL TIME

Complete in 1-4 years

SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE

Offered by Tikvah and our partner, the University of Dallas

FELLOWSHIP & PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

In Jewish day schools and yeshivas

PRIORITY DEADLINE

January 31, 2024

www.jewishclassicaleducation.org