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Rabbi Moshe Kahn, Long-Time Rebbe at Stern College for Women, Passes Away at 71

By RIVKA BENNUN

Rabbi Moshe Kahn, a long-time Judaic Studies faculty member at Stern College for Women (SCW) who taught Gemara and Halacha to thousands of women over forty years of teaching, passed away on Wednesday. He was 71.

Rabbi Kahn's funeral was held Thursday at Gutterman and Musicant Jewish Funeral Directors in Hackensack, NJ. He was buried at the Cedar Park Cemetery in Paramus.

Born on Feb. 16, 1951, Rabbi Kahn attended Yeshiva of Central Queens for high school, and then Yeshiva College (YC) from 1968–1972. He studied under Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik for many years, receiving *semicha* at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) in 1975 and *Yadin Yadin* in 1979. He was also a close student of Rabbi Yerucham Gorelick, who served as a *rosh yeshiva* at RIETS for 40 years.

Rabbi Kahn was recruited to teach in YU by Rabbi Moshe Besdin, the founding director of the James Striar School of General Jewish Studies (JSS), and subsequently taught Gemara and Halacha in JSS for 11 years.

In 1983, Rabbi Kahn joined the Judaic Studies faculty at SCW, and for nearly 40 years, he taught Advanced and Intermediate Talmud to undergraduate students, primarily teaching *Nashim* and *Nezikin*. He also taught several Halacha courses at SCW,

including "Hilchot Shabbat," "Hilchot Berachot" and "Women and Jewish Law."

"For all intents and purposes, Rav Kahn was the Stern College *rosh yeshiva*," Associate Dean of Torah Studies Shoshana Schechter told The Commentator. "He could've been a YU *rosh yeshiva* ... but he wanted to teach women. Probably every woman who learned Gemara in America in Orthodox circles learned with Rav Kahn."

Schechter added that he was also a "pioneer in women's Halacha learning," and that "if he taught thousands of women Gemara, he taught tens of thousands of women Halacha."

When the Graduate Program for Advanced Talmudic Study (GPATS) was founded in 2000, Rabbi Kahn was hired to teach Gemara for morning seder. Currently, GPATS contains two morning seder tracks, one for Gemara and one for Tanach. Within the Gemara track, Rabbi Kahn taught one shiur, while Rabbi David Nachbar continues to teach the other.

"Learning and working with Rav Kahn in Stern and GPATS has been one of the greatest privileges of my life," GPATS Director and Judaic Studies faculty member Nechama Price told The Commentator.

In addition to his work in both the undergraduate and graduate programs at YU, Rabbi Kahn taught at the Drisha Institute for Jewish Education for over thirty years, beginning in 1980. He was a core faculty member of the Scholar's Circle, a three-year program for post-collegiate advanced

Talmud and Halacha study, and taught at Drisha until 2013.

"[Rabbi Kahn's] teaching of Torah, primarily [but] not only to women, was one out of a commitment and love of Torah, in a belief that Torah, in study and practice, affords one an opportunity to live a meaningful religious life," Drisha Founder and Dean Rabbi David Silber said in a eulogy over video. "His goal for his students was to provide them with the tools to be lifelong learners, with a deep engagement with Torah study."

Additionally, Rabbi Kahn was a licensed psychoanalyst and psychotherapist. He held his license from the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis and had a private practice in his hometown of Teaneck, NJ.

Rabbi Kahn was recently diagnosed with lung cancer, and from then on taught all his courses from his home via Zoom. He continued teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses until late October, when, due to worsening health, he had to stop teaching.

"Thank you Rav Kahn, for creating a space for us to learn and creating a world where Talmud Torah for women is accessible and acceptable," Price wrote in a eulogy. "The next generation of women will not have the absolute privilege that we have had, to be in your classroom, they will learn from your students and your students' students and your Torah will live on forever. Thank you Rebbe."

Rabbi Kahn is survived by his wife Chana, three children and multiple grandchildren.



Rabbi Moshe Kahn at the GPATS graduation ceremony in May

Rabbi Ari Rockoff Appointed as David Mitzner Community Dean for Values and Leadership

By HANNAH POLLAK

This article was originally published Jan. 2

Rabbi Ari Rockoff (SSSB '97, RIETS and Azrieli '01) was appointed the first David Mitzner Community Dean for Values and Leadership this November.

Rockoff was contacted by the university in its search for a candidate and will work with undergraduate and graduate students in leadership programs, oversee existing and future educational and Jewish projects within YU and the wider Jewish community and advance YU's values campaign.

The Office of Values and Leadership, according to its website, aims to "serve[s] the entire University, our alumni, and the broader Jewish community promoting Yeshiva University's Five Torot, its core values and the writings of Rabbi Sacks."

Since Rockoff's appointment in November, he has been taking a "listening and learning tour" to explore more opportunities for students to be involved

in communal projects, he told The Commentator. He said he plans to continue the tour during the spring.

The position itself was created by YU President Ari Berman; Rabbi Menachem Penner, the Max and Marion Grill Dean of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and Erica Brown, vice provost for values and leadership and director of the Sacks-Herstein Center, Rockoff told The Commentator.

Rockoff worked at YU between 2000 and 2014, beginning as a coordinator at the Max Stern Division of Communal Services, then as director of the Department of Community Partnership at the Center for the Jewish Future, before being promoted to associate dean of institutional advancement at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. Since 2014, Rockoff has served as executive vice president of the Mizrahi Zionists of America (RZA) and as a senior director of leadership development and strategic

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WYUR, YU's Student-Run Radio Station, Restarts as Podcast Recording Studio

By DOV PFEIFFER

This article was originally published Jan. 20

WYUR, a student-run Yeshiva University radio station that had been defunct since 2019, restarted this November in the form of a podcast recording studio.

The effort to restart WYUR has primarily been the project of Yitzhak Graff (YC '24) who, with the approval of Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) and Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC), two undergraduate student councils, along with some assistance from Office of Student Life (OSL) Director Jonathan Schwab towards locating necessary room keys, has restarted the platform, gaining access to the WYUR studio and its equipment on the third floor of Schottenstein.

Since restarting WYUR, Graff has been recording podcasts using its equipment, purchased when the station was last active in Spring 2019. WYUR's podcasts are being hosted through Anchor, and are available

on Spotify. Graff hopes to expand to other listing platforms in the future.

"Audio media is an incredibly effective

"Audio media is an incredibly effective and useful tool for people to have access to, to expand students' horizons beyond just written media, which is what's available now."

Yitzhak Graff (YC '24)

and useful tool for people to have access to, to expand students' horizons beyond just written media, which is what's available now," Graff shared with The Commentator. "The equipment already exists in the

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Moshe Emet Ve'Torato Emet: Reflections on the Loss of my Rebbe, Rav Moshe Kahn zt"l

By RIVKA BENNUN

In Pirkei Avot, R. Elazar ben Shamua teaches, "*Morah rabcha kemorah shamayim*" — the reverence for one's teacher should be like the reverence of Heaven. I always had a hard time understanding this Mishna. How can we possibly compare the reverence we feel for a teacher, a mere human being, with the concept of *Yirat Shamayim* [fear of Heaven]?

I could not understand this Mishna until my first day of Rav Kahn's Gemara shiur, which was also my first day of my undergraduate studies at Stern. I don't think I let out a single breath in that first shiur. When Rav Kahn cold-called me, as many had warned me he would, I couldn't utter a word; I simply shook my head and he got the message that I was a terrified first-time student.

I grew slightly more comfortable with speaking up in class as the semester progressed, but by the end of the semester I felt ready to leave. While I thankfully did well on the exams, as a result of endless nights pacing the *beit midrash* and memorizing the Gemaras and Rishonim, I did not feel cut out for the class. I scheduled a meeting with Rav Kahn to speak about the possibility of switching from his Advanced Talmud class, which meets four times a week and includes a seder component, to Intermediate Talmud, which only meets twice a week and moves at a more moderate pace.

I'd never had a one-on-one meeting with Rav Kahn before, and as always prior to an interaction with him, my stomach was full of knots and I was nervous. I simultaneously had so much respect for and fear of my rebbe. I logged onto the Zoom meeting, preparing myself to inform Rav Kahn of my decision to switch classes. I had made up my mind — I was not cut out for Rav Kahn's class.

Rav Kahn logged on, peered at me closely and asked, "How are you, Rivka? How is the shiur going for you?" I began to tell him that while I had learned a lot in the shiur and worked hard, I did not feel like I was at the level of the class. I explained that half of the time I was struggling to comprehend the basic understanding of the material, while the girls around me were debating each others' *sevaras* [complex interpretations of the material]. I told him I felt I should switch to Intermediate for a semester and see how that went instead. Rav Kahn patiently waited for me to finish speaking, then looked at me plainly and said: "Rivka, you're just shy. You just need to ask more questions. I know you have questions during class; ask them! That's why I'm here."

I was a little shocked. I had expected him to advise me on how to go about switching classes, on what my options were and what I could do to ensure I continued learning next semester even if I did not stay in his class. Instead he looked at me and saw me right to my core. I thought I had slipped his notice the whole semester, that he assumed I was quiet in class

because I understood shiur and was simply a quieter student. But he knew, the entire time, that I was just too shy to ask questions. It felt like he had been waiting the whole semester for me to approach him.

Educators and those aspiring to join the field often speak of the dream to have an impact on their students. I believe one of the most effective and direct ways to accomplish this is by making a student feel seen. You might spend an entire semester, or an entire year, or many years, teaching a student. But if you made them feel like someone saw them, like someone peered at them and understood them, you know with certainty you have left an imprint.

This was exactly how I felt following this interaction with Rav Kahn. Perhaps it was the result of forty years of pedagogical practice, or of twelve years of training to become a psychotherapist or a combination of the two, that enabled Rav Kahn to truly see his students. Regardless, my story with Rav Kahn is one of thousands. Over the past few days, women from all corners of the Jewish community have been writing stunning tributes about the impact their rebbe had on them. If this is the first Rav Kahn story you are reading, I highly recommend finding the countless beautiful posts online. A mere editorial does not do justice to our beloved rebbe.

Many have written extensively about Rav Kahn's remarkable *anava*; how he revolutionized Gemara study for women in the United States, and made it accessible when others brushed it aside as unimportant and secondary; how he taught and inspired thousands of women and made them feel like a direct link in our *mesorah*, instead of as if they were peering into the world of Talmud Torah from the outside; how he demanded excellence from his students, and did not go easy on them just because they were women; and how, as a direct result of years of pedagogy, mentorship and a demonstration of pure *ahavat ha'Torah* [love of Torah], hundreds of women joined the world of *chinuch* and took the skills Rav Kahn provided them with into their classroom as his proud *talmidot* [students]. Yet he somehow accomplished all this with the utmost humility.

Rav Kahn never made a fuss of his work. He loved to tell the story of the time he drove his rebbe, Rav Soloveitchik, to the airport. He said that the Rav was someone who did not speak if he didn't need to; the car ride was mostly silent. Rav Kahn timidly asked the Rav if it was permissible to teach women Gemara, to which the Rav responded, "Why not?" From then on, there was no question of what Rav Kahn was going to do. Thus began his life's mission, and he never made a big deal out of it. He went about his work quietly and humbly, doing what he felt was important and his contribution to *Klal Yisrael*.

Occasionally he was challenged by others. He sometimes told us stories about people who would approach

him in bewilderment and ask why he chose to teach women Gemara. He would always respond that he did not understand the question. Rav Kahn had no agenda; he wanted to teach Torah, and he wanted to enable women to have a *kinyan* over Torah, a connection with Torah. External values were not a factor; it did not matter what others thought.

I had the privilege of learning with Rav Kahn for a little over a year before his declining health forced him to stop teaching. There are so many precious stories to share from that year and change. For example, there was the time he wasn't feeling well but was determined to give shiur, and when a girl explained the Tosafot correctly he smiled widely and said, "Ah! You're already making me feel better." Or the first week of classes, when he baked us bread with his breadmaker after telling us about his new hobby he had taken up during COVID. Or the last time I ever saw him when my friend Gaby and I visited him in his home a few weeks before he passed away. I told him we had gotten up to the Rif on the *sugya of Edei Chatima Kartei* and *Edei Mesira Kartei* [the witnesses to the signing/giving over of the document create the transaction], and his eyes widened and he responded, "Wow, it's really amazing, isn't it?"

I gained a treasure trove of skills from Rav Kahn's class. I am now able to learn confidently on my own and understand what I am learning, which was not previously true. But beyond the skills that Rav Kahn taught us, it was the tremendous sense of dedication, *Ahavat Torah* and *Yirat Shamayim* that was conveyed most strongly to me.

This brings me back to the question I originally posed in the beginning of this article. How can we compare the awe of a teacher with the awe of Heaven? Rabbenu Yonah answers that the awe we feel for our *rebbeim* is the foundation of our *Yirat Shamayim*, because a good rebbe instills this value in his students, and teaches them how to love Hashem and His Torah. For me, and for thousands of others, no one embodied this more than Rav Kahn.

There is so much more I could say. So many women older and wiser than me have written profoundly on Rav Kahn and his legacy, and I encourage you to find their writings online and learn more about this special teacher and mentor. I will end by simply stating that I miss my rebbe; the world feels a bit emptier and a bit dimmer without him. I feel a deep sense of gratitude for the time I had with him, and I feel honored to be surrounded by his *talmidot*, some my friends and some my teachers. Together, we will God willing carry forward his light and the light of Torah for the future generations of women. It is the least we can do to honor his memory.

Yehi Zichro Baruch. May his memory be a blessing.

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For 88 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.

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Wilf Campus Student Councils Launch Bikkur Cholim Brigade to Deliver Relief Bags to Ill Students

By **ANDY KATZ**

This article was originally published Jan. 6

Yeshiva University Wilf Campus undergraduate student councils launched the Bikkur Cholim Brigade (BCB) this November, which will allow students to request care packages for students who are sick.

Students who are ill, or their friends, can request a bag by scanning QR codes on flyers around campus, by emailing bcb@yu.edu, or through BCB's website. Each care package, packed by students, will contain Gatorade,

tissues, a Kind bar, cough drops and health information.

BCB can also deliver cafeteria and restaurant meals to students and gift baskets from Oh Nuts, a confectionary store with locations in Boro Park, Cedarhurst, Flatbush and Monsey. The program is also available to students off campus as well.

Rabbi Hershel Hartz, program administrator of Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS), thought of the idea this summer, and handed the project, which aims to show students that YU cares about them, to Ari Rosenthal (YC '23) and Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) Vice President of Chesed

Yedidya Schechter (YC '24).

"The goal," Hartz told The Commentator, "is to show students we care about them in times of need. This really reflects our Torah values as an institution — we are not just a university with classes where everyone does

"The goal is to show students we care about them in times of need."

Rabbi Herchel Hartz, program administrator of Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS)

about class attendance.

During the pandemic, the Office of Student Life (OSL), had a somewhat similar initiative that delivered meals to quarantined students.

Both Rosenthal and Schechter were excited about the initiative and felt that it shows that students are serious about chesed.

YU students participating in the Bikkur Cholim Brigade," Rosenthal told The Commentator, "highlights the fact that our student body is serious about chesed and looks out for the best interest of fellow talmidim. I am grateful to be part of such a campus community.

"This is a great initiative," Schechter shared with The Commentator, "as it shows that others, students and faculty, care if there are those who aren't feeling well, and want to do their best to help them. People should feel cared for.

"Why should being aware that people are sick and helping out stop after Covid?"

The breakdown of the cost of each bag is as follows: \$0.20 for the bag, \$0.50 for a Gatorade, \$0.35 for cough drops, \$0.70 for tissues, \$0.05 for the health information card and \$1.03 for a Kind bar.



A gift basket (illustrative)

UNSPLASH - FREDDIE COLLING

their own thing with no connection to the other. We are a yeshiva that cares deeply about every talmid who goes here.

"Just like any other yeshiva where a masgiach or rebbetzin takes the lead on taking care of sick bochorim, we have the same responsibility to give a 'homey' feel to this institution because our Torah demands it."

BCB is funded by both Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) and SOY, two undergraduate student councils. The funding goes directly to the cost of each bag, assembled by a student volunteer, for a cost of just under five dollars. Each bag also contains a card containing information on Antidote Health, YU's telehealth partner, Hatzalah's contact information and information on what to do

RABBI ROCKOFF

Continued from Front Page

partnerships of the Orthodox Union.

Rockoff will be working with both graduate and undergraduate students.

"Rabbi Rockoff will be working with RIETS," said Brown, "and also ... our Leadership Scholars, our Sacks Scholars in Ethics and Entrepreneurship, and our leadership development initiatives with the Office of Student Life."

Rockoff will also manage pre-existing communal-based projects such as YU Torah, Torah to Go, Kollel Yom Rishon, the Orthodox Forum and the Community Beit Midrash. These initiatives, along with future ones that he will implement, are part of his job's mission to strengthen and develop the

university's current value campaign.

Rockoff told The Commentator that he was honored to work again at YU.

"I feel extremely honored to be back at YU and to work so closely once again with the student body in this capacity!" Rockoff said.

Students were pleased with Rockoff's appointment.

"I'm excited for Rabbi Rockoff to join the Sacks-Herstein Center for Values and Leadership and for him to continue to help guide and teach our Torah values through the lens of leadership," said Yael Sabo (SCW '24), a Sacks-Herstein Leadership scholar.



Rabbi Ari Rockoff

RABBI ARI ROCKOFF

WYUR RESTARTS

Continued from Front Page

possession of student government; I'm just organizing a way to make it usable."

WYUR was founded in 1968, and, from nearly its inception, was available to students on both the Wilf and Beren campuses, primarily broadcasting music, but also a selection of political and comedic talk shows of interest to the student body. WYUR also broadcasted select Yeshiva University athletics games. Broadcasting ceased around the mid-late 90s when, due to age-related equipment failure, the station became unreliable. Broadcasting resumed in 2003 through internet streaming hosted on the now defunct wyur.org and wyur.net, and resumed its previous programming with the exception of athletics games, which were taken over by MacsLive. Since then, WYUR fluctuated between periods of productivity and hiatuses throughout the rest of the 2000s and 2010s, last operating in April 2019.

As of publishing, WYUR has uploaded four podcasts of various lengths on diverse topics, including a podcast exploring the history of the Schottenstein Center and an interview with Danny Kutin (YC '25), the head of the Band Club. Currently, only a select few people are involved in the organization, and roles and shows have yet to be ironed out.

More expansion and specialization are planned for the future. One plan is a show interviewing club leaders about their interests and plans, to be hosted by Rami Levin (SSSB '24), who explained the reasoning behind the idea to The Commentator.

"It's exciting to see other people excited about their clubs," said Levin, "People are really passionate about their hobbies, and it makes for an interesting interview."

"We hope to allow students the freedom to develop their own shows using our recording

equipment," Graff told The Commentator. "We currently have several individuals who are interested in producing shows under this model, and we intend to continue doing outreach in the spring semester."



WYUR restarted this November, since recording four podcasts

UNSPLASH - WILL FRANCIS

Graff has started a WhatsApp chat to raise awareness about WYUR to students, has advertised it at the club fair, through posters and through email, and is planning to expand to social media in the future. He also authored a features article for the YU Observer about the history of WYUR with the aim of raising awareness of the platform's history.

WYUR also retains access to historical equipment, reels and vinyl records, some dating as far back as its founding in 1968, some of which it has since donated to the YU Library archives.

Students Caught Cheating Using AI on Finals; Academic Integrity Policy Updated

By JONATHAN LEVIN

This article was originally published Jan. 5

Multiple students in two Yeshiva College (YC) classes were caught cheating using ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot, on a take-home final exam this December.

The students who cheated were in two back-to-back classes of “Books on Books/Films and Films,” a course taught by Professor of English Paula Geyh on Monday and Wednesday. The cheating, which was detected through AI detector programs used by Geyh, also led to changes in Yeshiva University’s undergraduate integrity policy.

The students who cheated will also be summoned to the undergraduate Academic Integrity Committee, staffed by four faculty members from Stern College for Women (SCW), Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB), Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS) and YC, as Geyh is initiating proceedings. According to YU’s academic integrity policy, intentional cheating carries penalties of lowered grades, failure of an assignment or course, suspension, notations on personal records and expulsion. Multiple deans and faculty members declined to answer The Commentator’s inquires about how many students cheated, saying that it was a personal matter.

Geyh’s take-home exam, worth 30% of students’ final grades, was given to students on Dec. 12 and was due two days later. Students, depending on which class they were in, were told to write a paper describing how they would direct one or two scenes of a movie based on the fairy tales “Prince Amilec” or “Petronella,” including how they would move actors, what kind of shots they would take and what props and sound effects they would use.

On Dec. 18, Geyh told students through email that she had discovered that students had cheated on the exam, although she didn’t tell students how she made that discovery.

Since Geyh was still unsure at the time if she had caught every student who had submitted work written by ChatGPT, she

told students that a new in-person final would be administered on Dec. 21 based on the recommendations of the Academic Integrity Committee, the deans and Provost Selma Botman. Shortly before the final was going to be administered, Geyh told students that it was canceled since she was

ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot released by OpenAI, a firm that specializes in artificial intelligence research, has been the subject of much debate since its release Nov. 30 due to its seeming ability to write passable college papers. The San Francisco-based firm did not respond to

deadlines, it is best to just ask for help. Whether it be help with writing from The Writing Center or a simple due date extension, your instructors and the YU community want to help you succeed, learn and grow the right way.”

According to Wasserman’s email, students caught cheating in the past have been expelled.

“Bad decisions in recent semesters,” Wasserman wrote, “have led the YU-wide Academic Integrity Committee to expel [emphasis Wasserman’s] multiple students from the university, in addition to students whose violations resulted in suspensions, course failings, and other repercussions that can remain for a lifetime.”

Besides Camara, the Academic Integrity Committee is currently staffed by SCW Associate Professor of English Ann Peters, SSSB Professor Marc Spear and Rabbi Natanel Wierderblank from UTS.

The committee was created in the fall of 2019. Previously, each of the undergraduate schools had separate committees tasked with dealing with internal academic integrity violations.

This incident is among the first known cases of students cheating using ChatGPT. Last month, a student at Furman University in South Carolina was caught submitting work written by the chatbot. The NYC Department of Education has since blocked NYC public school students and teachers from accessing the program.

YC’s final exams period began on Dec. 27 and is slated to end Friday. Some professors, like Geyh, administered their final exams on different dates.

Geyh told students in her class that she no longer plans to administer take-home exams.

Editor’s Note: This article was updated on Jan. 6 to reflect that students will be summoned to the undergraduate Academic Integrity Committee and clarified that the students were in two YC classes. A previous version incorrectly stated that the students were already summoned to the committee.

“R’ Moshe Feinstein ז”ל paskened [ruled] that if you get a job based on fraudulent grades, every dollar you make is geneiva. Think about that: Every paycheck is filled with aveiros [sins].”

Noam Wasserman, Dean of the Sy Syms School of Business

“confident” that she was able to identify all the cheaters.

In response to the cheating, Yeshiva University updated its undergraduate academic integrity policy to state that intentional misrepresentation is characterized by using “someone/something else’s language,” updating it from “someone else’s language.” The updated policy also added the word “generator” to its list of examples of intentional misrepresentation.

“The new language makes clear that the use of AI platforms, without acknowledging the source of this content, is a violation of our Academic Integrity Standards,” Karen Bacon, The Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, told The Commentator.

Multiple professors, based on the recommendations of the Academic Integrity Committee, warned students against cheating using ChatGPT on the finals, with some changing aspects of their final exams to prevent cheating using the chatbot.

“The academic integrity committee,” UTS Dean Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky told The Commentator, “provided additional guidance to faculty in advance of finals ... and advised faculty to take additional measures to adapt to the realities of AI and beyond when assigning work and exams.”

Faculty members have also been given access to AI detection software.

The Commentator’s requests for comment.

The cheating engendered many reactions from faculty members, with some expressing shock and others warning that cheating leads to “geneiva [theft].”

“I’m especially shocked that religious Jews would engage in this kind of behavior,” Associate Dean for Student Affairs Fred Sugarman told The Commentator.

“The first question we will be asked in Shamayim [heaven],” SSSB Dean Noam Wasserman told SSSB students in a pre-finals email on Dec. 22, “is whether we acted with integrity in all our dealings (Shabbos 31a). By doing so, we are creating a Kiddush Hashem in everything we do.

“On the flip side,” Wasserman continued, “R’ Moshe Feinstein ז”ל paskened [ruled] that if you get a job based on fraudulent grades, every dollar you make is geneiva. Think about that: Every paycheck is filled with aveiros [sins]. Kiddush Hashem becomes Chillul Hashem.”

James Camara, an associate professor of chemistry and chair of the Academic Integrity Committee, told The Commentator that the use of AI generators is not just an ethical issue, and encouraged students who are falling behind on schoolwork to seek help.

“This is not just an issue of ethics. It is also an issue of pedagogy and the learning process. Students should know that if they are struggling to complete work or meet

Bar Ilan University Professor Jonathan Rynhold Presents Lecture on Israeli Government

By SRULI FRIEDMAN

This article was originally published Jan. 25

The Bernard Revel School of Jewish Studies and the Center for Israel Studies hosted a lecture by Professor Jonathan Rynhold, head of Bar Ilan University’s Department of Political Studies, on Jan. 3.

The lecture, entitled “More Talmud, Less Democracy? What to Expect from Israel’s New Government,” was sparsely attended in person by students due to ongoing final examinations, but drew nearly 50 attendees over Zoom.

In his lecture, Rynhold discussed the many challenges he sees facing Israel under the new coalition, ranging from Jewish-Arab relations and religious tensions to Haredi education and shifting attitudes towards Israel in the United States among both Jews and non-Jews.

Rynhold also expressed concern about ongoing efforts to reform the Israeli Supreme Court and told The Commentator after the lecture that he is “deeply concerned” about proposed changes.

“I am deeply concerned about [Israel’s] political direction, particularly the attempts to institutionalize measures that would undermine the independence of our judiciary, and therefore make much easier both political and financial corruption,” Rynhold told The Commentator.

Israel’s new government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was sworn in for the sixth time on Dec. 29, has pledged to pass reforms to restrict the powers of the nation’s Supreme Court. The proposed changes would include changing the method by which justices are appointed and allowing the Knesset to override any decision of the court by a majority vote. The proposals have led to significant debate in Israel and sparked large protests against them in the past weeks.

However, despite all of the dangers that he sees in Israel’s political situation, Rynhold still remained hopeful about the future of Israel’s character and culture.

“I am very optimistic about Israel’s creativity, its dynamism as a society, as an economy [and] as a place for creative Jewish culture,” he told The Commentator.

Rynhold received his PhD in

International Relations from the London School of Economics in 1998 and began teaching at Bar Ilan University in 1999 as a lecturer. He has directed the Tel Aviv-based Department of Political Studies since 2021 and has written numerous publications relating to Israeli, American and Middle Eastern politics.



Supreme Court of Israel CHRIS HOARE / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Fiftieth Volume of Encyclopedia Talmudit Dedicated in Honor of Rav Schachter

By YONATAN KURZ

Encyclopedia Talmudit, a Hebrew encyclopedia that alphabetically summarizes *halakhic* topics of the Talmud, released its 50th volume in honor of YU Rosh Yeshiva Rav Hershel Schachter on Jan. 18.

“The encyclopedia brings from the Gemara, from the Yerushalmi, from the poskim, Rishonim, Acharonim, until our present day.”

YU Rosh Yeshiva Rav Hershel Schachter

The 50th volume of the project, which began in 1942, was released at a ceremony at the residence of President Isaac Herzog of Israel.

“The encyclopedia brings from the Gemara, from the *Yerushalmi*, from the *poskim*, *Rishonim*, *Acharonim*, until our present day,” said Rav Schachter in an interview about Encyclopedia Talmudit. “When we encounter a new topic that we

still haven’t learned or heard about, we look at the Encyclopedia ... the entire subject is present before you, with all of the sources.”

Rabbis across the country, including YU Roshei Yeshiva Rabbi Michael Taubes, Rabbi Menachem Genack, Mashgiach Ruchani

Rabbi Yosef Blau and Director of Semikha Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, contributed to the volume in a fund-raising campaign organized by the university which aimed to raise \$40,000 to sponsor its completion.

The Encyclopedia Talmudit was first created as an idea of Rabbi Meir Bar-Ilan in 1942. Its first volume was published in 1947 with Rabbi Yehoshua Hutner serving as director and Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin editor-in-chief. The current director is Rabbi Professor Avraham Steinberg, 1999 recipient of the Israel Prize for original rabbinic literature, who replaced Rav Zalman Nechemiah Goldberg following his passing in 2020. The director works with a team of scholars who write, review and edit the material. The volumes are currently published by Yad HaRav Hertzog, which is based in Jerusalem.

The entire project of the Talmudic Encyclopedia is expected to be completed in 2024.



Rav Schachter learning in Glueck Beis Midrash

ELISHAMA MARMON



CLASS OF 2023

UNDERGRADUATE COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY CHECKLIST

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Consult with your academic advisor or program director to be sure that all of your graduation requirements have been met.
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- STEP 2**
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Visit yu.edu/registrar/graduation for additional information.
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- STEP 5**
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No attire will be distributed at Commencement.
- STEP 6**
Each graduate will receive **6 guest tickets**. If you would like to request additional tickets, a form will be live in the coming weeks.

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Speaking Out the Silence: Revisiting the Klein@9

By DOV PFEIFFER

When I came to YU, I quickly discovered the difficulty of finding a well-paced Shabbat morning *minyan*. The silent spells between sections of *davening* in Glueck sapped my concentration and Morg felt like a mad dash until *mussaf's* end. From my MTA days, I had vague memories of a *minyan* in Klein Beis Midrash. In searching for this lost *minyan*, I brought back old memories of “The Klein@9 Controversy” — the time when a woman gave a *dvar Torah* from the *bimah* — and it is that tale, the story of one of few major controversies President Berman’s administration has seen to conclusion, which I seek to retell.

Toward this end, I reached out to three Klein@9 organizers: board member and Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) IBC representative Samuel Gelman (YC ‘19), board member and SOY Vice President Noah Marlowe (YC ‘19) and co-founder and SOY President Dovid Simpser (SSSB ‘18). Anything they are quoted as saying comes from this correspondence unless explicitly stated as originating in an article from the time.

The Klein@9 service launched in the 2016-17 academic year as a student-led “community run” *minyan*. Marlowe, who joined the board in its second year, shared that the *minyan's* pillars were “(a) student empowerment/leadership, (b) meaningful *tefilla* and (c) community.” He also shared some examples of how this was achieved: “[W]e created opportunities for students to take more active roles — giving a *dvar Torah*



The Klein@9 minyan was a source of community and later controversy

after davening, leading a *chabura* following *kiddush*, being involved in the logistics of the *minyan*, etc.” The weekly pre-*kiddush* announcement, “the *minhag ha-makom* is to introduce yourself to someone you don’t know,” exemplified community building. The Klein@9 also planned non-prayer communal activities, such as a musical *seuda shelishit*.

Included in the Klein@9 regulars were some female participants. As part of determining how they could lend their voice to the *minyan*, a policy dictated “women can’t speak at the *bimah*, but they can definitely give the *chabura*.”

The origin and reasoning for this policy is unclear. The article first mentioning the policy explained that men who felt uncomfortable wouldn’t have had enough time to leave the *minyan* before the speech started. However, when I corresponded with Gelman, he implicitly disputed the accuracy of this claim, saying there was enough time “to give anyone uncomfortable with the idea plenty of time to exit.” In communication, Simpser believed that Rabbi Penner had expressed modesty concerns regarding women speaking from the *bimah* at the original meetings to get the *minyan* off the ground, though he noted that his memory could be faulty.

Nonetheless, several members of the *minyan's* board believed the policy was only temporary. “I was aware that there was an agreement, and we (the *minyan* leadership) wanted to revisit it with the administration,” Marlowe shared. Gelman described thinking that “while it would not be allowed at the start of the *minyan's* tenure, women would eventually be allowed to give *divrei Torah* at the *minyan*.”

From those murky rules, the controversy unfolded quite organically. One week, Marlowe asked Lilly Gelman (SCW ‘19), Sam’s sister, to speak. While Marlowe had intended to inform the administration, who were not aware of the forthcoming policy change, he had not done so yet. Though in the end she didn’t speak that week, based on Marlowe’s request, Sam assumed there was no longer any issue. Thus, one sparsely attended Shabbat Chanukah, when both Marlowe and Simpser were absent, it happened: a woman’s voice was heard from the *bimah*.

“When I asked my sister to give the *dvar Torah* on that particular Shabbat ... no men had agreed to give it ... I was under the impression that we were at the point where it was now allowed,” Gelman said. In sum, it was a miscommunication.

According to Marlowe, “the majority of

students [in the Klein @9] were in favor of women giving *divrei Torah*. It seemed that even from the students who weren’t in favor, it didn’t bother them so much.” Nonetheless, complaints, their origin unclear, were voiced to Rabbi Penner. By the next week, the school policy solidified: women’s voices were banned from the *bimah*.

On Feb. 18, 2018, Lilly Gelman published her account of the situation and its broader implications in her article “The Speech that Led to Silence.” This was followed by a month of administrative silence, silence sharply criticized in Miriam Pearl Klahr’s (SCW ‘17) March 2018 Observer article, which argued that YU’s policy contradicted OU guidelines which allowed women to teach and give *shiurim* when deemed by local leadership as appropriate. She also noted hypocrisy in YU’s promoting itself as empowering female leaders to serve in their communities, while silencing them in the Klein@9.

Five days later, then-Dean of Students Chaim Nissel sent a statement to both student newspapers. In flat contradiction to Klein@9 being student-run, Nissel claimed “Klein@9 has been conceptualized as one of the yeshiva *minyanim*.” In its place, Nissel promised a new community *minyan* where women could speak. The Klein@9 board wasn’t informed of the planning, and was only made aware of the planned new *minyan* the morning of the announcement. Responses came quickly. The Klein@9 board and Wilf student government presidents put out a statement critiquing the administrative response, noting, “We billed ourselves as a ‘Student-run, Undergrad, Community *minyan*,’” and asserted that students must have final say in determining what the *minyan* would look like.

Gelman and Marlowe expressed disappointment in the statement and the administrative radio silence leading up to it. “The announcement of a new student *minyan* — essentially identical to Klein@9 but allowing women to give *divrei Torah* — was a surprise to the *minyan* leadership,” Marlowe shared. “We had hoped that the administration would have approached us to discuss the situation.” Gelman added, “The way it was presented to me by Simpser and Marlowe was that Klein@9 was supposed to be the student-run *minyan*, which made the university announcement and Rabbi Penner’s interference very confusing and upsetting.”

Ultimately, this new *minyan* never panned out. As Marlowe explained, “Klein@9 had momentum, a sense of community and great branding; it didn’t make sense to form

a new *minyan*.” It seems strange the administration never offered to formally recognize Klein@9 as student-run, but that is how this story ends, with the storm slowly stalling into silence.

Although this controversy did not kill the Klein@9, which only shut down with

While I found Shenk Shul to provide a mid-paced minyan, the hole left by the absence of a student-run community minyan like the Klein@9 remains.

COVID, there was a major shift in the aftermath. Gelman shared that the awareness of YU management fundamentally changed the *minyan's* feel: “Rabbi Penner’s decision definitely changed the tone of the *minyan*, as the oversight was now clearly established. It removed the power and agency from the term ‘student-run’ and put into question which community this ‘community-oriented’ *minyan* was really serving.”

And so, I arrive back at my situation in the present day. While I have since found Shenk Shul provides a mid-paced *minyan* to my satisfaction, the hole left by the absence of a student-run community *minyan* like the Klein@9 remains. Although for most, if it summons anything, mention of the Klein@9 primarily reminds of the controversy it’s known for, for me, it also brings to mind a particular image, one I sometimes see when I pace about the ground floor of Muss Hall. I see a couple of tables next to each other, a blue tablecloth on top, decked with iced coffee and pastries. I see a large group of people, and I hear voices talking and laughing. In the corner, crouched under the cover of a great red door, I see myself, younger and more naïve, enthralled by the scene. And then it all crashes down, fading into the sound of silence.

Community, Leadership and Jewish Heritage: The YU Mission to Morocco

By RAPHI SINGER

On Jan. 8, as winter break was beginning and finals were coming to an end, I, along with 30 other Yeshiva University students, participated in a week-long leadership mission in Morocco sponsored by the Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herstein Center for Values and Leadership.

We were told that the trip would consist of a myriad of different activities, from volunteer work to interfaith dialogues to touring Jewish holy sites.

After a six-hour flight, our group landed in Casablanca, the first of many stops. Not knowing what to expect, as most of us had never been to a Muslim country before, there were some feelings of discomfort and

confusion. Should the guys on the trip wear our kippahs out? Should the girls look outwardly Jewish?

All of our questions were soon answered as we met with *Mimouna*, a group of Muslim students who educate their peers about the importance of preserving Jewish history and culture in cities and towns with barely any Jews left, specifically in Rabat, Morocco’s capital.

Prior to the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, hundreds of thousands of Jews lived in Morocco, and their roots traced back hundreds of years. In the early 1950s, most of the Moroccan Jewish community left and migrated to Israel, the United States, Canada and France. Today, approximately 2,500 Jews reside in Morocco, primarily in Casablanca and Marrakech. Only one Jew

remains in Rabat.

The message of the first day of the trip seemed to be most relevant throughout our

take on positions of leadership not knowing exactly what your role will entail, but knowing that your service is immensely important.

I believe that our Leadership Mission to Morocco was a success in every way.

entire stay: that the Muslims of Morocco maintained and appreciated a deep sense of connection and appreciation towards their Jewish brothers and sisters.

After our first night in Casablanca, we met the rabbi of the local Jewish community, who lamented the hardships of leading a community with almost no financial resources. He spoke with us about what it meant to be a leader, and how sometimes you have to

This leadership point was made even more clear when the group traveled to Mohammed VI Polytechnic University (UM6P), a newly established Muslim university, located near Marrakech with branches in Rabat and Laayoune. There, we met with fellow students studying law, medicine and pharmacology who were all very eager to

Continued on Page 7

YU MISSION TO MOROCCO*Continued from Page 6*

learn about where we were coming from and our different backgrounds. It was eye-opening to meet with students who were members of a different faith, and lead learning activities, something that none of us had ever done before. Our meeting created a sense of friendship and dialogue, appreciated by both groups, that hopefully helped dispel negative preconceived notions that can result from a lack of interaction with people of other faiths.

The next couple of days consisted of meaningful conversations and learning about Jewish heritage in many Moroccan cities. We traveled to Marrakech and Essaouira, cleaned gravestones that had gotten dirty over time and prayed in shuls that had not been active in nearly a century. We also had the opportunity to hear from Moroccan students who were learning about their heritage while participating in the trip, including Lisa Delouya (SSSB '25), who discovered an ancestral grave in the cemetery in Marrakech and met a distant cousin who was visiting the *Kever* as well. Hearing her story made the trip come to life, as it seemed like we were bringing Morocco's Jewish past back to life.

Our mission to Morocco was also marked with words of inspiration from fellow students and our leaders, including Vice Provost for Values and Leadership Dr. Erica Brown, David Mitzner Community Dean for

Values and Leadership Rabbi Ari Rockoff and Leadership Scholars Senior Program Director Aliza Abrams Konig. Throughout the entirety of the trip, they shared their own formative personal stories and experiences.

"There were so many magical moments on the trip, it's hard to single one out. It may have been when we were all singing in the synagogue in Marrakech after one of our students, Lisa Delouya, saw the name of a distant grandfather on the wall, who helped build the synagogue," Brown shared with The Commentator. "I found myself tearing up at the blend of past, present, and future carried by beautiful music that expressed deep Jewish continuity."

Hearing from these impressive leaders at YU shaped our view of the trip, but we also appreciated hearing everyday participants share their experiences and vulnerabilities, feeling comfortable to open up to a group of over 40 people.

At different times on the trip, each participant was given an opportunity to lead an activity, share a "Morocco Moment," or give a *dvar* Torah. These occasions turned into leadership opportunities for all of the participants as we were now able to use tangible skills to teach, share and give over words of inspiration and encouragement to the group.

I believe that our Leadership Mission to Morocco was a success in every way. We visited holy sites across the country,

strengthening our appreciation for the communities that we come from. We met and interacted with members of a different faith, something that can be quite taboo in the Orthodox world. We volunteered at a foundation that supported Muslim students in their higher education journeys, planting trees and engaging in dialogue with

them. But most importantly, we became one cohesive group, learning, understanding and growing with one another as each day went by.



Students on the trip with volunteers at an outreach center

TOVIT LIPNER

Chanukah and Covenantal Relationships: Rabbi Dweck from the UK Visits Beren Campus

By DOV PFEIFFER

Rabbi Joseph Dweck, senior rabbi of the Spanish and Portuguese Sephardi Community in the United Kingdom, has an extensive internet presence through which he spreads his Torah. In fact, I had listened to many of his lectures before coming to YU, which I enjoyed greatly. I was excited when I saw a flier for his upcoming tour, containing a stop on the Beren Campus on Dec. 14. The shiur itself was uploaded to the Stern Torah Spotify page, for those interested in listening.

Rabbi Dweck's shiur discussed the theme of Israel's covenant with God and its relevance to Chanukah. Within the shiur, Dweck brought up many stories to back up a secondary thread of his speech, the unique connections seen in how Jews live — connections, in Dweck's view, often taken for granted.

Dweck considered the prevalence of



Rabbi Joseph Dweck WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

covenants in Tanakh, from well-known examples such as God's covenant with Avraham (Genesis 15:18) and the covenant by Har Sinai (Exodus 19) to lesser-known covenants, like God's covenant with Pinchas (Numbers 25:12). Dweck noted both the uniqueness of covenants to Judaism as well as the theological question of what it means for an omnipotent God to enter into a covenant. More simply stated, how does an all-powerful God commit to running by rules?

Dweck gave particular focus to the seemingly unearned covenant with Abraham, suggesting that, from a textual perspective, it is as if God fell in love with Abraham for no easily explicable reason, at which point God established a covenant with him. Dweck honed in on the particularist aspect of this choosing: "So *Haqadosh Baruch Hu* is primarily choosing not the philosophy of Avraham, not even the religious sensibility of Avraham, but the man, the human, the being that is Avraham." God then saw in Avraham's descendants a reflection of that same love expressed toward Avraham. In sum, the choice of Judaism was based on a love for Avraham and his family, not out of some sense of his philosophical or moral perspective.

Dweck built from the family nature of this covenant to articulate a view of Judaism as a large, extended family. "The Jewish people, the people of Israel, are not first and foremost a religion, are not first and foremost an ideology, are not first and foremost an ethical and moral society," he said. "We are first and foremost a family, a people, and the covenant is within every one of you, in your person, as it was with our great grandfather." The ethical and ideological aspects of Judaism, Dweck explained, as important as they are, are like an added layer upon the family, but are not themselves the foundation.

Following this, Dweck arrived at what he considered the central theme of Chanukah.

Chanukah was the first time that Jews en masse considered abandoning their identity as Jews to submerge fully in Greek society. Dweck saw the Greeks as the first culture to pose such a question, by, in his understand-

of, Rav Ovadia Yosef, answered a question about Rav Ovadia with humanizing recollections about how he loved to make pickles, would make them for Shabbat and give them to his grandchildren saying that they were

"I thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated speaking to the students and I look forward to more in the future."

Rabbi Joseph Dweck

ing, posing many of the same questions Judaism deals with, while also providing greater hedonistic satisfaction. Dweck described Chanukah as a fight not just for our religion, but our identity.

The victory of Chanukah, short-lived as it was, was one that was fought by people seeking to preserve their identity in the world, one which God then joined into to preserve the covenant, as reflected in the words of *Al haNissim*, that God fought the Maccabees' fight, not that the Maccabees fought God's war.

As such, in the *halakhot* of Chanukah, it is described as "*Ner ish u'Beto*," that, as expressed in the typical Sephardi practice, one can fulfill the commandment of Chanukah lighting even when traveling because the household lights for him. Dweck suggested that the family focus is because the family unit, the foundation of Judaism from the covenant with Avraham onwards, is what led to the victory.

Dweck concluded by summarizing the importance of close family, even where relationships are tense, as well as the extended family composed of all Jewish people, who, despite fundamental disagreements, are all part of the Jewish family, whatever any individual's state of Jewish knowledge may be.

At the very end, Dweck, who studied under, and is married to a granddaughter

"*ma'aseh yaday*," the work of my hands. Similarly, he described Rav Ovadia's love for Arabic music, that he knew every song, and how, when possible, he would spend hours singing *pizmonim* [liturgical poetry] at the Shabbat table.

"I was humbled to see so many of the students attend the shiur and I was also impressed with how seriously they were engaged," Dweck shared with The Commentator. "I also appreciated the thoughtful questions that several asked at the end. I thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated speaking to the students and I look forward to more in the future."

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

(April 18, 2005; Volume 70, Issue 10) — The Papacy of John Paul II: A Jewish View

By **RABBI DR. NORMAN LAMM**

Editor's Note: With the recent passing of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who stepped down in 2013, The Commentator has seen fit to publish Rabbi Lamm's reflections on the pope preceding Benedict, Pope John Paul II, upon his passing in 2005.

We Jews, accustomed since childhood to view the Catholic Church, and especially its Popes, with a jaundiced eye, have happily had to revise our thinking in the past 43 years. And that is not a long time as measured by the history of the Church, and especially by the time frame of Jewish history.

When I was a child, Pius XII was the World War II Pope, and I knew that he hated me and I hated him. His austere mien, unfriendly and domineering, did not much to endear him to non-Catholics. His playing with the Nazis - which some Jews excused because, they said, he had to protect Catholics interests from Nazi retribution - certainly raised serious questions about his underlying anti-Semitism. These feelings were reinforced when, in 1963, Rolf Hochhuth's play, *The Deputy* (which I helped put on Broadway, to the dismay of some of my frightened synagogue members), drew capacity crowds and effectively dramatized Pius' steely indifference to the fate of European Jewry. The blot on his memory will never be ceased.

But Pius XII was only the latest in a long string of Popes - not all, but assuredly too many - who were blatantly anti-Semitic. Any Jewish child who had the least acquaintance with Jewish history identified Catholics with the Inquisition, with the Crusades, and with pogroms. We were persecuted, used, despised. As such, it was not difficult to detest the ecclesiastical leaders of this powerful and antagonistic institution.

Understandably, then, when new winds began to blow through the musty halls of the Vatican, Jews were thrilled, but in their subconscious lingered 2000 years

of bitter memories. The Jewish mind and heart were in conflict - the mind saw the dawn of a new day in the relations between Jews and Catholics, but the heart could not forget the indignities and humiliations that we suffered during the long and often bloody history of the Church.

The great change took place in 1962 under the unforgettable Pope John XXIII when he convened what became known as Vatican II, at which time profound changes were made in Catholic theory and practice. No longer were Catholics permitted to assert the guilt of Jews for the crucifixion, thus banishing deicide from the Church's lexicon concerning Jews. Henceforth, Jews were to be considered "most dear to God." The Church now recognized that the covenant between God and Israel was ongoing, eternal - and not, as in past Catholic thinking, invalidated. And Jews were not to be targeted for conversion.

The next pope, Paul VI, confirmed the teachings of Vatican II. For a number of years, the new ideas percolated slowly, until the recently deceased Pope John Paul II gave them enormous impetus by the force of his own personality. But in practice, there still was a long way to go. A giant, world-wide institution numbering about a billion members and a record going back almost a score of centuries cannot turn around suddenly. A train speeding along at 150 m.p.h. cannot stop on the proverbial dime.

The late Pope, who to such a large extent was responsible for upending the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, enlarged and expanded the Vatican II views on the Jews. His actions concerning Jews were the result of his religious thought - he was an accomplished student of philosophy and theology - and his personal experience as a Polish priest who had many Jewish friends, most of whom were killed in the Shoah. In 1991 he established diplomatic relations with the State of Israel. He publicly expressed contrition (he used the Hebrew word *Teshuvah*) for the sins of leaders of the Church towards Jews for centuries it indulged its anti-Semitism.

He visited the synagogue in Rome - and the fact that it was a Roman synagogue made the act so much more meaningful. He went to the Kotel to pray and toured Yad Vashem. And in his personal will, as we recently learned, he mentioned only two individuals by name - a priest who was his long-time assistant, and Rabbi Toaff, the Chief Rabbi of Rome.

This does not mean that his record was perfect in all respects. His efforts to give saint status to Pius XII are one example of misguided policy. Koheleth's statement that there is no man so perfect that he does only good and no wrong, is as applicable to non-Jews as it is to Jews. We must also remember that in addition to his palpable love for Jews and respect for Judaism, the Pope has responsibility for the welfare of his flock the world over, and that political considerations are always inevitable. I am reminded of the time Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was listening to the lobbying by American Jewish leaders about Israel, and he reminded them, "Gentleman, remember that I am Secretary of State of

the U.S., not Israel." Some of us impatient Jews should always remember that, indeed, the Pope is Catholic.

Yeshiva students have longer memories and more sensitive outlooks than their non-religious contemporaries. We find it hard to ignore two millennia of Catholic persecution of our forebears - and indeed we should not forget. But we are Jews, and we know the meaning of *hakarat hatov*, and Pope John Paul II has proven that he most certainly deserves that gratitude.

I have no hesitation in considering him one of the leading *Hasidei Umot Haolam* who, according to our sacred tradition, are assured a "portion of the World-to-Come." I pray that his successor be no less benevolent towards us and no less friendly to the State of Israel in this world.

Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm is chancellor of Yeshiva University.

The screenshot shows the website 'The Commentator' with the article 'The Papacy of John Paul II: A Jewish View' by Norman Lamm. The article text is visible, including the opening paragraph: 'We Jews, accustomed since childhood to view the Catholic Church, and especially its Popes, with a jaundiced eye, have happily had to revise our thinking in the past 43 years. And that is not a long time as measured by the history of the Church, and especially by the time frame of Jewish history.' The sidebar contains a weather report for New York (HI: 42, LO: 20) and a yellow box with the text: 'In the coming days, Congress is set to raise the cost of student loans by \$15 billion... Can you afford \$6,000 more in college debt? Call 1-800-574-4243 to speak with your congressman and senator, or click here for info.'

The Commentator Archives

THE COMMENTATOR

We Asked, Y(O)U Answered: YU's Hebrew Program

By **FLORA SHEMTOB**

Yeshiva University has always prided itself on having a dual curriculum, including mandatory Hebrew language classes. Before starting at Yeshiva University every student is required to take a Hebrew placement test; students are then placed in a class based on their score. Hebrew classes were, in the past, mostly in person and required students to show up to class twice a week, but as of this past semester, most Hebrew courses were made asynchronous. The Commentator asked students their thoughts on the new Hebrew program.

Dovid Price (SSSB '24)
Finance

"For YU to talk about how they support Israel and fly the Israeli flag 365 days a year requires that they take that responsibility seriously. Part of that responsibility is taking pride in it, which includes teaching Hebrew properly. I fully support Hebrew being a requirement but it has to be done in

a competent fashion. The current model is dysfunctional and it is hard to believe that a university which takes itself seriously isn't embarrassed to have presented such a class as an acceptable option."

"An online Hebrew program is proof that YU does not value a true Hebrew language education."

Gillian Herszage (SSSB '24)

Yitzzy Warren (SSSB '24)
Finance

"I don't want to learn Hebrew. I also don't think there is any program in YU that will ever teach me Hebrew. If I have to take Hebrew, then ideally it would be a class that I can get a decent grade in. Online Hebrew is very easy and I can do all the work and quizzes without any difficulty. I can also just barely pass the final and squeak out a B. That seems fair to me."

Gila Kalman (SCW '24)
Journalism

"There are two things I have to say about the Hebrew program. The first is that those

who take Hebrew and do not cheat are punished with poor grades and second, if the school cannot provide a quality course they should not require it."

Gillian Herszage (SSSB '24)
Marketing

"The standard for Hebrew education in the Modern Orthodox world is extremely low. So many schools have random Israelis who aren't educators teaching students.

Teachers and students alike are often frustrated, and in my experience end up thrown out of class and failing vocabulary quizzes. I believe this is because YU does not value the Hebrew language. The problem with Hebrew starts at the top. YU does not value our Hebrew education, both the university and its students treat it like a requirement, not a learning opportunity. YU doesn't offer a Hebrew major or teach Jewish education majors how to teach Hebrew. Therefore so many schools do not have qualified Hebrew teachers.

"An online Hebrew program is proof that YU does not value a true Hebrew language education. If the leaders of the Modern Orthodox world don't value the Hebrew language, if YU doesn't set the standard, how can the broader community?"

From YU to Aish: The JSS Trip to Israel

By GAVRIEL FACTOR

As we stepped off the airplane, we were all exhausted after the long flight but excited about the next ten days. Soon after, we were on the rooftop of Yeshivat Aish HaTorah, looking down at the holy Kotel. All 15 of us, including many who had never been to Israel before, took in the incredible view of our history with awe, prepared to grow on our spiritual journey in the holy land of Israel.

“Seeing this place in person for the first time,” Max Ruth (YC ‘25), a sophomore who had never been to Israel before, said regarding looking at the Kotel from Aish’s rooftop, “felt so surreal with the knowledge of the significance of that spot. I was able to feel such a deep connection with this holy place.”

During the winter break, the James Striar School of General Jewish Studies (JSS) Associate Director Rabbi Jon Green took 15 students to Israel on an inaugural trip to experience Yeshiva learning and get a taste of what Israel is like. JSS is one of the four Undergraduate Torah Studies programs on Wilf Campus, and is catered towards students who are less familiar with Hebrew language and textual study.

“This JSS trip has been years in the making,” Rabbi Green told *The Commentator*, “and offers the opportunity for young men, many from JSS who didn’t have the opportunity to spend the year learning in Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel, so to give them 10 days in Yeshiva in Eretz Yisroel is an amazing opportunity that they had.”

We were joined by a *madrich* [guide] from Aish’s staff who helped to plan and organize this trip. On the trip, we stayed

at Aish HaTorah’s campus in the Old City and learned with their amazing staff. We were given daily seminars by different Aish rabbis, had *chavruta* sessions with older students from the Aish “Beit Midrash” program and participated in Aish discovery seminars. These sessions helped give us a newfound appreciation for the Torah and a personal connection to Judaism.

In addition to this, we experienced the beauty of Israel by visiting places like Tel Aviv, Wadi Qelt and Hebron. As a participant in this trip, I was deeply inspired to

As a participant of this trip I was deeply inspired to grow in my Judaism and I have formed new and deeper friendships with everyone on the trip.

grow in my Judaism and I have formed new and deeper friendships with everyone on the trip.

When the group first met at the airport, many of the students did not know one another, but over the entire trip, especially over the first Shabbat together, we all got the opportunity to bond over activities and learning.

The Kotel served as the highlight of the trip for many students. On Shabbat, we prayed at the Kotel, which was eye-opening for everyone, even for students who had been there before. Aish HaTorah is located right by the Kotel so we were able to see the Kotel during our shiurim, hear the sounds of bar mitzvahs and joyful tour groups beneath us and pray there during the trip. “I was by the Kotel every single day, davening there,” said Ozzie Joseph (SSSB ‘25). “I felt a great sense of connection to Hashem and

it helped me with my own spiritual self and gain a deeper, better connection.

“When I was by the Kotel I experienced a certain tranquility. Despite everyone davening around me, I was able to concentrate and meditate through everyone’s song.”

Ruth was also deeply inspired by the Kotel: “The highlight of the trip for me was going to the Kotel. This was my first trip to Israel and I have been looking forward to going to the Kotel since I was a kid ... After some time at Aish learning about the Kotel, we finally walked through the Kotel plaza

We also went to Hebron and were joined by Rabbi Matt LeVee, a former JSS rebbe, along with Rabbi Benjamin Yudin. We toured the city and visited Yeshivat Shavei Hebron, where we sang a moving *niggun* [tune]. After this, we visited *Me’arat HaMachpela* and prayed a meaningful *Mincha* there. I found it extremely memorable to journey to a place with such significance in our history.

Ultimately, students found the trip extremely uplifting and were motivated to continue their Jewish learning outside of Israel. The Aish rabbis were deeply inspiring and motivational. We were all motivated to grow in our Torah learning and in our *midot*.

“I was with the JSS students and all of them had the same growth-oriented mindset,” Joseph said. “Being in an area with other like-minded people creates an environment for me to grow and helps us all to accomplish new heights.” Additionally, spending time with YU rabbis in Israel outside of the classroom helped students to form connections and displays the care that YU staff has for its students.

“This trip helped the students grow and skyrocket to incredible heights of Torah growth,” Rabbi Green shared. “This, *be’ezrat Hashem*, will continue for those students in JSS who went on the trip and will affect all those in JSS.”

“I was so fortunate to have been on this trip and deepen my connection with Hashem,” Ruth said in conclusion.

and I touched the Kotel for the first time. I instantly felt a bond with Hashem and took some time just to stand there. I had waited for this moment since I was a kid.”

Additionally, for Shabbat dinner, we were hosted by Professor Ari Wasserman and afterward had an *oneg* with JSS Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Yonasan Shippel in Mamiya. It was very special to spend time with YU staff and our rabbis outside of the classroom.

We also went to Tel Aviv with Rabbi MZ Dubov, a teacher at Aish HaTorah, where we heard from Rabbi Eitiel Goldwicht, the director of Aish Israel in Tel Aviv. He taught us about leadership and how to live meaningful, successful lives and led us through an exercise of defining what success means to each one of us. This leadership experience helped us think realistically about our lives going forward.



The JSS group in Hebron

BRANDON FISHER

Unpack With YUPAC: From the Board: Why YUPAC?

By THE YUPAC BOARD

As global antisemitism rises, it seems that only in Israel can Jews feel safe and at home. The record-breaking number of reports of antisemitic incidents, many of them occurring in the hearts of Jewish communities where we once felt safe, is enough to make anyone feel uneasy. The question is what we ought to do about it: What are concrete steps that we can take to be better educated on the issues facing American and Israeli Jewry and to have a real impact on it?

The first thing that we must do is to understand the scope of the issue. Jewish students in secular colleges have reported facing verbal harassment from fellow students, hostility from professors and encountering significant amounts of anti-Israel rhetoric on their campuses. For example, over 90 institutions hosted a so called "Israeli Apartheid Week" in 2022, in which the Jewish state's actions are compared to those of apartheid South Africa,

a comparison which is obviously absurd. The attacks on Jews and Israel are real and prominent.

However, the safety of the Jewish and Zionist values of the administration and student body of Yeshiva University's "bubble" can lead YU students to forget about the hatred Jews and Israel face on an everyday basis across the country and the world. It's easy, in YU, to become tepid and

If we in YU don't take this important mission upon ourselves, who will?

unenthusiastic about our support for Israel, since it can seem like it and its promise of a Jewish homeland are here to stay and are very broadly accepted.

The unfortunate truth is that to keep Israel, we must be able and willing to fight for it every day. We must constantly remind ourselves and the people around us why Israel is necessary for Jewish survival,

and fight against the negative Jewish influence. The survival of the Jewish state is reliant on both our resilience and support as Jewish people and the political aid of other world powers, mainly the United States.

This is why we think that YUPAC, The Yeshiva University Political Action Club, is so important to have at YU, in the very place where some people might think that a club supporting Israel would be the least necessary. YUPAC provides students on campus an opportunity to learn about the sometimes confusing political ties between the US and Israel, and educates students on how to actively combat antisemitism through creating ties with political figures and learning about the intricacies of governmental affairs between Israel and other prominent countries by hearing from speakers and lobbying Congress directly.

Despite the daily grind of classes and schoolwork, it is necessary for YU students, although they are currently immersed in a pro-Israel environment, to have exposure to prominent thought leaders, politicians and news about Israel, American Jewry,

and the relationship between the two countries.

Similarly, be it through YUPAC's daily "News for the Jews" WhatsApp group or Unpack with YUPAC articles like this one, becoming educated on these issues, even if only a little, is critical to our community continuing to actively support Israel and fight antisemitism. If we in YU don't take this important mission upon ourselves, who will?

We hope you'll join us in this critical endeavor.



Unpack With YUPAC: The Story of Jonas Phillips and Our Role as Jewish Citizens and American Jews

By ALLIE ORGEN

In 1750, a German Jew named Jonas Phillips moved to the colony of New York to escape pogroms and rising antisemitism in Europe. Phillips was very poor upon his arrival; he was able to enter the Colonies as an indentured servant to another American Jew. At that time, the promise of America was his driving and motivating factor, but he could never imagine the success that he would ultimately find there.

Upon working off his debts, he moved to New York. He was an active Patriot in the 1770s and a soldier in the American Revolutionary War. From the founding of America, he was involved both in contemporary society and in American Jewish life.

At the time, America offered rather favorable conditions for the Jews. While Phillip's European brothers were suffering through programs, blood libels and violent acts of antisemitism, Phillips and his family were living a much better life. He was financially stable, his family was safe and he was free to openly practice *halacha* and live publicly as a Jew.

That, however, didn't stop Phillips from demanding more. On September 7, 1787,

ten days before the ratification of the United States Constitution, Phillips wrote a letter to George Washington during the Constitutional Convention to complain about the religious discrimination he was facing,

The story of Jonas Phillips allows us to answer the question; "What does it mean to be both a Jew and an American? How can one be both?"

demanding equal treatment.

At the time of the Constitutional Convention, delegates were required to take an oath to serve as a delegate, swearing that the Old and New Testaments were written through divine inspiration. This oath prohibited Jews from joining the government and serving in the legislature, and violated the Pennsylvania Bill of Rights' promise of religious freedom.

Phillips argues that full freedom of religion does not mean the right to be left alone to practice one's religion, or to not be forced to worship a religion you don't believe in. Rather, it means the freedom to be an actively involved member of society, to take your religion and your values into the public square and to have the same

privileges as all other religious individuals. Phillips did not stay quiet and accept that although America was not perfect, it was better than Europe. He took a stand and demanded that the country live up to

its promise of always striving to be a more perfect union. Phillips' letter ultimately led to the foundation for true religious liberty in America.

The story of Jonas Phillips allows us to answer the question; "What does it mean to be both a Jew and an American? How can one be both?"

Jonas Phillips saw something unique in America. As Modern Orthodox Jews, we don't reject society, we ask to be involved in and engaged in society, on the condition that we recognize our faith also sets us apart. We live by YU's duality of both Torah and Mada. This is what Phillips' legacy demands from us; to be both an American and a Jew, to be involved in the endeavors of American society, but to bring our Jew-

ishness with us.

Dr. Ruth Wisse, a prominent scholar of Jewish history and culture, said, "Modern Orthodox Jews are counted on to combine a commitment to Judaism and citizenship of the first order." Our Jewish values and American citizenship do not exist in separate spheres of our lives, but should rather go hand in hand.

Jonas Phillips had been involved in American politics throughout the Revolutionary War and the establishment of the country, all while maintaining a strong Jewish identity, a strict adherence to halacha and while raising the next generation of Jewish leaders. These lessons still apply to us today a quarter of a millennium later. As American Jews, we all have the power to embrace our citizenship and our Jewish values to make a true difference. Despite the many challenges on the rise, we have the ability to get involved and to promote real, meaningful change. This is not just an opportunity but also a responsibility for each of us to look around at what in the world we can fix, and follow in the footsteps of Jonas Phillips and make a difference in the world.

Unpack With YUPAC: AIPAC Political Leadership Forum Features Prominent Speakers and Focuses on the 2024 Elections

By ELISHAMA MARMON

Over the course of Monday and Tuesday, Jan. 9-10, AIPAC held its Political Leadership Forum in the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC, and featured speeches from many of the most prominent American political leaders.

Compared to AIPAC's past policy conferences, which attracted over 15,000 attendees, this event was small, with only about 1,000 of AIPAC's leaders and donors being invited to attend. The focus of the forum, in contrast to the pre-COVID goal

of directly lobbying Members of Congress to vote for and support pro-Israel policies, was to emphasize the effectiveness of the new direction that AIPAC has gone in since before COVID and encourage AIPAC's strongest supporters to continue to redouble their support for the organization, with the 2024 elections being a commonly-discussed theme.

AIPAC's new focus, in summary, is to work to ensure that pro-Israel politicians are elected to Congress in the first place, rather than prioritizing lobbying them after. This is achieved by supporting candidates via small donations from its new PAC

and spending massive amounts of money in tight races through its super PAC, which helped eight of AIPAC's ten candidates in tough races prevail. Between the two, they raised over \$50 million in the 2022 election cycle.

The featured speakers at the forum included nearly all of the most prominent members of both major American political parties. The opening general session featured Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu via video call in his first address to a foreign audience since his recent reclamation of the Israeli Premiership. He spoke about the threat of a nuclear Iran, the

importance of the existence and expansion of the Abraham Accords, the importance of support for Israel being a bipartisan issue and the cooperation that his government will have with the Biden administration. Additionally, the session featured Admiral James Stravdis, the former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, who discussed the military importance of the relationship, and writer Dan Senor, who spoke about his book about Israel's economic growth.

The next major session featured speeches from Senate Majority and Minor-

Continued on Page 11

Unpack With YUPAC: YUPAC's Plans for the Spring Semester

By **SRULI FRIEDMAN**

The Yeshiva University Political Action Club (YUPAC), has hundreds of members and a mission to promote the America-Israel relationship through advocacy and education. It primarily achieves this goal by hosting speeches and engaging prominent political figures in dialogue with students. However, YUPAC has recently begun to simultaneously expand its purview and means of raising political awareness among the student body.

YUPAC had its most eventful semester in its history in Fall 2022. From the introduction of this very section of The Commentator to the launch of the new "News for the Jews" Whatsapp group, not to mention sponsoring and cosponsoring events with noted foreign policy analysts, diplomats and senators, YUPAC has spent the last few months providing students with many new and unique political resources and experiences.

This spring semester, YUPAC plans to continue to expand its offerings to the YU student body. These include the Washington lobbying trip's long-anticipated return in March, an expansion of the "News for the Jews" and "Unpack with YUPAC" WhatsApp chats, and a Shabbaton tentatively scheduled for late February. Here's a glimpse of some of the plans for next semester:

Washington Lobbying Trip

Undoubtedly, the highlight of YUPAC's plans for this semester is the lobbying trip to Washington DC on Wednesday, March 22 — the first since 2019. Attendees will

meet with members of Congress to advocate for strengthening the US-Israel relationship, fighting antisemitism and other issues that matter to American Jewry. Students will hear from high-profile politicians and members of AIPAC, as well as tour Capitol Hill. Buses will leave from both campuses early in the morning to DC and return later that night after a packed

YUPAC is gearing up for one of the most exciting, action-packed semesters in its history and you can be a part of it.

day. Spots for the trip are limited, so sign up as fast as possible to have the best chance of being invited (applications are due Feb. 8). Those accepted will attend a training session with AIPAC's Leadership Development Director on Feb. 21. This full-day event including a trip to DC and meals will have a small cost.

News for the Jews & Unpack With YUPAC

Are you Jewish? Do you like news? Regardless of the answer to either of the two questions, you should probably join the "News for the Jews" Whatsapp group, where your phone receives news updates about all things Jewish. From Israeli politics to worldwide anti-semitism, you'll regularly receive links to the hottest stories as well as daily news briefs brought to you by YU students. Besides news, there's also this very section of The Commentator, Unpack with YUPAC, in which students can

contribute insightful commentary on various topics of concern to American Jewish citizens. Make sure to check YUPAC's recently launched website for these articles, as well as many helpful links, announcements and information.

YUPAC Shabbaton

YUPAC is in the midst of organizing a Shabbaton in late February on Beren, which will serve as an excellent opportunity to spend shabbos with your fellow politically-minded students. You will also be able to attend exclusive speeches by several current members of Congress from here in

NYC. It will also feature a joint discussion with a panel of YUPAC leaders regarding topics pertinent to the club, as well as other events that have yet to be announced. Be sure to sign up as soon as you are able, as spots will fill up fast.

YUPAC is gearing up for one of the most exciting, action-packed semesters in its history and you can be a part of it. If any of these events or initiatives strikes your fancy, please join the News for the Jews and YUPAC Updates Whatsapp groups. We can't wait to see you there!



YUPAC's event flyers from fall semester

YUPAC

AIPAC FORUM SPEAKERS

Continued from Page 10

ity Leaders Chuck Schumer and Mitch McConnell, respectively, as well as House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries and former Majority Leader Eric Cantor. All four spoke about their support for the U.S.-Israel relationship, the importance of ensuring that it remains bipartisan and their commitment as Leaders of their parties to ensure that the support of their parties was with Israel.

The featured speakers at the forum included nearly all of the most prominent members of both major American political parties.

That evening featured New Jersey Senator Robert Menendez, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who spoke about the work he does in that role. Another fascinating discussion was with Yossi Cohen, the former director of the Mossad, who spoke about the importance of American support for Israel in its various military operations. Last was Dr. Einat Wilf, a former member of the Israeli Knesset and the author of "We Should All Be Zionists," who discussed the theme of her book.

After that, there was a reception honoring the 118th Congress, in which the Forum attendees had the opportunity to meet and mingle with dozens of Members of Congress who came after a long day of voting to discuss the issues of Israel, antisemitism and whatever else was on people's minds.

The next day featured several different breakfasts broken up by region of the U.S., with various prominent Members of Congress speaking about their endeavors and ideas about the U.S.-Israel relationship. Following that, there was a general session featuring Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, whose remarks expounding on the military and political relationship between the U.S. and Israel are transcribed online. Other speakers were Senator Susan Collins, Representative Mike McCaul, the chair of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and Jonathan Conricus, the former IDF spokesperson.

After various breakout sessions dis-

cussing certain aspects of Congressional function and foreign policy, the forum ended with two featured speeches. One was from Representative Ritchie Torres, a second-term Congressman from New York who has set himself apart by the principle, strength and eloquence in his defenses of the State of Israel and his fight against antisemitism. The other was the first speech at an event by the newly elected Speaker of the House, Kevin McCarthy. He spoke about the importance of the U.S.-Israel relation and promised to use his power as Speaker to ensure that the relationship was maintained and strengthened.

Nearly 30 student attendees who put

significant work into supporting pro-Israel candidates in tough elections from across the country attended the conference as part of AIPAC's Leadership Development program. Among them were two Yeshiva University students, myself and Jonathan Levin. The program seeks to promote student leadership in the pro-Israel political realm, as well as help students run pro-Israel campus programming, which on many college campuses is in very short supply. In YU it assists the YUPAC board in creating compelling events, including this year's Mission To Washington, which will include an afternoon stop at the AIPAC offices in DC. There were several interesting speakers who addressed only the students, including the director of AIPAC and an Afghan refugee, who, along with the journalist who worked with IsraAID to get her out of Afghanistan, addressed the students and answered their questions on the entire ordeal.

"It was an honor to attend AIPAC's Political Leadership Conference along with other young AIPAC activists across the nation," said Jonathan Levin (YC '24), a YUPAC board member and one of the YU attendees. "AIPAC does amazing work advancing the American-Israeli relationship, bolstering the security of the United States and its ally. The enduring bond of this relationship was at full display at the conference, and I am truly grateful for the opportunity to attend."



Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin addresses the audience at the AIPAC Political Leadership Forum

AIPAC

Why You Should Probably Quit Pre-Med

By MICHAEL SHAVOLIAN

Recently, I listened to a podcast that told the story of Sean Cole. At age 14, Sean Cole entered a new school and found himself among a group of very eccentric classmates. With an honest desire to set himself apart, on the very first day of classes, he began speaking with a British accent. First, it was just for a day. But one day turned into one week and then one month and, unable to turn back, Sean Cole spoke with a British accent for two whole years until switching schools.

Many YU pre-med students are like Sean Cole. They enter college with noble desires. They want to challenge themselves, make their families proud and do something fulfilling, so they sign up for the pre-med route, because it checks all those boxes.

And they don't get found out. Nobody realizes their British accent is fake. They don't get weeded out of Biology. They ace General Chemistry. During the semester they shadow a cardiologist. During summer break they do clinical research at a prestigious hospital. They do their homework before registration and get into the right classes. All their boxes are checked. Their British accent is impeccable. Nobody picks up on it.

But the only person they've fooled is themselves.

They aren't meant to be pre-med. But this is no easy thing for them to realize. The pre-med route demands an intense single-minded focus; it can't handle deviation. It sucks you in almost like quicksand, engaging you in a time-consuming cycle of planning and execution. Between four-year course schedules on Excel, registration,

lab reports and internship applications, pre-med students have little headspace to think about anything else. As a result, they oftentimes completely forgo thinking about divergent career paths.

But dear reader, there are other compounding causes for this myopic vision.

They ace General Chemistry ... But the only person they've fooled is themselves.

The pre-med allure is forceful; the path to becoming a doctor provides so much financial promise, social prestige and certainty of execution (especially for someone as smart as you) that in the process you've ignored the reservations tugging at your sleeve. After all, you're pretty good at this pre-med stuff. So, why give it up? Besides, what else would you do?

I want to tell you about an old friend of mine named Josh Goldstein. I once observed Josh during my General Chemistry final exam. I watched as Josh handed in his exam 30 minutes early and remarked to the professor: "Thanks for a great semester. I don't think I'll be seeing you next semester." I remember wondering in disbelief why this fellow honors student couldn't hack the class. Three long years later, while perusing the YU's News website, his image popped up. The caption read: "YU Grad Josh Goldstein headed to Yale Law." I was astonished. Josh Goldstein showed me that the choice to quit pre-med meant far from failing. It meant choosing to have faith in one's ability to succeed on another path. Josh taught me the vital lesson that you can be radically good at something, but to find that out you must let go of one thing and try something new.

If you're reading this, it might be time

to step back from the checklist hoopla and consider three things. Firstly, consider that you could be really good at a lot of other things and start exploring some of those things. Lao Tse once said that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." Take that one step. Take a class in Syms,

shadow a lawyer, intern at a real estate company or pursue that side hustle you've been thinking about. Most of all realize that if you can get by in pre-med, you can likely do exceptionally well in other fields.

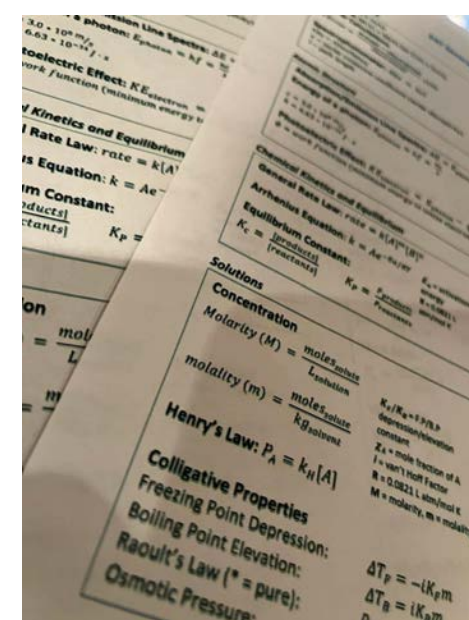
After you've considered that there are, indeed, other paths that you could successfully pursue, face your doubts about becoming a doctor head-on — by now you've probably noticed that your reservations haven't gone away simply because you've ignored them. If you feel awfully uninspired when shadowing a doctor, don't like the sciences or are having trouble with the idea of years of delayed satisfaction, explore these issues now instead of pushing them away because of the anxiety they cause. Remember: everyone gets anxious about their career path at one point or another. It's totally normal and it's better to have it now than 10 years from now. So, take the time to tune into your soul to ensure that you pursue a career that's right for you.

Lastly, more generally speaking, it may be wise to examine the core beliefs you have about careers. Perhaps, it's time to start questioning your belief that you can't support a Jewish family as anything else but a doctor (maybe you can't, I don't know), that you are a failure if you become

a lawyer (maybe you are, ask your Jewish mother) or that you must help people to have a fulfilling career. Only you can answer these questions for yourself.

The good news is that the sooner you face your doubts and address the questions that have been lingering in your mind, the sooner you can go on to live the rest of your life — whether in medicine or in another field.

If you've fallen prey to the sunk costs fallacy, recognize it as such and acknowledge the truism that it's never too late to switch paths to something better. And if pre-med has become your identity, if your dreams have been wrapped up in pre-med packaging, note this: you're not giving up on your dreams, you're just redefining the means to accomplishing them. After all, you've always dreamt of being happy and successful. Pivoting to a different path is simply a way to make that happen.



Is the Arab-Israeli conflict about Settler Colonialism and Apartheid?

By JONATHAN LEVIN

Is the Arab-Israeli conflict about settler colonialism and apartheid?

A few students who protested an event at the CUNY Graduate Center seem to think so.

On Dec. 8, the students, affiliated with CUNY4Palestine and Not in Our Name CUNY, two student organizations in the

City University of New York (CUNY) system, disrupted an event entitled "A Conversation on the Language of the Israeli-Palestine Conflict," chanting that the Arab-Israeli conflict is about "settler colonialism" and "apartheid."

Do these claims hold out?

The first claim, that the conflict is about settler colonialism, is not rooted in fact. Jews have continuously inhabited the land west of the Jordan for over 3,000 thousand

years, and Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews, exiled from the land by invaders, all share common Levantine ancestry — as evidenced by modern genetics — dating back thousands of years.

South Africa.

There is no race-based systemic discrimination in Israel. Neither is their systemic anti-Arab discrimination. Muslim Arabs serve on the Supreme Court and in

That's not to say Israel is a perfect country immune from criticism; the country, like many others, has plenty of issues remaining to be solved. But apartheid is not one of them.



A view of the Mount of Olives, containing a 3,000-year-old Jewish cemetery, from the Hurva Synagogue, which was destroyed by the Jordanians in 1948 and rebuilt in 2010

JONATHAN LEVIN

Additionally, the archaeological record of Jewish settlement west of the Jordan dates back to the 13th century BCE and is subsequently supported by additional archaeological evidence from the ancient and Byzantine periods, from literary sources from the classical era through more recent times and in Jewish texts like Tanach, the Mishnah and Talmud Yerushalmi.

Claiming that Israelis are settler colonialists disregards historical and scientific evidence and is false. Furthermore, that very charge — that Israel is a racist endeavor and Israelis are settler colonialists, is considered antisemitic by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, which is adopted by 39 countries, including the United States. (For the record, the groups that took credit for the disruptions oppose IHRA, likely to avoid implicating themselves)

As for the apartheid claim against Israel: There is a definition for apartheid: Systemic segregation and discrimination based on race, as practiced in 20th-century

the Knesset. Ethiopian Jews also serve in the Knesset, as well as in the IDF. Druze — a minority group mostly based in Israel, Lebanon and Syria — hold positions in the political, public and military spheres.

That's not to say Israel is a perfect country immune from criticism; the country, like many others, has plenty of issues remaining to be solved. But apartheid is not one of them. Calling the only country in the Middle East and North Africa and one of three countries in continental Asia (joining South Korea and Mongolia) termed as "free" by Freedom House an apartheid state is detrimental to the global state of democracy, which is backsliding in the face of rising authoritarianism.

The groups that took credit for the disruptions, CUNY4Palestine and Not in Our Name CUNY, have a history of extremism. They oppose IHRA, accuse Israel of genocide, have lauded the work of the antisemitic mapping project, oppose "dialogue" and want to rid CUNY of Zionism.

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It's About to Get Awkward: The Truth About the YU Community

By JOSHUA SHAPIRO

"YU is not a friendly place."

At a recent Yeshiva University (YU) event, a faculty member spoke about the importance of symbiotic relationships between people, at times digressing to discuss the significant need for Orthodox Jews to improve the quality of our conversations. While in the middle of one of these tangents, he suddenly paused and bluntly rebuked the students on a more personal level. "YU is not a friendly place," he said. Despite Jewish precepts, stories and values that encourage friendliness, students at Yeshiva do not actively make an effort to generate a welcoming environment and often remain in previous social circles, according to the faculty member. The administrator mentioned that he has been on too many elevators without anyone greeting him and engaged in too few conversations where people introduced themselves. While we have all heard the critiques of Yeshiva University for its supposed "cold" Shabbat life and intimidating *beit midrash*, this reproach was more resounding for some reason. The thirty students in the room instantly stopped eating their slices of pizza and were left speechless, wondering whether YU is, indeed, an aloof environment.

Every student at that moment, myself included, surely thought of times when he was guilty of these offenses. We all recalled moments when our eyes remained glued to our phones in an elevator, desperately wishing the other person would say nothing.

However, I would not say that the students in attendance, or any students at YU for that matter, are unkind, self-centered or socially unaware, so where does the resistance to extend kindness in these moments emanate from?

The hesitation to act kindly in a given situation can alternatively be characterized as an inability to overcome awkwardness. While everyone acknowledges that writing a thank you letter or paying a *shiva* call is the noble thing to do, the discomfort one feels in the moment or subsequent to the kindness is potentially cringeworthy. C.S. Lewis, in a magnificent chapter about friendship in his book "The Four Loves," describes exactly this phenomenon:

A Friend will, to be sure, prove himself to be also an ally when alliance becomes necessary; will lend or give when we are in need, nurse us in sickness, stand up for us among our enemies, do what he can for our widows and orphans. But such good offices are not the stuff of Friendship. The occasions for them are almost interruptions. They are in one way relevant to it, in another not. Relevant, because you would be a false

friend if you would not do them when the need arose; irrelevant, because the role of benefactor always remains accidental, even a little alien, to that of Friend. It is almost embarrassing ... We are sorry that any gift or loan or night-watching should have been necessary — and now, for heaven's sake, let us forget all about it and go back to the things

condemnation, the claim can also be understood much more positively. The notion that every student is guilty of the supposed "cold" environment at YU is indicative of the fact that there exists a real responsibility for each and every student to create a friendlier community. While at other universities such an imploration might be scoffed at, at Yeshiva

friendliness and courage of many people. Recognizing that it is my first year on campus, many students introduce themselves to me in classes unprompted or go out of their way to ask about my well-being. In fact, the community has a certain reciprocity to it. Instead of simply judging the environment as an outsider, when one actually makes an effort to be friendly and create relationships, the community becomes warmer. More generally, unnuanced judgments about a community which is so diverse and has so many positive aspects to it are both unfair and dishonest, and Yeshiva is no exception to this rule.

This is not to say YU is perfect though. While it may be unreasonable to expect people with their introverted personalities and busy schedules to engage in small talk with every member of the world's biggest college Jewish community, there is always room to improve — to finally learn that classmate's name or sit at a different lunch table every so often. Any frustration I have, though, is actually rooted in an unprecedented expectation for college students: I believe that my university is capable of more. While at other schools unfriendliness is often an unfortunate reality, at Yeshiva University, overcoming the awkwardness to engage in kindness is a responsibility.

The notion that every student is guilty of the supposed "cold" environment at YU is indicative of the fact that there exists a real responsibility for each and every student to create a friendlier community.

we really want to do or talk of together. Even gratitude is no enrichment to this love. The stereotyped "Don't mention it" here expresses what we really feel. (Chapter IV)

Although Lewis is most directly speaking about a relationship between friends, his message can also be applied to how one experiences good deeds in general. The virtuous acts one does to another person are often felt to be odd or unnatural. When we hand someone a thank you letter or get our friend a surprise birthday gift, we cannot help but feel discomfort. We incessantly blush, refuse to make eye contact and subsequently shrug off the deed as "not a big deal." Paradoxically, though, it is exactly these sorts of unnatural actions that mean the most and strengthen the relationships we have in this world.

Aside from Lewis' focus on the action itself being simultaneously benevolent and awkward, kindness is also often brought about in a situation suffused with discomfort. Interjecting to introduce oneself in the midst of a conversation takes courage, but it certainly breaks the awkward eye contact and lack of communication between the two unfamiliar parties.

Moreover, we are also self-conscious of how those around us perceive us in these moments. Careful not to come off as arrogant, virtue signaling or cliché, we shy away from kindness in public. While we may hand a security guard a holiday present in private, it is too awkward to do this in front of a third party.

Although such motivations behind abstaining from acting virtuously in public have some merit to them, it is undoubtedly more beneficial to still perform the good deed. Public benevolence inspires the observer to engage in future kind acts. Additionally, the hesitations we have about "optics" when acting virtuously are almost always overstated, and the observer is most likely to look upon us as benevolent and not arrogant.

While at first glance the administrator's comment about the aloof environment at Yeshiva University seems to be a strong

University the expectations are alive and real. Perhaps it is because we are a Jewish institution, where everyone is intrinsically connected at some level like two unfamiliar Jews at an airport, or maybe it is because we all followed each other on Instagram at some point yet still pretend that we do not know each other. Whatever the reason may be, there is an existing bond and a potential for future connection between every student at YU, and the onus is on each and every one of us to take this initiative.

Do I think YU has a cold environment? Not really. I am often inspired by the



Yeshiva University in cold weather

FOUR SQUARE

CONFLICT
Continued from Page 12

Although Not in Our Name CUNY asserts itself to be Jewish, it has a history of extremist rhetoric that appears to be even more egregious than CUNY4Palestine. The group calls for the effective end of the "illegitimate" state of Israel by demanding Israel "return of all land prior to 1948," accuses Israel of funding international Nazi groups, opposes Jewish groups like Hillel and wants to make Jewish students "unlearn Zionism," which it defines as a 150-year-old ideology inspired by white supremacy, colonialism and ethnic nationalism.

Besides feeding antisemitism, the group has a fundamental lack of understanding of Zionism and Judaism's relationship with

the holy land. The core tenets of Zionism, even if one disagrees with more modern social movements that manifest Zionism, are present in the Torah. This is something Rav Hershel Schachter, Rosh Yeshiva of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (REITS) here at YU, has discussed.

Additionally, of all the mitzvot in the Torah that can be fulfilled today, 37 can only be fulfilled in the biblical land of Israel, including agricultural mitzvot like Shmita and Orlah and the mitzvah of yishuv b'erez yisrael, living in the biblical land of Israel (which I'm sure this group would be shocked to hear exists).

Not in Our Name CUNY's status as being Jewish does not excuse their calls for the destruction of the Third Jewish Commonwealth, just as Jewish heritage did not excuse Assyrian officer Ravshakheh's call for

the destruction of the First Jewish Commonwealth in 701 BCE, and just as it didn't excuse Roman General Tiberius Julius Alexander's role in the destruction of the Second Jewish Commonwealth in 70 CE.

Being born Jewish does not give one the right to justify antisemitism, especially when they lack a basic understanding of Judaism or Jewish history, and instead engage in activity that is antisemitic.

CUNY4Palestine and Not In Our Name CUNY's views, which include kicking off of campus students and university presidents who don't espouse their extremist rhetoric, are antisemitic and unacceptable, especially in an era of rising antisemitism. Such views, as Mayor Adams and President Biden have made clear, are not tolerated in this city and have no place in this country; likewise, it has no place in CUNY.

The writer is a fellow at the Committee for Accuracy in Middle Eastern Reporting and Analysis (CAMERA).

Satmar Shabbaton: Lessons From My Shabbos in Kiryas Joel

By DAVID TANNER

It probably wasn't a good idea to leave Washington Heights to go to Monticello with only two hours before Shabbos. I had missed the last bus to the YUnite Shabbaton, which I had my heart set on attending, and I found myself out of breath and anxiously checking my watch as the hours to Shabbos quickly passed. So, foolishly or not, I called an Uber and was soon on my way. Halfway through my ride, though, the Uber broke down on the side of the highway in upstate NY. The Uber driver was kind enough to call someone else to take me, but by the time the new driver arrived, sunset was approaching. I quickly concluded that I wouldn't make it to the YU Shabbaton in time for Shabbos but after perusing Google Maps realized that I was only minutes away from the Satmar town of Kiryas Joel. I called the Kiryas Joel branch of Chaveirim, the famed Jewish roadside assistance organization, explained my situation and was quickly supplied with an address to tell the taxi driver.

During the short drive there, I was filled with apprehension. I was thankfully fully prepared with my Shabbos clothes but concerned about the evident differences between the locals and myself: Would a clean-shaven, *techeiles*-sporting YU student be received kindly in the insular Satmar world of Kiryas Joel?

I walked into shul earlier than everyone else, since I was *makpid* about davening before *sunset* while the practice of Chassidim is to daven long afterward. When they finally began, davening was slow, but loud and meaningful. As soon as it was over, my host, Reb Shia Kornbli, came over to me and welcomed me. He then went around introducing me to others as follows: "This is a real '*shomer Shabbos*.' He was in a car, and Shabbos was coming, so he said 'Stop!' That's a real *shomer Shabbos*!" Almost everyone I made eye contact with said "Good Shabbos" and "*Shalom aleichem*" and asked where I was from.

Back at Reb Shia's home, his adorable children shyly peeked at me, until one of his sons asked me something in Yiddish

that I didn't understand, but I made out the English word "stuck." I confirmed that I was indeed stuck, and Reb Shia explained to me that he usually hosts someone in my situation every Shabbos. As the meal progressed,

previously encountered and have no negative preconceived notions of YU, creating an opportunity for a relationship of mutual respect and *achdus*.

Allow me to end with a story you may

This is especially true of the Chassidic community; though it is indeed different from ours in many ways, our lack of familiarity with it can lead us to exaggerate the differences at the expense of the vast similarities.

Reb Shia and I exchanged *divrei torah* and *zemiros*. Reb Shia was very curious about YU, and I was curious about the chinuch system in Kiryas Joel. With regard to the elephant in the room, Reb Shia and I didn't really talk about Zionism, though we did talk extensively about the Satmar Rebbe and his unyielding adherence to his beliefs.

The rest of Shabbos flew by. Before long, I was sitting back in the shul where it all began, eating *shaleshudis* alongside another curious Satmar *Chassid*. He was actually very impressed with my basic knowledge of some *Chassidish* Torah on the *parsha* (namely the *Sheim Mishmuel* — shoutout to Rabbi Reichman) and invited me to come back another Shabbos as his guest. I recently took him up on this offer, and he said would be glad to host any other YU *bachurim* reading this article as well.

So, who cares about my Shabbos? Why do I need to publish it as opposed to just telling my family and friends?

The reason I am writing this article is not because it's a great story (although it is). It's because I want to challenge the assumption within much of the Modern Orthodox or YU community that *Chassidim* disrespect us. My Shabbos in Kiryas Joel gave me a completely different impression. Everyone I encountered was genuinely curious about and respectful toward YU. In fact, many people had never even heard of YU and were impressed when I described a typical YU student's schedule of Torah learning and secular classes. Ironically, the insularity of the Satmar community means that many individuals in that community have not

not believe, which indicates that positive changes toward *achdus* may be taking place. On the *heimish* bus back from Kiryas Joel the most recent time I went for Shabbos, I sat next to a Satmar *yungerman* [man who studies in *kollel*] from Williamsburg. We had a long, pleasant conversation. At one point, he asked me if I learned the *sefarim* of Rav Soloveitchik. After I affirmed that I had learned some of them, he told me he also did. I asked which *sefer* he'd learned, fully expecting him to mention one of the popular works of the Rav's *chiddushim* on *shas* such as *Reshimos Shiurim* or *Harerei Kedem*.



A Satmar Chassid walking in front of a Kiryas Joel Shul

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Strengthening Our Jewish Core

By DOV PFEIFFER

This past semester, I took the class "Texts, Contexts, and Traditions" with Dr. Moshe Bernstein. The course, which is essentially identical to the previously required "Intro to Bible" course, surveyed various background aspects of the Bible and its interpretation. In this class, we discussed topics such as the nature of *Qeri uKetiv* [words that are read differently from how they are written], the different *Targumim* [Aramaic translations], and the characteristic styles of biblical commentators such as Rashi, Rashbam and Ramban. In this class, we explored and discovered the utility of broad background knowledge when engaging with our sacred texts. Sometimes there were novel challenges, but as long as it has been around, biblical commentary has engaged in answering new questions, in forming the novel explanations of the era. The class enabled meaningful exploration of new topics within Judaism in what I felt was a traditionally sensitive manner.

Unfortunately, from conversations I've had, it seems to me that many religiously serious Yeshiva College students, who display deep conviction towards Judaism and Torah study, view the Jewish core as a hindrance, something that must be gotten over with, not

something that can benefit their religious lives. A good friend of mine summarized the issue effectively, noting that when he came back from Israel, he had planned to take the Jewish requirements early, to continue

additions should be made towards providing meaningful Jewish Studies classes for those students who see the current course offerings as themselves on or past the fringe.

I think it would be agreed that the Yeshiva

If our liberal arts core in YC is viewed as vanity and vapid breath, perhaps I could think it away as no big deal. However, for our Jewish core to be popularly viewed as in conflict with Judaism is something that demands attention.

his learning, but ultimately chose to wait, to avoid the perceived heresy. Similarly, as I was writing this article, I heard a student complain about the Bible department here, essentially saying it's all *kefira* [heresy].

Now, it is certainly the case that dialogue about the roles and limits of academic Jewish studies at YU have existed well before now, from a January 2008 *Observer* article by Olivia Wiznitzer arguing for teaching the documentary hypothesis in Stern to a March 2013 *Kol haMevaser* article, titled "Shut Down the Bible Department," arguing that the Bible department is detrimental to religious growth. However, my goal is not to argue about where the limits should lie, or what sorts of fringe classes should or shouldn't be offered, but to argue that alterations and

College Jewish core — and I speak of Yeshiva College alone here, based on my impression that Stern and Syms are very different in their Jewish requirements and that the points I make are therefore not pertinent — should be one that enhances one's Judaism, as opposed to what seems for many to be an afterthought at best. Given the seeming failure on this front, revisions should be considered.

If our liberal arts core in YC is viewed as vanity and vapid breath, I don't feel that would be too big a deal. However, for the Jewish core to be popularly viewed as in conflict with Judaism is something that demands attention.

While the question of why such course offerings are beneficial could be asked, and

He haltingly said, "I think it's called *Divrei Hagus V'ha'aracha*?" (For those who need to brush up on Rav Soloveitchik's writings, this is a collection of essays including the *hesped* for Rav Velvel and the Rav's famous speech on Zionism, "Kol Dodi Dofeik.") Shocked, I said, "Ah, I thought you meant his *chiddushim* on *shas* ... that's more *machshava inyanim*, right?" My seatmate quickly retorted, "Oh, everyone knows his stuff on *shas*, but I like this *sefer*. He talks about *Eretz Yisrael* and describes Rav Chaim ... he has very interesting things there." Seeing my disbelief, he gave me a cheeky smile. "I bet you didn't expect to hear that one."

But that's exactly the point. We expect and assume a lot of things that we may be surprised about. Instead of making assumptions, we would be better off if we took the time to talk and understand each other. This is especially true of the *Chassidic* community; though it is indeed different from ours in many ways, our lack of familiarity with it can lead us to exaggerate the differences at the expense of the vast similarities. An open mind, though, can lead to greater Jewish unity and a mutual appreciation for communities that are different from our own.

I could wax poetic, as I did in the opening, stating soliloquy after soliloquy in their defense, I don't believe this is a relevant question. The Jewish core is unlikely to be removed anytime soon, and it is this pre-existing core we must work with. Thus, we reach the central question I want to explore: How can the Jewish core be improved? Many of the ideas I suggest are half-baked brainstorming, possibilities I think have potential, but need work to evaluate and engage with. It is my hope these can be expanded on.

One administrative option, based on a suggestion from the responses to that 2013 *Kol haMevaser* article, would be to offer a course engaging in presenting Jewish approaches to many issues of academic study. As an example, this semester Rabbi Hayyim Angel is offering an IBC course on modern issues in biblical interpretation. A course like this open to all Wilf students seems like it could help dispel many of the fears around incorporating academic methods within a traditional framework of *Talmud Torah* [Torah learning], in much the same way I have been informed Professor Ari Bergman's academic Talmud classes do for that subject.

Another option would be to offer classes that are more explicitly theologically framed. Here, I admit that some classes could no

Continued on Page 16

Shaky Links: How the Russia-Ukraine War is Impacting the Global Economy

By **MOSHE CORONEL**

On Feb. 24, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin shocked the world by announcing the start of a “special military operation” to “demilitarize” Ukraine. Since that announcement, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and his Western allies have produced an astonishingly successful defense of Ukraine, taking back more than half of the land captured since the beginning of the war. While the war by itself is a significant global event, it has also had a much more extensive impact on the global economy by creating shortages of critical supplies and disrupting supply chains.

Arguably the biggest impact of the war has been the decrease in global supplies and commodities. Ukraine and Russia are part of what’s known as the “global breadbasket,” which supplies almost 30% of the world’s grain and 75% of the world’s sunflower oil. Many African and Asian countries, including Tunisia and Indonesia, rely heavily on grain imports from these countries to feed their populations, and the war has hit these countries hard. Another big area impacted is the energy market. Part of the Western response to Russian aggression was the enactment of financial sanctions and the stopping of trading with Russia, which has hurt Russia’s ability to fund its war. However, this process has affected many European countries in turn as Russian gas accounts for 10% of the global supply and many European countries, especially Germany and Lithuania, rely heavily on Russian gas to keep the lights on. Finally, Russia controls a significant market share in the export of metals such as aluminum and nickel which are critical for the function and manufacture of everyday appliances and transportation like planes, cars and batteries. As with the food and energy sectors, metal prices are exhibiting record highs, with the greatest being the nickel market, which has hit its 10-year high mark. The bottom line is

that the global economy has been slammed by this war and is slowly trying to respond to those changes.

These macroeconomic changes have, in turn, big implications for citizens all around the world. According to some estimates,

The global inflation rate as a whole has increased as much as 3% specifically due to the Russo-Ukrainian War, which translates into billions of dollars coming out of the consumer's pocket.

European energy costs have more than doubled due to this trade imbalance. These shortages are sharply increasing global inflation and hurting consumers worldwide; the European Central Bank has recorded the highest inflation since it started producing those statistics, at more than quadruple the targeted 2%. The global inflation rate as a whole has increased as much as 3% specifically due to the Russo-Ukrainian War, which translates into billions of dollars coming out of the consumer's pocket. All of this depressed global output and consumer spending is contributing to the International Monetary Fund’s outlook: “Global growth is forecast to slow from 6.0 percent in 2021 to 3.2 percent in 2022 and 2.7 percent in 2023.” Organizations like the Dallas Federal Reserve are saying that “War-related energy and food price hikes have some parallels with previous crises, such as the oil shocks of the 1970s.” All this doom and gloom has led to one of the sharpest drops in European consumer confidence ever recorded. There is a general feeling of hardship that has taken over the worldwide marketplace, and this will be alleviated with time.

In response to all these pressures, Western countries are reshaping their supply chains and relationship with the global market. EU countries are closely coordinating actions to tackle rising prices and scarcity of supplies. The EU has agreed to phase out dependence on Russian fossil fuels as soon

as possible and has banned almost 90% of all Russian oil imports by the end of 2022. The EU has also agreed on new measures to secure and share gas supply in the EU, as well as to limit the volatility of gas and electricity prices. The US government is also taking a

hard line on Russian aggression and its effects, with the US leading talks to enforce a price cap on the sale of supplies from Russia, balancing global supply needs and preventing Russia from profiting from the war. The US has announced that the sanctions, which have been imposed in response to Russia’s actions in Ukraine and interference in U.S. elections, have led to a decline in Russia’s GDP, a decrease in foreign investment and a depreciation of the ruble. Governments

are responding, and in time the effects will moderate.

The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War has had far-reaching consequences on the global economy. The disruptions in supply chains and shortages of critical goods have resulted in increased inflation and decreased economic growth. These changes have had a significant impact on the livelihoods of citizens worldwide, particularly in developing countries, where the majority of citizens live below the poverty line and are already struggling to make ends meet. The trade imbalance and energy shortages caused by the war have added to the already dire economic situation in these countries. Additionally, the war has also led to a decline in consumer spending, as people are forced to spend more on essential goods and services. Yet in spite of the hardships, there is a light at the end of the economic tunnel, and only time will tell on the effectiveness of the response to Russian aggression and its economic consequences.



Russian and Ukrainian flags as puzzle pieces

PIXABAY

There is Still Time to Hop on the Tesla Wave

By **TANI LEWIS**

In the previous edition of The Commentator, I wrote an article titled Now’s The Time To Hop On The Tesla Wave. There is a hook about boogie boarding and a poetic and visual metaphor about the ocean as well. It was a well-written article, if I do say so myself.

Even better than the writing quality was the opinion that Tesla’s stock (NASDAQ:TSLA) was undervalued and the stock was going to go back up — and it

did. Since the publication of that article on December 28, 2022, Tesla’s stock has increased by about 23%. However, the reasons that are being attributed to this increase are not the ones that I mentioned.

Since the writing of the previous article, there has been a macro shift in the economy. The Federal Reserve’s battle with inflation is going better than expected and investors expect rate hikes to slow. This means borrowing capital will be cheaper, making it easier for businesses to receive capital, by way of operational revenues and by borrowing. This has caused many stocks that were

previously decreasing in value to change direction.

This is a bigger deal for tech companies more than other companies, as tech companies have been seeing worse decreases in value. The pandemic created a mini bubble around tech companies which had inflated values beyond what is realistic, but this bubble seems to now be over as tech companies that crashed are now showing signs of recovery. Additionally, the headlines of newspapers lately have been listing which big tech company is going to perform large rounds of layoffs. Elon Musk, Tesla’s CEO, announced plans to reduce Tesla’s salaried workforce by 10%. With fewer expenses and slower rate increases, investors have started looking at Tesla more favorably again.

But this is not the reason the company’s stock price is up 23%. The main reason investors have started buying the stock again is Tesla’s surprise price cuts. Without any warning, Tesla decreased the prices of all its models internationally. These price cuts vary from 3%–20% on each model and have brought Tesla vehicles back into a competitive range with other electric vehicles.

On top of these price cuts, the new Inflation Reduction Act allows Americans to file for a \$7,500 tax credit for the purchase of a “clean” vehicle. Clean refers to hydrogen fuel or a plug in electric vehicle. There are a series of other requirements which make redeeming this \$7,500 difficult, but in theory, it brings the price of the Tesla’s

cars even lower.

The introduction of electric vehicle tax credits on top of Tesla’s price cuts have not only been a significant factor in the boost of the company’s stock, but also brought down the stock of other electric vehicle manufacturers. Investors predict more people will pick Tesla vehicles instead of their competitors, forcing them to sacrifice more money to sell their vehicles and decrease their already significantly lower profit margins.

Tesla will release quarterly earnings this week, which will tell a lot about its performance this past quarter and will prove somewhat indicative of what to expect this upcoming quarter.

Tesla’s stock has increased due to some unexpected reasons, but the reasons mentioned in my earlier article still hold true. While their earnings report may impact the stock’s short-term performance, over the longer term their stock will go up as the company is still expected to roll out the Cybertruck, semi-truck, new roadster model, new battery model, the first version of their humanoid robot and start beta testing full self-driving mode this year. The auto vehicle manufacturer is still the only one of its kind, still growing at a fast pace, still has higher profit margins than all its competitors (even with price cuts) and still has easy access to capital and high aspirations. The markets are performing better, the swell waves are among us and Tesla still seems like the wave that will go the farthest.



Tesla driving

UNSPLASH - DARPANVISUALS

JEWISH CORE Continued from Page 14

longer be academic in nature, and some clever thinking would be required to find a way to circumvent that issue. Nonetheless, I think an option, perhaps available in the 1:05–2:45 slot on Tuesday and Thursday, when many YP students take their Jewish core classes, for a more theologically focused Tanakh, Jewish History, or Jewish Philosophy, perhaps even offering something like a *halakha* class, which are offered as Jewish Studies classes on Beren Campus, would allow the Jewish core to be at least partially edifying for those concerned students.

Building upon this, I think a change of focus in some classes could be productive. Perhaps offering more skill-based classes

could help not only in removing discomfort but demonstrating the value a university framework could provide towards traditional religious study. One of the issues I have seen in traditional Yeshiva study is that skills are generally expected to be picked up by assimilation and not taught explicitly. While some students are able to grasp these skills, many others don't. Having fully academic classes that delve into useful skills, such as "reading *Tosafot*" or "understanding Brisker *lomdus*" could show the value a university classroom format can offer even to those primarily focused on traditional learning.

I have no pretension that this article will solve the problem I raised. My goal is to open a conversation, to give dissatisfied students some possible seeds that could sprout productive discussion. I have tried to suggest

changes that seem likely to be within the range of what would make sense for a Jewish liberal arts college, while also being beneficial toward the problem at hand. It will take

more popular effort, especially from those who themselves have these complaints and are therefore most qualified to voice their desires, to reach viable solutions.



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New Year's Eve: The Business, The Bars and The Ball

By EMILY SAFIER

Starting at 11:59, descending for 60 seconds, the New Year's Ball dropped, bringing in 2023! The 11,875-pound ball, adorned with 16 million colors, gracefully plummeted from Times Square Tower on January 1,

This iconic ball has a fascinating history that calls to all business people's minds.

2023. The ball-dropping festivities were sponsored by Planet Fitness, Kay Jewelers and Waterford. The history of ball dropping dates back to the 1800s when a ball of light would be dropped daily as a signal for ship captains to change locations. This iconic ball has a fascinating history that calls to all business minds. In 1907, New York Times publisher Jacob Starr developed a brilliant marketing tool to gain PR for the paper. He created a celebratory event where a flashy wooden ball that was to be placed atop the NYT headquarters, Times Tower, will descend on New Year's Eve to welcome in the New Year. This marketing campaign had great success with large crowds gathering by The Tower to see a ball drop. Eventually,

the design of the ball grew more complicated and the size increased, causing them to move the ball to the bigger Times Square building located in central Midtown.

The ball drop became a New York tradition that occurred every year except the war years of 1942–1943 when the entire country was ordered to a "dimout" of lights as a means of protection during World War 2 and even then crowds went to visit the ball quietly. From 1981–1988, the ball was converted into an apple with red light bulbs and a green stem for the "I Love New York" marketing campaign. And the final change occurred for the ball's 100 anniversary, when Waterford Crystal and Philips Lighting created a new LED crystal Ball, the Centennial Ball, that was and continues to be, on display for the public all year round.

Amidst the pouring rain, an estimated one million people crowded around One Times Square from the street, rooftops, bars and more to see the ball drop. This was a great turnout compared to last year when New York limited the crowd to 15,000 people out of COVID precautions. Additionally, people around the world were able to view the ball-dropping ceremony online. The largest networks ABC, CNN and FOX stream the event. This year, an estimated 175 million Americans and 1 billion internationals tuned in to welcome the New Year.

New York bars, restaurants and

nightclubs gain a great deal of business from New Year's Eve partygoers. They can make up to as much as 40% of the year's revenue in the fourth quarter of business, from the months of holidays, winter break and New Year's Eve. Due to businesses being shut down by COVID, there are 55 fewer venues this year compared to pre-COVID. As a result of the reduction of options, bars, and clubs are charging more. Most of the bars with viewing space of the ball charged as much as \$5,500 to attend their NYE parties. And ticket prices for the average party have

overall gone up over 10% for a hefty cost of \$250–\$500 per party-goer. As for the area of Times Square, the city of New York makes over \$20 million in revenue from advertisement. It costs a company anywhere between \$5,000–\$50,000, which varies based on location, size, etc, to advertise their brand.

New Year's Eve is a celebrated event that is close to all New Yorkers. Our New Year's ball drop remains a famed attraction that is dear to millions of people. The businesses and city thrive on New Year's Eve, further strengthening our economy and history.



New Year's Eve 2023

PIXABAY

2023 Market Outlook

By ELI LEVI

Charlie Munger, the legendary investor and Warren Buffet's partner, is known to say, "Show me the incentive and I will show you the outcome." In 2022 and continuing into 2023 the incentives have changed, namely the Fed Funds rates.

The Fed Funds rate, which sets the tone for the rest of the fixed income market, has gone from the zero bound to 4.5% with four 75 basis point rate hikes in a row. The 30



Stocks

UNSPASH - ISHANT MISHRA

year fixed mortgage rate in New York is currently 6.7%, with a 20% down payment and a credit score between 700–719. The Fed has remained hawkish and many say this might lead to a recession, yet if inflation is looked at on a month-to-month basis as opposed to the traditional annual rate, currently at 6.5%, it is a different story. For the months of March, April, May and June respectively, the one-month percent change in the Consumer Price Index was 1.2%, 0.3%, 1.0% and 1.3%, whereas from July to November the change was 0.0%, 0.1%, 0.4%, 0.4%, and 0.1%. The most recent CPI data for December was negative 0.1% inflation—deflation. If the Fed sees that its rate hikes have the desired effect the Fed might be able to let up earlier than the market expects, thereby sidestepping a possible recession. Nevertheless, the 2 and 10-year treasury have crossed paths and it has been one of the strongest indicators of a recession to date. Yet with nonfarm payroll adding 223,000 jobs and unemployment decreasing to only 3.5%, it is hard to imagine a recession beyond the technical definition of two-quarters of negative GDP.

The most relevant comparison is to the dot com bubble that, while technically a recession, did not affect much other than the bubble of internet stocks. Right now a similar

kind of recession will likely occur. Twitter, which laid off almost 66% (probably more now) of its staff yet is still functioning albeit with more glitches. Given low interest rates and infinite money, large tech companies like Meta and Google had no reason to ever cut or hold back from firing on all fronts and making any bet they thought might pan out from AI to self-driving cars. Now, the top tech companies seeing that Twitter was able to lay off so many and still have a minimum viable product combined with the end of infinite money and investors caring more about the bottom line as opposed to growth at any cost are surely thinking that they can afford to cut costs. Layoffs are pervasive across high-flying tech companies and Wall Street Meta is cutting 11,000 jobs, Salesforce 8,000, Amazon 18,000, Spotify 600, Credit Suisse 2,700, and Goldman 3,200 which is around 6% for these companies. Google is finally combining Waze and Maps and laying off 12,000, the S&P is down 14%, and the Nasdaq 25% since one year ago. Most of this can still be explained by overhiring and the growth at any cost mindset that was 2021. While all of these layoffs may seem like an indicator of a recession, I think it is an indication of the insane growth of the past decade. Amazon added 800,000 jobs in 2020 and

2021. With this context, the 18,000 employee layoffs should not indicate a recession but rather a healthy reset. The macro story so far seems to be some form of a white-collar recession with a tight labor market giving plenty of cushion for even a hawkish Fed. Additionally, the fact that there are layoffs in the tech sector is healthy; the market was so tight that many startups struggled to hire and find talent. The era of free money is over and that calls for a reset which every market needs. While some individual markets like real estate and crypto might go into their own recession, the broader market should hold steady even if the stock market itself is still down.

While the stock market is not a good indicator of the overall health of the economy, it is what many investors care about the most, especially for any market outlook. With quantitative tightening and rising interest rates the multiples that companies are valued at come down significantly. Ultimately, a company is only worth its cash flows and a recession brings that to the fore. With borrowing costs on the rise, price-to-earnings multiples become restricted. As long as the Fed is raising rates, valuation multiples should remain low.