



Rabbi Ozer Glickman, YU Rosh Yeshiva, Dies Suddenly at 67

By Benjamin Koslowe

Rabbi Ozer Glickman, a YU rosh yeshiva and teacher in Sy Syms School of Business and Isaac Breuer College, died suddenly on Monday, March 19. Glickman, a resident of Teaneck, New Jersey, leaves behind his wife, Ilana, as well as six children and several grandchildren. He was 67 years old.

The Commentator learned of Rabbi Glickman's passing on Monday evening when President Ari Berman announced the news at the beginning of a *shiur kelali* at the Beren campus Beit Midrash. Glickman was seen on the

Wilf campus as recently as Monday afternoon on the day of his death.

Rabbi Glickman studied philosophy at Columbia University, where he received his BA. He also studied philosophy and religion on the graduate level at the University of Toronto, and he earned an MBA in finance from New York University's Stern School of Business in 1980. He studied at Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav Kook and, according to his YUTorah biography, "received rabbinic ordination from leading rabbinic figures in Israel and the Diaspora."

Since 2000, Rabbi Glickman has been affiliated with

Yeshiva University as a rosh yeshiva and teacher of Talmud and *halakhah* to undergraduate and *semikhah* students. His "Business and Jewish Law" course in Sy Syms School of Business has 68 students registered this Spring 2018 semester; in Isaac Breuer College (IBC), one of the Wilf campus' four undergraduate Torah studies programs, Glickman's "Jewish Values in the Contemporary World" course currently has 35 registered students. In May 2015, Glickman received the Adjunct of the Year award from Sy Syms School of Business.

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In Memory of Rabbi Glickman Zt"l: A Mentor and Role Model

By Raymond J. Cohen

In a speech commemorating the twentieth anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, Rabbi Ozer Glickman Zt"l said of the former Prime Minister of Israel, "it is the fate of all men and women with outsized achievements to be seen as symbols." Individuals and communities naturally strive to learn principles of guidance from the select few whose accomplishments in achieving ideals transcend the norm. Rabbi Glickman's own outsized achievements as a *rosh yeshiva*, first-rate scholar, professor, and veteran of Wall Street led many in the YU community to view him as a symbol of *Torah U'Madda* in our time.

Rabbi Glickman was a philosopher and a poet, a talmudist and a quant. A thinker, a teacher, and a consultant. He mastered the boardroom, the classroom, and the *beit midrash*. He was all things to all people and

yet he was unabashedly himself. He was who he was, wherever he was. He did not vacillate between two realms but rather infused his entire personality into all of his interactions.

I first met Rabbi Glickman while collaborating on a story for this newspaper about YU's new Business Ethics curriculum. Our conversation rapidly developed into a discussion about our role as Jews in the world, which led to a back-and-forth about his upbringing, early education, and career as a trader on Wall Street. Somehow, it evolved into a discourse of Rav Shimon Shkop's understanding of the laws pertaining to *rov* (majority). I was fascinated by both his erudition in Torah and his vast knowledge of the world of finance. Each of these would have been

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Dean of Students Chaim Nissel Announces New Wilf Minyan Where Women Can Give Divrei Torah

By Avi Strauss

Dr. Chaim Nissel, Dean of Students, released a statement on Friday, March 23 describing plans for a new "community" *minyan* on the Wilf campus next semester where women will be able to give *divrei Torah*. Dr. Nissel explained that this decision was made after "student feedback" regarding Shabbat services at YU. The statement comes one month after several articles in the student newspapers discussed, questioned, and further criticized the administration for not addressing Wilf campus policies concerning women's roles in uptown Shabbat activities.

Dean Nissel's full statement:

"In light of student feedback, we have decided to review our policies with respect to the Klein@9 *minyan* and Shabbat services at YU. Klein@9 has been conceptualized as one of the *yeshiva minyanim*, and so had followed the typical practice of *minyanim* in *batei midrash* at men's *yeshivot* in which presenters of *divrei torah* in the sanctuary are men. Starting next semester, we will add a student-run YU community *minyan* in a new, soon to be determined venue in which—like *minyanim* in YU communities across the world—women and men alike may deliver *divrei torah* after services. We look forward to continuing to work with students to formulate meaningful programming at Yeshiva University."

The statement comes after the recent controversy regarding women delivering *divrei Torah* at a Wilf campus Shabbat *minyan*. On December 16, 2017, Lilly Gelman, a student at Stern College for Women, delivered a *dvar Torah* from the pulpit upon the conclusion of the student-run and Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY)-

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The EDITORIAL

A Positive Development but the Wrong Solution

By Avi Strauss

The Friday, March 23 announcement that, starting next semester, a new Wilf campus Shabbat *minyan* will be added where “women and men alike may deliver *divrei [T]orah* after services” is a welcome step in an ongoing saga to bring campus life more in line with the general Modern Orthodox framework of acceptable religious practice. Considering the wide array of Shabbat morning *minyan* choices, and the significant Rabbinic and communal backing of the practice of allowing women to deliver a *dvar Torah* at the conclusion

“IT IS A SOLUTION THAT TACITLY SUPPORTS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN TO SPEAK, BUT ONLY IN A SETTING THAT IS SPATIALLY AND IDEOLOGICALLY SET APART FROM ‘THE YESHIVA MINYANIM.’ IT IS A SOLUTION THAT KNOWINGLY WELCOMES CAMPUS BIFURCATION AND SEGREGATION.”

of services, it is welcoming to see *Yeshiva* University change to better reflect the movement of Judaism it represents.

I realize that RIETS and YU represent both a diverse rabbinical and student body and that changing the status quo would naturally be a sensitive topic, but this solution is wrongheaded and misguided. Instead of owning up to and fixing a misunderstanding, the solution creates another space for a *minyan* nearly identical to Klein @9, one which will be administratively distinguished from the rest of the Wilf campus. It is a solution that tacitly supports the opportunity for women to speak, but only in a setting that is spatially and ideologically set apart from “the *yeshiva minyanim*.” It is a solution that knowingly welcomes campus bifurcation and segregation.

Dean Nissel’s statement is misleading. Describing Klein @9 as a *minyan* “conceptualized” as a lower-case “*yeshiva*” type of *minyan*, when it has been advertised from its conception as a student-run and community-oriented one, distinct from the other six Shabbat morning services, borders on historical revisionism.

To be clear, every *minyan* on campus offers its own religious flavor, and invites students to self-segregate based on pace of prayer, amount of singing, speeches from the pulpit, etc. It would not be reasonable, fair, or level-headed to suggest that all *minyanim* be seen equally in the eyes of

student congregants. But the main *minyan* in Glueck has never been advertised as the “*frummet*” *minyan* by any YU communication, and the Rubin Shul *minyan*, which runs concurrently with Glueck, is not labeled as “short and sweet” for students looking to fulfill their obligation and then go to *kiddush*. And this makes sense. An institution should let its constituents self-sort, rather than going out of its way to explicitly label and segregate its parallel options.

Yet, the recent statement clearly delineates that, by some vague notion of conceptualization, students who attend this “new” *minyan* will be participating in services that don’t actually align with what the rest of the student body is doing. Instead of just acknowledging that there should be options for the wide tent that is YU’s orthodoxy, we are being directed to pick a side.

This is most troublesome to the casual Klein @9 *minyan-goer*. Until now, a typical Shabbat morning in the Klein *beit midrash* featured a healthy cross-section of the Wilf student body, with guys wearing clothing from black and white to the full spectrum of the color wheel, and spanning a wide range of intellectual and spiritual leanings, all together in one unified setting. Moreover, the *minyan* has been hugely successful, built and supported by student leaders for two years, regularly gathering a small crowd, and even filling the seats of the Klein *beit midrash* on occasion.

The announcement itself is framed falsely. We cannot pretend that this decision was solely the result of “student feedback,” nor should we be naïve that Dean Nissel was really the one responsible for drafting and publishing it. A month of criticism from communal lay leaders and alumni, several of whom reached out directly to *The Commentator* for clarification on the matter, surely played a major role in this decision. To pretend otherwise is silly.

Further, the statement was a missed opportunity for the leadership of this institution to affirmatively state general support for halachically appropriate women’s participation in services. The announcement should have come from either the RIETS administration, who instituted the criticized policy, or the Office of the President, which was likely involved in the statement’s production as well. Perhaps a few well-groomed sentences, to the effect of “YU of course supports women teaching Torah to an audience” and “there was a misunderstanding, and we are working on creating a new understanding,” could have split the difference between not taking full responsibility, while clearly supporting what this statement sheepishly admits. If the university can’t make a statement as bland as that, then there’s a much bigger problem than the question of women speaking from the pulpit.

So while now might be a time to applaud this positive step, students should push for women-delivered *divrei Torah* in Klein @9 to become a normalized status quo, as opposed to leaning on redundancy and semantics to brush off a mistake, all the while drawing needlessly divisive lines through the student body.



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For 83 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

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

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



500 W 185th Street
New York, NY 10033
yucommentator.org

1 Wilf Hot Tub

According to The Commentator archives, it used to function as a *mikvah*. I wonder what @KiraPaley would have to say about that?

2 Beatie Deutsch

This religious Jewish mother of five has impressively finished marathons while seven months pregnant, and was this year's Jerusalem Marathon's fastest woman, but this past weekend I binged two seasons of *BoJack* and ate like fifteen slices of pizza, so I'm truly not sure why she's getting all of the attention and I'm not.

3 Library Naps

I cannot recommend these enough, though I'm 95% sure that my friends take pictures of me every time I fall asleep in the library. Doze with caution.

4 Roller Hockey Team

The YU squad continues to impress and will be competing in the Division II national championships for the second straight year in everyone's favorite center of the roller hockey world, Fargo, North Dakota.

5 Le Bistro

The Beren campus gets fancy ethnic names for its dining halls? We hereby rename the Wilf Caf "El Café."

6 Keren Neu-groschl Sending New Rochelle Shabbaton Emails

Get it? Because her name rhymes with New Rochelle!

7 Ulaanbaatar

The world's coldest capital; home of over 500 yurt monasteries; the mythical *Garuda* bird as its national symbol; I'm honestly shocked that this *hasn't* been a 7up until now.

7 UP 7 DOWN

1 Websites That Look Like They Are From the 2000's

We're looking at you, MYYU.

2 Wednesdays

Sources say that due to the high number of Wednesday snow days this semester, one course was forced to reschedule a few classes for the summer. Let's hope it stops snowing by then....

3 Promenade Bar and Grill Not Kosher Anymore

Does this mean I will have to cancel my weekly "Mishna and mojito" chaburah?

4 International Bar

This Godforsaken corner of the Wilf Caf serves food that is neither international nor food for that matter — that "chicken" once sent me sprinting to the nearest toilet faster than Beatie Deutsch.

5 "Possibly Out of Order" Washing Machine

I don't know what system of modal logic YU students adopt these days, but this sign that I recently saw on a YU washing machine necessarily makes no sense.

6 Left Field

According to some Commentator readers, our 7 up 7 down bits often come from this exact location. #7up.

7 Clif Bars

Nothing against the snack, but who the hell is Clif? And where are my pants?! I refuse to eat any more of these until I get some answers.

Letter to the Editor: Kira Paley

As the author of the article mentioned in "A Modest Proposal to Ban Women from Wilf Campus" I would like to briefly respond to this piece in order to clarify my position and argument.

First, I encourage readers to read my original article, "Why Stern Students Shouldn't Have Access to the Uptown Pool," and take it seriously despite the "Modest Proposal" author's attempt to minimize the issue with satire. I also encourage readers to read a piece I wrote last year, "Working Within the System," in which I discuss the need for students to recognize that equality within the religious framework is not attainable at YU, for better or for worse.

Though I did not mention this in the original article, there is a lack of nuance surrounding the debate of women using the pool, and the "Modest Proposal" article is a perfect example of this. Women using the YU pool is a unique issue; it is not like women using the library, women living uptown, or women attending graduate school on the Wilf Campus. It is an issue that cannot be

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Letter to the Editor: Judah Wolkenfeld

To the Editor and the YU Community:

Re "From the Wilf Student Leadership: A Response to the Recent Statement" (March 26), "A Positive Development but the Wrong Solution" (March 25), and "The Speech that Led to Silence" (February 18):

I can imagine that feeling silenced is unpleasant. That feeling that your voice is not worthy of being heard is degrading. But I'd argue that one thing is worse than being silenced: having to then sit back and allow someone else to inaccurately portray your views.

Over the past couple of months at Yeshiva University, the controversy over Klein@9 has, unfortunately, become one of the hottest debates on campus. If you've followed only from the internet, reading recent Commentator or Observer articles, or have visited only certain parts of campus, you'd be led to believe that the debate pits the YU administration against the entirety of the student body, the latter collectively fighting for change against the former.

Let me dispel that notion. There is quite a strong contingency of students at YU that are against what happened at Klein@9 that Shabbos. There are those who feel that women speaking at a *minyán* is inappropriate at the least and against *halakhah*

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Letter to the Editor: Reuven Herzog

To the Editor:

I want to extend my thanks to a classmate of mine for recently sharing his voice in this newspaper ("Letter to the Editor," March 28). For all those who are invested in "serving the needs of the students," it is important to know the diverse voices within the student body.

One of the things that has particularly bothered me about the past few weeks' events is that we've read arguments that were thought-out and explained in depth from various students. But from the administration's side we heard one matter-of-fact decision only second-hand, and another statement that was a single paragraph and without any explanation.

I am sure that within the various offices of OSL, RIETS, and above them, there were long debates analyzing the different reasoning and effects of different decisions. As students who are parties to the decision, we deserve an explanation of a final outcome. As Jews who look to our senior decision makers for

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Political Commentator Michael Knowles Speaks on the “Humorless Left”

By Avi Hirsch

Conservative political commentator Michael Knowles spoke on Monday, March 26, to around 90 Yeshiva University students on “Why the Right is Funnier than the Left These Days.”

The event, which was organized by the YU chapter of the Young America’s Foundation (YAF) and the YU College Republicans, is the third event at Yeshiva University that YAF has sponsored, following lectures from conservative talk show hosts and political commentators Ben Shapiro and Dennis Prager last year and last semester, respectively. Student reactions to the Knowles event were as varied as the reactions to those previous YAF events. While some found his rhetoric divisive, many students appreciated the unique perspective Knowles provided.

Knowles commented about the event, “It was such a pleasure, and the YU students were at such a higher caliber than students at so many other universities.” He added, “It was a sophisticated audience who asked serious questions on the left and the right—really a pleasure to come.”

The event began with a short introduction from Yeshiva College Junior and founding chairman of YU’s YAF chapter Elliot Fuchs, who thanked the event sponsors, the YU College Republicans, and members of YAF, before introducing Michael Knowles.



Knowles’s speech itself was largely a comedic and politically charged discussion of the “humorless Left,” and why the “Right” is so much more funny. He opened by joking, “I want to make fun of some Democrats, and get out of here,” and proceeded to discuss his time as

President of the Yale College Republicans, when “most of what we did was provoke the Lefties.”

He then outlined the two main topics that he would discuss in his lecture: “Why the Right is so much funnier than the Left right now, and also why the Left is humorless—why they don’t have a sense of humor.” He defended his thesis with examples of “Lefties” he considered unfunny,

“KNOWLES COMMENTED ABOUT THE EVENT, ‘IT WAS SUCH A PLEASURE, AND THE YU STUDENTS WERE AT SUCH A HIGHER CALIBER THAN STUDENTS AT SO MANY OTHER UNIVERSITIES.’”

like Jimmy Kimmel, and those on the Right who he did find funny, most notably President Trump.

Throughout the lecture, Knowles attributed various traits to the Left that he believes account for its lack of humor. “Why is the Left these days frowning, and yelling, and shrieking, and crying?” he asked. He explained that “comedy is aggressive; snowflakes are too fragile these days to handle it. Comedy violates the sacred, and the Left doesn’t have any sacred.” He added that “the Lefties today deny objective truth...they believe in the primacy of subjective experience.”

The lecture was followed by a question and answer session in which Knowles responded to students who asked him about the president’s use of Twitter, the alt right, and his position on gun legislation, among other things.

Fuchs considered the event a success. “I thought Knowles picked an interesting and unique topic and I think he did it well, and I think the students appreciated it,” he said.

This sentiment was shared by Stern College Junior and president of the YU College Republicans Alyssa Wruble,

who added, “The room was full, which is always a sign that students at YU are interested in thinking, learning, and debating political issues.”

To Fuchs, Knowles’s perspective was distinctive compared to Shapiro and Prager. “We had Shapiro, who is obviously at the top of the world right now in terms of

conservative political commentary; we had Prager, who is almost like a hall-of-famer,” Fuchs said. “I think Knowles is distinct from the two of them because he is an up-and-comer, something we haven’t seen yet—what the future looks like.”

Wruble agreed. “I think Michael, as a young up-and-coming political commentator, really showcased his unique perspective on the intersection of culture and politics with his signature mix of intellect and humor,” she said. “It was a nice break from the tension that usually surrounds political discussion and debate these days.”

Some students who attended the event, like YC Junior and executive board member of the YU College Republicans Nolan Edmonson, appreciated Knowles’s comedic tone. Edmonson noted the “positive student turnout” and stressed the comic nature of the topic. “I think the students received Michael’s message very well,” he said. According to Edmonson, Knowles wanted to “start a lighthearted dialogue among the people in attendance about what issues divide conservatives and liberals. For an evening that was devoted to a comical topic, I thought Michael made some serious and thoughtful points.”

Others, like Stern College Senior and board member of the YU College Democrats Rachel Lelonek, were not so enthusiastic. Lelonek pointed to the time Knowles spent “bashing ‘the left’ and their inability to take the humor of ‘the right.’” She continued, “I feel like events like this only foster animosity and bad feelings on campus. Liberals, the uncommon minority on Yeshiva University’s undergraduate campuses, are the punching bags of these events, which might intimidate some of them to come to the events or even participate.”

Wruble disagreed, saying, “Bringing in different speakers with different opinions and perspectives is always helpful for encouraging dialogue regardless of whether the student agrees with the speaker, maybe even more helpful when they disagree.”

Added Fuchs, “Conversation is what we hope to provoke, a battle of ideas is what we hope to provoke, all in the better interest of our campus.”

Michael Knowles is a 28-year-old actor and the managing editor of the conservative website the Daily Wire, where he hosts the podcast *The Michael Knowles Show*. He trained in acting at the Stella Adler Studio, and graduated from Yale University in 2012 with a B.A. in History.

Knowles is perhaps best known for writing the blank book *Reasons to Vote for Democrats: A Comprehensive Guide*, which became a #1 bestselling book on Amazon.com and was termed “a great book for your reading enjoyment” by President Donald Trump in a tweet. Shapiro has similarly praised the book, calling it “thorough.”

Second Annual Giving Day Fundraiser Aims to Raise \$3 Million in 24 Hours

By Shoshy Ciment

On April 25-26, Yeshiva University will be holding its second annual Giving Day, a 24-hour fundraising campaign that helps fund the university’s various programs, scholarships, and student life initiatives. The program will begin at noon on the 25th and feature live events and challenges to engage participants and students on campus.

The goal for this year is to raise \$3 million from at least 3,000 donors, which would mark an increase in donors by more than 10% from the 2016 Giving Day. Last year, the first annual Giving Day shattered its goals of \$5 million by bringing in more than \$6 million from 2,700 donors in 24 hours. Each donation was quadrupled by various donors.

Anonymous donors have also already collectively pledged upwards of \$10 million towards a special fund in honor of the inaugural year of President Ari Berman.

“Every contribution made during the 24 hour period will have an even greater impact—all gifts will be matched dollar for dollar, and more, thanks to the generosity of several supporters,” explained Alyssa Herman, Vice

President for Institutional Advancement. This year marks Herman’s first Giving Day in her new role, which she assumed last June.

The campaigning theme for the day is “YU Hero,” which will portray YU students as superheroes to highlight heroic qualities within each student.

“THE GOAL FOR THIS YEAR IS TO RAISE \$3 MILLION FROM AT LEAST 3,000 DONORS, WHICH WOULD MARK AN INCREASE IN DONORS BY MORE THAN 10% FROM THE 2016 GIVING DAY.”

“Whether they’re advancing Torah scholarship, conducting cancer research or fighting for social justice, Yeshiva University students, faculty and alumni make up a powerful and heroic movement—rooted in Jewish values

and committed to building a better world,” said Herman. “Giving Day is an opportunity for the entire community to come together, celebrate all we have achieved and ensure that our future remains strong.”



After Two-Year Vacancy, Wilf Campus Housing Office Hires Assistant Director

By Sara Marcus

This June, Natan Bienstock will become the Assistant Director of the Wilf Campus Office of University Housing and Residence Life (UHRL). The position has been empty for the past two and a half years, while Jonathan Schwab, the Director of Housing, ran the office.

"There has been a need for quite some time [for an Assistant Director]," stated Schwab. "The model was a Director and an Assistant Director for many years (and is the model at Beren as well), until around 2015, when two staff members left in short succession, and since then we've been short-staffed as we try to creatively figure out the best ways to maintain quality service to our students."

Bienstock, who graduated from YU in 2016, worked as a Stanton Fellow in the Wilf Campus Office of Student Life (OSL) for a year, and then as Student Life Coordinator in the OSL for one year. "[Working in the] OSL...has helped me appreciate the needs of students, and learn how to listen to what they really want...I am excited to continue to work in a department that really values student input, and realizes that they are the reason we are here."

His new responsibilities will entail coordinating with the RA team, such as "helping them run events, solve problems, and just be generally available for them as a support system," according to Schwab. "Mr. Bienstock and I will share many of the responsibilities that I currently handle while each also owning some individual projects...

As we each settle into the new dynamic, I imagine the projects each of us will own will become clearer."

Bienstock said, "I hope to continue the great work that the housing office has already done, and improve on what has already been accomplished. I believe that there is a constant need to innovate and come up with new ideas, as prior success does not guarantee future success."

As for the upcoming year, the Housing Office is optimistic. "It is clear that [Bienstock] cares about making YU a home for all of its students and how to best accomplish that," wrote Schwab. "With Mr. Bienstock on board and a very talented incoming group of RAs for 2018-2019, I think we are poised to have our best year yet. We want to continue growing our programs and projects that have been very successful and introduce new ones that make residents lives even easier." Those include streamlining the housing application procedure, simplifying check-in, responding to facility complaints more quickly, and "creating even better opportunities for social fun on campus."

With Bienstock assuming the position of Assistant Director, the Housing Office will return to its original structure. Schwab commented, "It will mean I will have more time to do the things that I should ideally be doing: meeting with students both proactively and reactively. This year we have not been able to communicate as well with residents on many important issues," he wrote, "and I am looking forward to having someone else who can help

us cover all the many things our office is involved in so we can appropriately handle all situations."

"As is increasingly becoming our motto in the UHRL



office," Schwab concluded, "there are very few limits on what we can accomplish."

Yeshiva College Faculty Vote in Favor of Shaped Majors

By Avi Strauss

After an electronic vote over the course of one week, Yeshiva College faculty voted to approve the creation of a "Shaped Major" track on the Wilf campus. The vote took place a week later than originally scheduled, after the Curriculum Committee and Dean's Office sought to fine-tune the proposal. This was the conclusion of a months-long process that began in November by the faculty.

The vote outcome means that students interested in forming an interdisciplinary course load as opposed to the more classic majors offered by Yeshiva College can now submit a proposal to "shape" their own major. Proposals will draw from courses already offered on campus and will be subject to approval on a case-by-case basis.

The 700-word Proposal for Shaped Major at Yeshiva College details the purpose of creating such an option for students, as well as the expectations and requirements of a student looking to pursue such coursework. "[T]he Shaped Major is meant to move beyond the shared 'general' education experience of the Core, and to provide students with in-depth, intensive work in a particular area of intellectual interest," reads the proposal's introduction.

The proposal further emphasizes that "some students' intellectual goals cross the boundaries between liberal arts disciplines and their departments—and we would like the College to be able to provide the conditions for meeting those goals, which can be equally rewarding and legitimate."

Yeshiva College Associate Dean Joanne Jacobson steered the proposal through faculty sessions up until the vote, reflecting that the process involved suggestions and input from Yeshiva College faculty to strengthen the proposal. "I am very pleased that we are now able to offer students the option of a Shaped Major" she said. "From initial discussions with members of the Yeshiva College Curriculum Committee, in November, to two discussions on the YC faculty floor, in December and in February, a substantial number of my faculty colleagues have had the chance to make suggestions to improve the proposal, and to express their enthusiasm for the idea."

Professor Will Lee, an Associate Professor of English at Yeshiva College, decided "to vote in favor of Shaped Majors with academically responsible guidelines for applications and strong advising for individual students once they are approved. Like interdisciplinary minors, they give students with special interests opportunities to pursue them and expand the range of students' choices."

The faculty ensured that the Shaped Major at Yeshiva College would be overseen with a series of academic guidelines and advisory procedures.

Students interested in pursuing a Shaped Major will be required to submit a "proposal packet" which must contain a 500-750 word narrative describing the focus of their major. The narrative must also include an explanation as to why it does not fall within the framework of already established majors. Any such application would require at least eleven courses already offered at Yeshiva College, drawn from at least two distinct departments, with at least five courses taken at the advanced (2000-level and above) level. Additionally, students will be required to propose an "anchor" course that will address the central question of the proposed Shaped Major, to be taken early on in the student's coursework.

Dean Jacobson said the initiative, in part, was prompted by student suggestions in her time here. "Over the decade

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-YESHIVA COLLEGE ASSOCIATE DEAN
JOANNE JACOBSON

or so that I have served as Associate Dean and as chair of the Department of English," she said, "a number of students have come to me with the request that we offer students such a major here."

Yeshiva Student Union Vice President of Clubs Tai Miller was one of the students who had suggested Shaped Majors to Dean Jacobson. He was pleased to learn the result of the vote, as it will expand campus offerings for students interested in disciplines outside of the current departmental offerings. "I believe this really opens up an opportunity for students to explore and hone their academic interests at Yeshiva College," he explained. "I'm excited this change was made while I was on campus."

Dean Jacobson described that "many other colleges and universities [offer Shaped Majors]," which are often described as "independent majors." In fact, the proposal was modelled after Shaped Major offerings at other universities like the University of Pennsylvania and Brandeis College. "[A]t a (very) small college like ours," Jacobson said, "this is a great way to expand the reach of our faculty and our departmental majors."

Although Dean Jacobson said that the Shaped Major will not be a fit for most students, she said that she is "excited to see what those students for whom this really is the right academic choice are able to put together, and to see them explore more fully and deeply areas of intellectual interest that the conventional majors may not be able to address for them."

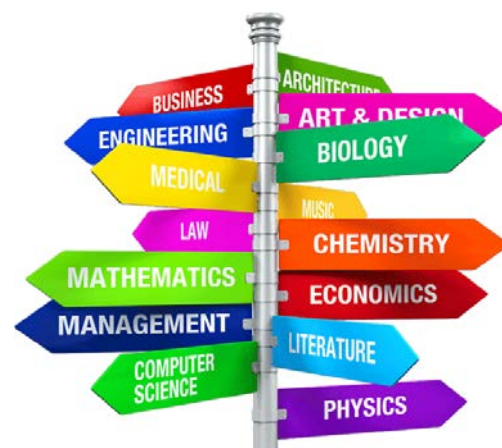
Interested students will be expected to apply for a Shaped Major, according to the proposal, by the end of their second semester, although applications during a student's third semester will be considered as well.

Other requirements include earning at least a 3.4 GPA in a student's first two semesters on campus, as well as a letter of support from a full-time faculty member who will serve as the student's Shaped Major advisor.

All Shaped Major proposals are to be submitted to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and members of the YC Curriculum Committee for approval.

Although the inclusion of Sy Syms Business School courses wasn't addressed in the proposal, Dean Jacobson said that thoughtful coursework proposal requests that include relevant Syms courses may be considered, as the overall framework for the Shaped Major was designed to be open to ideas not otherwise considered.

Miller, who would have pursued a Shaped Major if it would have been available earlier in his college experience, added, "I think interested students are thankful for Dean Jacobson's efforts to make Shaped Majors a reality on campus and I think future students will benefit from this for years to come."



Roller Hockey Team Advances to National Championship

By Esther Stern

For the second year in a row, the Yeshiva University roller hockey team headed to the National Collegiate Roller Hockey Association (NCRHA) Division II championship tournament. The tournament games took place in Fargo, North Dakota on April 11-15th.

The team has won 13 out of the 18 games, ranking fifth in the ECRHA. As team captain Daniel Fuchs described before the tournament, “the opportunity to play in the national tournament isn’t a common occurrence around here, so we’re wicked psyched to go play.” The team had humble beginnings, starting without funding from YU and without official NCRHA status. “This isn’t something we’ve just been working on from the start of the season,” stated team captain Joseph Robin. “For a lot of the guys, this chance at the national championship is the culmination of three full years of hard work.”

According to Yeshiva College Sophomore Yehoshua Segal, “what has so many fans flocking to the team is their underdog mentality, the prospect of a group of guys wanting a more robust hockey playing experience but with meager means is relatable to so many.” In 2016, the team climbed the ranks from Division IV to Division II of the NCRHA. This switch, according to Robin, “meant tougher opponents, a taxing schedule, and more grueling practices.” The team also has had to schedule all of its games for Sundays, as compared to the lighter load they would have, had Shabbat not been an absolute priority for the team. Having Sunday as the only playing day has resulted in as many as four back-to-back games on a given Sunday for the team.

The team’s actions led to an article on the team in the New York Times last year entitled “Skating, and



Scoring, for God’s Glory.” Describing the team overall, Fuchs commented, “We’re Yeshiva. Everything about us is different—our style of play, our work ethic, and even

our schedule. We’re proud of who we are and what we represent, and we’ve gained the respect and admiration of many teams across the country for doing so.”

GLICKMAN, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Rabbi Glickman formerly served as senior vice president of strategic risk management and global head of corporate treasury for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce.

“RABBI GLICKMAN WAS AN ENORMOUS TORAH SCHOLAR, SOMEONE WHO SPANNED FIELDS AND DISCIPLINES. MOST OF ALL HE WAS A DEVOTED TEACHER.”

- PRESIDENT ARI BERMAN

Additionally, he taught at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, where he was the senior resident rabbinic scholar, adjunct professor of law at the Center for the Study of Jewish Law and Contemporary Civilization, and affiliated with its Program in Jewish Law and Interdisciplinary Studies. According to Rabbi Glickman’s Facebook page, in June 2016 he “joined Oliver Wyman & Company in a

senior advisory position where he [was] consulted by major financial institutions including some of the largest banks in the world.”

An active user of Facebook and social media, Rabbi Glickman was seen by many students as a role model for and avid advocate of *Torah UMadda*. He regularly spent time meeting with students about Torah, Jewish philosophy, and networking advice by the Nagel Bagel dining area on the first floor of the Gottesman Library on the Wilf campus.

“Rabbi Glickman was an enormous Torah scholar, someone who spanned fields and disciplines,” said President Berman. “Most of all he was a devoted teacher.”



NEW MINYAN, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

sponsored Klein @9 Shabbat morning *minyan*. Soon after, Rabbi Menachem Penner, Dean of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and Undergraduate Torah Studies, issued a formal policy that disallowed women to give *divrei Torah* from the same position. Gelman later wrote an article criticizing the response, leading to much discussion on the Wilf and Beren campuses, as well as in the Modern Orthodox community at large.

One of the features of the Klein @9 *minyan* is its student-delivered, post-davening, pre-*Adon Olam* brief *dvar Torah*. On occasion, students also lead optional *chaburot* after *kiddush*. An informal arrangement prior to the December incident, which had been made between student leaders of the *minyan* and the RIETS administration, provided

“THE STATEMENT COMES AFTER THE RECENT CONTROVERSY REGARDING WOMEN DELIVERING DIVREI TORAH AT A WILF CAMPUS SHABBAT MINYAN.”

for women to deliver post-*kiddush chaburot*, but not *divrei Torah* at the end of services.

RIETS is generally responsible for religious decisions and policies on the Wilf campus, while the Klein @9 *minyan* is overseen by the SOY student council.

New Program Allows Students to Share Excess Caf Funds with Students in Need

By Avi Strauss

In an email announcement to the student body on April 12, Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel announced the creation of the YUCares program, which will allow students to share excess funds on their Dining Club cards with students in need of money for meals. The program is being run jointly with Dining Services.

According to the announcement, YUCares is being run on a trial basis, from Sunday, April 15 to Friday, April 20, and will allow students to donate up to \$50 from their own Dining Club card to the YUCares fund.

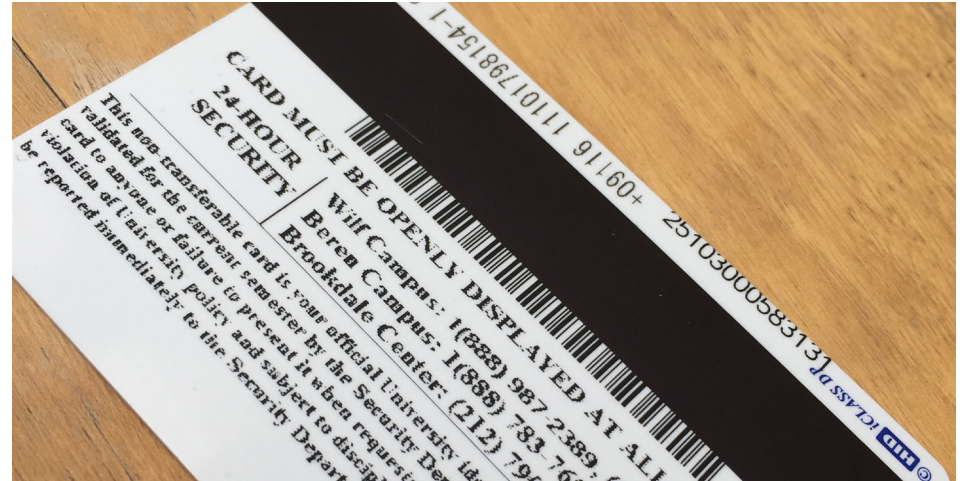
The statement was signed by Dr. Nissel, as well as all seven undergraduate student councils and the two campus student life committees.

“The goal of YUCares is to give students greater authority over the way their left over caf-card money is spent and to offer students a tangible opportunity to help one another,” said Yeshiva Student Union Vice President of Clubs Amitai Miller, who spearheaded the program along with Dean Nissel and the YU Administration. “More importantly, by actively reaching out to the entire student body, students who are struggling financially will know they have somewhere to go for help,” he added.

It remains unclear to what degree this type of sharing Dining Club Card funds is different from students simply buying food for their friends on their own cards, which is prohibited by Dining Services due to the tax-free nature of caf card spending, according

to a Fall 2016 email from Dean Nissel.

The announcement concludes by stressing that it is a pilot program, whose future will be based on participation and suggestions made by students.



President Berman Joins Congressman Espaillat in Calling for 181st Subway Stop Renovation

By Commentator Staff

President Ari Berman sent a letter to Governor Andrew Cuomo calling for the “renovation and redesign” of the 181st subway station on March 15. Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13) co-signed the letter, which stresses the importance of the station to both the Washington Heights and Yeshiva University communities.

The 181st station is a part of the 1 train subway line.

The letter comes just three weeks after Congressman Espaillat visited the Wilf campus, for meetings with President Berman and Vice President for Legal Affairs Andrew Lauer, as well as YU students.

In particular, the letter requests updates to the station’s “outdated elevator banks,” the only access point into and out of the subway from the 181st stop, to be prioritized by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) during upcoming subway renovations citywide. The station sees 3.5 million riders yearly, according to the letter, and is in close proximity to the George Washington Bridge and Bus Terminal.

The letter also calls for addressing the station’s “cramped” corridors and spacing.

Stern College for Women Sophomore Reena Wasserstein said she uses the station at least twice per week and described it as “not so pleasant.” She stated, “The elevators take forever and are packed with people.” Wasserstein said she would welcome improvements and believes that they “would improve the quality of life of the Yeshiva University population as well as the community of Washington Heights.”

The letter was also co-signed by Manhattan Community Board 12 Chairperson Shahabuddeen Ally.





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CLASS SCHEDULE FOR FALL 2018

MONDAY

2:50 PM

Rynhold: JPH 6880 Themes in 20th-Century Jewish Philosophy

Tsadik: JHI 5335 Jews in the Lands of Islam I

4:50 PM

Carlebach: JHI 5410 Jews in Modern Europe, Social and Intellectual History: 1760–1900

Rynhold: JPH 5011 Survey of Medieval Jewish Philosophy

6:50 PM

Fine: JHI 6220 Talmudic Archaeology

7:00 PM

Koller: BIB 5203 Biblical Hebrew

TUESDAY

2:50 PM

Hurvitz: TAS 5872 Introduction to the Midrashic Literature of the Amoraim

Dauber: JPH 5350 Introduction to Jewish Mysticism

4:50 PM

Cohen: BIB 6094 French Medieval Biblical Exegesis

Elman: TAS 7554 Middle Persian Context of the Babylonian Talmud

Gurock: JHI 5571 American Jewish History: 1654-1881

6:50 PM

Hurvitz: TAS 7821 Textual Development of Mishnah and Talmud

Olson: JHI 6541 Austro-Hungarian Jewry, 1772–1916

WEDNESDAY

2:50 PM

Tsadik: JHI 7600 Reading Modern Arabic Sources on Jews and Judaism

Berger: JHI 5321 Medieval Jewish History: Christian Europe

4:50 PM

Eichler: BIB 7350 Biblical Historiography

Leiman: JHI 6410 Emden-Eibeschutz Controversy

6:50 PM

Eichler: BIB 5115 Introduction to Biblical Studies II

Karlip: JHI 5441 The Jews of Eastern Europe: 1914–89

THURSDAY

2:50 PM

Dauber: JPH 6715 Sefer ha-Bahir

Hidary: JHI Midrash in Historical Context. [New course]

4:50 PM

Kanarfogel: JHI 5345 The History of the Tosafists and their Literary Corpus

Rynhold: JPH 6874 The Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas

6:50 PM

Perelis: JHI 6384 Jewish Culture in Medieval Spain

Elman: TAS 5801 Introduction to Tannaitic Literature

Language

Tsadik: SEM 5111 Arabic I Monday and Wednesday 4:40–5:55 pm.

Does not count toward the ten required MA courses, but scholarship grants apply to this course.



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Students to Head to New Rochelle for Off Campus Shabbaton

By Esti Kuperman

Yeshiva University's undergraduate colleges will be joining forces for an off-campus shabbaton on the weekend of April 20 in New Rochelle, New York. The shabbaton, titled "New-Ro Shabbat," is the first off-campus shabbaton in at least four years.

Sponsored by the Stern College For Women Student Council and the Yeshiva Student Union, the shabbaton will be hosted at the Young Israel of New Rochelle. The entire cost for students for the shabbaton, which includes meals and transportation, is \$15.

The student councils decided to try out this new type of shabbaton in order to offer some new opportunities for students on both campuses, said YSU president Zach Serman. "We figured it might be different and exciting to take things off campus, to explore a great Orthodox community here in NY," he said. Shabbatons with Wilf and Beren students only occur on the Beren campus, so the student leaders tried to explore new possibilities beyond the typical Beren campus shabbatons.

"We are very excited that our Shul is hosting the shabbaton," remarked Rabbi Reuven

Fink, the Rabbi of the Young Israel of New Rochelle since 1981. "We hope that the college students will enjoy the social and educational opportunities available to them." Fink, who teaches at Yeshiva University, also mentioned that having students from Yeshiva

"WE ARE VERY EXCITED THAT OUR SHUL IS HOSTING THE SHABBATON," REMARKED RABBI REUVEN FINK, THE RABBI OF THE YOUNG ISRAEL OF NEW ROCHELLE SINCE 1981."

University for shabbat is an important experience for the community of New Rochelle.

According to Serman, the strong modern Orthodox community of New Rochelle made it a perfect fit for the shabbaton. Only a 30-minute drive from Washington Heights, many

members of the Young Israel of New Rochelle are affiliated with Yeshiva University in some way, as students or teachers.

"The administration has been very supportive of this idea from the onset," said Serman. "They see the potential that it has to offer and happily helped us to set things in motion."

The student presidents of YSU and SCWSC expressed a desire to offer students enjoyable programming. They also remarked that they hope future student presidents advocate for continued programming of a similar nature. Serman explained that it is often hard to start new program initiatives at a University, but he is hopeful for positive feedback from students to continue to push for more programs like this.

"We thought it (the shabbaton) would be a great opportunity to have a positive co-ed event while connecting with a different community," said SCWSC president Keren Neugroschl.

"I think it's really nice that this shabbaton is taking place outside of Yeshiva University and Stern, because I think the two don't really connect in a Shabbos community, and something about a shabbos community brings people together," said Stern College Junior and New Rochelle resident Nicole Berger. I think it's really nice that Stern and YU are coming to my community."

Chaya Ross, a Junior at Stern College, displayed enthusiasm for the new shabbaton saying, "It seems like a great opportunity to have a meaningful Shabbat outside the usual spot."

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YC Deans Involve Students in Selection of New Political Science Professor

By Yitzchak Carroll

In an effort to hire more effective instructors, Yeshiva College Deans included students in the hiring process for a new Political Science professor earlier this year. Students, faculty and administrators alike lauded the initiative to involve students in picking new instructors.

"The Deans are completely committed to getting student input into the hiring process for all full-time, tenure-track positions. And we read students' evaluation forms carefully, and take them seriously," said Yeshiva College Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Dr. Joanne

"STUDENT INPUT IN THE HIRING PROCESS IS NO DOUBT VALUABLE SINCE STUDENTS ARE IN THE BEST POSITION TO EVALUATE THE TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS OF A PROSPECTIVE PROFESSOR," LUDERS SAID"

Jacobson. "This is a liberal arts college, and teaching—and good teachers—are essential to our mission!"

Jacobson said that in the fall, the "top four [candidates] out of a much larger applicant pool" were invited to present their research to Political Science majors as well as students in a Social Science class that met concurrent to the presentation slot. After each presentation, students

anonymously filled out evaluation sheets to provide feedback to the Deans.

Matthew Incantalupo, who is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor at Haverford College, was selected to fill the vacancy and will begin teaching at YU in the fall. He specializes in American politics and will teach three courses in the Fall 2018 semester.

"I don't subscribe to the idea that students are the University's 'customers,' but students are part of a broader partnership that makes the University a special place," Incantalupo said regarding students' involvement in his appointment. "Students should definitely remain a part of the hiring and recruitment process. Knowing that I'll be working with good students helped me decide to come to Yeshiva," he added.

According to Political Science Chair Dr. Joseph Luders, the vacancy for an Assistant Professor of Political Science occurred after Dr. Ruth Bevan, the former department chairwoman, retired last year.

"Student input in the hiring process is no doubt valuable since students are in the best position to evaluate the teaching effectiveness of a prospective professor," Luders said. "At too many universities, there is insufficient consideration of a professor's merit as a teacher, but, for many students (perhaps most), this is the single most important consideration and it deserves to be factored into the mix of variables when making an appointment."

A similar process has been used previously to fill vacancies in other YC departments, including Computer Science and Biology. According to Computer Science Department Chair Judah Diament, in recent years, candidates have been invited to teach a class as part of a regular Computer Science course and present a guest lecture to students on a topic of the prospective professor's choosing. Following

the lectures, students were furnished with surveys to evaluate the candidates, which were then returned to Professor Diament.

"If someone can't successfully communicate with, and connect with, our students, we will not hire [them] as a Computer Science professor, no matter how good his/her non-teaching credentials are," Diament said. "Yeshiva is an educational institution, not an industrial research lab whose exclusive goal is doing excellent research. As such, I think it is critical that we get students' feedback on our candidates."

Sophomore Political Science major Avery Horovitz applauded the move. "I'm really glad that the University took this step in encouraging students to become more actively engaged in this aspect of their educational journey," Horovitz said. "I hope that this sets a trend that will continue on a University-wide scale," he added.



Yeshiva College and Syms First Year Writing Courses to be Combined

By Kira Paley

As of the Fall 2018 semester, the first-year writing courses for men in Sy Syms School of Business and Yeshiva College will no longer be separate; male Syms students will take First Year Writing in Yeshiva College. The Wilf Campus Syms course of study requires two communications courses, Business Communication and First Year Writing, which up until now both were taken in Syms.

The requirement for Syms students to take First Year Writing at Syms has been in place for the past three years, according to Sy Syms School of Business Interim Dean Michael Strauss. "The change in policy is largely because of the excellent English department at Yeshiva College," said Dean Strauss. He also noted the similarity in curricula between the Syms First Year Writing course and the YC First Year Writing course. "Though taught by different professors, what was being taught in each course was roughly the same," he said.

"Since First Year Writing is a particular strength of the YC English Department, and since there is benefit to studying in an environment where there is a mixture of students from different majors, combining business and liberal arts students in the same writing classes seems a win/win," said Dean Karen Bacon, The Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of

Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences. "A derivative benefit is that with a larger number of YC FYW sections to accommodate the larger numbers, students will have more sections from which to choose in making their schedules."

"In short, this will allow YC and Syms students to learn together in an academic context, which, especially with writing, benefits everyone by potentially deepening any classroom dialogue with more perspectives and experiences," said Liesl Schwabe, Writing Program Director at Yeshiva College and Yeshiva College First Year Writing professor, in an email.

Syms Junior Ariel Axelrod said about First Year Writing at Syms, "The class covered both business and general writing skills. Some of our assignments involved composing business-relevant emails as well as corporate memos. Other assignments (i.e. our final paper) were more general and required us to delve into an ethical issue such as, in my class, the cooking of lobsters."

Professor Schwabe noted the universality and versatility of the First Year Writing courses at YC. "In my own FYWR courses, we often explore both the tradition of college and the ways the 'purpose' of higher education is evolving," she said. "We ask why literacy and critical thinking matter in a democracy and consider why writing in particular is so important to any kind of learning—on campus and off and regardless of major. In my past experience of teaching Syms and YC students together, this discussion was made all the more compelling when students reflected on their differences and, just as often, their similarities."

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It's Policy, Not Psak

By Chana Weinberg

When the athletics department decided to have the women's basketball team play its home games in four different gyms, none of which were the Maccabees home court on the Wilf campus, rumors circled YU—it's a dress code issue, women's basketball is not an appropriate event to be held on a rabbinical school campus. It is likely you imagined rabbis sitting in a room, discussing and then deciding a halachic *psak* regarding the permissibility of women playing basketball games in the gym. The Klein @ 9 controversy also appeared to students as a *psak* decision

"AT THIS POINT, I UNDERSTOOD THAT PSAK HALACHA IS NOT HOW THE OFFICE OF STUDENT LIFE DECIDES TO APPROVE OF A SPEAKER OR AN EVENT. THIS EXPLAINS WHY TOPICS SUCH AS FEMALE ATHLETES PLAYING GAMES IN THE GYM AND KLEIN @ 9 CAN BECOME SO CONTENTIOUS—WE ARE NOT GIVEN CLEAR-CUT HALACHIC ANSWERS BUT RATHER ARE PRESENTED WITH POLICIES THAT THE UNIVERSITY HAS ESTABLISHED AND STANDS BY!"

made by Roshei Yeshiva. But, as I learned in an attempt to investigate the halachic basis of these decision, rumors and assumptions, though often based on truth and reason, can be inaccurate or even false.

I began my research by reaching out to the people in the university who are in the position to make halachic decisions. One correspondence I had, with Rabbi Jeremy Wieder, Rosh Yeshiva at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, was curious. I asked, among other things: What is the process that the Roshei Yeshiva have to make halachic decisions for the university? Rabbi Wieder replied: "I personally am not involved in any *psak* for the University, I have no idea who (if anyone) is asked and under what circumstances."

A Rosh Yeshiva not involved in making *psak*?! That seemed strange. I must be missing a key understanding of the Rosh Yeshiva's involvement in student life.

This confusion called for deeper analysis, so I searched for a long-tenured school official with the experience required to understand the inner workings of decisions made at YU—someone who could give a clear explanation of how *psak* is decided at the university. I thought Rabbi Blau, *mashgiach ruchani* since 1977 and a part of YU since undergrad in 1959, would be a fitting interviewee.

Sitting at a table in a packed beit midrash I asked Rabbi Blau the same question I asked Rabbi Wieder and hoped for a simple explanation. The hope quickly vanished—these things are just not simple.

"Not every Rebbe, because he says *shiur*, considers himself a *posek*," said Rabbi Blau. "There are a number of rabbanim who are halachic experts in particular areas, but to a large degree that reflects itself outside of yeshiva." Rabbi Blau continued by explaining how community rabbis give halachic advice to their congregants and how that differs from the type of issues that arise in Yeshiva.

"If someone is a rav in a shul, he will get many different kinds of questions: he is going to have issues that affect the married couple; issues about having an elderly parent who is very sick... what should you do in terms of keeping them alive? A vast majority of these questions will not come in the context of day-to-day life in yeshiva."

As for what happens in Yeshiva, Rabbi Blau explained how "internally... there are limited areas of *psak*... Many of the issues are questions of appropriate atmosphere kinds of things. The *Shulchan Aruch* doesn't talk much about having male and female colleges from the same institution a couple of miles apart. I couldn't find that anywhere." (I didn't look that up, but I trust this assessment.)

At this point, I understood that *psak* halacha is not how the Office of Student Life decides to approve of a speaker or an event. This explains why topics such as female athletes playing games in the gym and Klein @ 9 can become so contentious—we are not given clear-cut halachic answers but rather are presented with policies that the university has established and stands by.

Many questions come screaming into my brain at this

understanding: why is one policy chosen over another if it is not halachic? Who decides or decided in the past what those policies are? If there are set policies, then why aren't we given full explanations of how the decision was made? Now you either have a question list of your own forming, or you are wondering why I'm letting these things bother me—most people are OK with what the university decides, so I should just let it go. Either way, it is important to know how these policies were formed at YU and how they come into play today.

Rabbi Blau continued to be a wonderful source as he explained the concept of the "internal *mesorah* [tradition]"

at YU. Similar to precedent, this *mesorah* has guided decisions in the past and continues to guide us and create both policies and problems for us today.

Rabbi Blau used the first gemara shiur taught at Stern to model the concept of "internal *mesorah*". The Rav, Joseph B. Soloveitchik, world-renowned Jewish leader and philosopher in the 20th century and former Rosh Yeshiva of RIETS, came down to Stern College and gave the opening shiur of the new *gemara* program. "[The shiur] was introduced by the Rav because that gave it the stamp that it is an approved thing," and with the stamp of approval from the leading Modern Orthodox Torah scholar of the day, the Stern *gemara* program was launched and continues to be held to the standard of excellence that the Rav exemplified in his first shiur. It was decided in the past and now becomes standard policy at YU: women are given the opportunity to learn *gemara* at a high level.

After sharing this story, Rabbi Blau reminded me that this was disputed even though the Rav gave his approval. It still became "part of the *mesorah* of the Yeshiva," however, that women learn *gemara*. After the Rav's passing, these policy decisions became less clear-cut. For example, in 2000, Rabbi Abba Bronspiegel and Rabbi Yehuda Parnes, who were both at YU for more than 40 years, left for the newly opening yeshiva, Lander College for Men, because of alleged clashes in religious ideology, particularly issues with women's Talmud study.

So we have an example of precedent and of how following the precedent leads to controversy. Rabbi Blau

explained that conditions are similar today; there are areas of contention in deciding religious policy at YU. "Things can be a little fuzzy" is how he put it—a refreshingly honest remark. This fuzziness, explained Rabbi Blau, is exacerbated by changes in the administration. "Status quo, even if it may be wrong, is hard to change," said Rabbi Blau. Newly appointed President Berman will avoid "rocking the boat" at the start of his administration, therefore some changes that people are looking for will take time to develop. Rabbi Blau did note, however, that President Berman is going to have more say in religious policy than his predecessor, Richard M. Joel, because he is an ordained Rabbi.

We now understand that the University makes religious policy, not *psak*. These policies are based on precedent and an overall evaluation of where the school wants to set its *hashkafa*. All of this is passed down as "internal *mesorah*" to guide the next generation of students and faculty in the way of Torah *umadda*.

This "internal *mesorah*" strongly parallels to the policy decisions made by any other university. For example, in November 2017, the University of Pennsylvania, following a slew of controversial political remarks made by professors, had unclear and hasty reactions to these statements, revealing an inconsistency in its overall policy of how to react to professors making controversial statements. Additionally, administrators of Stanford University, which has an "internal *mesorah*" of commitment to free speech, removed posters with insensitive comments—an acute deviation from its stated standard.

While we face battles with policy issues just as the top universities in America do, we bear the yoke of hundreds of years of tradition and religious commitment. With that in mind, one could argue that we should hold our institution more accountable for unexplained *hashkafic* policy decisions, especially those generating negative student reactions.

Though it is still unclear *how* these policy decisions are made and who specifically makes them, my conversation with Rabbi Blau reassured me that YU upholds a rich history of commitment to Torah values which we benefit from in numerous ways: never missing classes or tests for chaggim; the constant availability of high level Torah learning; the ability to play (and win) on NCAA level sports teams without worrying about games or practices being on Shabbat. I also learned that I am not alone in thinking that these religious policy decisions can be "a little fuzzy". The controversies surrounding the gym and Klein @ 9 are likely a by-product of the "internal *mesorah*." If we were given *psak*, we would have been told that it is *assur* [impermissible] for men to watch women play basketball or that it is *mutar* [permissible] for women to speak from the pulpit. We hear the results of a policy decisions and we trust they are rooted in good faith. But maybe we need some explicit explanations as well.



On Opioid Overdose: Why is the Death Toll Rising?

By Jonah Stavsky

This past week I returned to my home city of Columbus, Ohio.

The list of my favorite Ohio pastimes includes experiencing the distinct serenity of the spacious farmlands as the airplane descends, trail biking through the Columbus greenery, and catching up with friends, family, and members of my relatively small, yet close-knit community.

To my chagrin, however, a relatively recent issue has threatened the integrity of the state. For Ohio is currently topping the charts in regards to the rising opioid epidemic, placing 4th on the list for the largest increase in non-heroin related deaths from 2000-2015 in a given state (1.6 vs 17.3 deaths per 100,000 people in

2000 vs 2015), and number one for the largest increase in heroin related deaths from 2000-2015 (0.7 vs 13.3 deaths per 100,000 people in 2000 vs 2015). This data taken from the CDC (Center for Disease Control and Prevention) is startling, and, in October 2017, prompted the official governmental declaration of the epidemic as a public health emergency in not only Ohio, but the entirety of the United States.

But why are the numbers increasing?

Surely opioids are as addicting today as they were back in the year 2000; this, however, is not the whole story. While the addictive properties of opioids load the gun, so to speak, factors such as increased physician prescription of opioids, heightened availability, potency, and deadliness of newer opioids, and subpar follow-up care of users admitted to the emergency room, pull the

trigger. Before discussing each of these complex subjects in turn (as well as proposed solutions), it is crucial to have a bit of background knowledge. Therefore, let us review the basics of opioids, including proper terminology, and the neurochemical mechanisms underlying their addictive qualities.

Opioids are a group of compounds that act on naturally occurring opioid receptors in the human brain. To clarify terminology, opiates are substances found in nature (i.e. from the poppy plant) in addition to their derivatives; famously, one such compound is morphine (Offermanns, 2008). Opioids, on the other hand, are synthetic or semi-synthetic (i.e. man-made) compounds and include drugs such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, and more recently, fentanyl (Freye, 2008).

SEE OPIOID, CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



OPIOID, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

For the sake of clarity, I will use the word “opioids” to describe the general class of compounds. So too, due to their slightly differing structures, each of the opioids achieves varying levels of bioactive effects.

There are several different neurochemical mechanisms that contribute to the analgesic (pain reducing) and psychoactive properties of opioids. Although each opioid differs slightly, the general pattern starts with the drug binding to the μ receptor in the brain and spinal cord. While there are others, the μ receptor is most responsible for the rewarding (i.e. addicting) aspects of opioids. The neurotransmitter GABA, which is an inhibitory compound, is itself inhibited by opioids. The net result is a strong stimulation of the reward centers of the brain (Chahl, 1996). Although a simplistic approach (the true mechanism is far more complex), it will be sufficient for the purposes of this article. With this in hand, let us take a deeper look into the reasons for the stark increase in opioid-related issues.

While pain levels in the United States have

yet preventing drug abuse on the other.

A (seemingly) simple solution to this issue is to find alternative methodologies for pain relief. Non-pharmacological pain management options include massage, physical therapy, and meditation. However, although these techniques may be efficacious for low to moderate pain, they are simply insufficient for the vast majority of patients experiencing high levels of pain. Therefore, drug-based intervention may still be the best option. But we run into the same issue: addictive qualities (as it relates to the euphoric experience) are an inherent property of most pharmacologically based painkillers. For this reason, scientific research has focused on finding the “goldilox” of drugs — effective at relieving severe pain on the one hand, yet non-addictive and with a low risk of lethality on the other. The research is ongoing (I was personally involved in one such project) and progress is being made every day.

Adding to the opioid epidemic is the heightened availability, potency, and deadliness of newer drugs. One such opioid is fentanyl, a synthetic opioid sweeping the nation — both in terms of medicinal and recreational uses — thereby drawing much attention to itself. The number of reported law enforcement encounters with fentanyl has increased exponentially in the past 8 years (cdc.gov). Here again, one of the highest rates of fentanyl encounters in the United States took place in Ohio, with other Midwestern and eastern states following suit.

As unprecedented as it may sound, the drastic increase in fentanyl availability stemmed from the ease in which the drug could be obtained by a simple mail order request to China. By changing the composition of fentanyl just slightly, Chinese companies can dodge law enforcement, while distributing the narcotic as a “research chemical”.

By binding strongly to the neural Mu receptors mentioned earlier, fentanyl has been shown to be about 75 times as powerful as morphine by volume, with some forms boasting 10,000 times the strength of morphine (NIDA, 2016). This drastic increase in potency has translated to an even greater increase in death rates from a given opioid, rising from 3000 deaths in 2013 to a staggering 20,000 deaths in 2016 (cdc).

Solutions to fentanyl over-usage are varied, and tackle the issue from all angles — biological, psychological, and sociological aspects included. The “biopsychosocial” model of addiction, as it were, not only applies to fentanyl, but to opioid usage in general.

On the biological front, an opioid antagonist (blocker) can be used in the acute setting to reverse a potential overdose. One such antagonist that you may have heard of is naloxone (brand name, Narcan). Naloxone binds to the opioid receptors but in a specific manner that inhibits fentanyl from binding, without activating the receptor itself (Naloxone, ASHP). Biologics that control long-term addiction (by continuously blocking the receptor) are also available.

From a psychological and sociological perspective, various forms of psychosocial therapy contribute great efficacy in the fight against opioid abuse. Such therapies may include cognitive behavioral therapy, contingency management interventions, and a computer-based community reinforcement approach called the Therapeutic Education System. Respectively, these methods focus on modifying dysfunctional emotions,

behaviors, and thoughts (Beck, 2011), providing tangible, voucher-based rewards to reinforce positive behaviors (Budney et. al., 2006), and increasing problem-solving, coping, and communication skills, especially with adolescents (NIH).

Finally, follow-up care for those admitted to the emergency room for an opioid overdose requires serious revision. In an article published in *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, researchers evaluated emergency room statistics from Pennsylvania based Medicaid patients. Only 15 percent of those who survived opioid overdoses and 33 percent of heroin survivors were given one of three FDA approved medications for the long-term treatment of opioid addiction: methadone, naltrexone, and buprenorphine. This problem is not isolated to the state of Pennsylvania. As it would seem, many hospital emergency room systems do not contain proper protocols in place to handle addiction cases.

As highlighted by an article published in *Scientific American*, a 2015 study published out of Yale School of Medicine gives a potential solution as it relates to hospital administrative policy. Patients admitted to the emergency room for an opioid overdose were divided into three study groups and were provided the following services/products: (1) a simple pamphlet on addiction clinics, (2) an interview with a researcher who would also provide transportation to a health care provider, or (3) a combination of the interview with initial and continuous doses of one of the prophylactic medications mentioned earlier, buprenorphine. 30 days later, the patients in groups 1, 2, and 3 remained involved in treatment at a rate of 37%, 45%, & 78%, respectively.

Clearly, there is an issue, and even clearer, there is a solution. However, although physicians have the ability to prescribe up to three days of maintenance, opioid blocking medication (US Department of Justice), a measly 30,000 are legally licensed to dispense. Moreover, despite a recent increase in the number of buprenorphine doses a physician can prescribe from 100 to 275 per year (SAMHSA), access to long-term care in the form of methadone clinics is impractical for many patients, as the repositories are often located in dangerous neighborhoods (*Scientific American*).

To summarize: increased physician prescription of opioids, heightened availability, potency, and deadliness of newer opioids (such as fentanyl), and subpar follow-up care of users admitted to the emergency room are mainstay factors in the recent increase of opioid overdoses in the United States. By expanding scientific research into nonaddicting, low-risk pharmacological alternatives, applying a biopsychosocial approach to preventing and halting opioid outbreaks, and focusing in on protocol adaptations in our emergency room systems, a better part of the damage may be avoided.

As a volunteer EMT in New York City’s Central Park, the theoretical nature of the opioid epidemic has become all too practical. As a permanent resident of the state of Ohio, the constant drug-based news coverage has bogged down community morale. But as a citizen of the United States, I am hopeful; although a lengthy and gradual process, advances in science and healthcare policy will undoubtedly close the gap in the fight against the opioid epidemic.

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remained relatively constant over the past 15 years, the prescription of opioids has nearly quadrupled, with roughly 50% of the narcotics being dispensed by primary care providers, who often report insufficient training in pain management (cdc.gov). So too, despite statistically constant levels of pain and pain-related conditions, there is a three-fold difference in opioid prescription rates between certain states. Interestingly enough, a few states, including Ohio, boast opioid prescription levels over a prescription per person, on average (cdc.gov). In order of relative risk of overdose from lowest to highest are opioids given by a friend for free, those prescribed by a physician, and narcotics obtained by a stranger or drug dealer (cdc.gov).

To be sure, prescription opioid medications demonstrate high efficacy for pain relief and improve the quality of life for certain types of individuals, including patients requiring surgical intervention and those who may have undergone a disabling physical trauma or someone otherwise experiencing a medical condition characterized by chronic pain. It is, therefore, a balancing act — managing acute pain on the one hand,

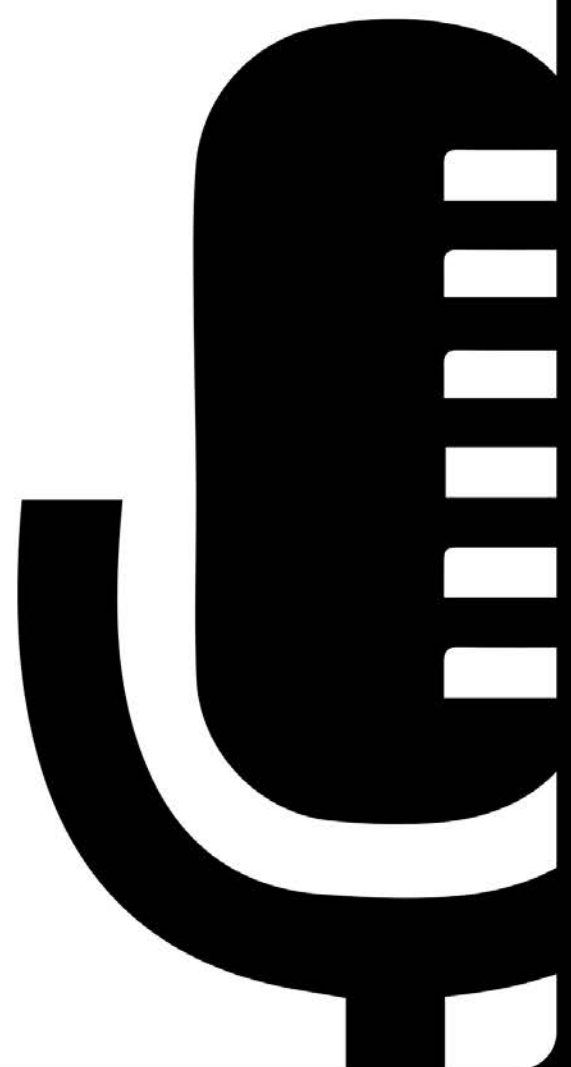


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The YU Commentator



Advancing Learning Through the Straus Center

By Nechama Lowy and Ellie Parker

The Zahava and Moshael Straus Center For Torah and Western Thought, headed by Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik, offers classes and extracurricular opportunities for students at Yeshiva University who wish to participate.

The Center's mission statement is "to help develop Jewish thinkers and future communal pillars by deepening their education in the richness of the Jewish tradition, exposing them to the richness of human knowledge and insight from across the ages, and confronting them with the great moral, philosophical and theological questions of our age." Ben Atwood, a student at YC who is involved in the Center through the Straus Scholars program, explained the center's belief that, "it is critical to keep the Biblical values underlying American culture and history alive and strong. The Center intends to teach that message and help people see that modern Western culture derives from the Bible."

The Center offers classes in Stern and Yeshiva College's political science departments as well as its art and philosophy departments. The courses tend to focus on interdisciplinary studies, combining Torah and halachic ideals with Western philosophy and politics.

While the classes are open to all students, the Straus Center offers a selective Scholars Program for male students who are already in the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program. However, while The Commentator was told by multiple sources that the program is only for current YC Honors students, the application does not specify this exclusion. The first year of the program was in 2016, with three YC students being selected.

The recipients of the scholarship receive \$25,000 a year towards their YU tuition, a personalized independent study with Dr. Neil Rogachevsky, and multiple trips and events. The scholars are also required to take eight Straus Center classes over the course of their time at YU, in place of the honors courses required by the Honors program. Though at the moment, this honors program is only offered for YC students, Rabbi Aryeh Czarka, Assistant Director of Operations at Straus Center, assured The Commentator that "we have plans to expand the Straus Scholars program to Stern College as well."

Another job of the Straus Center Scholars is "to promote the Straus Center to the student body," stated Atwood. However, their current best mode of advertisement is through students already enrolled in the classes. "It's usually a diverse crowd [in the classes], so that's how people know about them," explained Atwood.

Not all Straus Center courses are taught by Straus faculty, namely Rabbi Soloveichik or Dr. Rogachevsky.

There are regular YC classes that are used to fulfill Straus requirements, generally involving philosophy. "Last semester, I took a class 'Ethics with Daniel Reynold' which was a normal philosophy class for YC, that was designated for my fulfillment," explained Atwood. Atwood has also

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taken classes at the Center, including *Rembrandt and the Jews* and *Athens and Jerusalem*.

Trips with the Straus center include tours to historical Jewish communities, pertaining to the various classes given. Last year, the Center visited Philadelphia to tour the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue. This past fall, students flew to Charleston to learn about Jewish life during the Civil War period. The Commentator was unable to determine what the precise guidelines are for who is allowed to attend the trips, but they are sometimes offered to Stern students who have been involved in the Straus Center through Stern College courses or outside programming.

It is onerous to conduct a program that seeks to merge the ideas of Torah study and Western thought while being intellectually open-minded and honest. However, Atwood explained how seamlessly the two concepts work in tandem in the classroom. He described the Straus Center as a place that encourages debate, "[Rabbi Soloveichik], in no way, attempts to hide his opinions, but always opens the floor to discussion and seriously pays attention to students who may disagree. As a result, the Straus center has a clear agenda but also supports intellectual growth in its openness to debate and question."

Talia Edelman, a Junior at Stern majoring in Neuroscience, registered for a Straus Center course titled

Bible and Democracy during her first semester on campus. The course, taught by Professor Matthew Holbreich, a Straus Resident Scholar, focused on the Hebraic foundations of the American founding ideals. When asked what made this class different from other classes she has taken at Stern, Edelman replied, "our professor was an expert in the field we were studying, and the course was structured around a book that he was co-writing with Rabbi Soloveichik." Additionally, the students in her class attended the trip to Philadelphia, organized by the Straus Center, to see the Spanish-Portuguese synagogue, as was discussed in the class.

Professor Joseph Luders, the Chair and interim Chair of the Stern and YC Political Science department respectively, feels that the Straus Center adds a crucial piece to his department. Professor Luders described how the Straus Center tends to focus its classes around "political philosophy," thus "rounding out the political science department since [it] often runs light in this subfield of political science." Additionally, the Straus Center offers unparalleled programming and speakers. "For instance, last year, the Straus Center brought a very well regarded Lincoln scholar to Stern for a course on leadership," elaborated Professor Luders.

The Center offers programs for graduate students, as well, specifically a fellowship for students in Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, all of whom seem to be hand-picked by Rabbi Soloveichik. Jonah Sieger, a current RIETS student and Straus Center fellow explained that, "A bunch of us got an email and we came in to have a meeting with [Rabbi Soloveichik]." However, RIETS fellow and senior at YC, Eli Weinstein, explained that he heard about the program from Sieger and emailed the staff directly to get into the program. The Commentator is unclear on how the fellows were chosen and for how long the fellowship runs.

The fellows are required to attend seminars twice a month and eventually to publish an article on a topic relating to Jewish and Western traditions under the guidance of Rabbi Soloveichik. Once the article is published, the author receives a stipend. Sieger would not reveal how much the stipend is, but it is dependant on the publication of the article.

The current theme of the RIETS seminars for this semester is "Rabbis, the Bible, and the American Civil War." For example, one such lesson focused on the different views of Jews regarding slavery during the Civil War era. Sieger spoke about how "we kind of tried to figure out how the Southern Jews reacted wholeheartedly supporting slavery and had their take on how to square that away in [Jewish] texts. And then you had the North, spearheaded by Rabbi Sabato Morais, a prominent pulpit Rabbi in the North who had his own take on how their view on abolishing slavery aligned with the Torah."

Sieger explained the type of writing that Rabbi Soloveichik expects from the fellows. "He wants us to put something out that is worthy of publishing and on a topic that we are passionate about. However, since we are Rabbinical students and Orthodox Jews who have been raised learning texts, he wants us to bring that to the fore and incorporate Rabbinic texts into the article."

Similar to the Straus Scholars, the RIETS fellows are privy to multiple trips. Sieger confirmed that Rabbi Soloveichik announced a trip to Virginia that will most likely include Gettysburg. The locations are chosen due to their relevance to the theme of the fellowship. The tour will focus on various locations and battlefields that were important during the Civil War. The location of the second trip has not been announced, but Rabbi Czarka did confirm that "plans for another trip on American Jewish history for this June are underway."

Additionally, the Straus Center holds multiple speakers and events every year that are open to the public. Last semester, Christopher Scalia, son of the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, spoke to Rabbi Soloveichik on his father's legacy and, at a later event, a professor of politics at the University of Virginia discussed the concept of "founding" in the thought of James Madison. For Yom Hazikaron this year, the Center will be holding an event hosting Dr. Leon Kass and discussing his book, "Leading a Worthy Life: Finding Meaning in Modern Times."



Yeshiva University Valedictorians: A Look into Academic Policies and Recent Trends

By Benjamin Koslowe

This May 16, as with recent years' commencements, Yeshiva University will present valedictorian awards to nine undergraduate men and women. Six of the valedictorian awards go to men of the Wilf campus: one Yeshiva College student, one Sy Syms School of Business student, and one student from each of the four men's Undergraduate Torah Studies programs—Mazer School of Talmudic Studies (MYP), Irving I. Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP), Isaac Breuer College of Hebraic Studies (IBC), and James Striar School (JSS). The other three valedictorian awards go to three women of the Beren campus: two students from Stern College for Women and one student from Sy Syms School of Business. One Stern College valedictorian award is given to a student of any major, while the other Stern College valedictorian award is given to a student whose major is in the Rebecca Ivy Department of Jewish Studies.

This article is divided into two sections: The first section offers a comprehensive look into the policies and processes that determine the nine valedictorian awards. The second section focuses on some observed trends, both historical and contemporary.

YU Valedictorians: Policies

The policies for determining the Beren campus valedictorians are recorded in the Beren campus Academic Information and Policies. The first Stern College for Women valedictorian award is granted to "[t]he student with the highest GPA, regardless of major." The second Stern College for Women valedictorian award is granted to a Jewish studies major with the highest Jewish studies GPA, "provided she has completed a minimum of 50 Jewish studies credits ... at SCW." Both of these students are required, by the time they graduate, to have completed "84 SCW on-campus credits and 6 semesters full-time." For each award, if two students tie by scoring the same GPA, "the student with the most credits [or Jewish studies credits, in the case of the second award] taken at YU in NY and listed on the SCW transcript ... is designated valedictorian."

Dean Karen Bacon, the Mordecai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and Dean Ethel Orlian, the Associate Dean of Stern College for Women, both confirmed that the two Stern College for Women valedictorian designations are made only on the basis of GPA, credits earned, and on-campus residency. "Academic rigor," wrote Dean Bacon, "is not one of the considerations."

Such is not the case for the male and female Sy Syms School of Business valedictorians. Though the Wilf campus Academic Information and Policies make no statement regarding valedictorian determination, the Beren campus academic policies, as well as the Sy Syms academic advising website, specify rules essentially equivalent to those for the first Stern College for Women valedictorian award. The only differences are that for these awards, the recipients must "have earned 75 credits on campus at the time of the decision," and "[r]igor of academic coursework in both secular and Jewish Studies will be considered" (the latter requirement appears on the academic advising website but not in the Beren campus academic policies). Interim Dean of Sy Syms School of Business Michael Strauss explained that academic rigor is judged "by a committee that includes the Dean." The policies for determining the male and female Sy Syms valedictorians are equivalent.

The rules for determining the remaining five awards—the four Wilf campus Undergraduate Torah Studies valedictorians and the Yeshiva College valedictorian—appear nowhere in the academic policies or on the Yeshiva University website.

Rabbi Menachem Penner, the Max and Marion Grill Dean of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS), wrote that the MYP, SBMP, IBC, and JSS valedictorian nominees are determined based on GPA, but "many factors are then taken into account by the *roshei yeshiva*" or "by the

faculties of the programs" to ultimately determine each recipient. Rabbi Penner wrote that "it would be difficult to base simply on GPA."

In similar fashion, the Yeshiva College valedictorian is determined by both GPA and faculty discretion. Dean Fred Sugarman, the Yeshiva College Associate Dean of Operations and Student Affairs, explained the stages of the process.

Dean Sugarman first determines the students with the top 35 or so GPAs in the graduating class and ensures that each student is in a position to complete 94 on-campus credits, demonstrates good academic standing, and proves to be a generally respectable person who represents

"RUTNER IS THE FIRST NON-SCIENCE MAJOR TO RECEIVE THE [VALEDICTORIAN] AWARD FROM YESHIVA COLLEGE SINCE 2010."

Yeshiva University values (this involves, among other considerations, making sure that the student is present and adequately participatory in his morning Torah Studies program).

Next, Dean Sugarman narrows the list down to the ten or so students in that set with the highest GPAs, which, according to Sugarman, is typically in the vicinity of 3.92. These finalists then write personal statement style essays on the topic of how they exemplify the ideal Yeshiva College graduate and are worthy of representing the class as valedictorian. They submit the essays to a board consisting of Dean Karen Bacon, Professor Shalom Holtz, Professor Aaron Koller, and Dean Joanne Jacobson (Holtz is Director of the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program and Associate Professor of Bible, Koller is Chair of the Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish Studies and Associate Professor of Bible, and Jacobson is Associate Dean for Academic Affairs).

After the faculty board evaluates the candidates' essays, Dean Sugarman computes a weighted average for each finalist by assigning a weight of 70% to GPA and a weight of 30% to the evaluated essays. From the new ranking, the finalists are narrowed down to three or so final candidates with the highest scores. Sugarman explained that because of the heavy weight assigned to GPA, the valedictorian is usually a student with one of the highest GPAs amongst his graduating class. The same board that evaluates the essays then interviews the final candidates. The valedictorian

award is granted finally to one candidate based upon the board's and Dean Sugarman's discretion.

"For myself," wrote Dean Jacobson, "the hope is to find the candidate whose strengths go deep, and beyond the conventional. I would include among those strengths: integrity; self-awareness; intellectual seriousness, ambition, and originality; a conscious point of view; and fulfilled promise (I would expect an Honors student, for example, to write a thesis and complete the Honors program)." Professor Koller explained similarly that the "essays are often very telling, and that is a really important stage, because there are students who can pull off a spectacularly high GPA but cannot articulate a vision for life, Jewish or otherwise. And that's not a criticism, but it's also not what we want in a valedictorian. So the essays enable us to whittle down the list to just a few, and then through interviews we try to settle on one who is both intellectually and academically spectacular and deeply thoughtful and thus reflective of the best YC has to offer the world." Dean Bacon, too, granted that in the interview process, "inevitably there is an element of subjectivity. Some students present better than others both in terms of their ideas and passions and as well as their style." She reflected, "All of this has an impact."

Dean Sugarman explained that the Yeshiva College valedictorian determination policies need not appear in the official academic policies for a variety of reasons. For one, the academic policies are largely intended to specify students' requirements and rights, such as course requirements and rules for academic integrity, but not students' privileges, such as the valedictorian award. Relatedly, many awards are granted at graduation to the point where it would not make sense to detail them all in the policies.

Dean Sugarman noted as well that it is standard in many other colleges for deans and faculty, rather than official academic policies, to determine the valedictorian based on their discretion. Indeed, many public and private colleges do not offer explicit rules for valedictorian determination. Several universities that do specify their rules, feature similar policies to those in practice at Yeshiva College. Columbia, Princeton, and Dartmouth all determine their undergraduate valedictorians by a number of factors, including GPA, scholastic standing, and faculty discretion.

SEE VALEDICTORIANS,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: With the Sy Syms School of Business annual Gala Awards Dinner around the corner, taking place exactly 30 years after the school completed its first year in 1987-88, The Commentator has decided to take a look back with this article.

From the Archives (May 12, 1987; Volume 52 Issue 8) — Syms School Sets Standards

By David Israel and David Piekarz

Next fall will mark the opening of the much heralded Sy Syms Business School (SSSB). The school will occupy the fourth floor of the Science Hall, with renovations currently taking place to make room for classrooms and administrative offices. Aside from the physical presence of the new school, many jarring changes will greet the returning and new students interested in a business-related career; changes regarding his choice of majors, course selection, degree, and teachers.

The first, and most apparent change confronting the student will be in the majors to be offered by the business school. The economics department in Yeshiva College will no longer encompass a finance, business, and economics track. Instead it will emphasize economic theory and grant a degree for the pure economics student, though still recognizing courses taken in the business school. The business school will take over the finance major, as well as offer new majors such as Management Information Systems (dealing with the application of computers to business systems), and Marketing and Management. The accounting department will also be under the auspices of the business school, and together with these other majors, will lead to a B.S. degree.

Dr. Schiff, the new Dean of the Sy Syms Business School, was careful to point out that students already enrolled in an economics or accounting major will be allowed to continue under the old program. In fact, every new student will initially be enrolled in YC and only in their sophomore year will they be required to make the decision of whether to enter the business school. The introductory economics courses will remain accessible to all as they are taught by the economics department, which will retain its individual identity.

But perhaps the greatest effect the business school will have on the students is not the new majors or curriculum, but the new faculty. One of Dr. Schiff's main goals for the school is to become accredited, or at least achieve

a level of academic excellence equivalent to AACSB standards, within five years. This involves, among other requirements, to have a percentage of full-time teachers, that is, those who hold a Ph.D. or its equivalent, yet have proven teaching prowess, have actual business experience, and are engaged in research projects. This necessarily entails a restructuring of the accounting and economics faculty. As to the problem of the validity of degrees issued by a non-accredited school, it must be explained that SSSB is only unaccredited as a business school; as a college, with genuinely transferable qualifications, it is recognized, being a division of Yeshiva University. Thus, until the school becomes a separate entity, all degrees will enjoy the same status that they held when courses were no more than a division of YU.

According to Dr. Schiff, all full-time teachers will be asked to return next year, however, this would not be applicable to part-time instructors. Three new full- and part-time teachers have been hired, including a new business law professor, a finance professor, and a computer applications instructor. Another important faculty change is the elimination of Professor Colchamiro's position as chairman of the accounting department, with his current responsibilities being shouldered by Dean Schiff. This change is because the integration of all business departments into one, as yet small school, renders individual chairmen unnecessary. Professor Colchamiro will continue as a faculty member of the business school.

In a meeting with the accounting students, Dean Schiff promised that the current placement success of the accounting department will not be curtailed in any manner. In fact, Dr. Schiff stated that plans have been made to hire a professional placement director to handle the growing ranks of accounting students, as well as those graduating from other business school majors. The placement office will remain separate from the YC placement, and will be handled through the office of the Dean.

The brochure for SSSB states that the school will "offer a complete program which will nurture and cultivate



VALEDICTORIANS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

YU Valedictorians: Trends

As of the time of publication, the only one of the nine Yeshiva University valedictorians to be announced is Jared Rutner. A Yeshiva College student who majored in mathematical economics, Rutner is the first non-science major to receive the award from Yeshiva College since 2010. The 2011 through 2017 YU graduation ceremonies saw seven Yeshiva College valedictorians, of whom four majored in biology, two in chemistry, and one in psychology. Five of these men were pre-med students set to attend medical school (four at YU-affiliated Albert Einstein College of Medicine, one at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai), while the other two pursued graduate-level science research after receiving their diplomas. The last Yeshiva College valedictorian who did not major in the sciences was Willie Roth, a Jewish studies major who, following his 2010 graduation, obtained semikhah from RIETS, a master's degree in medieval Jewish history from Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, and a J.D. degree from Harvard Law School.

In those same years, multiple Stern College for Women valedictorians were pre-med students as well (several continued their academic studies at Einstein), although at least two majored in the humanities (one double-majored

in history and Jewish studies, and another majored in history).

All of those currently involved in the Yeshiva College valedictorian determination offered the same perspective regarding the recent trend of science majors meriting the award. "The fact is," said Dean Jacobson, "Yeshiva College students do major disproportionately in the natural sciences; and I have a feeling that preparation for pre-med calls upon many of our strongest and most ambitious students to do their best work." Professor Koller figured that "it has something to do with what it takes to run a 3.98 GPA or higher." Koller explained that pre-med students are often under considerable pressure to maintain perfect GPAs, whereas this may not be the case for students majoring in the humanities. Dean Bacon wrote similarly that she "can attest to the fact that there is no bias towards science majors. Nevertheless, because there are so many science majors on campus, they may make up a large percentage of those who have the highest GPAs." The Commentator reported earlier this semester that "biology is the largest declared major on both the Wilf and Beren campuses, comprising 26.0% and 33.3% of all declared liberal arts majors, respectively."

This year's Yeshiva College valedictorian determination process, which concluded with the announcement of Rutner this past Wednesday, began a month prior. On Monday, March 12, the Dean's Office sent an email to "the set of students" who were being considered for the award, for the purpose of determining if they were indeed graduating

in May 2018 and eligible to be valedictorian. Two weeks later, on Monday, March 26, Dean Sugarman sent an email to the undergraduate student body announcing the eleven finalists (one later withdrew himself from the running). Of these final candidates, nine spent only three full years on-campus. When the decision was made, most of the candidates were in positions to complete the requisite 94 on-campus credits by graduation, although two were not. Three majored in biology, three in mathematical economics, one in computer science, one in history, one in philosophy, and one in political science. At least two of the candidates were not Honors students.

Dean Sugarman privately emailed the candidates on Tuesday, April 10, informing them that the finalists had been narrowed down to three students. The three students interviewed with the board of deans and faculty on Wednesday, April 11, one after the other, beginning at 1:00 PM and ending at 2:30 PM. Dean Sugarman emailed the three finalists about the final decision at 2:37 PM, and delivered the rest of the student and faculty body at 2:50 PM.

"It is quite an amazing honor," expressed Jared Rutner, reflecting on his privilege to be this year's Yeshiva College valedictorian. "I wish congratulations to all the other finalists and I really am just so thankful for being in YU, for my family, and to Hashem."

From the Sy Syms President's Desk: Celebrating Syms at 30

By Yael Saban

In 1987, Yeshiva University opened its doors to its newest endeavor, The Sy Syms School of Business.

Today, in 2018, Sy Syms has grown from its first graduating class of just two students to this year's graduating class of approximately three hundred students. The program has grown to include five majors, with many individuals working to further what we have within our programs and what we could possibly see in the

"MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUR GROWTH AND SUCCESSES, HOWEVER, ARE THE VALUES AND IDEALS THAT DROVE US ALONG THE WAY."

near future. We have 18 active clubs, educating students through real-life experiences and connections in the inner workings of the business world in New York City.

As a business school surrounded by the business of Midtown Manhattan, Sy Syms is both challenged and improved by the fast-paced business world of New York City. Although we are one of the smaller schools amongst the plethora of business schools in the area, Sy Syms has truly set their mark in the business world. We use every ounce of New York City as our classroom. Whether it be our Hospitality Management Club visiting top hotels in the city or our very own Sy Syms professors sharing with us their real-life experiences that go on outside of the classroom, we are able to grasp onto so many opportunities that are laid right before us.

Within the short time span in which the Sy Syms School of Business grew to become the successful institution we have today, we are able to clearly differentiate it from other prominent business schools. More important than our growth and successes, however, are the values and ideals that drove us along the way. You see the true essence of Torah *UMadda* when you are sitting in your Business Law class and your professor, who has *Semicha*, makes an active effort to intertwine the learning of secular business law with the halachot we have for conducting business. We learn from Sy Syms that it's not just enough to sit in the classroom, it's about going above and beyond what

is expected of you in the business world and leaving the mark of a Sy Syms student wherever you go.

Over the last thirty years, Sy Syms has pushed itself as an institution to set and meet goals and constantly see growth. In a fast-paced community and location, it's beyond impressive that we never fall behind. With hard work and guidance, our students are placed in top firms and set such a great *Kiddush Hashem* for all those around them. Those who choose to work for mid-sized companies are sometimes the first exposure their secular workforce has to Jews and are the ones who give us such a great reputation.

This year's Sy Syms Annual Award Dinner, taking place on Wednesday, May 2nd, 2018, will be celebrating the last 30 years of Sy Syms. It will be an evening that will focus on the values and commitment of those who have brought us here today and continue to give us opportunities and tools to help carry our successes into the future. Join us in celebrating the past, honoring our present, and looking forward to what is to come.

Tickets for the Sy Syms Annual Award Dinner will go on sale on Monday, April 16th.

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The Musical Chairs of Adulthood

By Ellie Parker

One of the unexpected consequences of living away from home is the strangeness of coming back as a visitor.

I spent *Pesach* break in Atlanta with my family. I've been lucky enough to be able to travel back and forth almost monthly since the beginning of the year. Each time I return home, I am subtly reminded that my childhood home is no longer my permanent residence. The overflowing suitcase in the corner of my bedroom serves as a constant indication of my impending departure.

If your home is anything like mine, it is filled to the brim with youthful mementos of a kindergartener stuck in time. Milestones and birthdays, each photographed and hung in a kind of timeline fashion in the center of my living room. Growing up, I passed by these photos every day and as I grew, so did the timeline.

I have two nieces, the eldest of whom possesses an uncanny resemblance to my younger self. Watching her

run past my timeline in the living room brings those pictures to life — adding movement to the motionless figure in the frames. My five-year-old doppelganger was present at my family's Seder this year.

For as long as I can remember, my family has had a very

“THE MUSIC HAD BEEN ON SINCE THE FIRST TIME I SAT AT MY FAMILY’S TABLE AND NOW, AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF PLAYING THE GAME, THE MUSIC HAD STOPPED.”

specific seating chart for our dining room table. The heads of the house, my mom and dad, sit at each end, with the

middle seats filled by guests and family members. In the corner is a little table that is occupied by a younger crowd, namely my two nieces.

As we sat around the table for the Seder, I had an almost out-of-body realization. I looked to my right and my left and, all at once, I noticed that my seat placement had changed. I was slowly moving closer and closer to the middle of the table, surrounded by a different generation of faces. I glanced at my nieces' table in the corner and a wave of nostalgia flooded over me — I would never again sit in that corner. How had I gone so many years without perceiving how far I had moved from that little round table? I had shifted a number of table settings since then and yet, that moment was the first time I had noticed.

As the night came to a close, my nieces assumed their sleeping positions on the couch in the living room. As I stood over them, contemplating the realization I had had at dinner, I noticed a picture on the timeline above them. There I was in preschool, playing one of many games of musical chairs.

I stood there, shocked that this was the first time I had seen this photo. As I paused, I thought about the game of musical chairs I had been playing in my dining room. The music had been on since the first time I sat at my family's table and now, after twenty years of playing the game, the music had stopped. There I was, having circled the table and ending up in the middle, finally looking up to see what changed.

The next time I'm home, I will sit down for a meal at that illustrious table and the music will come back on. With this newfound knowledge, I have the opportunity to play with conviction and poise, not only moving up physically, but intellectually as well. I will resume the game and I will play until I reach the head of the table — having mastered the lifelong game of musical chairs.



MENTOR AND ROLE MODEL, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

impressive on its own. I wrote him a thank you note, in it saying: “I found our discussion incredibly stimulating and was left with an indescribable feeling of satisfaction.”

Rabbi Glickman's exemplary academic and professional accomplishments were only overshadowed by his care for others. He would spend his precious hours meeting with students to provide mentorship and guidance. He even sent out job and internship opportunities to his students.



I frequently sought his advice concerning my career and life in general. I remember setting up a meeting with him

once just to pick his brain. We talked that day extensively about topics ranging from statistics, to Jewish history, to philosophy and *derech halimud* (approach to learning Torah). I naively asked him what it would take for me to be like him. I remember taking copious notes on his answer. Sleep little. Focus. Love of Torah. Strength of Identity and of Character. Own your decisions.

I would occasionally sit with him in Nagel Bagel as students, rabbis, and professors would stop by for conversation with him. I marveled at the fact that he attracted students with diverse backgrounds and interests and connected students who may not have interacted with each other if not for him. He used to say that part of his personal mission was to open up the world of Torah and Talmud for those who were high achievers in secular studies but would have otherwise missed out on the breadth and depth that Torah has to offer. He also felt a responsibility to teach students about the importance of interacting with the world around them.

Rabbi Glickman was fond of a particular *mishna* from Pirkei Avot: Raban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehuda says: “*Yafeh Talmud Torah Im Derech Eretz*”; Excellent is the study of Torah with a worldly occupation. Rabbi Glickman exemplified not only this portion of the *mishna*, but a later portion as well: “*Vekhol HaAmeilim Im HaTzibur, Yihyu Ameilim Imahem LeShem Shamayim*”; And all those who work on behalf of the community, should do so for the sake of heaven. During my senior summer internship, I met with the Rabbi at a Starbucks on 57th street. He advised me on how to make the most out of my internship and gave me tips on how to interact as a Jew in the workplace. Rabbi Glickman provided the guidance and resources to help me position myself for success. We also spoke about the challenge of growing in spirituality and *limud Torah* while excelling professionally. Rabbi Glickman challenged me to continue studying rigorously post-graduation so that I can

ultimately conduct business as a *ben-Torah*.

I learned so much from him despite the fact that I was never formally his student - and that's exactly how he

“HE MASTERED THE BOARDROOM, THE CLASSROOM, AND THE BEIT MIDRASH. HE WAS ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE AND YET HE WAS UNABASHEDLY HIMSELF. HE WAS WHO HE WAS, WHEREVER HE WAS.”

liked it. Another of his favorites from Pirkei Avot: “*Ehov et HaMelacha U'Sna et HaRabanut*”; Love the work and hate the lordship. As Rabbi Daniel Feldman wrote, he loved to mentor and teach but eschewed the formality of authority that came with his position.

I am humbled to have had the chance to learn from him and, as a community, we are lucky to have had him teach in our halls. I am still in shock about the suddenness of his passing and it is difficult for me to imagine the reality of the world without him. I hope that we can collectively work to fill the giant void that was created in his loss. Rabbi Glickman has passed, but his values, passions, and ideals live on. Such is the fate of men and women with outsized achievements.

Raymond J. Cohen is an Assistant Vice President of Corporate Lending at Israel Discount Bank of New York. He is an alumnus of Yeshiva University (SSSB '16) and a former Business Editor for The Commentator.

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Yeshiva University

Previewing the 2018 NFL Draft Class

By Mayer Fink

The NFL draft is fast approaching (beginning April 26th) and many pro-football and draft analysts will be shooting rumors in the weeks to come about where different prospects will land. Expect these rumors to grow; with names like Josh Rosen, Sam Darnold, Josh Allen, and Saquon Barkley all to allegedly be going to the Browns or Giants, or any team who wants to give over a king's ransom to get these "generational talents". To be honest, no one actually knows who will be drafted at number 7 (which belongs to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers) because nobody knows how the picks will play out and how each team's interest will change based on the early selections. Therefore, I won't make a mock draft, but instead I will list the positives and negatives of notable draft prospects.

Josh Rosen, QB UCLA:

Strengths

Mechanics: He has the best throwing motion in the draft. Rosen has a quick release and throws with a very simple wind up. He doesn't have a lot of movement in his arms and he generally throws with his feet set, which is vital for any passer in the game.

Low Risk: I would consider him the lowest risk of all the quarterbacks in this draft; his ceiling may not be as high as some of the other quarterbacks, but he possesses all the necessary tools that a quarterback should have, and the team that drafts him will guarantee themselves at least a solid player.

UCLA: Additionally, there is the UCLA factor. This has nothing to do with Rosen's talent as much as it has to do with mystique or biases. The last time any UCLA quarterback was drafted number one (or in the top few picks of the draft) was Troy Aikman. Aikman turned out to be one of the greatest QBs of all time, as he helped lead the Dallas Cowboys to three Super Bowls and is in the Hall of Fame. Based on this superstition, people will be inclined to think that Rosen could be another Troy Aikman (he's probably not).

Weaknesses

Shoulder Problems: In his sophomore season (2016), Rosen injured his throwing shoulder and needed to have surgery to recover from it. Injuries are a part of the game, but an injury to the throwing arm is a big red flag. There have been many quarterbacks who went on to become very good quarterbacks following surgery (Drew Brees notably excelled after a major shoulder surgery), but scouts and general managers will definitely be concerned about this injury.

Losing: Rosen wasn't exactly a winner in college. At UCLA, he went 17-13 as a starter. Even with just an average team around him, a good college quarterback should post a better record than that. Granted, winning isn't a major factor in evaluating quarterbacks, but it will only get harder to win games in the NFL than it is in college, especially if he goes to a roster with little to no help around him like the Browns at number 1 or Giants at 2 (many are projecting him to land in one of those 2 spots). Most quarterbacks that are good and were good in the NFL were winning quarterbacks in college, so this does not fare well for Rosen.

Limited Mobility: Of all the quarterbacks in this draft, he is the least mobile. Rosen does not scramble and he struggles to throw on the run. This isn't such a big problem as many good quarterbacks in the NFL prefer just sitting in the pocket.

Sam Darnold, QB USC:

Strengths

Upside: Darnold seems to have the strongest upside of all the quarterbacks in this class. He really looks like he may have the greatest potential to become a star. It has been said that he has the "it" factor and it mainly is his ability to create plays out of thin air (a quality often attributed to the great Brett Favre).

Mobility: A big part of Darnold's "it" factor is his ability to throw on the move. Not only has he shown that he can scramble out of a sack, but he can also throw while being chased. Darnold's athleticism can be credited to the multiple positions he played in high school on both sides of the ball, and to having played both baseball and basketball in high school.

Winning: Unlike Rosen, Darnold actually was a winner. USC had a sudden revival in Darnold's two years at quarterback. The team started 1-3 in his first season, but once they made Darnold the permanent starter they finished the season with a nine-game winning streak. He finished his career 20-6 at USC and while the Trojans generally have had a good roster around him, the rebound to relevancy has to be credited mainly to Darnold.

Weaknesses

Consistency: Any way you look at it, Darnold has been very inconsistent. When watching him play you sometimes think you are watching the next great NFL quarterback, then only a few plays later you wonder how he not being benched.

Mechanics: His throwing motion is more of a windup. This can be a strength for his personal way of playing, but generally you want the quarterback's throwing motion to have little movement in the arm and just go straight up with a quick release. However, it may not be such a bad thing for Darnold, because in order to throw deep while on the run you can't have a simple throwing motion. A good example of this in the NFL is Ben Roethlisberger whose throwing motion is similar to Darnold's, but many of his passes are deep balls. Of course, this kind of throwing motion does lead to less accuracy, and scouts have noticed this about Darnold.

USC: This is the polar opposite of UCLA. There is no way around it, but USC has given us bust after bust at quarterback. Cody Kessler, Matt Barkley, Mark Sanchez, John David Booty, Matt Leinart, yikes. The last quarterback that wasn't a bust from USC was Carson Palmer and there is a legitimate argument to be made that he also was a bust based on the hype he came into the NFL with. It's very hard to look at Darnold and not think of all the USC quarterbacks that came before him and didn't work out.

Saquon Barkley, RB Penn State:

Strengths

Athleticism: Barkley might be the best overall athlete in the draft, and he has shown that he can do it all in every aspect of the sport. Barkley's draft combine performance might have proved that, as he did more bench presses than offensive lineman Joe Thomas and was faster than wide receiver Deshaun Jackson (as well as other mind-blowing stats). His versatility is very valuable in today's game; especially his ability to catch passes both out of the backfield and as a receiver (running backs are being asked to be part of the passing game more than ever).

Nice Moves: Barkley has a unique ability to cut. Every running back has their own way of navigating through defenders. Le'veon Bell uses his patience and vision while Ezekiel Elliott tries to run through the gaps in the line, while Todd Gurley's specialty is hurdling defenders. Saquon Barkley is similar to David Johnson in that he uses a combination of speed and power in his running style. What makes Barkley really dangerous, though, is his ability to cut in a horizontal line. In cutting this way, Barkley can make a defender look silly as the defender can be aligned with him ready to make a tackle and completely whiff.

Weaknesses

None.... Ok he does sometimes try to play hero ball where, instead of just taking the quick tackle and playing for another down, he'll try to make the big play resulting in negative yardage, but that might just be

due to the bad offensive line play he had at Penn State. Additionally, he also isn't a very good pass blocker, but that won't be such a red flag.

Minkah Fitzpatrick, CB/S Alabama:

Strengths

Versatility: Fitzpatrick has played all of the secondary positions in his career at Alabama, having spent time at cornerback, both safety positions and nickel corner. You name it he's covered it. The question is what his strongest position is but whoever drafts him can plug him into the position of need. 2 years ago, Jalen Ramsey was the same story, having played both corner and safety at Florida State, but the Jaguars needed a corner so they just developed him there.

Weaknesses

Covering the Best: Fitzpatrick has struggled in coverage (mainly outside coverage) against teams number 1 receivers. You can watch Clemson's Hunter Renfrow beat him on numerous plays in the 2015 National Championship game.

Josh Allen, QB Wyoming:

Strengths

Intangibles: He's 6'5 and weighs 223 with a cannon arm. He also is hard to tackle when running because of his size. People are hoping that he will be the next Carson Wentz because he's got all the tools, but he is a bit raw and from a small school.

Experience on the Run: While there were a lot of issues in his game, he faced more pressure than any other prospect in the draft. Give him a solid offensive line and we may even see more of his upside.

Weaknesses

Decision Making: Allen doesn't have very good decision making while quarterbacking and his accuracy is really bad. He reminds scouts of a Jay Cutler or Deshaun Kizer, a guy who has an incredible arm but is very inaccurate and makes bad reads.

Bradley Chubb, DE NC State:

Strengths

Great Hands: Part of what makes Chubb the best edge defender in this draft is his ability to use his hands and arms to shrug off lineman and harass the quarterback. He has a very good swim technique and is able to immediately jab the lineman to get leverage. If you watch his film you will see the occasional Reggie White-style bull rush where he gets his arm by the lineman's ribs and just pushes off the lineman, causing him to fall.

Both Ends: Chubb plays both sides of the edge. This helps him and teams that are looking for an edge rusher because they won't need to teach him how to play the other side of the ball. Often a prospect comes into the draft playing only one position, but the team drafting him already has someone there. Chubb can have an immediate impact because the learning curve will be less for him should that situation arise.

Weaknesses

Position: There is a general lack of value from the defensive end position. While edge rushers have been a popular selection for general managers in the draft recently, there has been a major problem with them. Most edge rushers can only affect a few plays a game, and mainly rush the quarterback. Teams that invest in edge rushers don't usually make their team better since they don't make a difference in enough plays. Chubb did play the run pretty well in college but it will be interesting to see if he can do the same at the pro level.

Tremaine Edmunds, LB Virginia Tech:

Strengths

Athleticism/Speed: This middle linebacker out of Virginia Tech is one of most athletic players in this draft. While being 6'5 and 250, he has the speed of some defensive backs. He could be very dangerous in the NFL except....

Weaknesses

Inexperience: Edmunds is very raw. This selection would be an ultimate "trust the process" move in the NFL. He still doesn't have the instincts and makes poor in-game decisions. There are plays where he looks completely out of place. The team that drafts him will have to hope that they can develop him into the star he promises to be.

SEE NFL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



YC's Computer Science Major is on the Rise

By Ilan Sasson

“You know that Computer Science department that everyone talks about”? Over the last few years, the Computer Science department has improved tremendously, and it is on the rise in Yeshiva College. According to a recent Commentator article, computer science majors comprised 18.4% of all Yeshiva College students in Fall 2017. This is a heightened number from years past, and it only seems to be rising. So why are more students opting to major in computer science in YC?

This pattern of an increase in computer science students appears to be running parallel with the general increase of interest in the field. According to Professor Van Kelly, co-chair of the Computer Science department, since the 2008 economic recession, there has been a sharp increase in the number of computer science majors in the United States. Professor Kelly explained that, other than finance and engineering majors, there is no field with a better starting salary than computer science. It would seem that many YC students are also interested in this aspect of the field.

While the financial incentive is nice, the rise in computer science major is largely a product of the resurgence of the department in YC. Professor Kelly, along with his co-chair, Professor Judah Diamant, are deeply involved in the growth of the department and are using their experience to create a successful department. Professor Kelly originally started off doing research at Nokia's Bell Labs, and then spent many years at Motorola working on conserving power for the Android. He joined the Yeshiva College faculty in 2009, and through his time in Yeshiva University, has seen the CS department grow from a small major with 2 professors to a major with specialized tracks.

Professor Diamant graduated Yeshiva University in 1996, and then attended NYU's Courant Institute of Mathematical Science for graduate school, while simultaneously doing Semicha at RIETS. After graduate school, Professor Diamant went on to work at Hitachi Data systems, followed by Bell Atlantic, and then spent 13 years doing

“WHILE THE FINANCIAL INCENTIVE [OF A CAREER IN COMPUTER SCIENCE] IS NICE, THE RISE IN COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR IS LARGELY A PRODUCT OF THE RESURGENCE OF THE DEPARTMENT IN YC.”

research at IBM before joining the Yeshiva College faculty in 2016. In an interview with the Commentator last year, Diamant noted that one of the reasons why he decided to leave the “business world” and join the “teaching world” was because of his yearn for his students, and his yearn for chesed. There is no doubt that having two mentors who are not only successful professionally and intellectually, but who are deeply devoted to the success of their students, creates a framework for success.

So let's get to the basics. Beginning in 2016 with Professor Diamant's arrival, the Computer Science department consists of two tracks. The first is called Data Science, which deals with Machine Learning and Statistics. The second is called Distributed Systems, which involves Cloud, Parallel Computing, and Coordination. Professor Diamant said that the exact requirements for these tracks are not set in stone yet, as this new “layered” program is still in its opening stages. In the Distributed Systems track, students deal with a model where computers send messages and communicate with each other. This side of the Computer Science track is the more technological side that deals with the science of many apps and is influential in many companies

such as Google, Amazon, and others.

In the Data Science track, students learn about mathematical models and use them to make largely distributed systems run more efficiently. According to Diamant, “the level of skill and knowledge required coming out of college to succeed is much higher than it was 25 years ago. It is for this reason that we moved away from only offering a generic undergraduate C.S. education and created the specialized tracks...Students in these tracks will..go much deeper into a specific area of C.S. which is in high demand such that they can not only be end users of these technologies, but creators of new applications of them.”

Besides for the department's strong faculty, another equally valuable aspect of its success are the students that major in computer science. Junior Aryeh Klein said, “The Computer Science track is very demanding, and as a result the kids who are most drawn to this department are very dedicated and motivated students who are aware of the demands”. Any student who wants to be a computer science major understands the workload involved, and thus, is prepared to work hard to get it done. Regarding the workload, upper sophomore Ezra Splaver noted “We basically need to build a code, and that can take up to 5-7 hours a week”. Not only does it require motivated people, but it requires people who are able to comprehend the material. It's a hard major, and as a result, people who are unable to keep up tend to switch to a different major.

It goes without saying that a large part of a certain department depends on its professors and chairs. But when you have motivated students who are ready to propel their teachers, and think about their codes and their work carefully, that changes the entire atmosphere of the department.

Besides for the in-class work, there are a lot of out of class opportunities that are available to further enhance the learning of computer science students. Throughout this year there have been speakers and networking events organized by the department several times a month that attract a large portion of the computer science students. This is a part of the department that is being worked on as the department continues to expand, but has certainly had an impact on its students thus far. Many students who attend these events noted that the events provide them with a greater picture of what they are learning by showing that it can also has applications out of the classroom. These events are also great networking opportunities for students to meet professionals who have truly succeeded in their field.

In addition to the efforts of the faculty in expanding the learning experience for computer science students, there has been a student-led push to do the same. The ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) is a club that began this year, run by Junior Aaron Shakibpanah that has provided workshops that teach important skills to students that they otherwise would not be able to get in the classroom. The club is yet another way in which a dedicated computer science student can work towards building up his foundation during his undergraduate career.

However, as with many newly developing things, there are some things in the department that the students aren't so happy with. For example, one student noted a disconnect that he feels between students and teachers due to the impersonal lecture style of some of the classes, and that as a result, class time lacks real value.

Although the future looks very bright and there are many aspects of the department that show great promise, there is much more work to be done. Increasing the number of professors and having more networking events can certainly help facilitate that. But as a student in the university, my message to everyone is that we should maximize the opportunities that are given to us at our university and inspire ourselves to work hard and use the devotion of our faculty as a springboard for our success. The teacher's role is less than half the battle- most of the battle is our mindset, dedication and attitude to hard work and success. The rising computer science department provides yet another great avenue towards our success. But it's all up to us.

NFL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

Derwin James, S Florida State:

Strengths

Jack of All Trades: James is quite versatile for defensive schemes. At Florida State, the coaching staff used him in all sorts of schemes. Occasionally, he would be used as a cover 1 safety and play center field on passing games. Other times, James would play middle linebacker and be a QB-spy against mobile quarterbacks. He would also sometimes play as a nickel corner where he would be able to cover tight ends and slot receivers. In today's NFL, finding a guy who can cover tight ends and receivers in the slot is very valuable.

Tackling: He has instincts that can't be taught and is one of the best tacklers in the draft. At Florida State, he was in on more tackles than anyone else. Derwin was also one of most feared tacklers in college as he was one of the hardest hitting safeties in the game. The ability to strike fear into opposing receivers is what puts safeties like Kam Chancellor and Landon Collins above the rest, and James has the potential to be in that same category.

Weaknesses

Technique: James does take poor angles many times. At the college level, his athleticism was able to make up for it, but in the pros that won't cut it.

Work Ethic: He didn't put in a lot of effort in his junior year, while Florida State had its worst season with James.

If he gets drafted to a bad team (and some mock drafts predict that) he may start slacking off if the team starts out poorly.

It's noteworthy that this draft is stacked mainly at cornerback, offensive line and running back (while Saquon Barkley clearly leads the class there are plenty of other running backs that could be pro-bowlers including Derrius Guice, Ronald Jones, Nick Chubb, Sony Michel and Akrum Wadley). There isn't very much depth at middle linebacker or safety, upgrading the value of players like linebackers Edmunds and Roquan Smith or safeties James and Ronnie Harrison. It should be exciting watching the first round of the draft and thinking of all the ways that you could have been a better general manager than your team's GM. it also should be exciting not watching days 2 or 3 of the draft but still complaining when you find out your team drafted a tight end from a college you've never heard of (there is a South Dakota State and Dallas Goedert does come from there).

Ok fine; here's my mock draft (probably will be lucky if I get 4 picks correct)

Cleveland Browns: Saquon Barkley, RB

New York Giants: Josh Rosen, QB

New York Jets: Sam Darnold, QB

Cleveland Browns: Josh Allen, QB

Denver Broncos: Bradley Chubb, Edge

Indianapolis Colts: Minkah Fitzpatrick, CB/S

Tampa Bay Buccaneers: Derrius Guice, RB

Chicago Bears: Quenton Nelson, OG

San Francisco: Derwin James, S

Oakland Raiders: Tremaine Edmunds, LB

Miami Dolphins: Denzel Ward, CB

Buffalo Bills: Baker Mayfield, QB

Washington Redskins: Vita Vea, DT

Green Bay Packers: Jaire Alexander, CB

Arizona Cardinals: Lamar Jackson, QB

Baltimore Ravens: Calvin Ridley, WR

Los Angeles Chargers: Roquan Smith, LB

Seattle Seahawks: Connor Williams, OT

Dallas Cowboys: Joshua Jackson, CB

Detroit Lions: Ronald Jones, RB

Cincinnati Bengals: Harold Landry, Edge

Buffalo Bills: Billy Price, OG/C

New England Patriots: Mike McGlinchey, OT

Carolina Panthers: Ronnie Harrison, S

Tennessee Titans: Arden Key, Edge

Atlanta Falcons: Harrison Phillips, DL

New Orleans Saints: Leighton Vander Esch, LB

Pittsburgh Steelers: Mike Hughes, CB

Jacksonville Jaguars: Reshan Evans, LB

Minnesota Vikings: Josey Jewell, LB

New England Patriots: Isaiah Oliver, CB

Philadelphia Eagles: Isaiah Wynn, OG

At the Lonely Crossroads: Remembering Rabbi Ozer Glickman

By Moshe Wolberg

I am very reticent about sharing such things publicly, but, in the case of my Rebbi, I feel little choice. I apologize in advance to anyone who finds such pieces in poor taste, but I feel it is correct and appropriate for a couple of reasons:

Firstly, I feel compelled to at least make somewhat known the aspects of Rav Glickman's greatness, to shine a little light on the eminence which he carried so humbly, insofar as I can perceive and comprehend it.

Secondly, on the subjective plane, I feel so lonely. I intuit that many of us, especially the mourners flung across the globe, have no one to lament to. We are searching for someone else who appreciates the loss but we find no one. I feel that sharing our pain can help us bear the bleak future together as a collective group of bereaving Talmidim.

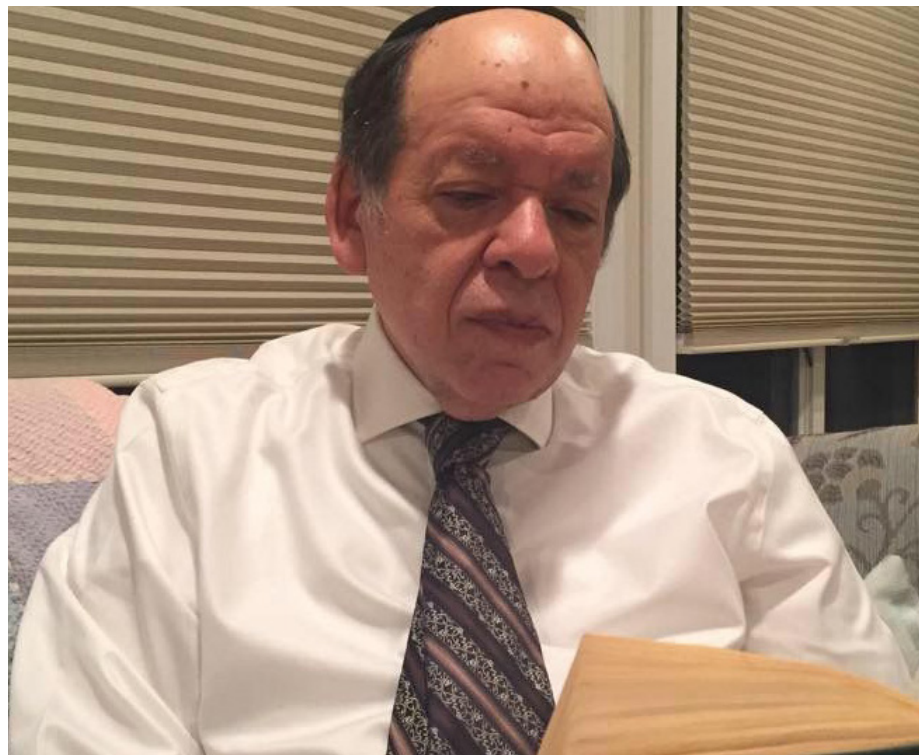
Thus I am drawn to silence but compelled to scream out, to sing dirge for the tragedy that has befallen us all.

"THE TRUTH WAS UTTERLY CLEAR WHEN ONE STOOD BY [RABBI GLICKMAN'S] SIDE. IT WAS LIMPID AND CRYSTALLINE AND DAZZLING."

The tenderest of sentiments remains hidden in the heart but I sketch what I can on the page:

Baruch Dayan HaEmet

These three are the most difficult words for me to utter,



as I lie in the terrible darkness, tears streaming forth ad infinitum.

My Rebbi, HaRav Ozer Glickman, *Zecher Tzadik Livrachah*, has suddenly passed away.

I now stare upwards into the heavenly machinery of the night and wonder whence he lies. The freezing cold and the emptiness of a lonely street burn around me. Nothingness has never ever been so pronounced.

Rav Ozer was my most important, precious role model, my deepest influencer. He was the most sublime embodiment of the elusive value that is *Torah UMadda* that I have ever met. Others could imitate, pretend, claim, but they never could come close to his remarkable synthesis and its authentic and sparkling magnificence.

To know him was to know, contrary to the claims of so many, that the ahistorical truths of Yiddishkeit could meet the modern world and find amplification and enhancement, not fiery collision and nihilistic retreat.

I once emailed Rav Ozer discussing a particular Rabbi who had zealously opined that the world of secular culture was worthless.

Rav Ozer aphoristically replied:
Machlokes him and the Rav. *Machlokes* him and Rav Kook.

Machlokes him and Rabbi Isaac Breuer.

Machlokes him and Rav Lichtenstein.

Might I add: *Machlokes* him and my Rebbi.

In truth, meeting Rav Ozer put an end to any *Machlokes* at all.

The truth was utterly clear when one stood by his side. It was limpid and crystalline and dazzling.

The most deeply painful aspect is that I had only just begun to really know my Rebbi, to encounter his thought.

I met Rav Ozer when he travelled to speak in South Africa and stayed by my family. When we first met, I was instantly captivated. We soon developed a close relationship and exchanged emails regularly. I last met him in person in Israel when we met for lunch at a particular cafe, which he poetically termed "the place where the philosophers of Jerusalem gather to discuss logic and theism." So typical of his amicable style.

I enrolled in YU for this fall, in no small part due to his encouragement, and was immensely excited at this prospect of finally being able to learn in person with my Rebbi.

Now I am without him.

He was such a generous Rebbi, too. Always so modest about himself and so efficacious about the other.

In the recommendation letter he wrote to YU for me, he said, "I unreservedly and enthusiastically commend Moshe to you with the prayer that I will merit teaching him in person in the years ahead." I did not deserve it, his praise or attention, not one bit at all, but we would have been so close...

Tears again, ones that I cannot control.

No words can begin to describe the pain of the loss.

Rav Soloveitchik discusses the concept of questioning God in his work on *Tisha B'Av*. Normally, the haranguing of God is improper in Judaism, the angry demands for explanation and the questioning cries toward him have no place in our religion.

We must stoically proclaim *Baruch Dayan HaEmet*, affirm our faith in the Lord even within the mystery of death, for we cannot lay claim to any understanding. We were not there when God laid the foundations, this is what Job was informed. Who are we to question the Unknown and the Unknowable?

But certain tragedies are different. They are not part of the normal fabric of the life cycle, not cut from the material

that we are expected to unquestionably bear. *Tisha B'Av* is one such tragedy. This is what what the Rav focuses on.

But he mentions another:

The death of a *Chosson* about to be married to his *Kallah*.

This sort of tragedy should never happen. Death should be the culmination of a beautiful life and blossomed relationships.

It should not be the cutting short of all potential, the terrible and sudden loss of all that remained in its incipient stage.

We cannot be expected to remain silent in such tragedy, Rav Soloveitchik says, to bear it stone-faced. We alter our practice and question out of sheer pain and sorrow.

We change the custom. Tractate *Semachot* even states that the coffin of the *Chosson* is carried for burial under the accusatory *Chuppah* that would have been his.

The Rav goes on to explain that normally there is end to crying, a point where mourning becomes overwrought and excessive in the eyes of the Sages. The cycle of life and death is inevitable and we must at a point move on.

But not in the case of the fallen *Chosson*. This tragedy is an aberration, a horror for which the eyes can never run dry. It is unnatural, something for which the mourning can never culminate and complete. We cry until our eyes have no tears left and then we sing bittersweet melodies of swirling melancholic pain because we have no more but we cannot stop. The mourning just goes on and on.

For me, on the subjective level, the passing of Rav Ozer is the passing of a *Chosson*.

He did not leave me as I would have so dearly hoped, he did not go after years of preparation. He did not leave me when I was a wide-winged eagle ready to soar and swoop in the oft turbulent world.

No, he left me oh so early, when I have only just begun to grasp him.

He has left me, his small dear Talmid, while I am still a vulnerable chick lying helpless in the nest.

Every day before now I was fed, but now suddenly I must get up and find my own food, years before I am ready.

Shall the bird not surely wail?

Shall I not surely cry for my support, my salvation, my Rebbi?

Make no mistake. Such loss is not part of the normal Rebbi-Talmid dynamic. The student gains independence from the teacher when he is matured. But I have been cast forward so prematurely.

It is aberrant, unnatural, awful, and tragic.

Can there be a more twisted, more heart-wrenching thing for a Talmid to lose his Rebbi when he was just on the cusp of truly learning from him?

This then is not the mourning that has limits and appropriate endpoints. It cannot terminate, I can never bring it to a culmination.

I have cried. I cry now and and I cannot be silenced forever. My tears may dry but they shall run within my soul forever.

The mourning can never stop, for I am now an orphan adrift in the cold washes of the world.

I am not brazen enough to scream out against the Lord, but sometimes when it's so painful in the depths of the night, I slowly and hesitantly whisper to Him Why? Why? WHY?

The sole consolation, Rav Ozer, my Rebbi, is that your portrait will hang beside my bed forevermore and your image imparts strength. I see you and I pray that I can somehow live up to the dreams and visions you had for me. Tears again. Lots.

Your Talmid forever,

Moshe

Baruch Dayan HaEmet

Innocence

By: Batsheva Lasky

The first tooth I lost
fell to the kitchen floor.
I lay my cheek on the cold tile
Peering under mahogany cabinets
and cushioned chairs until I found it,
nestled between a long lost cheerio and the table leg.
I picked it up as a jeweler would a diamond,
held it up for all to see.
When night fell,
and the tooth fairy was set to come,
I hid the tooth not under my heart shaped pillow
guarded by my army of fuzzy friends,
but in my secret hiding place
where not even a fairy could find it.
No one could take it away from me.
Even for a quarter.

Courtesy of The Yeshiva University Poetry Club

In the Wake of Parkland, It's Time to Talk About Cyberbullying

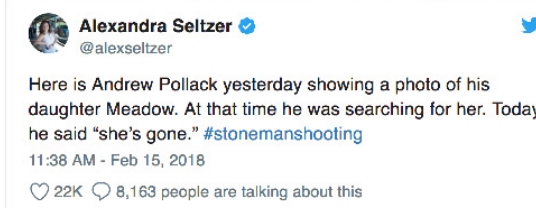
By Shoshy Ciment

On February 15, one day after the shooting that claimed 17 lives at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, social media lit up around one photo in particular.

The photo, which was tweeted by reporter Alexandra Seltzer, showed Andrew Pollack sitting in a car holding a photo of his then-missing daughter, Meadow Pollack, on his iPhone. Seltzer tweeted, "Here is Andrew Pollack yesterday showing a photo of his daughter Meadow. At that time he was searching for her. Today he said 'she's gone.' #stonemanshooting."

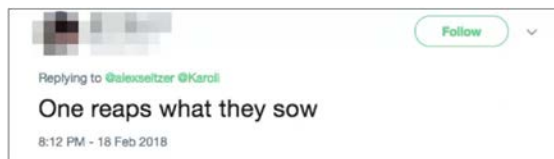
But the response to this photo wasn't simply one of condolences and words of comfort. Instead, many people decided to attack Pollack while he was down, sending messages of hate and ill-wishes to a father who had just lost his daughter.

Why? Because he was wearing a shirt that showed his support for President Donald Trump.



But the issue here is deeper than politics. While there may never be a right time to bully someone because of his political views, the day after one of the deadliest shootings in America is certainly unacceptable.

Would these sick people who tweeted things like "one reaps what one sows" been able to say such disgusting and hurtful things to this grieving father's face if they had the chance? What happens when the screens are removed from this conversation? Does their conviction still hold?



This incident is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to bullying over social media. While many argue that social media is making us dumber, there is a far more nefarious effect. By removing any sense of actual humanity in online interaction, social media is actually making us crueler.

The Cyberbullying Research Center, which offers cyberbullying statistics and methods for coping, reported that about half of young people have experienced cyberbullying at least once in one form, while 10-20 percent experience it regularly. And cyberbullying isn't just an adolescent problem. On their website, the Cyberbullying Research Center admits to getting more inquiries from adult victims about cyberbullying than they do from teens.

In general, most statistics show an increase in cyberbullying over time. And why should we be surprised? As our world gets increasingly digitized, bullying does as well. It's easy to fling insults and hurtful words when you can hide behind the comfort of a phone or computer screen without fear of an immediate repercussion. When we view people as profiles and emoticons, we misunderstand the impact that our harmful rhetoric can have.

Of course, social media can unify as well. Images of rallies, memorials, and marches have only been able to be distributed so widely because of online social networks. For some survivors of the Parkland shooting, Twitter has become an indispensable platform for them to connect with supporters and spread messages of hope and resilience.

But the drawbacks are massive and cannot be ignored. When the human-aspect of connection and social

"BY REMOVING ANY SENSE OF ACTUAL HUMANITY IN ONLINE INTERACTION, SOCIAL MEDIA IS ACTUALLY MAKING US CRUELER."

interaction is removed, we enter a state of fuzzy rules and undefined boundaries, where death threats and terrible remarks can be uttered without much regret, where people are no more than their profile pictures and twitter handles.

Social media should be bringing people together. But, unless we remember that there are faces behind the screens, it will only continue to do the opposite.

It's Not Me, It's You; A Glance into Testing Locations

By Esther Stern

It was the necessary reduced distraction location for test taking for which, for years, I was accustomed. It is in those extra time rooms where there was nary a peep, for, after all, there were people taking exams. I knew of a reality in which the decorum of the test-taking room was a sanctified entity.

"I HAD ASSUMED, RATHER ERRONEOUSLY, THAT THE ROOMS IN WHICH TESTS FOR 'NORMAL TEST-TAKERS' WERE TAKEN WERE JUST AS HALLOWED AS THE EXTRA TIME ROOMS I HAD KNOWN. THIS, I LEARNED RECENTLY, WAS NOT THE CASE."

I had assumed, rather erroneously, that the rooms in which tests for "normal test-takers" were taken were just as hallowed as the extra time rooms I had known. This, I learned recently, was not the case.

The first offense commonly found in the test rooms is what I'd like to call "the pretest regurgitation." This is when students go up to classmates and blurt out an endless stream of "MITOCHONDRIA - CHLOROPLASTS - CENTRIOLES;" almost always followed by "OH GOSH WHAT HAS CENTRIOLES?!? Is it in plants? In animals?"

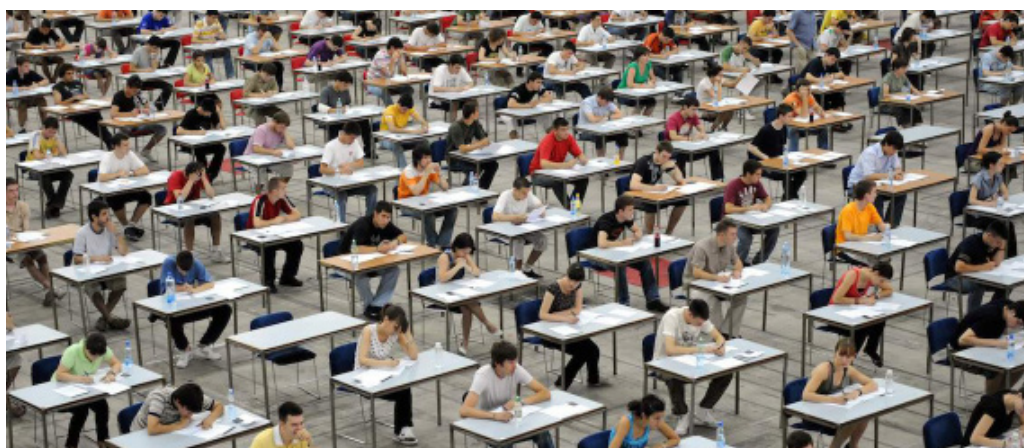
Is it going to save us from the next apocalypse? ARE WE ALL JUST ONE BIG CENTRIOLE AND WE DON'T KNOW IT?!" After many conversations asking people if they were peeved by this pretest regurgitation, I was met with a resounding yes. Herein, my friends, lies the first pillar of hypocrisy; some people think it is okay to perpetuate in this practice and shush people who do the same.

The second infringement is the talking during the test or during extended test-taking time. Talking is obnoxious. There is no way that people enjoy having their chances for success narrowed by people who aren't thinking about others, especially if you start at a disadvantage because the people around you pregame with their pretest regurgitation ad nauseum. This is not even including the fact that the talking is usually related to the test which would mean that you are inadvertently cheating by listening to their fascinating reasons as to why they selected answer choice B. This, my friends, is a borderline hilarious absurdity of the likes I was blessed not to have known until late. I've even seen a professor give a student extra time they didn't need because of their peers' disregard for the student's focus while taking the test, which was astonishing.

The reason that these prevalent practices have not seeped into the decorum of the reduced distraction room is fairly clear to me. Many in the extra time room

have been subject to people not caring about the fact that it can take them double the time to study, read the test, or even sit down. It is the keen awareness of the plight of their peers that prevents them from erring in the same way their fellow students have failed them in the past. While these reasons don't excuse those without extra time from their disruptions, it does provide some understanding. It's also possible that people outside the extra time room don't care as much, and can bounce back from the distraction fairly quickly.

All suggestions for the basis of the reality of the incessant, student-caused distractions point to a meaningful conclusion and are some of the many reasons people continue to need reduced distraction locations. For me, this conclusion is two-fold. For the pretest regurgitation, I thank God there exists an extra time room. And to the pretest and test hockers I say, "it's not me, it's you."



PALEY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

used as an example for the ways in which male and female students have different opportunities, for it is a situation in which explicit immodesty is at the forefront of the debate. Women do not wear bikinis walking on Amsterdam Avenue, nor would they do so in the library or in any YU facilities besides the pool. If YU can prevent situations of immodesty, it must.

The author of “Modest Proposal” represents the students who treat this debate with a lack of nuance in that she A) is quick to equate the pool to every other YU facility or

opportunity as well as to situations (like “Heights parties”) which are not affiliated with YU and B) fails to understand that YU is not a place where exact equality is achievable. I don’t necessarily believe that male and female YU students are treated equally, but I discourage fellow students from using access to the pool as an example of the inequality that does or does not exist at YU.

The author also implies that “*Kavod HaBriyot*,” “*Gemilut Chasadim*,” and “*Kivush HaYetzer*” are more important values than the value of modesty. Perhaps this is true, but remember that the issue at hand is access to a

swimming pool, not access to educational materials, basic necessities, or affordable transportation. Until someone convinces me that having access to a pool is crucial to a quality college education, I continue to firmly argue that modesty trumps all in this particular situation.

At no point in my article do I even imply that I am in favor of keeping women away from the uptown campus. I simply argue that I am in favor of keeping women in bathing suits away from the uptown campus.

Kira Paley, Stern College for Women '19

WOLKENFELD, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

at most, those who don’t appreciate having their *yeshiva* experience diminished by an environment that allows practices that other yeshivos wouldn’t dream of, and those who actually support the original response from the RIETS administration. These sentiments are not coming solely from the “yeshivish” contingent among us, but actually also from those who identify as Modern Orthodox. If you’d believe it, some in the Modern Orthodox community here don’t believe that the change being demanded falls in line with Modern Orthodox *hashkafa*.

For one reason or another, though, such student opinions have been unexpressed. Instead, they’ve been represented by pieces that overwhelmingly take another side in this controversy. However, as someone who feels the way I’ve just described, allow me to now respond to this public one-sidedness with a different perspective.

This perspective disputes the request that “the chosen path within those [established *halakhic*] parameters [set by our authorities] must be left to the students ... [to] have the freedom to grapple with and chart our own communal norms,” to quote from the recent statement by student leaders, no matter how many Wilf student leaders endorse it. Instead, it willingly and explicitly follows those *halakhic* parameters set by our religious authorities, as it does in every other aspect of life. This perspective contests Dean of Students Chaim Nissel’s recent statement not because the solution was insufficient, but because it usurps the religious authority of RIETS and its *roshei yeshiva*, placing it dangerously instead in the hands of the Office of Student Life; and because it unacceptably establishes *Yeshiva* as a laboratory for synthesis instead of one in line with all traditional yeshivos,

something Rav Soloveitchik was notably opposed to. This perspective strongly rejects the assertion that “the decision to prevent women from speaking after the *minyán* stems ... from a patriarchal community mindset encouraged by years of halachically unfounded cultural norms”, as Lilly Gelman put it, and instead stands in awe and appreciation of the profundity and magnificence of our *mesorah* and its *halakhic* norms. This perspective genuinely believes that in a religion predicated on *emes* and *kavod*, accusations of sexism are inappropriate, and, if anything, illustrate a lack of comprehension of what Torah is about. This perspective is quite embarrassed to allow itself to be represented by student leaders who claim to support all student opinions, but simultaneously release statements which it vehemently opposes. This perspective understands that you may disagree, but this perspective is proud to stand on the shoulders of current and past *gedolim*, of people much greater than we, and to defend the ground those people have stood on.

And although this perspective will probably remain quiet and un-extraordinary, and will likely be overridden by a much louder and trendier one, this perspective will no longer accept not being accurately recognized as part of the student conversation.

Judah Wolkenfeld, Sy Syms School of Business '20

HERZOG, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

guidance into the essence of YU, we should hear how those decision makers conceive of our environment. And as much as YU considers itself “the flagship institution of Modern Orthodoxy,” it should wield this title with seriousness, understand the ramifications of its decisions among the broader community, and indicate to this broader public (who, as demonstrated on social media, are definitely watching) the logic and reasoning of any decision, so that it can be extrapolated properly. Responsa literature is one of the hallmarks of the halakhic tradition, with contemporary examples like *Igrot Moshe* and *Shu”t Minchat Asher* providing exceptional *lamdanut* and reasoning; these works are treasured not just for their decisions but their contribution to the world of *talmud Torah*. Closer to home and in the realm of public policy, last year the OU published a 20-page document with citations regarding the role of women leaders in the Modern Orthodox community. YU should give us more than one brief paragraph.

At the same time, I would like to respond directly to some of the arguments the author put forth. He claimed that the Klein@9 community should not have the freedom to set its own communal norms; from his perspective, student communities should “willingly and explicitly [follow] those halakhic parameters set by our religious authorities, as [they do] in every other aspect of life.” But what religious authority is he deferring to? Neither the original decision nor the OSL statement referred to either a specific halakhic authority or to a particular halakhic text.

The author also implied that Klein@9 looks to be innovative, treating “*Yeshiva* as a laboratory for synthesis.” But large numbers of shuls within the Modern Orthodox community are completely comfortable with women speaking to the congregation following davening—either in positions as scholar-in-residence, community scholar, or in community congregations without a full-time rabbi. This is not innovative anymore; it is established practice, one that several students grew up with and wanted to mimic on campus.

Finally, the author devoted much of his piece to the argument that YU should not have “an environment that allows practices that other yeshivos wouldn’t dream of.” He put forth that YU should be a *yeshiva* “in line with all traditional yeshivos.” And in many discussions with students and administration I have heard the claim that “we do x and don’t do y because we’re a *yeshiva*.” The issue

with this claim is that it treats the idea of “being a *yeshiva*” like an axiom. By definition, yeshivot don’t include women. By definition, yeshivot give all authority to the administration. By definition, yeshivot are traditionalistic and not innovative.

I don’t want to debate the historical accuracy of any of these claims. Instead, the author, the student body, and, particularly, the administration should address the question of what a Modern Orthodox *yeshiva* ought to be. What are our religious values; how do we conceive of our educational model; who are our *gedolim* and what is their role? We ought to ask how the context of New York, 2018 is different from Volozhin, 1854—or, for that matter, New York, 1886—and how we establish ourselves in our own time. When we make a claim that ultimately relies on

“because we are a *yeshiva*,” we beg the question: Do we have our own values, do we have a guiding philosophy; or are we only mirroring decisions other people make?

Yes, YU is a *yeshiva*. It is both the first and the foremost Modern Orthodox *yeshiva*. Therefore what? Previous leaders of YU, including Presidents Revel, Belkin, and Lamm, as well as Rav Soloveitchik, were fearless in charting a course based on what they thought matched their values. The challenge of synthesizing Modernity and Orthodoxy and Torah and *Madda* has not gotten simpler in the past century. It is incumbent on all of us to not resort to empty slogans but to address essential questions.

Reuven Herzog, Yeshiva College '19



Expanding Socially: A Student Athlete's Perspective

By Jake Schrier

It is Thursday night at YU. Students crowd into the Rubin lounge for another excellent SOY Chulent Mishmar, a Thursday night event that occurs a few times each semester, generally before an in-Shabbos. People are coming from the *beit midrash*, the library, the gym, from all over campus to get their hands on some free chulent. Two close friends of mine, teammates on the 2017 Men's Cross Country team, share a laugh over some chulent, not even realizing they are being photographed. This photo subsequently became the advertising flyer that SOY would send around to attract students to their Chulent Mishmar events. The first team member to notice it immediately sent it to our team WhatsApp group, and we instantly picked up on something humorous. This wasn't a random photo; this was an attempt at showing some "YU diversity"—stereotypical IBC kid in the v-neck t-shirt shares a laugh with stereotypical YP kid in a button-down shirt with *tzitzis* out.

One of the most pressing challenges on our campus is how to break down the walls between different sub-categories of the student body and connect to anyone and everyone. How we can expand past the friends we maybe had before college and continue to meet more people and be friendly and inclusive to all.

It is a fairly common occurrence for students to go through their years at YU and make very few new friends. They are comfortable hanging out with their high school crew, grabbing a meal with friends from their *yeshiva* in Israel perhaps. Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against hanging out with old friends. I personally had high school peers and friends from my gap year at YU with me, and I grew much closer to many of them. These are some of my most cherished relationships to this day. But I was also capable of making many new friends along the way. These relationships were also very important to my development and overall well-being at YU.

A classic example of a new YU friend might be someone in your *shiur* or morning program classes. Or, perhaps a peer with the same major, so you see each other in a few classes and grow close that way. I have found success in befriending people this way, and I think it is a good avenue to explore if you have not already.

However, there is a different approach I'd like to share.

I had the privilege of serving as a student athlete for four years here at YU. This was a very special part of my unique college experience. I can go on for hours about what I have gained from my time as a Maccabee—I'd like to take this opportunity to apologize to those friends who have sat through large segments of that rant—but today I will share just one takeaway, arguably the most significant.

The Men's Cross Country team happens to be very tight-knit. Excuse the cliché, but it really does feel like a

"cross country family" at points. I have made some really special friends through this extracurricular, and some of these individuals I most certainly would not have crossed paths with otherwise at YU. Not only was I privileged to have these friends, I actively brought them into my social circle. I didn't want "cross country friends"; I wanted "friends." It's the same way I didn't want "high school friends," "*shiur* friends," "*yeshiva* friends," etc. I would actively invite friends from different circles to a Shabbos meal, for example. I'm sure many times it just led to two friends of mine awkwardly waving to each other in the li-

"WHY ARE PEOPLE SO BAFLED THAT NEW FRIENDSHIPS CAN BE MADE AT YU?! I SHOULDN'T BE A HERO FOR BECOMING FRIENDS WITH THE GUY I SIT NEXT TO IN CLASS."

brary as their brain raced, "how do I know that guy? Oh yeah, we had lunch at Jake's together a few weeks back." However, at its best, it led to an old high school friend and senior at YU inviting a new cross country friend, a freshman, to his own shabbos meal. And they even cut out the middle man! (You still owe me an invite, Donny...)

On our team it doesn't matter what morning program you're in, whether or not you spent a gap year before college, or what your major is. Of course, these topics have all come up during the many miles we've run together, but they're not essential; they don't define or determine whether or not we can be friends.

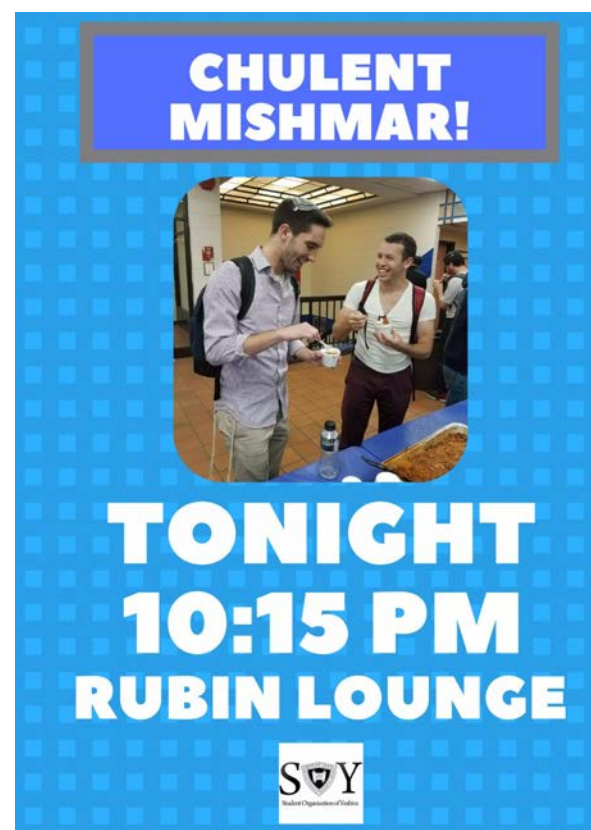
It is for this reason that the friendship featured in the photo above can exist. Unfortunately in YU, it sometimes feels like it can be so rare to have a relationship like this. For our team, it's a given.

It's embarrassing that often times at YU—and in life in general, for that matter—I have to explain to a peer how I'm friends with someone. I'll be at a wedding of a YU friend, for example, and I get seven comments and have to have the same conversation over and over again: "I know I didn't go to Yeshiva X in Israel, we became friends from *shiur*/class/YU in general." Why do I have to explain how I became friends with someone? It is one thing to ask something like "how did you guys cross paths?" But why are people so baffled that new friendships can be made at YU?! I shouldn't be a hero for becoming friends with the guy I sit next to in class.

I'm not saying that everyone needs to start running 40 mile weeks with YU students they never knew (although

that is a guaranteed recipe for amazing new friendships). To many of you that sounds ludicrous, and it probably is. What I'm saying is this: the same way that the twelve of us built our friendships around our shared passion for Yeshiva Athletics and for running, you can create something similar from your passions and interests. There are many clubs and events on campus that people are very passionate about. I think these sometimes facilitate similar "new" YU friendships to those that I've built through the team.

And I think we can up our game. Why don't we go to one of these events or clubs actively looking to expand our social circles? If you're too scared to do it alone, go with an old friend and try to expand your circle together. Go with the goal of making a friend or two that night. Worst case scenario, you have another person to wave to on Amsterdam or Lexington Avenue. Best case scenario, you're able to follow up and actually build a strong relationship with someone new. Maybe one of your old high school buddies will also befriend this person and invite you both over to hang out. Maybe you'll have another friend to pull that late study night with you, or to grab a bite with you. Let's create a friendlier culture here, one new friendship at a time.



From the Wilf Student Leadership: A Response to the OSL Statement

By The Klein@9 Board & Wilf Campus Student Council Presidents

The Dean of Students recently put out a statement alleging that Klein@9 "has been conceptualized as one of the *yeshiva minyanim*, and so had followed the typical practice of *minyanim* in *batei midrash* at men's *yeshivot* ... Starting next semester, we will add a student-run YU community *minyan*."

This statement is counterproductive and indicative of a larger issue.

The founders of the *minyan* explicitly envisioned for Klein@9 to be a student *minyan* which would provide a different experience than the existing Glueck *yeshiva minyan* and efficient Rubin *minyan*. We billed ourselves as a "Student-run, Undergrad, Community *minyan*," which would serve both the population of the *yeshiva* and larger community, and we still envision Klein@9 along those lines today. As a student-created *minyan*, the students have always been and will continue to be solely responsible for the practices and programming of the *minyan* in shaping the religious experience that they desire. We

categorically reject the implication that Klein@9 is merely another *yeshiva minyan* run by the institution, and are distraught by the announcement of a second "student-run

"WE, THE STUDENTS, MUST HAVE THE FREEDOM TO GRAPPLE WITH AND CHART OUR OWN COMMUNAL NORMS."

YU community *minyan*" that did not consider any student input or consensus. This decision will further divide our community and is not a solution that the student body desires.

We believe that, within the framework of *halakhah*, our community needs to decide what our norms and practices should be. This requires conversation between *all* of our community members, from both sides of the *mechitzah*. Every community has its disagreements regarding how

the spirit of *halakhah* and Jewish values are expressed in practice. It is vital that these struggles are dealt with communally, by those who are involved with our community day to day, Shabbat to Shabbat. We invite those voices involved and dedicated to *our* community to share their desires and needs so that we can shape our shared religious experience. We believe that together, we can chart our Jewish practice with inspiration from our teachers and with the values that have been imparted to us throughout our Jewish education. To us, having students take a leadership role in building a community is a value—not an inconvenience.

In practice, what this means is that the students should be the primary decision-makers in student policy and programming, with guidance from YU institutional officers, Student Life staff, and religious leadership. This is a far cry from the current state where the administration rarely engages in dialogue with students or even elected student representatives when making policy decisions. Instead, as is the case with the newly announced "student-

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On the Hubris of Holocaust Remembrance Day: The Case for Moving On

By Aryeh Schonbrun

Amidst the throes of an aborted attempt at returning to our normal quotidian rhythm, during which we must try to come to terms with our modern-day slavery after experiencing the glorious emancipation of our dear Pesach, all must come to a stop: Yom HaShoah, International Holocaust Remembrance Day has arrived.

Over the past few decades, an obscure date in history has become a cornerstone of the Jewish calendar. Along with Yemei Hazikaron and Ha'atzmaut, we have adopted Yom HaShoah not just as a commemoration of a date in history (the start of the Warsaw uprising), but as a solemn holiday, deeply entrenched in meaning, permeated by sacrosanct religious fervor and reverence. For better or worse, our traditional day of mourning, Tisha B'Av has been passed over. By doing so, we have designated the Holocaust as a unique event in our troubled history as a nation. The Holocaust, perhaps owing to its contemporary nature (400,000 survivors still live among us), perhaps due to its horrific modern, industrialized scale, has taken center-stage in our litany of memorials. The destruction of the Batei Mikdash, the annihilation of Beitar, the Inquisition, the Crusades, the Chmielnicki Revolt, etc. have seemingly taken a back seat to the Holocaust, and while I can naturally sympathize with what might drive such a response (I, too, lost family, know survivors, etc.), I cannot say that I wholly agree. What sinister motives lie behind this seemingly benign phenomenon may surprise you.

[Before I begin—a disclaimer: When approaching such a topic, one must do so in fear and disbelief. I cannot and will not partake in discussions surrounding the theodicy of the Holocaust and the horrible trauma that affects us till this day, however, I have taken the liberty of attempting to analyze our response to such a tragedy. I dare not endeavor to explain what happened, but I cannot consent to staying quiet when I believe that the memory of the millions of my murdered brethren is being manipulated and abused.]

I, like many of my peers, did *not* participate in my Yeshiva's trip to Poland. I did not see the need in reawakening in my psyche deep feelings of loss and trauma which I had experienced from afar, in the bosom of Western progress. Growing up in New York, I did not know much of the Holocaust. My family escaped Europe decades before anyone could imagine such a horror taking place. I was lucky. My grandparents did not carry scars, nor tattoos, from the old country. They did not suffer like so many of their brethren (and cousins). My family, while suffering with all of the Jewish people, was largely spared. I did not grow up hearing stories of loss and destruction, nor did I

grow up with the knowledge of the splendor and vivacity of what was lost. I did not know of the ghetto, nor of the shtetl. As a whole, I have lived a thoroughly Americanized experience.

In my teenage years, I began to acquaint myself with the history of my people. I learned some Yiddish, heard stories, and researched the events that led to my people's near-total destruction. I became close with a survivor, whose stories of home and whose true *yiddishkeit* (and *heimish* Yiddish) interested me as much as his stories of harrowing escapes and the trauma of the war-years. Through writers such

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as S.Y. Agnon, Sholem Aleichem, and Bialik, and through the music of pre-war Judaism (Yiddish/Ladino), and even through the study of traditional, Torah texts (the tomes of Gemara and its commentators carry a trove of historical, sociological records). I sought to imagine what life was like before, during, and after the dramatic calamities of our history. The thought that my people had a rich history, offset by my society's ignorance of its depth and breadth, brought me both comfort and frustration. Eagerness to learn more, and sadness over its increasing irrelevance. I wept over the loss, and I found little comfort.

Who can claim to know God's workings, how may one try to understand what we lost? I can't, for one, and I don't care to listen to anyone who might offer an explanation. I don't mean that we shouldn't investigate the causes of the Holocaust. In fact we do way too little of that. The Treaty of Versailles worked wonders for the world, though it escapes

our criticism. The West's inability to act on army intelligence regarding the death camps caused many thousands (if not hundreds of thousands) of preventable deaths (especially of Hungarian Jews). The spurious arguments connecting the Holocaust and Israel's founding do not sway me. One cannot know what might have occurred otherwise, and I find the attempt to cope in such a way as supremely naïve.

We try to cope, but Israel, the Jews, and, it seems, the entire world, cannot, try as we might, distance ourselves from the trauma. The psychological and national damage that affects the Jews and Israel on account of what took place continues to play a large part in our psyches. The presence of survivors still reminds us of what happened, and we can only begin to assess the full scope of the psychological impact that has scarred our collective soul.

Indeed, even for the rest of the West, the Holocaust still takes a toll. (In 2014, during the refugee crisis, I recall listening to a German diplomat at YU as he explained that his government's generous overture to the refugees represented for the Germans a reckoning [redemption?] for what they had done to us.) The Holocaust was not just a despicable act committed by the Germans against the Jews, it signified the climax of half a century of destruction and demoralization, and of the destabilization of Western society. Not only the Germans failed us, the West as a whole must take responsibility for the amorality and vacuum created by the decadent society of the post-Victorian era. Millions of lives were lost in two self-inflicted world wars, millions more in famine (caused either deliberately or through lack of proper foresight) and disease (encouraged by the disorderly and filthy conditions of war), and in at least two major genocides (as anyone who has walked the Armenian streets of Jerusalem knows). The West didn't just lose those millions of victims, she didn't just fall into moral disregard and abject cruelty, she also lost confidence in herself.

Prior to WWI, the West had not known full-scale modern warfare (except, of course, the American Civil War). They didn't even consider how much damage such a war might wreak. The era of cavalry charges and hand-to-hand combat ended disastrously in the barrages of automatic rifles and exploding shells. The strength of human engineering had turned against the West, and, in Frankensteinian fashion, threatened the very existence of its creator. No longer could the West ignore the dangers of a world-wide, man-made disaster. The West, after having worked so long to climb out of the pits of the ignorant dark-ages (e.g. Thirty Years' War) had again sunk herself in the trenches of despair and

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run YU community *minyán*,” policy is handed down to students in a top-down system that does not reflect the will of the student body or the spirit of what student government should be. It is not only the women who have been silenced, it is the entire student body's collective voice that has gone unheard.

While we certainly appreciate the importance of established halakhic parameters set by our authorities, the chosen path within those parameters must be left to the students. We, the students, must have the freedom to grapple with and chart our own communal norms. If YU institutional officers, Student Life staff, and religious leadership will not trust inter-student dialogue and community building, then for what reason should our future communities invest the very same trust in YU? While we regret that we did not speak out before about administrative interference in the instance of the Klein@9 *minyán*, we are speaking out now, and we apologize to those that were angered and disappointed by our silence. It is for this reason that we are releasing the following statement.

**

We call upon the Yeshiva University administration, from RIETS and the Office of the President to the Office of Student Life, to support our student-run *minyán*'s right

to determine its own communal practices, and to support YU students aiming to become the future leaders of the Jewish community. Rather than usurp and diminish its student leaders' authority, the administration should act as a guiding affiliate to student programming and decisions across the University, engaging in dialogue with the student body. For Yeshiva University to be relevant to the Jewish community, it must start by supporting its current students. If we are to be leaders, or at least engaged members of our Jewish communities, then we must start grappling with these issues within our own YU community and be responsible for our own actions.

The Klein@9 Board

Aryeh Laufer, Co-Founder, Klein@9
Dovid Simpser, Co-Founder, Klein@9
Samuel Gelman, Board Member, Klein@9 & SOY IBC Representative
Noah Marlowe, Board Member, Klein@9 & SOY Vice President

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Joshua Zirman, Syms President

Klein@9 Mission Statement

Klein@9 was created in December 2016 by elected student SOY representatives for the student body as a means to build a warm Shabbos community on campus, create more space for student leadership, and create a meaningful religious shabbos experience. We are deeply grateful to the many students who have invested in our community since Klein@9's inception, and have helped make some of these goals a reality. We are committed to these three pillars, and hope that future student leaders will uphold this vision through the continuation and creation of new initiatives to further these goals.



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animal-like cruelty. This realization did not begin with the Holocaust, but what happened to the Jews broke the back of Western society. In response, philosophers and politicians agreed for once: The West, responsible for such a horror, must die.

And from then on, society has grappled with her Thanatos-inspired death-wish. The same self-destructive impulse that inspired the Great War, the same desire that needlessly torpedoed any effort at finding peace (Versailles), that same reasoning that overtook the Nazis and caused them to lose their humanity. Today it lives on, though nowadays it need not reveal itself as such. Nowadays it has a host.

In an ironic and paradoxical nature, this self-destructive instinct, has latched itself onto its very bane. The Holocaust and the wars the accompanied it not only demoralized society, not only directly damaged the West, but they also serve as the object-of-desire of this immortal evil. The inversion of natural human instinct, that of love, growth, and beauty, to that of pain, suffering, and destruction carries alongside it a tendency towards morbid fascination and the fetishizing of traumatic events. Just as a victim suffering from post-trauma might regress to past mental states of development (as the West has on many fronts), just as he might insist on reliving (through memory or action) his original trauma, so too the West (and in today's globalized society—all of humanity) revisits her actions of infamy, her deepest, darkest moments, not in search of answers, not in order to fix anything, but in pathological obsession. She harbors a relentless, unconscious will to never let go of the trauma, to stay transfixed by her own weakness.

As a result of this obsession with one's own destruction,

or destructive tendencies, the West has despaired completely from any future progress/existence. The West of old, of enlightenment, sophistication, comradery, and progress, has devolved into a confused state of egotism, economic-paganism, and psychological illness. We suffer in the West from the disintegration of society. What took hundreds of years to build implodes before our very eyes, but all we can do is twiddle our thumbs. Rome is burning, and the firefighters suffer from acute pyrophobia.

The confidence in our prowess, in our ability to develop and change our existence, has fizzled out thanks to our overwhelming sensation of dread when contemplating social change. Any kind of revolutionary thinking, any kind of sophisticated pondering, receives as much ridicule as Jeremiah the prophet before the destruction of Jerusalem. Fear of insurrection, the throttling of free-speech and thought, and rabid xenophobia (which, in today's society of strangers means fear of just about anyone) have all parts to play in this tragedy. We learn in school, through the media, and anyone we speak to that history has shown the danger in *everything*. Communism, the horror!, Nationalism, oy!, Religion, nein!, morality, no way! and so on and so on. "Everything has been tried and nothing works!"

And that's what they want you to believe. The Holocaust and modern man's self-inflicted suffering serve well as weapons in the hands of those intent on shutting down our desire for change. Society, they claim, has never looked better: "Look here, no Holocaust!"

But I do not judge society so favorably. To me, this endless sophistry, as dictated by political and economic interests, presents me with no significance whatsoever. Should I also thank my mother for not having aborted me as a fetus?! Maybe I should, though I surely won't define

my entire relationship with her based on the fact that she carried me to term! She loved me and cared for me as well! Must I define my entire relationship vis-à-vis the state (U.S., Israel, the West) by feelings of gratitude that it did not think to send me and my fellow brethren to our deaths in premeditated genocide? Can we not think of one positive reason to *live*? Israel, in contrast to what they might tell you on your 'Heritage' trip to the death camps, was not created *expressly* in order to defend Jews (hence the juxtaposition of Yom HaShoah to Yom Ha'atzmaut). In fact, the State of Israel's continued existence does not exactly make us so many friends in the world. Israel rose up in order to fulfill her destiny as a 'light unto the nations.' The West, too, must not continue to justify its existence by childishly repeating: 'at least I'm not Hitler.' The West's innocence, already tarnished by wars, terror, and economic manipulation, cannot save her from destruction. She has used up her excuses. She must begin to think straight, return to God, return to morality, and attempt to resuscitate her collective spirit. She must strive again to fulfill her destiny. If her fear of failure bars her from acting, it would most certainly ironically end in her own destruction.

We must never forget what transpired in Europe 75 years ago, but we must not lose faith in humanity. We may never fully overcome the trauma of the Holocaust, but we must begin to lick our wounds, stand up, and dream again.

"Laugh, o laugh of the dreams/I dream/Laugh that I believe in Man/for I still believe in thee. For my soul yearns for salvation/I have not sold herto a golden calf/I still believe in Man/in his spirit, his strong spirit."

-Shaul Tchernichovsky



On Procreation

By Irwin Leventer

I am extremely grateful to be surrounded by thinkers who share their convictions with cordial discourse. It is so grand that it feels so natural to jump from peer to peer and hear thoughts on my thoughts. Our student body is so entrenched in this behavior that my question starts to be innocently pondered and suddenly, it's two in the morning. Huge realms of discussion are repeatedly placed on the backburner for fear of elapsing all eternity while discussing it. Maturity of disputation allows entertainment of ideas wildly foreign to oneself, and that's where the magic happens.



In speaking with a friend of mine, I found that one of my deepest convictions, a core value that I hold, is not shared by him. What this does is it allows me to be naked

in my assessment of this value, discuss it, and either discount or reaffirm it. After our discussion my value was strongly reaffirmed. This is my exhalation of it, newly vitalized, in the hopes that he, and all without affinity to it, can feel this conviction and act upon it.

I strongly believe that one of the principal purposes of my existence is to have children. I try to orient myself towards making the world a better place as much as possible. Little is more effective towards this end than

“THERE IS LITTLE ELSE CREATIVE AS PROCREATION, LITTLE ELSE GOOD AS BRINGING GOOD HUMANS TO THIS EARTH.”

placing in it people with whom I share my delicately conceptualized values. We all frenzy to be remembered in ultimately insignificant ways and forget that we can literally create an exponentially growing chain of human beings, a swarm of thinkers and good.

I am second-to-oldest of seven children and have not a scab of an illusion that raising children is easy. If you assess the worth of things based on their ease you miss out on being human. In the beginning, my parents had neither the money nor the time to have children. They still did: if they could create *people*, they could create time. Now, because of their efforts and omnibenevolence, there are six people in this world whom I love unconditionally and trust with all that is me. Six people who for me are the living, breathing, gentle, thoughtful, caring, hard-earned

eponyms of procreation done right.

People find it amusing, but for years I've kept a running list of things that I want to implement when I'm a parent. They come from anywhere they can be found, and I record them with excitement and passion: the house will be filled with quotes and thoughts and stories; their bedrooms will be under a ceiling of hundreds of glow-in-the-dark stars; the library will be a magical place of curiosity; and on and on and on. My excitement helps drive me towards my ideal self, the self which I dream to share with my children.

In entertaining the contrary you are considering relinquishing your most blatant of superpowers. You don't even have to mix ingredients, put parts together, exert much effort at all. You are equipped with the you-seed that exists nowhere else. With your wife and her her-seed you come together into a unique person that you get to watch come of age in this world. With this person you get to share what it means to be human, what it means to give and to love, to overcome pain and fight for what you believe in, to value things because of their worth and not because of their ease. There is no one with a cleaner slate on which you get to share the ways of the world than your child. Your experience with and love of life can greater benefit no one than your kin. There is no reason for restraint; share what you are.

I urge you to internalize the implications of your fecundity. There is little else as worthwhile as creating good in this world; there is little else creative as procreation, little else good as bringing good humans to this earth. To my friend, I hope I have allowed you to reassess this value with a childlike innocence, and that I've planted the seed towards your planting your seeds.

Are Students Prepared in Case of an Active Shooter on Campus?

By Phillip Nagler

A few Sundays ago, I was sitting in the Heights Lounge talking to one of my friends. An alarm suddenly went off that could be heard throughout the entire building. I immediately got up to look around the lounge to see what was going on. Out of the 30 people or so sitting in the lounge, most of them didn't even flinch. It seemed nobody was worried in the slightest sense. I asked my friend if they thought it was the shooter or fire alarm. "I'm fairly certain it's not the shooter alarm," they replied. I decided to walk out of the lounge to ask security what was going on, and they informed me that the alarm went off due to a glitch in the system.

Although this whole situation turned out to be a false alarm, it made me realize how unprepared I am in the case of an emergency. At the time, I wasn't even sure if there was an alarm that notifies everyone of an active shooter. YU prepares students in cases of an active shooter by showing them a video on the topic and explaining proper protocol at orientation. I watched this video twice; once at my post-Pesach orientation and once at my fall orientation. Yet, there I was, unsure of how students are notified if an active shooter is on campus. It is also important to note that I am only in my second semester in YU and I've already forgotten most of the procedures described in the video. Do students in their second, third, and fourth years on campus remember what the video said during their freshman orientation? In fact, some students have told me that they've never even seen the video.

“SCHOOL SHOOTERS DO NOT CARE ABOUT OUR CONVENIENCE, AND IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO PREPARE OURSELVES.”

According to YU's emergency response policy, "The Security Department, in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Health and Safety (as applicable), is responsible for testing the University's emergency response and evacuation procedures at

least once per year." In the document, however, it does not specify what type of test will be run. Personally, I have experienced only one fire drill this year during my morning shiur in Zysman. Additionally, I have heard from other students that there are periodic fire drills in the library.

Back when I was in high school, I remember having two security drills annually. About an hour was devoted to the security drill. A security expert from the IDF would come in and speak to the entire school for about 20 minutes about general security procedures. Then, each class would return to their classroom and practice the lockdown drill. Although I've never had to experience such a horrific event, these drills gave me



some reassurance that I'm prepared if something were to ever happen. I understand that it could be inconvenient to run similar drills in YU, since everyone is running on a completely different schedule. That being said, school shooters do not care about our convenience, and it is our responsibility to prepare ourselves.

It seems that my plea to the university was answered before I even made it. A week after I started writing this article and right before Pesach, an email from security was sent out about new policies and drills that will now be conducted on campus. Ultimately, though, the university can do only so much to prepare us in case of an emergency. It is the responsibility of every student

to prepare themselves for such an emergency. I'd urge each and every one of you reading this article to set aside time to prepare yourself for an active shooter. Whether that means signing up for an active shooter drill or watching the safety video on the YU website, it's imperative that you stay on top of your own safety.

If you suddenly feel compelled to prepare yourself in the event of an active shooter on campus, here is a summary of some important details to remember that are listed on YU's security page:

1. When an active shooter or commotion is near you, flee the area you are in and search for a safe place to take cover. Only contact 911 once you are in a secure area.
2. Search for a room or office that locks from the inside. If the door does not lock, barricade it with whatever heavy objects are in the room. Close the windows and stay as quiet as possible.
3. If you are caught in an open area or hallway, hide as well as you can and stay silent or "play dead" to avoid detection.
4. If you get a YU alert that a shooter is in on campus and you are outside, take immediate cover or leave campus. Distance yourself from the building that the active shooter is in.

If you do not receive YU alerts, update your contact information here:

www.yu.edu/yualert

5. Consider all risks when leaving a secure area. It is common for shooters to pose as police in order to get people to leave their shelters. Wait until trusted emergency personnel give you an "all clear," or until a YU alert is sent out that says the situation is under control.

For those of you who just completely skipped reading 1-5, I get it. It seems so unreal for something like this to happen. It feels like an active shooter is a one in a million occurrence. However, if you have glanced at the news at all in the past couple of months, then you know that this is a foolish mentality to have. Unfortunately, deadly shootings have been occurring too often lately, and we must accept that this is a potential reality and prepare ourselves accordingly.

This Is Not Only About Dating, Believe It or Not

By Donny Steinberg

Throughout the 1930s, when Americans thirsted for an inexpensive escape from the economic horrors, LeRoy Robert Ripley rose to the occasion and surpassed all expectations. Ripley travelled to 211 different countries recording man's most outlandish accomplishments to launch his first book that started it all - *Ripley's: Believe It or Not*. His popularity skyrocketed as he hosted his own radio show, established nationwide freak-show Odditoriums, and, after his death, his enterprise produced a viral TV series. The Ripley Entertainment company, now just months short from celebrating its centennial milestone, captured the world's attention for so long by revealing the individuals who stand out. Being different, with all one's blemishes and knacks, weaknesses and talents, is the portal to ingenuity and is what people continue to love.

Recently, I have just gotten my feet wet in the dating world and was surprised by the *shidduch* resume phenomenon. From a guy's perspective, I would like to share some of my impressions and suggest how it reflects on a greater societal trend.

Unlike Ripley, who promoted the ordinary to be extraordinary, the *shidduch* resume deflates the extraordinary to simply ordinary. I quickly came to avoid resumes because (aside from the fact that one cannot accurately compress a 22+ college-educated developing *ben* or *bas Torah* into a short 5-7 sentence blurb) many Orthodox women describe themselves on the resume as the same, and misleadingly flawless, woman.

Unfortunately, many *shidduch* resumes use (redundant) illustrations to depict the same pixel-perfect woman such as "really smart, very studious, and successful in school. She's *frum* and takes *yiddishkeit* seriously." They use humdrum descriptions such as "Looking for someone who has motivation and positive approach to learning but sees the value in a job and the outside world..." Aside from my pet peeve for misusing "but" for "and," unless your pool of guys learns in Telz or Brisk, this essentially describes a large portion of the *frum* "YU-type guy," let alone a majority of the larger Orthodox world too. These descriptions do not paint her unique picture and can and should either briefly be added in or, more impactfully, be mentioned by the one presenting the resume. Yet, they all say it, with not much else. I find it mind-boggling that when job applicants write their professional resume, their agenda is "How can I stand out?" yet, when it comes to dating resumes, their agenda, it seems, is "How can I blend in?"

Friends know to not share resumes with me anymore and that I prefer a sensitive and real conversation about a prospective suggestion instead. However, I understand that resumes are an unfortunate reality and even though I avoid reading them, many still do. So how can we improve them?

Capturing what makes us unique is difficult – especially when obliged to put it in a concise text – but imagine if resumes focused on answering questions such as "What are you passionate about?"; "What is something you are trying to improve on?"; "What motivates you?" I am not suggesting adding weaknesses and struggles – though we all certainly have them. Essentially, say what makes you special; and everyone has something.

I realize that some of the above questions are personal and that one may not necessarily want them online. However, one should look to strike a balance between being understandably reserved and also personal. Breaking out of the resume template allows the reader to consider her *personal* picture instead of resorting only to her *actual* picture.

Unfortunately, this behaviorism of coming across as generic seeps into dates as well. I have often noticed, and heard from others too, that many women – like on their resumes – come across as all the same. Perhaps it is because they seem to cater their opinions and responses to what they *think* the guy is looking for; certain opinions are stressed, while other less "attractive" ones, such as controversial *hashkafic* views, are softened. I presume that women would argue the same about many men, and that we men are just as guilty.

Both the same "perfect" resumes and the generic dates lead me to speculate that this conformity reflects on a fundamental lapse in our society. This is not only about dating, believe it or not. This is about being genuine – all



the time.

Intentional or subconscious, it seems that many people all around us are forfeiting their individuality out of fear of isolation. I know many people are overly cautious to express their political opinions, if they have one at all, because they are concerned that their social circles would not welcome them if their opinions were not the popular view. Plastic surgeons, intensive weight loss programs, and name-brand

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outfitters who increasingly advertise their "indispensable" products as mechanisms to achieve what *society* deems as ideal beauty also come to mind as instances of the aforementioned societal trend. It is human nature and vital to feel accepted, but hiding ourselves behind the masks of conformity is cowardly and does not bring us closer to authentic social acceptance.

God creates every individual *beztelem Elokim* (as commentaries expound) – *uniquely* in His image. We are all created with our own mosaic of looks, habits, passions, idiosyncrasies, aptitudes, and shortcomings. We should strive to live our entire lives maximizing that responsibility of being individual and not opting to comfortably blend in.

Tal Ben-Shahar, Harvard professor and author of *The Pursuit of Perfect*, teaches "We may have been taught that ... feeling shy and nervous about opening ourselves up emotionally and physically was uncool and shameful." Ben-Shahar continues, "Unlearning the lessons of childhood and early adulthood is hard, which is why it is difficult for so many of us to open ourselves to the flow of emotions." Imagine if we all felt confident being a little more vulnerable. Imagine if everyone felt comfortable expressing to our friends, colleagues, mentors, and strangers our real eyebrow-raising opinions, family struggles, mental health challenges, theological questions, and quirky hobbies – without feeling like or caring if we are being judged. We all have baggage. I am certainly not saying everything has to

be public, but I *am* saying that not everything has to be so private. Complexity and shortcomings are what make you and me human; they are what make you and me individual. Perfection is not a Jewish value; it isn't even a human one. Why taint ourselves by portraying ourselves as such?

Confusion and uncertainty is uncomfortable, so we look to fill that void by quickly putting people – and ourselves – in (albeit flawed) boxes. Some may feel, "I am a registered Republican, I can't be known to support position X." Or, "I am in YP and so I must speak with a certain jargon," "She went to *that* seminary, so she must be X religious but not Y *hashkafically*," and so on. We then question when people deviate from these "boxes." We should all do what we believe in and not hold ourselves back because of how others might view us. If others judge us, that is their problem, not ours.

Anyone who knows me well knows that I thrive on doing my own thing and thinking in my own way; I also work on not shying away from expressing this mentality along with comfortably sharing my own shortcomings and insecurities. I also strive not to box (which is a feel-better word for "judge") others or myself based on institutions we attended or communities we come from. We are all complex, and with the proper confidence, we all can and should be different.

I am *not* saying we must be different for the sake of being different. We do not have to be like Edna Price, who would swallow 12 swords at once and remove them one at a time, or like Lothrop Withington Jr. who swallowed 25 live goldfish to win his student election (though, Noah Marlowe, I'm counting on you to follow in these footsteps), or like two brothers in Russia who slapped each other's faces for 36 hours straight. I *am* saying we should aim to be real about who we are and not sacrifice that for anything – especially when it comes to something as important as finding our *shidduch*.

I am new to the dating scene and maybe I do not fully comprehend the unfortunate stress and worry that women and men face. My hope, though, is that women should consider giving their resumes a little more spunk – guys love that. And when dating, we should *all* try a little more to express our genuine selves. My hope is that we should all be who we want and not let anyone box us into conventional paths. Robert Ripley exemplified and shared with the world that people love those who are different. I implore us all to introspect, find what makes us different, share it with the world, and be the greatest individuals that we were born to be. People will accept, respect, and love you *more* because of it – believe it or not.

Do Social Media Platforms Stunt Political Debate?

By Lilly Gelman

Most college students I know, including myself, have become experts in wasting time on Facebook and Twitter. We procrastinate with endless articles, Tasty videos, and status updates to distract ourselves from work and exams.

In addition to the nonsense and the lack of sense present on social media, using them as platforms for political information and debate has a negative effect on its users. Jesse Singal in *The New York Times* wrote that political debates on social media “[make] us dumber” because “tribal allegiances are replacing shared empirical understandings of the world,” preventing “good-faith disagreement” and promoting anger and ignorance.

But, are people as willing to debate politics over social media as often as we think? A Pew Research survey investigated the “tendency of people not to speak up about policy issues [on social media] ... when they believe their own point of view is not widely shared.” When asked specifically about their willingness to discuss Edward Snowden’s 2013 leak of NSA global surveillance programs, “only 42% of those who use Facebook or Twitter were willing to discuss these same [political] issues through social media.”

Thanks to Facebook’s algorithm, however, users today hardly need to worry about opposing points of view. As Kylie Sipowski wrote on *The Odyssey*, Facebook’s algorithm dictates what we see on our newsfeeds “not just based on the most recent posts from your friends or from pages you’ve ‘liked,’ but based on the posts it predicts you’ll find the most relevant.” Users become bombarded with articles and ideas supporting their already existent opinions, rarely encountering any counter-arguments or opposing opinions. In this way, Facebook and other social media sites and apps limit the scope of the political debate we see, as well as the range of our political conversations.

Additionally, engaging in political discussion on Twitter or in a Facebook comment thread offers the easy cop-out of logging off or shutting down the app. Instead of coming up with a response or considering the possibility that one may, in fact, be wrong, an individual can simply leave the conversation without any expectation of an explanation. The screen

provides a force field behind which one can hide when someone disagrees with their point of view or makes an argument they can’t counter.

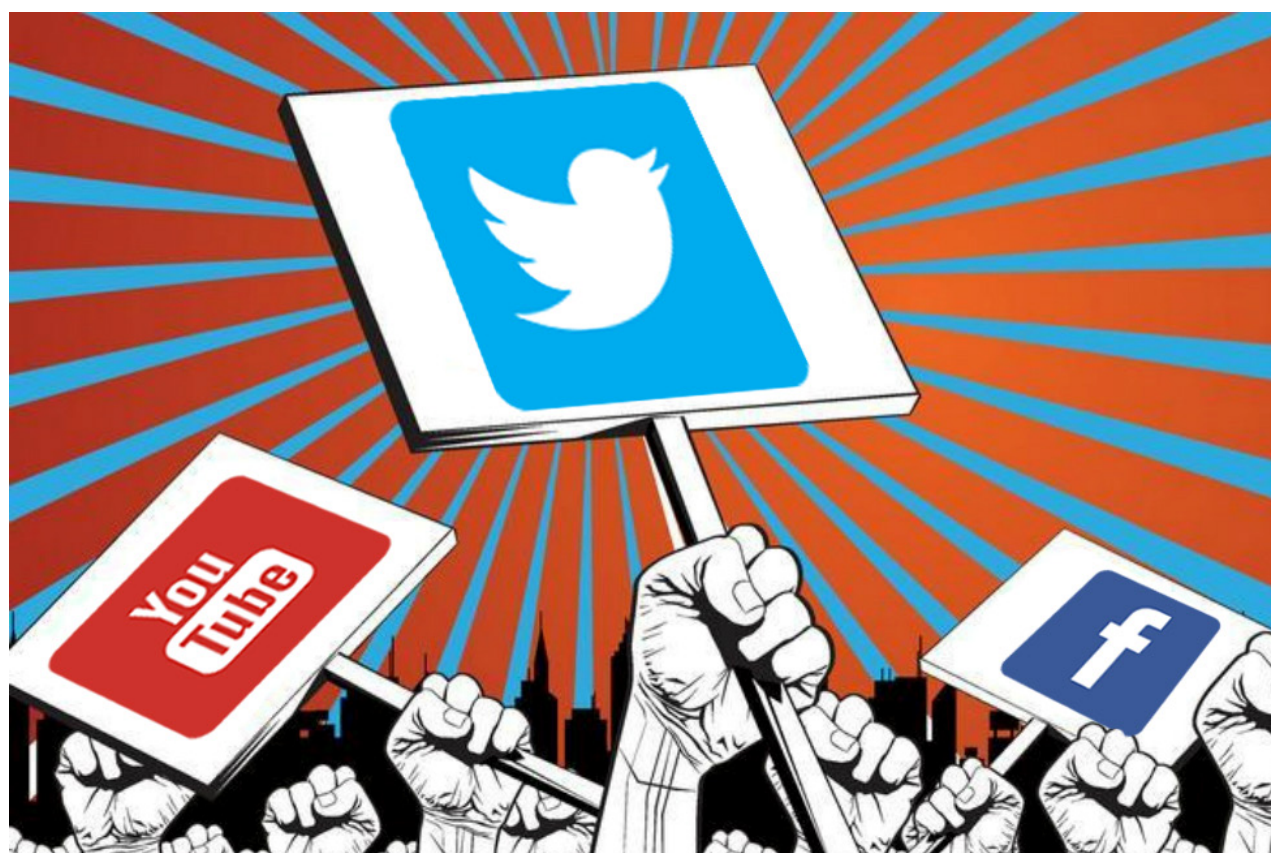
This escape route limits meaningful debate and prevents users from questioning and developing their own opinions. Social media not only limits our exposure to the full spectrum of political opinions but stunts the deepening and developing of our own points of view.

Now, in terms of the echo-chamber of ideas, I think it’s pretty safe to say that this would occur with or without social media. Maybe the new Facebook formula further limits the school of opinions one sees online, but in most cases, people will find opinions falling mainly in line with their political points of view. CNN reported a different Pew Research study which found that “Republicans and Democrats both say their friend networks are predominantly made

up of people who are like-minded politically” and that “2 in 3 Democrats (64%) and more than half of Republicans (55%) say they have ‘just a few’ or ‘none’ close friends who are” members of the opposite party.

Regardless of this evidence for a real-life echo-chamber, having political debates in person requires that one fully understand their point of view and respond to any challenge to their opinion. Ending a conversation is nothing like closing the Facebook tab, forcing people to ponder and address any objections to their political stances. Even in a conversation with like-minded peers or colleagues, the nuances of the opinions may emerge and lead to a friendly disagreement during which both sides learn something from the other person.

It might be time to think about taking your finger off the like, re-Tweet, and reply buttons, and moving the political conversations to in-person venues.



Change in Mindset

By Nechama Lowy

Since Dean Nissel released a statement on Friday, March 23 announcing the implementation of a new *minyán* that will allow women to speak from the pulpit, there has been a strong response by the Wilf campus student leaders calling for the Yeshiva University administration and RIETS to consider the student body’s needs before taking action on their own accord. While I wholeheartedly support this notion, it is not just the external permissions that need addressing, but the internal mindset that is clearly prevalent among the RIETS administration.

The recent statement reaffirmed what the rabbis of RIETS have already made clear—they do not parallel a Modern Orthodox *yeshiva* atmosphere with women in leadership positions and *that* is the exact mindset that needs changing. The reason they are not changing Klein@9 to fit the needs of the community is because they have not shown any intention of normalizing women in leadership roles in *minyanim* as a “*yeshiva* norm.”

I state this with confidence, having experienced Klein@9 firsthand and speaking with leaders of the *minyán*, as well as researching the background and dialogue behind the policy that women cannot speak from the pulpit. Several RIETS rabbis explicitly stated that women were not allowed to speak after davening and the fact that the issue was not resolved after one woman spoke, until multiple articles and discussions were published, shows that they had no intention of including women anytime soon. The university acted upon community pressure when creating the new *minyán* that they announced a few weeks ago, not their own values. Perhaps it would have been more plausible to assume that the rabbis of RIETS support women in leadership roles in *minyanim* had they taken this opportunity to differentiate between their personal stricter views and the needs of the community to create an inclusive environment. However, after speaking with multiple leaders of the *minyanim*, no such statement was made, aside from reasserting the policy that disallows women from speaking after davening. There is no reason to believe that they supported women speaking prior to the incident and creating an entirely separate *minyán* shows that they do not support it now.

While I understand Yeshiva University’s desire to accommodate the range of opinions among the student body, in truth, they are not working to accommodate, but rather to

prevent a positive change that would encourage both men and women to truly embrace and participate in their Shabbat experience. The administration needs to cease the mindset

**“YESHIVA UNIVERSITY CLAIMS TO BE THE
FLAGSHIP INSTITUTION FOR MODERN
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OTHERWISE.”**

that exclusion is a tolerable status quo because of how they deem the typical “*yeshiva minyanim*” to operate. Yeshiva University claims to be the flagship institution for Modern Orthodoxy, yet their actions seem to imply otherwise.

While Yeshiva University has failed to properly acknowledge the improvement regarding accepting women leaders within Modern Orthodox communities, many of our diverse communities continue to show their support for participation. I attended a seminary where my female Talmud teacher taught women’s law at the *yeshiva* nearby. My high school Tanach teacher, a Stern alumna, taught Tanach and Jewish Thought to the high school boys. Orthodox life on many other college campuses takes pride in women serving as *gabbait*, giving the *dvar Torah*, and taking on leadership roles.

Women continue to become more involved and take on more roles in their respective communities and Yeshiva University should not only recognize this, but wholeheartedly support and condone the actions taken by leaders of *minyanim* to include women. In failing to do so, they will not only further isolate students, but stunt growth and acceptance within their diverse communities.

The unfortunate truth is that Yeshiva University is not ready to accept the necessity of women in *yeshiva* leadership roles, and until they release a statement equalizing and validating the *minyanim* that are more open to women as aligned with the Modern Orthodox *yeshiva* norm they claim to represent, we have no reason to believe otherwise.

Why Any Smart Investor Should Play The Powerball. Sort of!

By Solo Shulman

If you've ever driven on any interstate roadway or up our very own west-side highway toward Washington Heights, you could not have missed the massive illuminated advertisement signs: "Current Powerball _____ million, Current Mega Millions _____ Million." As a driver who just passed these lit up fantasies of hope, you'll need to ask myself the million-dollar question, "Should I buy a ticket?"

To answer this question, you'll need to determine a lottery ticket's expected value by evaluating it from an economic and mathematical perspective.

The expected value of any investment is calculated by

the Multi-State Lottery Association, only occurs once in every 292 million. Further, even if you are lucky enough to match all 6 numbers, your jackpot winnings still vary from drawing to drawing. Therefore, according to the original expected value, you would need the entire jackpot to be 584 million. You'll arrive at this figure after determining

"HEY, YOU JUST NEVER KNOW!"

the expected value of 584 million multiplied by a 1/292 million chance of winning is = 2 which is the break-even point on your original \$2 investment (the ticket price).

only one winner to claim the entire jackpot. However, the way the jackpot works is that if there are multiple winners, they all split the jackpot evenly. So in your situation, the 584 million indifferent price becomes 292 million (584/2) and thus the expected value would drop to \$1 which is below our ticket price. Therefore, you wouldn't even contemplate buying a ticket!

But should you necessarily assume that there would be 2 winners? After all, you were lucky enough to win the lottery; maybe you're also lucky enough to be the only one?

To determine the probability that there will be more than one winner, you'll need to return to the January 13 example. There, 1 billion tickets were sold the night before



simply multiplying each outcome by the probability of a specific outcome occurring. For example, the expected value of a coin toss that offers \$10 for a "heads" and nothing for a "tails" is \$5 dollars (\$10 x 50% plus \$0 x 50% = \$5). If the cost of entry into the coin toss gamble is \$4 dollars, then it is economically sensible to play. By contrast, if the cost is \$6 dollars, the expected value is less than the entrance fee and it is not a sound investment.

In regards to the Powerball, does the expected value of the Jackpot drawing exceed its ticket price? First, we'll need to consider all of the nine different ways that you can receive a payoff from the lottery. The Powerball consist of five white balls ranging from one to 69 and a red ball ranging from one to 26. Thus, the total expected value would be the probability of winning each prize multiplied by the amount won at that level. For example, the chance of matching one red ball (and only one red ball) is 1 in 38.32 and the payout is \$4. The expected value of this prize is approximately 10 cents. (\$4 multiplied by 1/38). The sum or total expected value for the first eight prizes combined (excluding the jackpot) computes to approximately 26 cents. So at the ticket price of \$2, it is clear that you should not purchase a ticket. (To understand the calculations feel free to visit <http://www.flalottery.com/exptkt/pwrball-odds.pdf>).

But of course, you don't play the lottery to come in one of the eight runner-up positions. To win the entire Jackpot, however, you must match all six balls which, according to

But to truly make an informed decision, you'll need to also consider the post-tax or "net" earnings; The Jackpot figure that is displayed on these interstate signs isn't actually what a lucky winner takes home. The cash value of the jackpot is usually 60% of the number that the signs display, from which taxes must still be deducted. After taxes you will be left with somewhere between 33%-40% (dependent on the respective state tax rate) of the number that is displayed on the signs. (New York has the highest state tax whereas several states have no state tax on lottery prizes).

How do these these adjusted figures affect the expected value? If you assume that the final cash payout needs to be 584 million to break even, and that cash payout is somewhere between 33%-40% of the displayed sign, you would actually need the signs to display a figure of approximately 1.6 billion dollars (assuming a take home over of about 36.5 percent- the average of 33 and 40) in order for your expected value to break even on your original investment. Such a number has only occurred once in Powerball history, on January 13, 2018.

So, if the Powerball were to reach 1.6 billion, should you then dump your retirement savings and play the Powerball? After all, according to the above estimates, it would be worth it, right?

Well not really!

The prudence of this investment hinges on there being

the drawing, allowing for the probability of three winners (1 billion tickets, divided by 1 in 292 million chances) who then split the jackpot evenly. Under those circumstances, the expected value of a ticket drops below the \$2 threshold. Indeed, that's exactly what happened in the the January 13th drawing; three individuals received over 200 million dollars a piece.

Let's rap up this discussion and give a concrete answer. If you are a rational investor, then the answer is overwhelmingly NO! Economic theory teaches that people are rational decision makers; If you prefer pizza to pasta, and prefers pasta to lasagna, then you'll also prefer pizza to lasagna. So why should you play? Because it's also true that people don't always abide by rules of rational decision making. After all, if you had pizza Monday and Tuesday, and then it's offered again Wednesday you might want a little taste of some lasagna. Personally, my sentiment is that people aren't rational thinkers and the expected utility (or satisfaction) you receive from playing, praying, and hoping that it's you who will become the millionaire, trumps the pure mathematical expected value, which would otherwise never allow you to rationally buy a ticket.

So is my entire article a waste? No, not at all! You should just know that mathematically it never makes sense to play the lottery but so many people do because as the lottery so brilliantly advertises, "Hey, you just never know!"

Q1: How did HQ get so popular?

By Akiva Clair

This past Wednesday afternoon, over 2.2 million people turned away from their work, school, and anything and everything else, opened up a funky little app on their phone, and spent the next few minutes excitedly sweating out the arrival of the biggest HQ Trivia game in the app's short yet impressive history. To advertise for the upcoming action film "Rampage," Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, the star of the movie, guest-hosted HQ, and the regular prize of \$5,000 skyrocketed to an HQ-record of \$300,000. Just a few weeks before, Nike sponsored a surprise game with an \$100,000 prize, and Steven Spielberg's "Ready Player One" blessed the HQ-world with a \$250,000 game only two days later. This trend of big-name companies using the app as a creative, out-of-the-box advertising medium will likely continue as marketers view HQ as a goldmine of potential customers.

Created in August 2017, HQ has grown steadily in participants due to increased prize amounts coupled with positive word-of-mouth experiences from current HQties who love everything about this cultural game. The concept of HQ is relatively simple. On weekdays at 3PM EST and every night at 9 PM EST, HQ goes live with a 12-question game. With a series of cute graphics and clever puns, the lovable host Scott Rogowsky (AKA Quiz Khalifa, AKA Host Malone) asks question after question about topics ranging from music, history, geography, sports, and much more. Unless you have an extra life, it's one strike and you're out. After the always-dramatic Q12, the people still alive divide up the cash prize (usually \$5,000) amongst themselves. At first, some prize amounts seem very high, but in reality, winners often walk away with less than \$20 after splitting their earnings with their fellow HQties.

While the allure of winning money, albeit usually a relatively small amount, definitely attracts people to HQ, you'd be hard-pressed to say it's the main reason. HQ regulars realize that the average winnings are very unimpressive, and when you calculate the amount of games you had to play to win those \$13.19, you're going to realize that you have an absurdly low return on investment. If not for the money, then why do so many people play and love HQ? The answer lies in three super-important and unique qualities that HQ possesses: It creates a fun, social experience, it gives you a great feeling of self-achievement, and it provides you with extremely valuable social value.

There are two primary ways to play HQ. One is slightly boring and lonely while the other is hyped and crazy. The first, less-enjoyable way is when you're sitting in an accounting class and balancing your phone on top of your thigh and under your desk while you look up at your professor every once in a while to avoid looking suspicious. While secretly playing HQ is undoubtedly more enjoyable than learning about credits and debits, it pales in comparison to the second, more social way to use the app. Instead of playing alone, playing HQ when you're hanging out with friends and family is significantly more enjoyable and exhilarating. During the ten seconds that you have to answer the question, your heart races with excitement

"IT CREATES A FUN, SOCIAL EXPERIENCE, IT GIVES YOU A GREAT FEELING OF SELF-ACHIEVEMENT, AND IT PROVIDES YOU WITH EXTREMELY VALUABLE SOCIAL VALUE."

as everyone screams out correct (and incorrect) answers and collectively holds their breath to hear if they got it right. What's more, celebrating correct answers with your friends is an awesome, wild moment that plays a big part in making the HQ experience so enjoyable. People love how fun the game is, and that reality contributes to more downloads, positive reviews, and a high user retention rate.

From Trivial Pursuit to Quizup and from Jeopardy to Family Feud, trivia games, shows, and apps have been, and will continue to be, extremely popular among all different types of people and personalities. The reason is that despite our differences, all humans naturally crave and love the awesome feelings of self-achievement and self-pride. Think back to a time that you received an award, got a good grade on a test, or hit a nice jumper. You probably felt that warm, exciting feeling in your chest that manifests itself into a smile that you simply can't hold back. Similarly, when we correctly answer a random question about Shakespeare, Australia, or Drake, we can't help

but feel that surge of pride and achievement over our mini-accomplishment. Every question that you get right reflects and reinforces your beliefs that you're a knowledgeable, cultural person, and that great feeling is one of the big reasons that you love answering trivia so much and keep on coming back to it day after day.

Arguably the greatest influencer and motivator right now in modern society is social value. Roughly defined as an increase or decrease in society's respect towards and acceptance of you as a valuable, interesting contributor and member of its culture, social value is a major consideration in many of the decisions we make. When you buy a car, for example, you want a nice-looking model and well-known brand so that people will look at what you're driving and think more highly of you. Similarly, when you post a funny meme in a group, a major part of your reason for doing so is to impress others, receive positive feedback, and make your friends think that you're funny, witty, and cool. Social value is a main driver behind the unprecedented success of social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram, and as long as people can see and like our thoughts and pictures, we'll keep on posting.

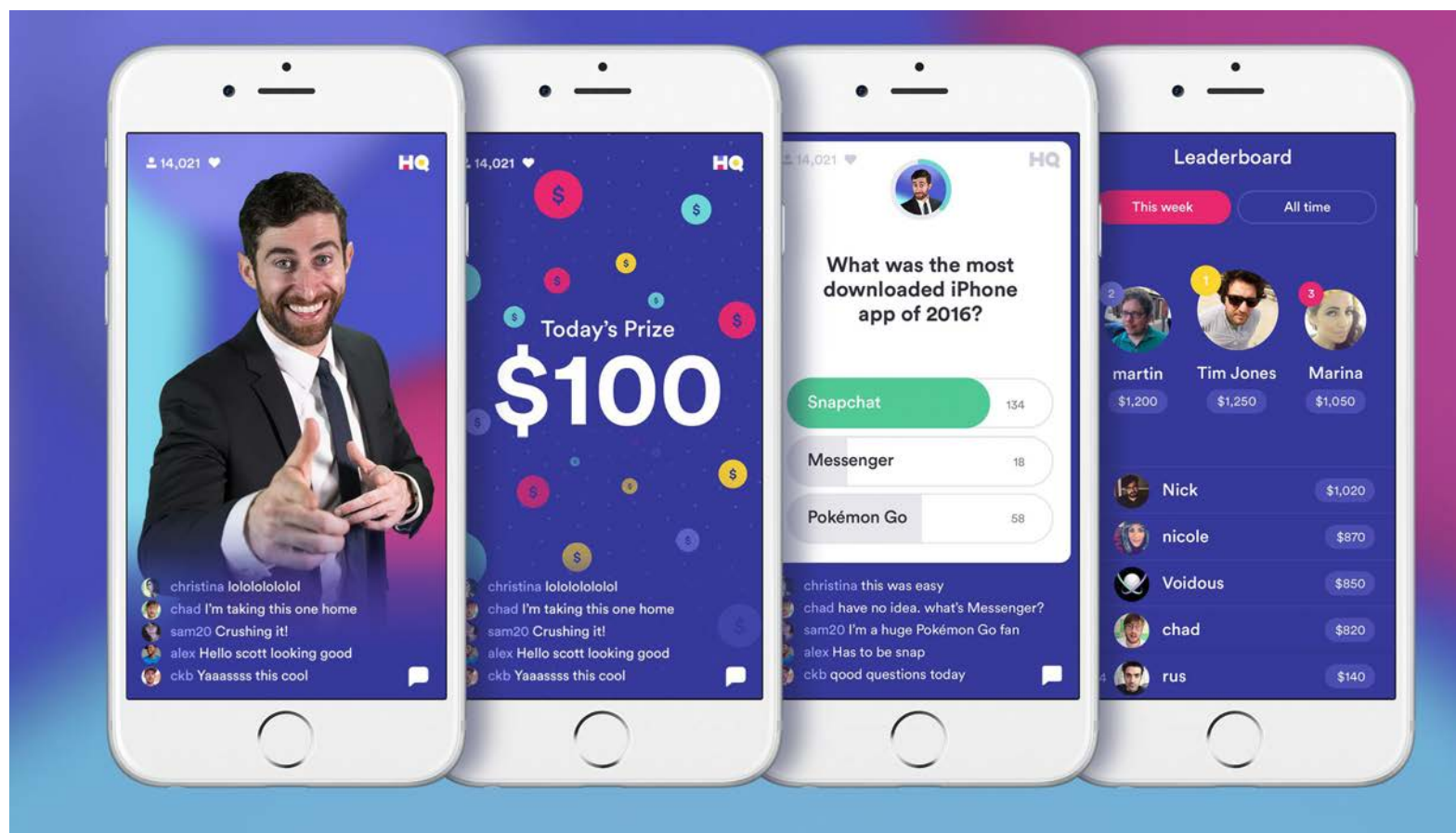
This natural, normal desire for social value, however, must be controlled. When taken too far, one can run into very mentally unhealthy problems of worrying and depressing over doing something that gave them negative social value. If you get to the point that you realize that every action in your life is based merely on the question of "What will people think of me if I do X or Y," then you should consider taking a step on back and reflecting on your immense, personal value that can't be measured by likes and compliments.

When you fight your way through savage questions and blindly guess your way to an HQ victory, your first reaction is to tell people that you won, especially if it's your first time. Winning in HQ is no easy task by any means, and being able to proudly yet respectfully share with others that you vanquished the HQ-dragon and came out victorious gives you a ton of positive social value. Your friends now view you as more knowledgeable, cultural, and successful. Yes, it's just a trivia game, but because it's so hard to win, people become really impressed by the winners. In essence, the harder something is to do, the more positive social value you'll gain by successfully doing it. What's more, the bigger prize games that HQ runs from time to time not only attract more people because of the larger payouts,

but also because of the significantly greater social value. Telling someone that you won over \$3000 during the epic Dwayne Johnson game is infinitely cooler than telling someone about that time you got eight dollars on a Tuesday afternoon.

Where HQ's popularity will go should be interesting to watch. It's growth has been somewhat stagnant as of late, but the allure of increasingly massive prizes and continued, positive word-of-mouth should keep the downloads coming. And what it lacks in annoying stalling and the occasional ridiculous question (some bird's nest soup, anyone?), it makes up for in a unique, enjoyable, and valuable experience that begs the following question:

Q12: Are you an HQtie yet?



Why Not Midsize Firms?

By Etan Neiman

It's been about a year-and-a-half, and more importantly two busy seasons, since I began my journey into public accounting. Suffice to say, my knowledge of what it's like to work in the accounting field has come a considerable way since I walked into Yeshiva University. This is knowledge I am eager to share with you, my reader, in the hopes that it will help you navigate the recruitment chaos. First, though, a little context is necessary.

Being fortunate enough to enjoy both strong academic and extracurricular success meant I could conceive starting my career at nearly any accounting or even finance firm. Nonetheless, I went accounting and much to the shock of many, I went smaller midsize. I scorned the big, shiny name firms in favor of Brand Sonnenschine, a smaller midsize accounting firm located in downtown

"STUDENTS, YOU HAVE WORKED TOO HARD AND TOO LONG TO SIMPLY FOLLOW THE HERD TO THE SHINY NAME (LARGE) FIRMS."

Manhattan. This is significant because there is a prevalent belief that the top accounting students go to the shiny name firms, the good students go to very large midsize firms like Grant Thornton and RSM and the rest of the students fight it out over the rest of the "inferior" firms. Yeah, I interviewed at the shiny name firms, but they were always a backup. You read that right; the EYs and PwCs of the world - the essence of holiness themselves - were a backup, interviewed at to cover my bases. There is certainly not anything wrong per say with shiny name firms, just they were not and are not for me and moreover, are not for many students.

After reading this piece, I encourage my reader to pivot to a more comprehensive article I wrote for this paper last winter covering the inaccuracies portrayed amongst the

shiny-named firms and the underappreciated benefits of midsize firms titled: Are The Big Four Accounting Firms and Grant Thornton as Great as They Seem?

However, that piece was written before I worked a full-time day in public accounting. Presented below are some of the experiences I've had along the past year-and-a-half which I feel could be helpful to an accounting or really any business student weighing midsize firms vs. larger firms.

1) I've actually learned

Rather than being handcuffed to one or a couple clients working on a singular aspect of a tax return or balance sheet, I've had incredible exposure. I've prepared and understood the entire process of the tax return for individuals, partnerships, corporations, trusts, estates, and even some private foundations. I've constructed everything from a cash analysis to accruals to depreciation schedules to adjusting journal entries to financial statements. I've supported far too many audits, reviews, and periodic compilations to count. I've learned.

If one is looking to coast for a year or two and not be intellectually stimulated all while putting in extreme hours, firms like Grant Thornton and KPMG beckon. However, smaller firms - whether consisting of about 30 members like mine or a couple hundred like Anchin, Block, & Anchin - allow for true growth.

2) I've done it in less time

Firms such as Deloitte and EY understand that entry-level hires are more and more looking to stay for a quick stint, then get anywhere but there. While two years used to be considered the minimum stay, that is gradually becoming one year.

Acknowledging this reality and not wishing to lose money on the expensive recruitment process, the shiny name firms work their new hires hard. Very hard. 15 hour days are commonplace during busy season and the "busy season" time of year is ever stretching. A friend of mine at Grant Thornton reported in February that he expected to more or less be in busy season until October.

On the other end of the spectrum, firms like mine, Citrin Cooperman, CohnReznick and many more midsize firms remain in line with true midsize firm standards of having not much longer than a twelve hour busy season day and not much more than two and a half to three

months worth of the busy season schedule. Best yet, non-busy season days actually are eight to eight-and-a-half hour days.

3) I haven't done it alone

"Nobody is going to get ahead here at the expense of someone else." Those words from a Brand Sonnenschine Senior Partner echo perhaps the biggest advantage found at midsize firms. It's a true team. The sheer eagerness, not just willingness but eagerness, of the more experienced associates and managers to help me refine my abilities since day one has been stunning. My colleagues have my back and I have theirs. Maybe my most impressionable experience came on the cusp of being assigned a tricky project the night before a busy season deadline. Without thinking twice, a couple of my fellow Junior Associates stopped packing up to go home and jumped to my aid. They recognized I was in a difficult situation and didn't hesitate to work with me to knock out this project, a project which was ultimately only my responsibility to complete.

It's hard not to contrast that experience with what would be expected at a shiny name firm, where having those incredible relationships would be closer to dream than actuality. Maybe one does not get to build those relationships due to the hectic pool seating model at larger firms, which has staff constantly changing seats from one day to the next depending on generic cubicle availability. Perhaps the trend of shiny name firms automating or sending jobs overseas fosters an understandable fear that it may soon be either my job or my colleague's job, making fostering close relationships a near impossibility.

Students, you have worked too hard and too long to simply follow the herd to the shiny name firms. You have earned the right to make an informed, pressure-free decision about where it makes sense to begin your professional life. Let's halt this damaging trend of not giving the proper consideration to the benefits offered at all firms. Maybe the shiny name firms will happen to be the fit for you, but what if they're not? You deserve to start at the firm which will set you up for success. Why can't that be a midsize firm?

Etan Neiman graduated from Sy Syms in January of 2017 and is a former Commentator Business Editor. He has worked at Brand Sonnenschine LLP since graduation.



Reaching Patent no. 10,000,000

By Aryeh Helfgott

In a few months, the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) is expected to grant its 10 millionth utility patent. While the granting of such a patent may seem like a trivial event, it is in reality a significant milestone in human ingenuity.

“IT IS CLEAR, THEN, THAT INDIVIDUAL INVENTIONS, AND EVEN ENTIRE INDUSTRIES, THAT BENEFIT SOCIETY ARE OFTEN DRIVEN BY THE EXISTENCE OF PATENTS.”

In 1787, at the Constitutional Convention, the Framers embedded the Patent and Copyright Clause (Article I, Section 8, Clause 8) into the Constitution:

“The Congress shall have power...To promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries.”

These words established the basis for a patent system designed to encourage inventors to create new inventions, as well as for them to disclose those inventions to the public. A patent is essentially a quid pro quo exchange between the inventor and the public. That is, the inventor gets the right to exclude others from making, using, or selling the invention for 20 years, in exchange for disclosing the invention to the public. Disclosure of the invention reveals its mechanisms and methods to the public domain of knowledge, thereby spurring cumulative innovation.

The very first patent was granted to Samuel Hopkins in 1790 for improvements in the process of making potash, an ingredient used in fertilizer, and was signed by President

George Washington. Since then, tons of patents have been granted to inventions, many of which were noteworthy and even revolutionary. For example, Eli Whitney’s cotton gin (patent no. 72); Samuel Morse’s telegraph (patent no. 1647); Louis Pasteur’s “Improvement in Brewing Beer and Ale” (patent no. 135, 245); Thomas Edison’s electric lamp (patent no. 223, 898); Nikola Tesla’s electro-magnetic motor (patent no. 381,968); Wilbur and Orville Wright’s flying machine (patent no. 821,393); and Steve Jobs’ Apple iPod (patent no. 7,116,791). Without patent protection, it is possible that the inventors of such groundbreaking innovations would not have devoted their time and resources to research, nor would they have disclosed their detailed ideas to the public scientific community.



Patents also dictate the success of entire industries. In the early 2000s, many biotech companies secured patents of specific human genes, as these isolated genetic sequences were used in a variety of therapeutic and diagnostic

applications. Over time, however, questions were raised over whether human genes were in fact patentable under law. While the biotech companies argued that isolated genes were no different than any other isolated natural compound found in nature (e.g. aspirin), for which there are patents, the U.S. Supreme Court nonetheless ruled (*Association for Molecular Pathology v. Myriad Genetics*, 2013) that all human genes were unpatentable products of nature. This invalidated tons of gene patents and created a significant setback to the biotech industry. A similar phenomenon occurred in the software industry, when where the Court rejected the patentability of certain kinds of software in *CLS Bank v. Alice* in 2014.

It is clear, then, that individual inventions, and even entire industries, that benefit society are often driven by the existence of patents. It is for this reason that there is a sense of celebration that is warranted upon reaching as high a patent number as 10,000,000.

This celebration is of course not to say that the patent system, as it stands, is flawless. It is certainly not. There are what are known as “patent trolls”: people who obtain patents for enforcement purposes (in order to then receive a monetary settlement) but do not practice the patented invention. Patent trolls serve as the antithesis the entire goal of the patent system since they often leave innovative entities monetarily damaged.

Nevertheless, the patent system has been instrumental in driving innovation. Indeed, in honor of reaching the 10 millionth milestone, the USPTO has designed a brand new patent cover that will be implemented along with the issuing of the 10 millionth patent and has started a “Ten for 10 million” social media campaign to vote on the 10 most transformative patented inventions in history.

As the world looks forward to seeing the lucky invention that will be granted this historic patent, others have been a bit nervous. They fear that the addition of an eighth digit to patent numbers would crash the patent computer system in an “Y2K fashion.” But the truth is that there is no need for alarm: there is a patented computer technology to account for that.

EU Attempts to Fight Data and Privacy Breaches

By Sarah Torgueman

On May 25, 2018 the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will come into effect, heavily impacting global business. In an effort to protect its citizens, the EU passed firm legislation that aims to protect the personal data that companies may receive from its users and clients. Due to the demanding features of the GDPR, businesses that wish to remain efficient will need to become familiar with the legislation’s terms and respond strategically in order to avoid any disruptions to their operations.

The GDPR was initially proposed by the European Commission, the legislative body of the European Union, in January 2012. Two years later, in 2014, the European Parliament approved the legislation, allowing for its official passage in 2016. The transition period, referred to as a “two-year post-adoption grace period” will end on May 25, 2018, enabling the GDPR to take full effect and its terms to become enforceable.

Interestingly, a study conducted by Dell and Dimension Research concluded that approximately 80% of businesses know “little to nothing about the GDPR” and that 97% have not created a plan for how they are to respond. Unfortunately, this ignorance can lead many firms to incur a number of hefty fines.

The EU intends to prevent many of the data and privacy breaches that are common in a data driven societies and economies. It stresses that data processing is applicable regardless of whether or not it is done in the EU region. Interestingly, the GDPR will even affect foreign companies who may have clients and services within the European Union.

Businesses that violate GDPR can face tremendous penalties. Specifically, a company can be fined as much as 4% of annual revenue or 20 million euros, whichever is greater. Violations may include not having company records in order, failing to notify the authorities and victims of a data breach within 72 hours, and not having enough customer consent to process their personal data. The regulation stresses that acquiring consent for processing personal data is critical. Therefore, companies must provide terms and conditions that are “clear and distinguishable from other matters,” and must be distributed in an “intelligible and easily accessible form” to comply with GDPR standards and ensure that customers are aware of their privacy risks.

In order to fully protect EU citizens’ data, GDPR will provide them with certain rights to prevent company misuse. They will have the right to be notified if their personal data is being processed, where it is being processed, and the purpose for processing it, establishing data transparency between subjects and companies. Data subjects will also have the right to be “forgotten,” which is known as Data Erasure. This gives individuals the power to not only halt the processing of their personal data, but to completely erase it from the company’s systems. Data Erasure may only take place if the data is said to “no

longer be relevant” to the original goals of the processing or if an individual removes his or her consent. Moreover, companies will be required to provide data upon request to data subjects, which is referred to as data portability. Upon request, companies must be able to transmit data to an individual in a “commonly used and machine-readable format.”

The concept of data minimisation is emphasized, as well. This refers to the requirement that data may only be processed and retained if it is necessary for the purposes outlined in advance. Additionally, access to personal data must be limited to those that conduct the data processing.

Companies whose primary operations involve processing and regularly monitoring data subjects or data related to crime will be required to appoint a DPO, or a Data Protection Officer, to be responsible for keeping internal company records.

The detailed requirements of the GDPR and its near global impact will shape the way organizations across Europe and the world do business and approach data and privacy. Once this goes into effect in May, businesses will be required to adjust their operations accordingly to effectively comply and avoid penalties.



The Future of Space Exploration

By Jeremy Herskowitz

One of the most iconic moments of the last century occurred on Monday, July 20th 1969, when Neil Armstrong became the first man to walk on the moon. "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" is a phrase that will be remembered forever. At that time, the United States was heavily involved in the Space Race- a competition with the Soviet Union to become the first country in history to land a man on the moon. The United States allocated roughly 4.5% of its total national budget towards space exploration. Nowadays, that number is a staggering 0.5%. The result of this significant reduction in funding has paved the way for private companies to take a front seat to space exploration on behalf of the United States, which could eventually result in tremendous profits in the future.

In 2011, NASA retired the space shuttle which prohibited the United States from sending astronauts

"SPACEX CEO ELON MUSK...HIS ULTIMATE GOAL FOR SPACEX AND SPACE EXPLORATION AS A WHOLE IS TO COLONIZE MARS."

to the International Space Station from US soil. Instead US Astronauts would have to travel aboard The Soyuz- a Russian spacecraft – in order to reach the ISS. This impediment in NASA's capabilities has led to a partnership between the US government and the private sector in order to jumpstart a new era in space exploration. Companies like SpaceX are at the forefront of this new partnership and they are among

the first private companies to have been awarded a government contract to run missions to the ISS. SpaceX has recently developed technology that allows them to launch a rocket to the ISS, return that rocket to a specified landing pad, and then reuse them for other missions, thus operating at a fraction of the cost of NASA. According to SpaceX's COO Gwynne Shotwell, the ability to recycle rockets will save them about 30 percent of the cost, which amounts to \$18 million for the Falcon 9 rocket that SpaceX manufactures and operates. Since 2012, SpaceX has completed 12 missions to resupply the ISS on behalf of NASA. SpaceX has also recently introduced the Falcon Heavy, the world's largest rocket, capable of carrying humans to the Moon and hopefully one day to Mars. In 2014 the US had awarded SpaceX a \$2.6 billion contract to fly American astronauts into space and just last year secured a \$97 million contract to send a military satellite into orbit. The potential future contracts and the revenue that is associated with them could make SpaceX one of the largest corporations in the world.

SpaceX CEO Elon Musk, (also CEO of Tesla and Co-Founder of PayPal) who is well known as a visionary and technological genius, has not been shy about stating his goals for the future of space exploration. His ultimate goal for SpaceX and space exploration as a whole is to colonize Mars. NASA would like to send astronauts to Mars, but according to Musk it is estimated that it would not happen until 2033 and at a cost of approximately \$10 billion per person. Congress estimates that between now and then the total cost of such a mission would be somewhere around \$500 billion. Musk on the other hand believes that SpaceX could send humans to Mars by 2024 and that he would be able to send 100 humans for \$10 billion (or \$100 million per human). Musk's biggest challenge is his

lack of money. After the latest round of funding SpaceX has a total value of \$21.5 billion, however it still is not enough money to launch a serious campaign dedicated to the "Mars Plan". Currently SpaceX is a privately-owned company, however if Musk were to take the company public he could theoretically raise enough money to fund his ultimate project. The question is why he hasn't done it yet.

Although there are reports of a potential IPO sometime next year, Musk is not overly excited about the prospect of SpaceX being publicly-owned. He is fearful that investors will look to focus on short term projects that generate revenue at a faster rate and sacrifice the ultimate goal of colonizing Mars because of the significant resources that it would require. A recent analysis done by analysts at Morgan Stanley estimates that SpaceX could fund its "Mars Plan" through launching hundreds of satellite missions and allocating the profits from those missions to the Mars project. If SpaceX were to take this approach they could potentially keep the company private for the foreseeable future, much to the dismay of hopeful investors.

Today, the only way for the average investor to invest in SpaceX is to invest indirectly through Alphabet Inc. who currently own a 7.5% stake in SpaceX. Alphabet Inc. is the same company that owns Google and YouTube, so having such a successful company having such a large interest in SpaceX demonstrates how investors feel about the future profitability of space exploration. Hopefully the rumors are true and SpaceX will eventually go public but for now this remains the only option to make a profit off of one of the most ambitious companies in recent history.



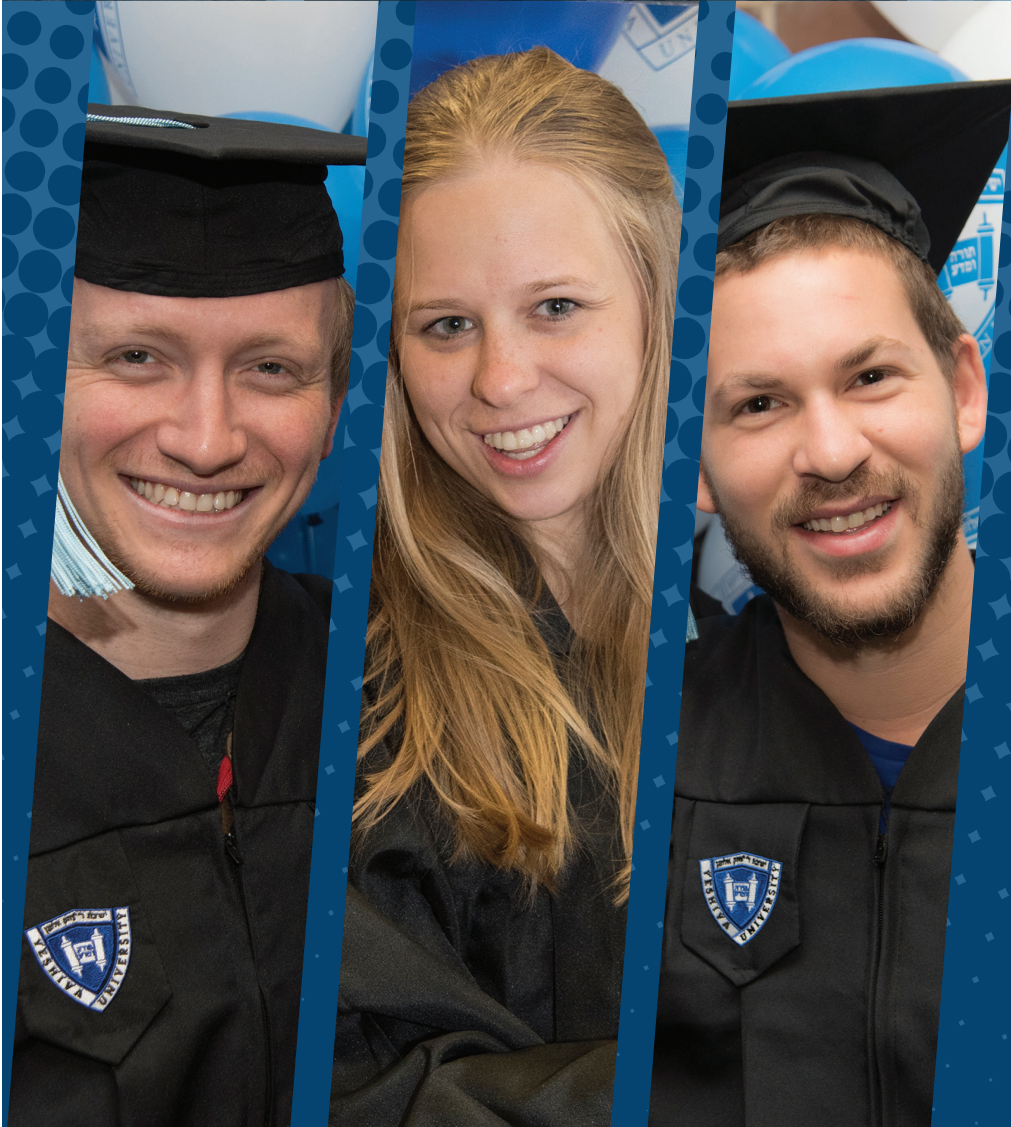


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Yeshiva University

Billions: Based on a True Story?

By Aaron Karesh

Here at YU, it is extremely common to hear people say that they are pursuing careers in investment banking in order to move over to the “buy side;” many YU alum succeed in doing so, landing jobs at prestigious hedge funds and private equity firms. Despite the successful track rate, though, none have managed to land a job at the biggest, baddest fund on the Street: Axe Capital.

Axe Capital is a hedge fund run by self-made billionaire Bobby Axelrod. His offices are stunning, employees well-paid, and returns magnificent. Unfortunately, the firm is under intense scrutiny from both the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), the United States District Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and the United States District Attorney for the Eastern District of New York due to a large-scale insider trading scandal. Axelrod has been arrested, charged with insider trading, forced to give up his license to trade securities and thus turn over his firm to Taylor Mason; his wife has filed for divorce; and he is at risk of losing his fortune to the government.

Billions is in its third season on Showtime, and is a hit drama that captivates both casual television watchers as well as Wall Street professionals. It is also the television show in which Axe Capital, Bobby Axelrod, and all of those investigations take place. But it could be real, right? Perhaps there is a reason for this aura of authenticity. Carefully examining Bobby Axelrod and others in the show reveals a striking connection to the real life story of S.A.C. Capital and its CEO, Steven A. Cohen.

Before agreeing to return all outside capital, not invest outsider’s money until January 1, 2018, and converting into a family office called Point72 Asset Management, Steven A. Cohen presided over one of the most successful hedge funds in history. The firm regularly posted returns of about 30% annually, and were therefore able to bypass the typical two and 20 fee structure most hedge funds employ and instead charged three and 50. For the uninitiated, hedge funds typically charge investors a fee of two percent of assets under management (AUM) and 20 percent of profits; S.A.C. Capital, on the other hand, charged investors three percent of AUM and 50 percent of profits. But with the returns he was generating for his investors, they did not seem to mind the exorbitant fee structure.

But how did they achieve these returns when other hedge funds, even successful ones, were not performing nearly as well? The answer lies in SEC Rule 10b-5 – the prohibition against insider trading. Insider trading is the trading of securities based on material, nonpublic information. For example, if your dad is an insider at a publicly traded company, knows that the stock price is bound to surge after the upcoming earnings call, and decides to let you know that the company would be a good one to add to your investment portfolio, you and

your dad have engaged in insider trading. While Cohen was never convicted of insider trading, a number of his employees – notably, portfolio manager Mathew Martoma – were. As a result, S.A.C. Capital was forced to pay a \$1.8 billion fine, return all outside capital, and convert to a family office that only invested Cohen’s \$11 billion fortune. In addition, despite not being able to link Cohen directly to the insider trading occurring in his firm, he was banned from managing outside capital until January 1, 2018.

While the government may have billed this settlement as a win, it wasn’t. They had been investigating Cohen and his firm for nearly a decade, and the U.S. Attorney at the time, Preet Bharara and his deputy Richard Zabel had a reputation for being a Wall Street crusader; some legends like Cohen, however, just cannot be taken down.

So this brings me back to Bobby Axelrod, Axe Capital, and Billions. How realistic is it? Not only are the storylines of Billions and the S.A.C. Capital investigation nearly identical, but the characters in the show seem to be based on individuals involved in the Cohen case. Bobby Axelrod is Steven A. Cohen, Chuck Rhoades is a cross between Preet Bharara and Richard Zabel, and Bill “Dollar Bill” Stearn is Mathew Martoma. Allow me to explain.

Axelrod and Cohen both grew up in middle class families, have firms that are just shortened versions of their names, and are self-made billionaires who will not settle for anything less than absolute victory, no matter the cost. In the show, Axelrod was forced to forfeit his license to do the very thing he was born to do – trade securities and make money for his investors. In real life, Cohen lost his reputation and his ability to prove to the world that he can still achieve those outrageous returns without breaking the law. So far with Point72, Cohen has not been able to mimic the returns of the “glory days.” Maybe this is saying something or maybe it’s just the market not being a good one for hedge funds across the board. Either way, Cohen is out to prove to the world that he is still the king of the hill, and despite not being allowed to trade securities, Bobby Axelrod is trying to do the same thing (I won’t say how because I abhor spoilers and I would never do that to you). But these two men would not be in this sort of trouble if not for the powerful attorneys on the other side of the battle, working to to clean up the Street: Preet Bharara and Richard Zabel in the S.A.C. Capital case, and Chuck Rhoades in the Axe Capital one.

Preet Bharara was the United States District Attorney for the Southern District of New York from 2009 until 2017 who, according to the New Yorker Magazine, had a reputation for being “The Man Who Terrifies Wall Street.” Richard Zabel, the son of Founding Partner of Schulte Roth & Zabel LLP William D. Zabel, was Bharara’s right hand man, and also played a significant role in the S.A.C. Capital case. As a

result, the corresponding character in Billions is based on the two men who made it their life’s mission to put Cohen away.

In Billions, the District Attorney for the Southern District of New York is a man named Chuck Rhoades. Like Zabel, his father is extremely wealthy and influential, he lives in a brownstone in Brooklyn, and he has a flair for using outlandish metaphors to get his point across. Like Bharara, Rhoades is a man who was born to be in front of cameras. His bravado at the podium is that of a politician, and he has a reputation for invoking fear in traders, bankers, and other Wall Street professionals.

Also like Bharara, Rhoades’s is known to overstep in the name of justice. Andrew Ross Sorkin, contends that Bharara achieved his reputation of being a Wall Street crusader by overstepping his bounds and overreaching where he should not have. Evidence of this can be found in a federal appeals court that overturned two of Mr. Bharara’s most prominent insider trading convictions (not Martoma). While I will not divulge any of Rhoades’s conduct here in this article, I will say that he is not afraid to overreach if and when he deems necessary, despite the moral and legal implications.

Mathew Martoma was a portfolio manager at S.A.C. Capital who is currently serving a nine year sentence in prison for insider trading, and he is a quintessential representation of the blind loyalty many employees at S.A.C. Capital felt towards Cohen. The oft-used tactic of using junior mobsters to eventually bring down the mob boss did not work in the S.A.C. case, evident by his 2014 conviction. To this day, it is not known why Martoma, who was fired after producing lackluster returns for two years, would not cooperate with the authorities in the investigation. On the outside, it seemed that he had nothing to lose in cooperating, seeing as the evidence against him was so conclusive. Like Martoma, Bill “Dollar Bill” Stearn is arrested for insider trading; unlike Martoma, however, Stearn walked free and received his large bonus for being loyal to Axelrod. While the similarity here is not as clear cut, and the character development in Billions of “Dollar Bill” Stearn is not as significant a narrative as Martoma’s case is to the S.A.C. Capital investigation, the parallels are difficult to ignore.

These are just three of the many similarities that exist between S.A.C. Capital and Showtime’s Billions. Axe Capital is not S.A.C. Capital, Bobby Axelrod is not Steven A. Cohen, and Billions is not real life, but to ignore the obvious connection between the two is nearly impossible. While the parallels are not perfect, the excitement, risk, and larger than life personalities who dominate Billions do exist in real life; for those interested in such a lifestyle, maybe those two years as an investment banking analyst are worth the suffering.



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