

"SAY GOODBYE  
TO DAYS WARMER  
THAN 65F UNTIL  
NEXT APRIL."

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

"YOU HEARD IT  
HERE FIRST!"

VOL. LXXXIV

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## Swastika Graffiti on YU Residencies Prompts Investigation

By SHOSHY CIMENT

The New York City Police Department's Hate Crime Task Force is currently investigating criminal mischief involving a swastika being engraved on an elevator at 36 Laurel Hill Terrace, an NYPD spokesperson confirmed. The report, filed on Aug. 21, follows a series of complaints from residents of YU-owned apartment buildings at 24 and 36 Laurel Hill Terrace throughout the summer.

Two similar acts of vandalism at the YU-owned 24 Laurel Hill Terrace were reported to the YU Security Office during the past summer, explained Randy Apfelbaum, Chief Facilities and Administrative Officer at Yeshiva University. The NYPD shut down an investigation resulting from an Aug. 3 report of a swastika on the wall of an elevator in 24 Laurel Hill Terrace due to insufficient evidence. A second investigation from a similar report from August 21 is currently in process for 36 Laurel Hill Terrace.

Other similar incidents, such as a swastika being carved into a tree near 24 Laurel Hill, have plagued both residences

throughout the summer.

The properties at 24 and 36 Laurel Hill Terrace are owned by Yeshiva University and are primarily used as housing for married students and graduates. In addition to the vandalism, residents of both buildings frequently reported packages as missing this past summer.

Security cameras were added to the lobbies of both buildings following requests from various residents to Joseph Cook, Executive Director for University Operations, and Marcy Reiz, who runs the YU married housing program. YU security currently has a full-time presence to monitor the apartment buildings on Laurel Hill Terrace, explained Apfelbaum. Despite the increase in surveillance, vandalism has persisted in the area.

"The super, YU Security and YU Housing have demonstrated an inability to communicate effectively and a sense of nonchalance that I would find unsettling should there be more serious incidents," remarked Netanel Paley, a resident of 24 Laurel Hill Terrace for the last five months.

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## Ari Fuld, A Hero

By ELI WEISS

I never knew Ari Fuld. But I do now.

This year I was blessed to go to Israel for the High Holidays. As is the usual practice for college students, I crashed by family. On Sunday, September 16, I was staying by my grandparents in Efrat. My grandfather drew a deep breath while sitting at the kitchen table and said, "There was a *piguah*," the Hebrew word for terrorist attack. I realized that the attack was a five-minute walk from where I was standing. My grandfather looked deeply disturbed — more than he should have been.

It didn't take long for me to figure out why. "It's Ari Fuld," my grandfather said. "I saw him in shul this morning."

For the rest of the day, tears, anger and frustration were common themes.

On the way to the funeral, I heard a bystander say, "One who is compassionate to the cruel, is cruel to the compassionate," intimating that the terrorist who murdered Ari should be given no mercy. Another person talked about using torture as a deterrent for terrorism, suggesting this as a punishment for Ari's murderer. Bitter comments were made about how the terrorist would be released in five years.

Then we arrived at the funeral. The message was entirely different.

Several thousand people crowded into and

around the funeral home, the crowd extending as far as the eye could see. The sounds of shuffling feet and hushed whispers became deafening. A large Israeli flag silently waved over the crowd. And then the Nation of Israel began to sing.

We didn't sing loudly. Rather, it was a hushed whisper with the voices of thousands of people. We sang songs of mourning and unity. Songs like *Gam Ki Eileich*, *Ochilah La'Eil*, *Ana Hashem* and *Acheinu*. The crowd was filled with all types of Jews: Soldiers, *roshei yeshiva*, *Chiloni'im*, *Dati'im* and Americans; all different but united in pain. Those who knew each other hugged. Those who didn't stood in solidarity.

When the family gave *hespeidim*, "*gibor*" (hero) was the word every person used to describe Ari. They said he was the strongest advocate for the Jewish people, a man who lived his life to the fullest. One of Ari's brothers, Moshe, said, "Who else could manage upon sustaining a fatal injury, to draw his pistol, jump a fence and shoot his attacker to make sure that his attacker would not hurt anyone else? Only my brother, only my brother."

Dani, Ari's brother, related a conversation he had with Prime Minister Netanyahu, who asked how it was possible that Ari was able

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## Syms Male Population Surpasses YC, Total Undergraduate Enrollment Down

By YOSHI ZIMLOVER

For the current semester, the full-time male student population in the Sy Syms School of Business has surpassed that of Yeshiva College, according to data from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. As of Oct. 9, there are 524 full-time students enrolled in Syms and 476 in YC.

This is the third time in the past four semesters in which the majority of the undergraduate male population has been enrolled in Syms, with the first instance occurring in Spring 2017. YC briefly overtook Syms in Fall 2017 with 523 students compared to 517, but Syms reclaimed the majority in Spring 2018 with 511 to YC's 473.

The data follows an eight-year trend of the Yeshiva College student body decreasing in size, with a high of 754 students at the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year. During this time, the large gap between the Syms and YC populations has dramatically closed, and for the first time at the beginning of an academic year, Syms maintains

a majority.

The total full-time male population of YC and Syms combined has been on the decline since 2015, and there are 40 fewer students this year than there were in Fall 2017. With 1000 students, Fall 2018 marks the lowest total in at least the past 11 years. In Fall 2008, the earliest year of data available online, there were 1218 total students. Additionally, 35 men are enrolled in the Katz School Associate program this year.

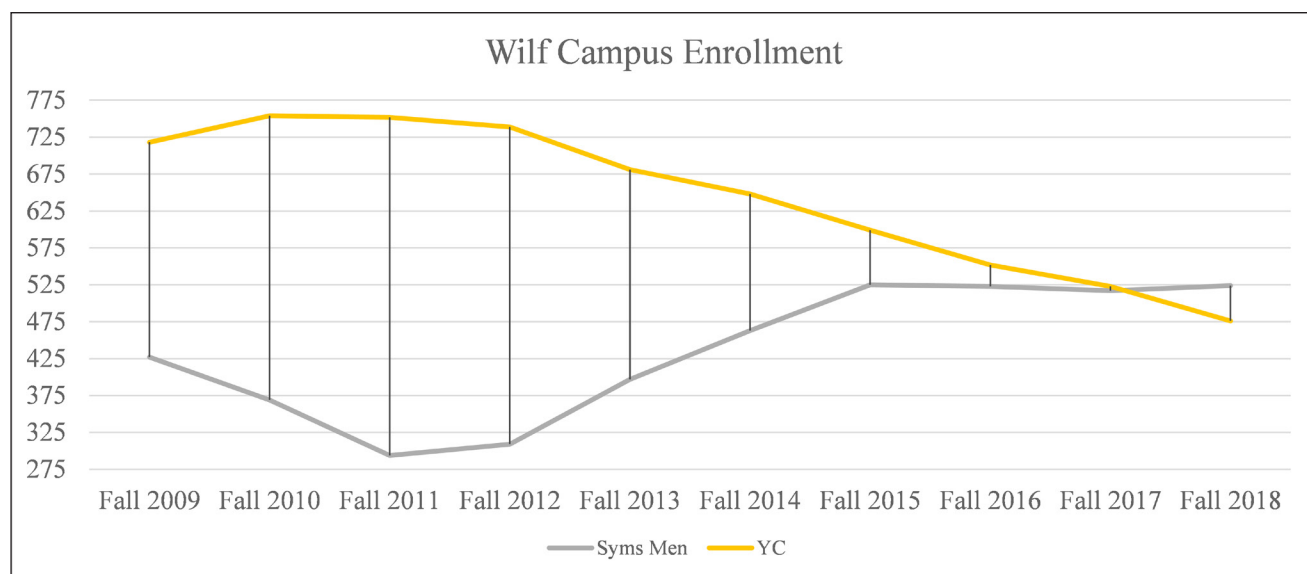
Furthermore, the combined Stern College for Women and Syms-Beren full-time female population has decreased from Fall 2017 to Fall 2018, ending a trend of growth that began from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017. This fall, there are 801 full-time SCW students, exactly the same amount as last year, while

enrollment in Syms-Beren shrunk from 169 to 163 students. There are also 32 women pursuing associate degrees at the Katz School.

Regarding male Undergraduate Torah Studies (UTS), the population of the Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP) rose from 239 students to 262 from last fall and from 22 percent to 24 percent of

the total UTS programs. SBMP is now the second-largest morning program, overtaking Isaac Breuer College (IBC) which decreased from 241 to 214 students from Fall 2017 to Fall 2018. Enrollment in the Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) has decreased from 492 students to 462 within the same time period and dropped from composing 44

percent of all morning programs to 43 percent. The decrease in MYP continues a trend of decline over the past 10 years, in both total number and percentage of all programs. The population of the James Striar School (JSS) rose from 136 students to 141 students since last fall.



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# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## How Bare Heads Are More Than Just Bare Heads, and Why It Matters for YU

By BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

There exists a sizeable population of male undergraduate Yeshiva University students who publicly do not wear kippahs on campus. Bareheaded undergrads have become a normal sight in YU hallways, outdoor plazas, lounges, libraries and even classrooms. This phenomenon is antithetical to Yeshiva values and should be shocking to any member of the extended community.

The problem is not about religious non-observance. Indeed, Yeshiva University accepts students spanning a wide range of religious commitment and does not enforce any religious observance on its students. It is an open institution that welcomes non-religious students who want to connect to and learn from Judaism in their own way, allowing everyone to feel comfortable in his own level of observance. As far as school policy is concerned, a student in the privacy of his dorm room is permitted to eat on Yom Kippur.

On the institutional level, though, Yeshiva University is Orthodox. This is explicit in various founding documents, mission statements and official slogans. It is also implicitly obvious from institutional policies. The educational requirements include Jewish history, Bible and Hebrew. There are vibrant *batei midrash* where hundreds of students spend their mornings fully immersed in a traditional *yeshiva* setting. Even those who do not spend their mornings learning Gemara dedicate half of their education to Jewish studies courses. The cafeterias serve only kosher food. The academic calendar accommodates Shabbat and Jewish holidays. And the list goes on.

As an Orthodox institution, Yeshiva University legitimately demands public respect of Orthodoxy. While a student may watch Netflix on his own on Friday night, the workout gym and vending machines, whose usage would create an atmosphere that detracts from Shabbat for others, are closed to him. Public respect includes other activities to avoid in public, but it includes active requirements too. A prime example is that students (and faculty) are expected, both formally and societally, to dress according to religious Jewish standards of modesty.

Kippah-wearing belongs to a similar category of reasonable requirements. These requirements are natural expectations that derive from the community rather than from some official set of rules. In fact, Yeshiva University does not officially demand that men cover their heads. The only requirement of male students, according to YU's official dress code, is that they "wear pants and a shirt." But communal expectations in any institution extend beyond the classroom and the letter of the law; in the case of Yeshiva University, male head-covering is one such unwritten expectation, and its noncompliance constitutes disrespect of Orthodoxy.

The practice of Orthodox Jewish men to wear kippahs transcends *halakhic* observance. The kippah represents belief in God and commitment to the system. The covered head serves not only as a reminder to the individual but as a meaningful signal to those who see him. By extension, a community of kippah-wearers signals to the outside world that they, both in themselves and as part of whatever group they represent, are Orthodox. In such a community, those individuals who do not comply stand out. So a Yeshiva University student who does not cover his head makes more than an individual choice. He, as a member of the community, detracts from the group's religious image.

The difference between complete and incomplete kippah compliance is very significant. When the community becomes one that includes a noticeable group of individuals who publicly

do not commit to Orthodoxy, the institution loses some of the inherent respect that it owes, as per its mission, to Orthodoxy. This matters in any Orthodox institution, but especially in Yeshiva University, a place where there are few other ideas besides for "Orthodoxy" itself that can unite the entire community.

Think for a moment about any other Orthodox institution, whether it be a high school, *yeshiva*, sleepaway camp or synagogue. Would it not seem highly unusual in any of these institutions to find a population of men or boys who do not cover their heads? And yet, in Yeshiva University, it has somehow become not only an existent culture but a normal matter of fact.

It is worth noting that the population of non-kippah-wearing students at YU is certainly not homogenous. There are many reasons why an individual student might choose to not wear a kippah, or perhaps even not ever put one on in the first place. Some students do not even have a reason, per se, but rather simply never thought twice about how kippah noncompliance at YU might be a bit strange. There are even many Orthodox students who are not used to wearing kippahs because of their particular custom, be it their Sephardic or some other heritage.

It would be unfair to ascribe malicious or antagonistic intent to any individual student who does not wear a kippah. That being said, the actions of many individuals collectively add up to the communal problem.

Of course, the reasonable expectation of kippah compliance is nuanced. There are exceptions to the rule, such spaces like gyms, the swimming pool and bathrooms, where even the strictest religiously-minded remove kippahs temporarily. Another exception is non-Jewish graduate students and professors who, despite walking around YU premises with uncovered heads, are typically discernibly older than most undergrads. The average passerby, with his ability to recognize that these of bare skulls are not Yeshiva University undergraduates, does not form an impression from these members of the institution about the undergraduate religious community.

*A Yeshiva University student who does not cover his head makes more than an individual choice. He, as a member of the community, detracts from the group's religious image.*

Another area of nuance is the outer rims of YU's campuses, whose exact boundaries are hard to precisely delineate. It is clear that the *batei midrash*, classrooms, libraries and cafeterias are intrinsically part of the institution. Certain outdoor spaces, such as the 185th Street Pedestrian Plaza, are similarly endowed with institutional status by their central locations. But does a student walking a block away from the main campus represent YU? What about when he is eating in one of the YU-dominated restaurants? These grey areas are complicated.

What can be done going forward?

The solution is not for the administration to crack down on dress standards, which would almost certainly result in unpleasant pushback. If any change is to occur, it will most likely be the result of slow, patient, thoughtful, open-minded dialogue about this topic. This dialogue might address certain important questions: Are students simply unaware of the importance of wearing kippahs in an Orthodox institution? To what extent does kippah noncompliance indicate an apathy towards religious practice? Are there students whose bare heads indicate a rejection of YU's basic values and beliefs? Is there a place in YU for those students who would answer yes to the last question?

Is kippah noncompliance an isolated issue, or is it indicative of something much more alarming about the state of Yeshiva University's undergraduate community today?

## THE COMMENTATOR 2018-2019

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**1 New Lawn Path**  
So divisive: Shortcut or longcut? Eye sore or aesthetic pleasure? Pathway to peace or highway to hell? Manifestation of the kind and gracious will of the *Ribbono Shel Olam* or Satan, who is the Devil, Himself?




**2 PJ and Rabbi Brander on the Plaza**  
It's so nice when the grandparents come for a visit.



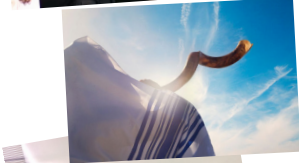
**3 New Nike Ad Campaign**  
“Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything.” vs. “Sacrifice Nothing. Achieve Anything.” I would be angry that they stole our slogan, but we did take the YU Hero campaign from the Girl Scouts so I guess it all evens out.




**4 Rabbi Penner Yearbook Photo (1991)**  
A writer for The Commentator?!?! “O Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?”



**5 George W. Bush Sneaking A Candy to Michelle Obama At John McCain's Funeral**  
Don't throw it until Yosef finishes laining his bar mitzvah parsha, Michelle!



**6 Tekiah Gedolah Face**  
Sweet aubergine, plum and magenta! Rich fuchsia, orchid and maroon!!! Deep lavender, lilac and (Key Food) grape!!!!!! PURGE me of my iniquities!!! For glimpses of my *baal tokeah* almost passing out *maavirin et roah hagzerah*!!




**7 Barriers By The Urinals**  
This all could have been solved if we just knocked down Furst, but I guess this will do.


## 7 UP ↗ ↘ 7 DOWN




**1 Everyone Leaving The Commentator's Breaking News WhatsApp Group**  
Totally get it. Who wants to read about statistics, graduate schools or irrelevant financial policy anyway?



**2 Popping Your Polo Collar**  
All the cool kids are doing it and you should too. It's like being *shomer negiah* in public!




**3 YU Mini Calendar Fiasco**  
Where do we even begin? The tiny, barely readable font? The ridiculous 17-month calendar? The fact that they forgot the email address at first? And to think this is only the second-most outrageous use of a calendar this month! It's all just too much!




**4 Nagel Opening Early For Night Seder**  
What they didn't tell you is that Nagel now closes 15 min earlier... #yeshivawinsbuteveryoneelsesloses



**5 Airbrushed Yearbook Photos**  
It's like Island Photography hired all the bubbes and yentas of my neighborhood to make their condescending and passive aggressive comments about my appearance a living reality!



**6 Pre-Rosh Hashanah/Yom Kippur Forgiveness Texts**  
I would say that the Island Photography photos were the fakest thing I have ever seen, but then I remembered these bad boys. #7up7downcrossover #takethatmarvel



**7 Silence**  
*Taka*, I was *mamish* worried about my *Yamim Noraim tefila*, but I *mamish* reached a whole other *madreigah* now that a woman has not spoken at Klein@9 for 303 days. Thanks YU!!

## Correction

In an article titled “Israel, the Modern Era, and Market-Readiness: President Berman Discusses YU’s Path Forward” printed in the Sept. 3 issue of The Commentator, President Ari Berman was quoted as saying that as per new memoranda with certain Israeli institutions, YU graduates applying will be “automatically accepted into their graduate program.” Since then, The Commentator has learned from Ben-Gurion University that the universities do not offer academic acceptance into these programs. Rather, the universities offer students who fulfill all the prerequisite courses and a minimum Science GPA of 3.2 the opportunity to receive an interview at the schools prior to having their MCAT scores. This does not guarantee admittance to the schools.

## Letter to the Editor: Sarah Casteel

To the Editor:

I recently read an article titled “Vote for Me, Vote for You, Vote for Who?” on your website. It was written by a fellow member of the College Republicans and friend of mine.

While I objectively agree with some concerns the article has about the Democratic Party, I find myself deeply disturbed and upset by many of its claims, and feel it necessary to respond. The article’s take on the issue of religious freedom is highly oversimplified. It pits religious freedom against LGBT rights, using a particular Supreme Court case as evidence which ultimately leads to an egregious and fear mongering conclusion: “Jews, be warned. Understand that the Democrats don’t care about your religious freedom and they are preparing to take it away in favor of civil rights for others.” The article claims openly that these “others” — in this case the LGBT community — should lose out on their *civil rights* because ours take precedent. I cannot disagree more with this sentiment.

In response to this article, it is my hope to convey that religious freedom does not have to be, on a Jewish nor on a Constitutional level, threatened by groups for whom expressions of various rights may appear to conflict. I also want to open a conversation in Yeshiva University and Orthodox communities at large about how we talk about and deal with LGBT issues. I write this letter for myself, as a member of the College Republicans (although I identify more strongly with the term “conservative”), but also for the LGBT community of Yeshiva University (many of whom I consider close friends), and for Jewish people as a whole.

In an attempt to warn us about a crisis for our religious freedom, the article brings up the idea that “some people’s rights impede on the rights of others.” It says that Democratic Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi “demean[s] religious freedom by referring to it as a ‘guise’ while stating that liberties associated with sexual orientations should take priority over religious liberties.” It is both true and inevitable that a

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## Letter to the Editor: Dov Alberstone

To the Editor:

In last month’s edition of The Commentator, an opinion piece was published entitled “Vote For Me, Vote for You, Vote for Who?” The ideas and misinformation presented in the article were deeply disturbing and moved me to write this response. I hope this article helps illuminate the issues and accurately expresses how I, and many others, felt after reading the article.

The article spins a tale of Jack Phillips, who must fight for his right to refuse service to a same-sex couple on religious grounds, and seven Republican Justices (a contradiction in terms) who vindicate him. Thus, the article concludes,

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DOV ALBERSTONE,  
continued from Page 3

we Jews must vote for Republicans, as only they will fight for our free exercise when its on the line.

Except it was never on the line. In June, the Supreme Court Of the United States ruled 7-2 in *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* that the Colorado Civil Rights Commission (CCRC) had acted without proper religious neutrality in their assessment of Jack Phillips' case. This case was about nothing more than the reversal of an unfair ruling because the *process* by which that ruling was arrived at was improperly executed. This case *specifically* avoided the question of where the limit on free exercise is in relation to commerce, especially in the area of LGBT rights. The seven justices who sided with the plaintiff were not all Republican appointees either. Justice Elena Kagan, appointed by President

Barack Obama, and Justice Stephen Breyer, appointed by President Bill Clinton, were both among them.

The discord between the facts of the case and the narrative presented in this article is so great that I wonder, along with other Commentator readers, where the authors gathered their information? This case shows neither an overstep on the part of the state, nor does it exhibit a Republican/Democrat schism in the opinions of the justices. The authors of the article, to put it simply, are utterly mistaken in thinking so.

The notion that the most pressing attack on free exercise of religion in the United States comes from same-sex couples trying to hire services for their weddings is offensive and deeply troubling. It is demeaning to the open-minded tolerance of the free exercise clause — a concept so central to our national identity — to reduce it to a cheap shield for the narrow-minded and intolerant. Same-sex couples and the LGBT population in general are not an unprotected class, for whom

commercial services and social acceptance are not offered as they are to other citizens.

Perhaps more disturbing than the “alternative facts” presented in this article is the tone the author uses. While one can see the value of an article urging voters a certain way, the fear mongering employed here is detestable. The article levies absurd claims, accusing Democrats of attempting to violate or even outright revoke the First Amendment right to free exercise of religion. There is no such attempt. The article's apparent goal is to stir up fear in its readers that a political boogeyman is out there, manifested in LGBT people and liberals, who will steal your rights away if you do not vote the way the authors recommend. It displays the worst kind of mindless partisanship and insidious dealing, attempting to delegitimize those with differing opinions.

One of the claims the author makes repeatedly is the impossibility of all citizens to be equally protected before the law. It is as if they consider the rights granted to

the citizens of this country to be a limited resource, from which one must grab as much as possible to ensure that others do not have more. I find this idea malevolent. It is, in my opinion, a violation of the foundation of America to believe that there is not room for all of us in this great land.

In his letter to the Jews of Newport, George Washington writes; “It is now no more that toleration is spoken of as if it were the indulgence of one class of people that another enjoyed the exercise of their inherent natural rights. We in the United States pride ourselves that we live in a land “which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.”

I won't presume to tell you how to vote. But I can tell you to vote with your conscience, not how a provocateur would steer you. Whoever you decide to cast your vote for, vote for the right reasons; because you want a better country for *all* of its citizens.

Dov Alberstone, Yeshiva College '21

SARAH CASTEEL,  
continued from Page 3

person's expression of their own rights has the potential to impede on the rights of others, even perhaps in this case of the conflict between religious freedom and LGBT rights; but this does not mean, as the article asserts, that only one or the other should have the opportunity to express their rights in any given conflicting circumstance.

Again, I agree that the Democratic Party puts too little value on religious freedom and threatens democracy by putting different weights on different rights. However, the article advocates for the same idea in the opposite: that religious liberty should trump basic civil liberties of LGBT people. I understand that these two things may appear to conflict, but I have no doubt that the Framers of the Constitution understood this inevitable conflict when they wrote the Constitution. I have no doubt that there is a solution for it and that the solution is certainly not to pick one or the other.

The inalienable rights that the Framers enumerated, “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness,” are not explicitly expounded upon in the Constitution. As Americans dedicated to upholding this democracy, it is our job to take a look at what these rights look like, and to ensure that they are protected for every person. As a conservative, I see it as my job to explain why religious freedom does not take precedence over every American's right to life, liberty and their own pursuit of happiness.

The article uses the Supreme Court case *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* as a primary piece of evidence for its argument that religious liberty is the ultimate priority in the interpretation and upholding of the Constitution. Here's my question: seeing as the Framers included the right to “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” in the *original* Constitution, and the right to religious freedom as an addendum in the Bill of Rights, how can we claim one right trumps another? The reality is that there must be a way to respect and protect *every* American's rights.

Imagine being in a same-sex, committed relationship, and finding out that your spouse has fallen deathly ill. Then, you find out that you are prohibited from sitting at their bedside or making medical decisions for them — rights guaranteed to a spouse from a straight couple. As some readers may know, the laws regarding life support and medical decisions have been governed by the status of “family,” thus making it

impossible for a person's life partner to act as a spouse if they are not legally married (especially considering gay marriage was only legalized three years ago). Is this not impeding on the ill person's rights — their own right to life — by refusing them the ability to designate their primary family member as their medical decision maker? I am obviously not blind to the reality that people are hesitant to “endorse” gay marriage because it “encourages a sin.” However, if we want to get to the root of treating people like humans,

With this I cannot disagree: Constitutional rights should fundamentally have a higher status than those legislated later. However, as I have explained, basic fundamental rights stated long before the First Amendment, such as life, liberty and happiness, indicate that the civil rights of LGBT people are, in fact, protected by the Constitution, and therefore are not automatically superseded by religious freedom. To argue any different is to question the basic foundations of our Democracy.

*The article claims openly that these “others” — in this case the LGBT community — should lose out on their civil rights because ours take precedent. I cannot disagree more with this sentiment.*

this issue should not be politicized or viewed through a specifically religious lense. Rather, we need to see how the basic Constitutional rights and treatment of an LGBT person as any other person are being denied more broadly on a fundamental level.

It is important to recognize the distinction between LGBT-phobia in general, and the specific religious practice of denouncing the sin of homosexual acts. We often forget that the Torah does not say “being a gay person” is a sin, and yet, homophobia is rampant in the Orthodox community. With regard to politics, I do not always affiliate myself with the Republican Party because I see their leaders and members — often very involved in religious communities — making homophobic and transphobic statements. This is why the article's use of the *Cake* case concerns me: the lines become blurred between its objective argument for religious freedom and its perception of the LGBT community as a threat to the expression of such freedom.

This concern is corroborated by its overarching argument that our religious freedom is more important than “the civil rights of others.” While a religious person may be hesitant to endorse homosexual acts, I tend to find that in both the Orthodox community and the Republican party, people often make general LGBT-phobic remarks that are more indicative of a general distaste for LGBT people as a whole, rather than a stemming from a religious concern. This is antithetical to both the Torah commandment to treat people with love and respect, and the Constitutional rights to humanity that *all people* are entitled to.

The article argues that “Republicans believe that freedom of religion supersedes rights not protected by the Constitution.”

While it is wrong for the Democratic Party to throw out our religious freedom in favor of other peoples' rights, it is equally wrong to want to throw out other peoples' civil rights in favor of our religious freedom. If we are to hold the article as representative of the Republican Party, of Yeshiva University students, or of Orthodox Judaism, we should be equally, if not more, “warned” about these institutions as well. Many statements in this article serve as examples of the exact issue I previously explained: “othering” LGBT people by perceiving that their rights threaten ours or must always compete with ours — or for that matter, are antithetical to ours. If we perceive our religious or Constitutional freedoms to be inherently threatened by LGBT people's desire, need, and right to live their lives, *we are part of the problem.*

In applying this to my life as an Orthodox Jew attending YU, I ask myself questions such as: have I treated everyone in my life with the utmost humanity? Have I made sure that my LGBT friends in school feel safe? Have I let them know that they are equally important to, and valued in, the community? While the article did not directly make homophobic remarks, the way the author gravely pits our religious freedoms against these LGBT peoples' civil rights leaves the reader with a distaste for, and fear of, the latter. Perhaps the author does not feel negativity toward LGBT people; however, their specific description of LGBT people as a threat to our own religious freedom — something that is *essential* to us — cannot be left unchallenged. As this article was published in a Yeshiva University newspaper, I need to speak loudly and clearly in this ocean of silence: LGBT people of YU, you are welcome to be here, and you deserve to be treated equally. And

I'm sorry if you have been made not to feel like that in the past.

To strengthen my argument and to bring this issue closer to home, I asked some of my LGBT friends at YU for their perspectives on the conflicts of religiosity and a LGBT identity. I hope readers will see the common thread of their statements and understand that these students, many of whom are living in hiding and fear the implications of coming out in this Orthodox Jewish community, are not a threat. Many of these students strive to find a balance between these two identities and hope to be able to find a way to fit into the community. All of the following quotes are from anonymous, current Yeshiva University students:

“Being LGBT is hard enough on its own, and being Jewish is hard enough on its own. Now imagine putting them together? That's my definition of hell on earth. My thoughts on being LGBT and Jewish are complex and sometimes conflicting. I'm working on reconciling the two, but I don't know if that will ever happen. I believe that since the Torah was written many, many years ago it would have been ridiculous for it to not condemn LGBT relationships. I believe that no one would have accepted the Torah if it said such an “absurd” thing. I don't know what God thinks, I don't know if God thinks being LGBT is “good” or “bad.” What I do know is that I identify as LGBT and I have to believe that God made me this way for a reason, and I have to believe that God wants me to be happy. I am still trying to reconcile the two but for now, they are equally important to me even though some might say they conflict, I refuse to believe that that is possible.”

“It's [being LGBT and Orthodox] something that I have to reconcile in my mind, quite literally every second of the day. I constantly battle myself over the choice I've made to live *halachically* rather than necessarily happily, and the fact that someone else thinks that they can navigate my decisions better than I can makes me disappointed in their hubris more than anything.”

“It's difficult enough reconciling it to myself without people fear mongering that me having rights will take away their rights.”

*Veahavta lareacha kamocha.* If we do not believe everyone, including those who identify as LGBT, deserves an equal chance at life, liberty, and happiness because it infringes on some of our own beliefs, are we really upholding the values that we claim to be at the foundation for both our religious and American lives?

Sarah Casteel, Stern College for Women '19



*GRAFFITI,*  
*continued from Front Page*

According to Paley, residents of the buildings received no information about the cameras or steps being taken to curb such incidents. Additionally, to date, YU Security has not reported the incidents to the greater student body.

*“One would think a university would be more concerned about the safety of its own students and alumni, especially on their own property, so this is very disappointing”*

—  
Netanel Paley

“One would think a university would be more concerned about the safety of its own students and alumni, especially on their own property, so this is very disappointing,” said Paley.

In an annual report, the Anti-Defamation League found a 57 percent increase of reported anti-Semitic incidents in the U.S. during 2017. The sharp rise, in part, was due to a doubling in incidents on college campuses and schools. A recent chain of vandalism attacks in Washington Heights involved FDNY ambulances and the West 181st Street Firehouse being covered with swastikas and other anti-Semitic material. Jem R. Ibrahimov was arrested on Sept. 1 by FDNY fire marshals after being caught vandalizing the fire station.

“Educating our children and residents on how to respond and fight hate

is an important proactive measure we can take to create safe and inclusive communities,” said Evan Bernstein, Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League in New York and New Jersey. “We have seen the response from the Washington Heights community speaking out against recent acts of bias and we stand with them and will continue working together to make every neighborhood no place for hate.”

“The security of our students, faculty and community is of utmost importance to us,” said Apfelbaum. “We will continue to work closely with the Police Department and our YU security team to ensure everyone’s safety.”



Recent swastika engravings (left to right): Elevator wall in 24 Laurel Hill, Tree near 24 Laurel Hill, and two walls in 36 Laurel Hill.

PHOTOS COMPILED BY HONEY ROGOFF FOR THE COMMENTATOR

## Events Office Allows Ben-Zvi Back to Campus

By LILLY GELMAN

Nomi Ben-Zvi has regained permission to tutor on the Beren Campus this semester, according to Director of University Events Melissa Celik. Ben-Zvi did not return multiple requests for comment on her reauthorization.

Last semester, an investigation by The Commentator revealed that the Chromium Prep tutoring service, conducted by Ben-Zvi, had its tutoring authorization rescinded by the Dean’s Office after the Fall 2017 Semester. Despite this, Ben-Zvi continued to tutor on the Beren Campus, holding sessions in different rooms in both academic buildings on the Beren Campus. After being informed of Ben-Zvi’s continued

presence on campus, Director of Security Paul Murtha told The Commentator that she would no longer be permitted to enter any YU building without permission from security.

According to an anonymous Stern College student, however, Ben-Zvi ran one session in 30 Park, Stern’s Independent Housing Project dorm, after being invited by two of her students.

According to the YU Office of Events, any tutor not affiliated with Yeshiva University is required to gain approval from the Dean’s Office before beginning to tutor on campus. The tutor is required to pay an insurance fee as well as a room rental fee of approximately \$150 per session. The Dean’s office declined to comment on the reason for Ben-Zvi’s de-authorization. When asked about Ben-Zvi’s

re-approval, Dean Bacon informed The Commentator that “if Ms. Ben-Zvi met the requirements we ask of others, she should be eligible to apply.”

According to an article in The Commentator, “Nomi Ben-Zvi[’s tutoring]...has garnered polarizing reactions from Stern students. Her tutoring has inspired and helped many succeed, while simultaneously creating a culture of exclusivity and pressure to enroll in her courses.”

Ben-Zvi had previously taught tutoring courses in General Chemistry, Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry on the Beren Campus. She is the founder of Chromium Prep, a tutoring service offering both private and group sessions and specializing in Chemistry, Biology, Organic Chemistry, Physics, Physiology, MCAT and DAT.



Nomi Ben-Zvi

CHROMIUM PREP FACEBOOK PAGE



# YU Takes Out Two WSJ Full-Page Color Ads in One Week

By YITZCHAK CARROLL

As part of a new marketing campaign, Yeshiva University took out a full-page color advertisement in both the Sept. 6 and 13 editions of The Wall Street Journal. The advertisements were run in the main section of the Wall Street Journal, which features international, national and regional news stories.

The advertisements were run regionally, according to Doron Stern, the University's Vice President of Communications. Stern, who began his current role this past January, declined to specify the exact cost of the advertisement.

"The WSJ ad was designed as part of a broader marketing campaign to raise the visibility of the institution among several constituents including high level influencers and prospective employers to support our commitment to our students to secure successful career opportunities," Stern said.

Yeshiva's ad was placed on the heels of recent shakeups in the University's Office of Institutional Advancement, which oversees large-scale fundraising efforts, among other responsibilities.

According to the Wall Street Journal's

website, advertising costs vary depending on a number of factors, but estimates for the aggregated costs of the ad buy hover in the six-figure range. As of press time, Wall Street Journal representatives did not return The Commentator's requests for information.

The Wall Street Journal released its annual college rankings on Sept. 5, in which YU placed 148th, down from last year's ranking of 119th.

*Estimates for the aggregated costs of the ad buy hover in the six-figure range.*

The Sept. 6 ad, which ran on page A10a, focused on the University's new marketing slogan, "Building Tomorrow, Today," and spoke of the intersection of traditional Jewish values and modern academic success on the backdrop of the Glueck Beit Midrash. The Sept. 13 ad ran on page A8b, included similar copy and graphics and also featured a line expressing greetings for a *Shanah Tovah*.

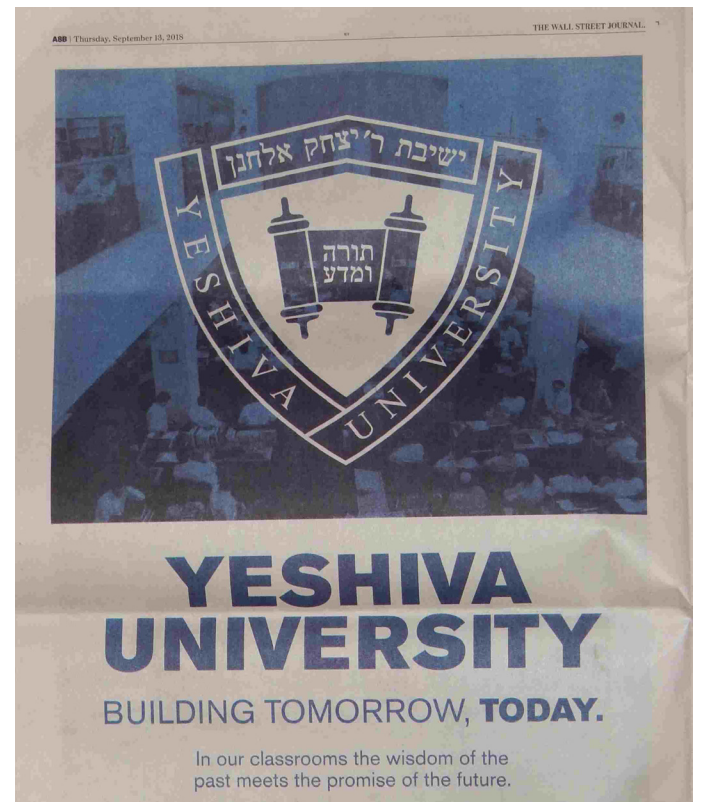
Alex Vayner, a data analytics and artificial intelligence consultant, felt that the advertisement did a disservice to the University

community. "Personally, I think it devalues the brand — you don't see Princeton taking an ad out," he said. "Instead of pushing, don't they want to project selective and exclusive status?"

Other students felt that the advertisements helped the University and its student body.

"When I read the WSJ and saw the ad, I was pleasantly surprised. I believe that an institution should always show a care to the status of its name recognition," said Yosef Lemel (YC '21). "As a result, students might have a better chance at being hired at an exceptional company," he added.

Eli Weiss contributed to this story.



The Wall Street Journal, Sept. 13, page A8b

THE COMMENTATOR

## YU Rises to 80th Among U.S. Colleges in U.S. News Ranking

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

Yeshiva University tied for 80th place in this year's U.S. News & World Report ranking of colleges across the nation, rising slightly from last year's 94th place. In the Best Value Schools category, YU was ranked 52nd, up from last year's 65th, although still below the 49th place attained in 2017. 2019 will mark the first improvement in the annual ranking after six years of consecutive downgrades, from a high of 45th in 2012 to a low of 94th in 2018.

U.S. News & World Report has published annual college rankings since 1985. Yeshiva University consistently ranked "third tier" — no higher than 100th — in most of the first few annual reports before leaping to "first tier university" status (top 50) in the 1997 report with a ranking of 45th best among national universities. From 1997 through 2016, Yeshiva University's ranking did not vary much, from a high of 40th in 2003 and 2004 to a low of 52nd in 2008, 2010

and 2016.

YU this year scored 54 out of 100 total possible points. Graduation and retention rates, undergraduate academic reputation and faculty resources constitute the largest factors in a school's rank. The undergraduate data presented in the report is based on the 2017-2018 school year.

Yeshiva University scored particularly low in "student excellence," ranking 122nd among national universities. According to U.S. News, the student excellence ranking, which weighs 10 percent of a university's overall ranking, is based on students' standardized test scores and high school class standing. The report stated that the 75th percentile for Yeshiva SAT scores is 1420, and the 25th percentile is 1160. The SAT is a standardized test widely used for college admissions in the United States. The test is scored out of 1600 with national percentiles typically numbering around 1200, 1050 and 910 for the 75th, 50th and 25th percentiles, respectively.

The report highlighted several aspects of

Yeshiva University, including the Center for the Jewish Future, its undergraduate newspapers The Observer and The Commentator, the intercampus shuttle transportation system, the Yeshiva University Gruss Institute in Jerusalem, the Yeshiva Maccabees sports teams and the "hundreds of student organizations on campus."

Jewish Studies.

Other data was included as well in the report. It presented a student-faculty ratio of 7:1. Of full-time faculty, 65.9 percent are male and 34.1 percent are female, whereas the part-time faculty gender distribution is 56.1 percent male and 43.9 percent female. The report cited that 58.6 percent of classes

*2019 will mark the first improvement in the annual ranking after six years of consecutive downgrades.*

The report also mentioned that YU "earns accolades for its highly ranked research opportunities" at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. Yeshiva sold the medical school to Montefiore Medical Center in 2015. Additionally, the report mentioned YU's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law and several "graduate offerings specific to the Jewish faith" offered by the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration and the Bernard Revel Graduate School of

have fewer than 20 students. YU's average freshman retention rate, which the report noted as "an indicator of student satisfaction," is 90 percent. YU's average six-year graduation rate is 84 percent. The report also stated that 33 percent of students live off campus.

Regarding cost and financial aid, the report stated that "56 percent of full-time undergraduates receive some kind of need-based financial aid, and the average need-based scholarship or grant award is \$28,227." The median starting salary of Yeshiva University alumni is \$53,400. By major, the highest median starting salary for Yeshiva University alumni is among Mathematics majors at \$72,400. Of the eleven majors presented, the lowest median starting salary for alumni is among Biology majors at \$37,900.

College rankings are a popular means of helping prospective students decide among undergraduate programs. The U.S. News & World Report is among the most widely consulted ranking services. The Wall Street Journal and Times Higher Education annual report, released on Sept. 5, ranked Yeshiva at 148th among U.S. colleges and universities, down from last year's ranking of 119th. Kiplinger, another popular ranking report, pegged Yeshiva at 25th in December 2017 for the best value in private colleges and 67th among all colleges.



Yeshiva University U.S. News & World Report Rankings

THE COMMENTATOR



# Administration Announces No New Student-Run YU Community *Minyan*

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

Following repeated requests for the President’s Office or Dean Chaim Nissel to offer a comment, the Office of Communications and Public Affairs released a statement to The Commentator, stating that the addition of a “student-run YU community *minyan*” where women would be permitted to give *divrei Torah*, will ultimately not be created on the Wilf Campus. This comes after Dean Chaim Nissel previously announced the creation of a new *minyan* for the Fall 2018 semester.

The full statement: “The Office of Student Life has conferred with the student leaders and at this time they were not interested in creating a new community *minyan*. Moving forward, the administration will be working closely with student leaders to find a direction for the wide range of our student body to have a meaningful, vibrant Shabbat experience on the Wilf Campus.”

This marks the conclusion of a discussion regarding the role of female students within the Wilf Campus Shabbat experience. In December 2017, Lilly Gelman (SCW ‘19) delivered a *dvar Torah* after the conclusion of *tefillah*

at Klein@9, a student-run and Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY)-sponsored Shabbat *minyan* in the Klein *beit midrash*. Shortly thereafter, Rabbi Menachem Penner, Dean of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and Undergraduate Torah Studies, enacted a policy that prohib-

“Most, if not all, students were not only disinterested in starting a new *minyan* but didn’t understand the concept at all.”

Noah Marlowe

ited women to give *divrei Torah* at the *minyan*.

The next February, Gelman criticized Rabbi Penner’s decision in a much-read Commentator article, which led to many follow-up discussions and articles, including a critique of the administration for not responding to the criticism. Within days after Dean Nissel’s announcement at the end of March, further critique was directed towards the administration in the form of an editorial and a joint

response by the entire Wilf Campus student council.

Noah Marlowe (YC ‘19), this year’s President of Klein@9 and last year’s SOY Vice President, was one of the student leaders that met with Dean Nissel to discuss the creation of a new *minyan*. Marlowe stated that he shared with Nissel that “most, if not all, students were not only disinterested in starting a new *minyan* but didn’t understand the concept at all.” He explained that students would not “want to abandon their community to form a new one” and that there was no interest in “creating a *minyan* solely on the platform of female students sharing *divrei Torah*.”

Marlowe further added that after consulting “many different types of students,” he believes that “somewhere between half the *minyan* and the majority of the *minyan* [Klein@9] is in favor of female students sharing *divrei Torah*.” He said that “nevertheless, we respect the University’s decision” and stated that “we don’t want to rock the boat or start a revolution; and we don’t want to make our community members feel uncomfortable. Instead, we wish to build a YU community that embraces and reflects the vision and mission of Yeshiva University and Modern (or Centrist) Orthodoxy.”





# 21 Cardozo Professors Sign NY Times Letter Opposing Kavanaugh Nomination

By JACOB ROSENFELD

Twenty-one professors from Yeshiva University's Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law joined more than 2,400 other law professors in signing an open letter in The New York Times' Opinion Section. The professors were attempting to urge the U.S. Senate not to confirm Supreme Court nominee Judge Brett Kavanaugh. The letter appears in the opinion section of The Times and was presented to the Senate on Thursday, Oct. 4.

The open letter comes after an intense confirmation process underscored by a F.B.I. investigation into sexual assault allegations made by Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. The 412-word letter begins by discussing judicial temperament as "one of the most important qualities of a judge." The letter goes on to mention that Judge Kavanaugh lacked judicial temperament in his Sept. 27 Senate hearing, which should disqualify him from sitting on any court. The professors who signed the letter argue that Judge Kavanaugh's prepared remarks and "aggressive" responses to questioning during the hearing showed a lack of interest in the "necessary search for accuracy" in the allegations made against him, but the letter does not take a stance on the allegations themselves.

Cardozo School of Law University Professor of Law and Comparative Democracy and Justice Sydney L. Robins Professor of Human Rights Michel Rosenfeld explained

the problem with Judge Kavanaugh's lack of judicial temperament by saying, "His aggressive and accusatory partisanship was particularly offensive because when people

the national law school community, including within Cardozo. Twenty-one of the approximately 85 Cardozo professors signed the letter – approximately 25 percent. Many

that one letter could adequately capture the views of such a large and diverse group, but by focusing on this critical area of consensus the letter it was able to wade past those disagreements and focus on something critical to everyone."

On Wednesday night, Oct. 3, U.S. Sen. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell filed a cloture petition furthering the confirmation process for Judge Kavanaugh. Per Senate rules, one legislative day must pass before proceeding on to a cloture vote. The letter was shown to the Senate prior to the Friday cloture vote when four Senators were still undecided. The Friday cloture vote was ultimately passed limiting debate of the nominee to 30 hours. Judge Brett Kavanaugh was later confirmed as a Justice to the Supreme Court of the United States after a Saturday morning vote of 50-48.

*"By focusing on this critical area of consensus the letter it was able to wade past those disagreements and focus on something critical to everyone."*

Cardozo Prof. Betzy Ginsberg

will come to argue before him they may reasonably suspect him of being blatantly against one of the two major political parties in our country. All judges are entitled to their political opinions, but no other judge has displayed any similar conduct after being nominated to the nation's highest court."

The professors further imply that Judge Kavanaugh falls under two statutes which govern the bias and recusal of judges and "as Congress has previously put it, a judge or justice 'shall disqualify himself in any proceeding in which his impartiality might reasonably be questioned.'"

The conclusion emphasizes that Judge Kavanaugh's politics are not the driving force behind the authorship of the letter but rather that Judge Kavanaugh did not exhibit "the impartiality and judicial temperament" required of a Supreme Court Justice.

The letter gained traction quickly around

students were shocked at how many professors from all over the country signed on so quickly. Betsy Ginsberg, Clinical Associate Professor of Law and Director of the Civil Rights Clinic at Cardozo, commented, "Before reading the letter, I was skeptical



Justice Brett Kavanaugh

THE NEW YORK TIMES

# Beren Bekiut Program Has an Emotional Kickoff

By CHANA WEINBERG

On Oct. 8, the Beren Bekiut Program (BBP), an initiative of Torah Activities Council (TAC) President Adina Cohen, was inaugurated. The BBP, which is sponsored by TAC, the Office of Student Life (OSL), and the Dean's Office, is an incentivized Torah

learning opportunity in which students learn a certain amount each week and then take tests on the material they have covered.

The night's events opened with President Berman sharing some words of Torah with approximately 50 attendees. "Our goal is to stoke your ambition, that you will leave this place as people of impact," President Berman said in his remarks. "These are the years that

one needs to take full advantage to learn and study [Torah] as much as possible. We want to make sure you have access to it."

After President Berman spoke, the doors opened to allow in the additional women waiting outside who wanted to join in participating. After the number of attendees rose to about 75 students, Adina Cohen explained the logistics. Students can choose to learn a section from Talmud, Mishnah, Halakhah, Chumash or Tanakh, following a weekly schedule. There are then monthly tests on what has been learned, where an average grade of 85 or above earns the participant \$150 to the Seforim Sale. Though a student can choose to learn more than one category, the funding only covers the money for one discipline. After Cohen's explanation, the students were invited downstairs to fill out sign-up forms.

The idea for this incentivized learning program emerged from a conversation that took place last spring between Cohen and a friend of hers who described to Cohen how he participated in an incentivized learning opportunity on the Wilf Campus. Founded in 2015, the Wilf night seder program doles out monetary incentives towards the Seforim Sale for students who maintain a certain average on bi-weekly tests. Since that conversation, Cohen has been working closely with Dean Chaim Nissel and the OSL to develop a high-quality program for the women on Beren.

"Our goal is to cater to as many types of learning styles as possible," Cohen said. For her, this program is "less about numbers [of people who participate] and more about creating an environment of Torah learning on campus."

Cohen's attitude speaks to other measures that YU has taken this year to improve Beren's Torah atmosphere. Another notable initiative is the hiring of Rabbi Jacob and Rebbetzin Penina Bernstein as the campus Rabbi and Rebbetzin. The couple teaches multiple shiurim a week and Rabbi Bernstein is available to students for halachic questions.

*"These are the years that one needs to take full advantage to learn and study [Torah] as much as possible. We want to make sure you have access to it."*

President Berman

The Bekiut program is another step forward in YU's attempts to bring more Torah to the Beren campus, and left a number of attendees with misty eyes.

"These are the moments when I am so proud to be apart of Stern College and the Torah community that we are building together," said Rachel Fried (SCW '19). "The energy in the room was contagious," she added.

Though numbers were not her goal, Cohen was excited to report the next morning that 100 students — a great deal more than those who attended the opening — have already signed on to participate. Cohen and her fellow TAC members are "optimistic that the number will continue to rise." And as of Wednesday evening, two days following BBP's inauguration, they had already reached 150.



Students Register For Beren Bekiut Program

TAC



## How a YCDS Alumnus Evokes “Tradition” in Yiddish Fiddler Off-Broadway

By SHOSHY CIMENT

For Moshe Lobel (formerly Wigder), being a performer was inescapable. Though he entered Yeshiva University about seven years ago with the intention to study and pursue psychology, he couldn't shake his nagging passion for the performing arts. It took a chance run-in with the then-president of the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society

time with YCDS. But like Tevye's profound connection to his traditions, Lobel also recognizes the way that his roots – YCDS and its artistic director Lin Snyder – helped him reach success in the field.

“I'm continually surprised by how well prepared I was by Lin for the professional world,” said Lobel. “Her approach was to prepare, to do things the way they are done in a professional environment.” For actors, that meant signing in for stage management

in Brooklyn, but mostly abandoned the language after leaving the insular society.

“I felt it was suppressive and I didn't enjoy it at all,” remarked Lobel.

Ironically, Yiddish eventually became Lobel's golden ticket to landing some of his most important auditions and roles, including those for Yiddish “Fiddler.” He was cast in “Awake and Sing” at the New Yiddish Rep in 2017 and got a role in “High Maintenance,” an HBO show that was seeking Yiddish speakers. When “Fiddler” came around, he went through a few rounds of auditions before he was cast as a replacement.

Lobel is currently the only resident of the Folksbiene's Anatevka who can speak Yiddish onstage as well as onstage, though it isn't evident from the audience's perspective. The other actors maneuver through the intricacies of the language superbly well.

“There definitely is a personality that comes with the language,” said Lobel. “There is a culture that doesn't come out in English.”

In “Fiddler”, that personality is suddenly evident. In hearing the Sabbath Prayer sung as it must have sounded in the *shtetl*, in watching Tevye recite *Kaddish* for his estranged, intermarried daughter (a gut-wrenching addition I had never seen done onstage before), the emotion, humor andchutzpah of “Fiddler” is magnified, finally at home in its native tongue. And non-Yiddish speakers need not worry. The show

is presented with English and Russian supertitles.

The scene-focused nature of Joel Grey's direction could be partly responsible for the success, Lobel pointed out. Many of the rehearsals were initially done in English to ensure that each scene was fully developed and explored. The Yiddish was often added in after the fact – and it shows in the acting.

“There are non-Jewish people in our cast who are very connected to the material just because of the way it is approached,” said Lobel of Grey's direction. And while rumors of a Broadway transfer are not yet confirmed to be true, the production's enormous impact has certainly extended beyond the Jewish community.

Performing in this historic, Shabbat-friendly production of “Fiddler,” Lobel has not forgotten where he started. For many participants, YCDS is a club. For Lobel, it was the start of a successful career. And for fledgling actors in YCDS looking to take it further, Lobel offered some advice:

“If you want to do it professionally then go into it,” he said simply. “Dive into it 100 percent.”

*Fiddler On The Roof in Yiddish is running at the National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene through October 25. To purchase tickets, visit <http://nytf.org/>.*

*“I'm continually surprised by how well prepared I was by Lin for the professional world,” said Lobel. “Her approach was to prepare, to do things the way they are done in a professional environment.”*

(YCDS) during his first week on campus to get Lobel to audition for “1776”, his first show with the society.

“As soon as I got on that stage, I felt very much at home, like that was kind of where I belonged,” said Lobel about his first acting experience with YCDS. “After doing that show, there was no way I could not do it again.”

Now starring as Mordcha in the critically acclaimed National Yiddish Theater Folksbiene production of “Fiddler on the Roof,” Lobel's career has blossomed since his

at every rehearsal – a ritual usually reserved for union productions – and warming up two-hours before a performance.

YCDS lineage notwithstanding, working in this entirely Yiddish production of “Fiddler” brought out another part of Lobel's personal tradition and heritage. His role as the eccentric, emceeing innkeeper doesn't mark the actor's first rodeo with the almost extinct German-Hebrew tongue; Yiddish was Lobel's first language. He grew up *chassidish* in Boro Park, an ultra-Orthodox community



TRADITION: Steven Skybell and Ensemble

VICTOR NECHAY/PROPERPIX

ARI FULD,  
continued from Front Page

to pursue his attacker after such a wound. The Prime Minister posited, “Perhaps he had enough blood left in him.” “But I disagree,” said Dani. “It was not his blood that propelled him to pursue his attacker – it was

*The message was about Ari, a hero who lived his life to the fullest, an example of something we should all strive towards.*

his neshamah.”

The overall message of the funeral was not anger – though perhaps it should have been. The message was about Ari, a hero who lived his life to the fullest, an example of something we should all strive towards. It was also about solidarity. The Nation of Israel has stood and always will stand by their brothers and sisters.

Like Rabbi Judah Michel said, “Ari was a true *Oheiv Yisrael*, a fighter for *Am Yisrael*, a defender of the honor of our nation. Ari represented the quintessential proud Jew, completely dedicated *Moser Nefesh*, an idealistic and unapologetic Jew.” In a word, he was a hero.

We should try to remember the words Ari's father expressed: “I know you will continue fighting in the *yeshiva shel ma'alah* for *Klal Yisroel*.”



Ari Fuld

FACEBOOK



# Galus 3.0: How Orientalism is Destroying the Jewish People

By ARYEH SCHONBRUN

Upon encountering any novel society, one must forego his preconceived notions, ideas and prejudices regarding the native population, approach the culture with cautious critique and try to bridge the distance between expectation and reality. We do this constantly even when fully acclimated to our natural habitat, but when we discover variations of culture and peoples we must fully exert ourselves in order to fully understand our surroundings. Most of us don't appreciate the richness of human society, nor care for the nuances of culture, language and religion. Most of us do not migrate, move or discover. We may seldom tour, but mostly never in genuine expectation of learning something new. As man becomes more mobile, his thoughts, mind and personality fossilize, robbing him of his unique ability to communicate and grow.

Making Aliyah, on the other hand, defies the decadent pattern of Western morbidity and allows for some serious souls to encounter humanity in a unique manner. Nearly all who make the move seriously consider the spiritual and nationalistic rationale involved, the thought itself a rebellion against the banality of a soul-deprived, post-industrial post-modern tyranny. The few souls who follow through on their national ambitions deserve some credit, however, as they find out Israeli society can be treacherous and a bit surprising.

When one makes Aliyah out of ideological concern for his nation and fatherland, he usually feels great admiration for its society, culture, heritage and physical land. When they find an Israel that does not meet those expectations, they might despair of its unique qualities, become claustrophobic of its tiny geographical confines, tire of its people's incessant bickering and self-hatred, fear terror, take umbrage at the hijacking of religion for political gain, deprave the status-quo of a continuing military occupation, bemoan the housing bubble and decry the impotence of society in fighting a corrupt, oligopolic, bureaucratic regime. True, many things about Israel shine out in contrast to the darkness of daily triviality, however, I would call myself a liar if I were to tell you that Israel is the redemption of the Jewish nation. With all her wonderful qualities, her down to earth *sabra* directness, her steadfast entrepreneurial spirit, her warm communities, holy experiences, fraternal conveniences and unique individuals, she remains tied commercially, spiritually and sociologically to the West. The sense of Western nihilism, that which precipitated years of worldwide war and suffering, that with which I must struggle daily, permeates even the most distant bastion of the West, and brings with it the dull materialism of a hedonistic society.

When I explore my adopted country, I don't dismay at the large discrepancies I find between my Western upbringing and my new home. I feel quite at home in my new country, and that worries me deeply.

Over the millennia, the Israelites have tried time and again to forge for themselves an independent society, devoid of pagan impurity and devout in its service of the one true God. They failed time and again and, in turn, suffered the consequences. Unlike the great societies of Rome, Greece, Persia and the West, they did not know long periods of growth, splendor and peace. Israel enjoyed relative prosperity for only short spans of time. David and Solomon unified the nation

and conquered the surrounding lands, but shortly thereafter the kingdoms split and the United Israel was no more. We enjoyed some stability during the Maccabean dynasty, and again during various periods of foreign occupation, but we could not sustain an independent identity for long. Even during the long exile, after having accepted our doomed fate, our ancestors prospered for a limited time in Spain and Eastern Europe, Germany, France, America, Iraq and Syria, but never for too long, always disrupted by pillagers, plague, genocide, inquisitions and the re-enlightened West. Were it not for our belief in salvation we would not have endured the trials of our prolonged perambulation, but, owing to our prized tradition and our belief in our unique identity, we persevered. That is, until now.

Who is a Jew?

Ben Gurion and Mapai (Israel's social-democrats) recognized the problem of social integration, but they ultimately failed in appreciating and accounting for the Jew's vast cultural variety. Instead of incorporating the beautiful and pure features of each diaspora community, they succeeded in whitewashing Jewish society through big government, obligatory conscription and re-education, thereby eliminating the non-Western/diaspora elements of Jewish life. The Mizrahi Jews suffered especially from the blindness of Israel's irascible racial policies, and while many have forgotten about the affair, the consequences of such a purge of a *leibadig* culture cannot go unnoticed. Israeli society, when it lost its indigenous diaspora milieu, became a satellite state of Western imperial-

*True, many things about Israel shine out in contrast to the darkness of daily triviality, however, I would call myself a liar if I were to tell you that Israel is the redemption of the Jewish nation.*

In our modern reincarnation of the Israelite society we again try to collectivize a general spirit of nationhood while insisting on the religious and patriarchal characteristics of the Redemption of Zion. We are not just another golden age, they tell us, but rather the beginning of an era, the end of our wanderings and suffering. God has meted out his punishment over the nation of Israel, the Holocaust was *it*, now nothing more. I have much appreciation for an entity that promises me basic security, basic comfort and needs, but over the years of exile our nation has become weak. We have developed neurotic tendencies and social ills and we must tend to them.

Ever since we parted and spread out throughout the four corners of this Earth, we have grown apart from each other. The natural fraternity that must have permeated functional Israelite society dissolved in a multi-cultural potpourri that, while generally pure and holy, incorporated all types of foreign tendencies, traditions, cultures and beliefs. Our differences, as much as our similarities, demand our utmost attention, but out of fear of alienation we demur. The Jewish people, after having suffered so many years in far-flung isolation, after having experienced the harrowing phenomena of a stateless nation, need to regroup and reprocess our core identity. What is Judaism?

ism, a shallow, impoverished reflection of the disturbing elements of our failing society: consumerism, baseless hatred and social stratification.

The proper response to Israel and the West's existential crisis must come from a comprehensive reckoning over what has caused this mess. Israel's affiliation with Western imperialist dogma, from the days of the Balfour Declaration to President Trump, has robbed her of her independence and compromised her values in deference to physical security and political pragmatism. The Israeli Jews, unable to consign themselves to the reality of true interdependency, this itself a relic of diaspora egocentrism, have, instead of rising up to the tide of neo-statist fascism, turned to the dictators of the West, private industry and speculative democracy, for affirmation and protection. The Jew, so mired in his recent misery and struggles, failed to check his own demise, his utter annihilation, at the hands of his Western allied "friends" invested in their continued exploitation and eventual destruction of the world. Israel remains the portal to the East, and thus gains protection from its Western subjugators, but she loses her independence and uniqueness, enveloped by the unadorned assignment of vassal state.

In order to free the Jew of their Western subjugation, in order to facilitate

their return to the simple life of the traditional, *ehrlliche yid*, we must resign ourselves to yet another *galus*. The present exile itself incorporates our dueling internal identities. We have no reason to fully divorce ourselves from the benefits of the West, of order, technological prowess and advanced knowledge. However, we also cannot ignore our Oriental origins, our Semitic roots and our irrational religious tendencies.

The Palestinian Muslims, then, while they may frighten Western, "Ashkefied" Israel, hold the key to our realizing our unique national identity. While we have lost touch with the Eastern qualities of religious piety and simple living, our neighbors have retained their unique Arab identities. Their culture, which many Jewish and Western Orientalists have condescendingly labeled as "backward," in fact represents the only realistic escape from the overbearing corruption of a failing Western imperialism. An authentic coexistence, acknowledging the positives and negatives of each respective culture, will allow for both of our peoples to liberate ourselves from forces of oppression. They, from the indignity of an alien, impersonal, heathen rule, and we from the Hellenistic destruction brought upon us through our too-close-for-comfort relationship with the West.

The Jew, a synthesis of Western intellectualism and development and Oriental fanaticism and piety, must find himself a home in Israel, a land straddling two continents, civilizations and histories. East and West converge upon the smallest of lands, and, according to my estimation, only here can one begin to bridge and reform both societies. The Orient, presently in a state of deteriorating barbarism, needs the enlightened philosophies of the West. The West, caught up in a cycle of suicidal ideation, could use a spiritual renaissance, building on the down-to-earth qualities of the East. If Israel should succeed in displaying to the world the possibility of rapprochement and coexistence between these warring civilizations, we may yet have what to live for.

Prophecy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.

Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live:

And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the Lord. (Ezekiel 37)



President Bush and Pinochet, Secretary of State Rumsfeld and Hussein

ARYEH SCHONBRUN & AP



FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

**Editor's Note:** The Commentator has decided to reprint the following op-ed that was written in response to U.S. News and World Report rankings from over 20 years ago, as well as a Letter to the Editor written in response to the op-ed. Though the current editorial board does not necessarily endorse either of the arguments below, the articles undeniably resonate still in 2019, when college rankings remain relevant to campus conversation. Moreover, this saga is doubly fascinating as a lesson in journalism, as the printed record shows that the first op-ed sparked many responses — both in agreement and in disagreement — including a student/faculty meeting about the YU Joint Israel Program (the subject matter of the article) and even some formal changes to the program's requirements.

From the Archives (November 15, 1994; Volume 60 Issue 4) —

Op-Ed: Joint Israel Credits Hit YU Where it Counts: Its Students

By SANDOR BAK

U.S. News and World Report recently published a ranking of America's best universities. Among the 220 schools included in the list, YU placed a very mediocre 107th. As much as our departments of admissions and public relations would like to dismiss this ranking as "totally inaccurate," the truth is that presently, the ranking appears just about right for our college. While those who are familiar with the school know of its many strong, distinguishing qualities, clearly we are no Harvard. At the present, we are no Columbia. In fact, according to U.S. News, we are not even Oregon State College. Of course, we could dismiss the ranking as meaningless and of absolutely no value. We could. Or we could believe, as U.S. News writes, that "Fairly or unfairly, the name of a top-ranked college or university opens more doors to jobs and graduate schools than does the name of a school in the bottom tier." Right now, YU has the reputation of an average school. One might speculate that the level of a school is a reflection of the intellectual level of its student body. Well, not according to U.S. News. The article reports that the average SAT score of a YU student is 1188, a very respectable figure that is much higher than the corresponding student score in any of the other average schools. Of course, no YU student needs the U.S. News and World Report to tell him that there are many bright students here on our campus. By simply sitting in on any of the upper-level courses of *shiurim* offered here, anyone can see that our student body is on an above-average intellectual level. Why then does YU rank only 107th in the survey? The answer is almost obvious.

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From the Archives (December 14, 1994; Volume 60 Issue 6) —

Cutting Credits No Solution

By YAAKOV BLAU

To the Editor:

While I felt that many good points were raised to support the suggestion of cutting down on Israel credits, I don't believe that this is the solution to YU's academic problems. First of all, my experience has shown that YU isn't even a three year college, but rather a two year or two and a half year college. Many of my friends did early admissions (which I don't consider a serious year of college, though that's debatable), got credit from Israel, took a few CLEPS, and did summer school (and not particularly high level courses at that). While YU has been cutting

down on these "garbage" credits, I think there is still a way to go before they are completely eliminated. I would suggest a cap of 32 credits as the maximum amount that may be transferred to YU from outside sources, so that if someone uses his Israel credit, that's it, no more transferring credit from Queens College summer courses on top of it.

Second of all, while forcing students to stay in college would probably force them to get a better education, ultimately the problem lies with the students' attitude towards college. I can't speak for all of the student body, but I meet all too many people whose sole concern is to get the maximum number of A's for the minimum amount of work. If YU is to become a serious academic institution, the students are going to have to want that change; I'm afraid that this is far from the case right now.

Until now, I've taken a purely academic viewpoint, but I think we must remember that this is Yeshiva University, and the Yeshiva is a higher priority than the university. Having a double schedule will, by its very nature, weakens one's academic pursuits, but that's a necessary evil. If someone wants a better education and only rudimentary Torah learning on the side, then he or she should go to Columbia. Now, one may argue that cutting down on Israel credit will not affect the yeshiva since people will go to Israel anyway. This is probably correct about one year of studying in Israel, but it would be disastrous in terms of Shana Bet. I think the overwhelming benefits of this second year in Israel are apparent to anybody who has stayed a second year or knows people who have. There should be no question that encouraging Shana Bet is worth a loss from the academic viewpoint. Perhaps YU could grant 16 credits for each year, so that one may get all 32 credits, but only for staying two complete years in Israel. Besides, even from an academic perspective, it's better to have older and more mature students in school, i.e. to have students who did the full two years in Israel.

I'm glad that people are striving to make YU a better college, I just hope they find the correct solution.

Yaakov Blau  
YC '93, RIETS '95



## Sam Harris' Tea II: This Time it's Political

By DOVID SCHWARTZ

In my last article, I discussed Sam Harris' position on morality. In his view, moral claims ("you ought not kill children," for example) are not facts. Instead, they are statements about preferred experiences. On Harris' view, the proposition "you ought not kill children" is understood as "in order to have the experiences we prefer, you shouldn't kill children." In this article, I want to illustrate some consequences of his view.

Before continuing, I want to highlight and reemphasize one aspect of Harris' view. According to Harris, there are no such things as moral facts. Instead, there are facts concerning what we prefer and facts concerning how we achieve our preferences. To put this in philosophical terms (am I losing you yet?), Harris denies the existence of "normativity." Normativity is the property which makes things morally obligatory. According to Harris, there are no right or wrong actions, only preferable or non-preferable ones.

What are the consequences of this view on politics? I believe that his moral views

tend toward totalitarianism. To see why, we'll begin at the level of the individual. I claim to know what I prefer. To take a trivial example, I claim that I prefer tea with lemon to tea with milk. But suppose someone else claims that I am mistaken about my preference. Suppose there is another person, call him O'Brian, who says that I would actually be happier if I had tea with milk. In fact, I would be happier even if O'Brian grabbed my tea with lemon and handed me tea with milk instead.

As Westerners, we tend to disagree with O'Brian's claims. We value private property and individual choice. So, even if O'Brian is correct in assessing my preferences, that is, even if he is right that I will be happier if he replaced my tea with lemon for tea with milk, he still has no business interfering with my private choices. In saying that O'Brian has no business interfering, we are making a normative claim about what O'Brian can and cannot do. Under Harrisian ethics, however, normative claims have no weight. All that matters is preference. If what I prefer is the tea that I will most enjoy, and if O'Brian knows better which kind of tea I will indeed enjoy, his conduct is justified.

Because for Harris, to be "justified" simply means "to bring about the state of preferred experiences."

The case about tea was trivial, but it illustrates that under Harrisian ethics, authority is in the hands of the Empiricist, the person with the data, the person who knows which actions will and will not achieve wellbeing. Herein the danger lies. If an authority knows (or claims to know) what is best, under Harrisian ethics, the authority is morally justified in bringing about what they believe to be best. They have no constraints. As long as, in the final count, the authority brought about more preferred experiences than not, the authority is morally justified.

Consider rights. I take a right to refer to a set of actions which another ought not interfere with. The right to property, for example, refers to the fact that others ought not interfere with my usage of my property. Rights impose constraints on authorities. To return to our previous example, if O'Brian would take my tea with lemon and hand me tea with milk, he would have violated my right to property. That is to say, he acted in a way he ought not have. But according to Harris, there are no such things as rights.

It may be the case that, in most instances, stealing from someone else will not be conducive to wellbeing. But that does not mean there exists a right to property. That does

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*What are the consequences of this view on politics? I believe that Sam Harris' moral views tend toward totalitarianism.*

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not mean it is immoral to steal.

These two features of Sam Harris' theory — the centralization of authority and the lack of rights — tend towards totalitarianism. Now, of course, this does not make his theory false. Even if his theory entailed totalitarianism that wouldn't make his theory false. But it does leave his theory in tension with the Western tradition. As more and more people began to adopt Harrisian ethics and views like it, we will begin to see a shift away from classical liberalism. In my next article, I hope to explain why this is a bad thing.



Another cup of tea.



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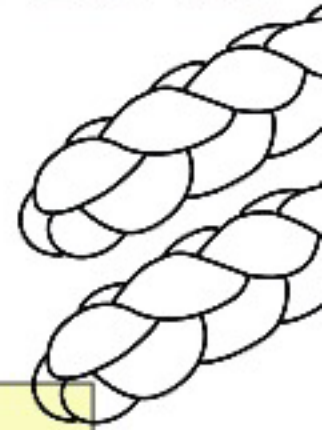
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Oct 5-6	SHABBAT SHARSHERET	educational presentation, shiurim by Rav Moshe Tzvi Weinberg
Oct 12-13	JEWISH FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP	learn from Tikvah Wiener (The Idea School), Charlene Aminoff (Gali's Wigs), and Faigy Grossman (Jewish Toy Designer)
Oct 19-20	COED: JEWISH YOUTH LEADERSHIP	Understanding how and why we educate the Jewish Youth with Marc Fein!
Oct 26-27	DRAMATON (SCDS & YCDS)	... with the cast of Soon By You
Nov 2-3	SHABBAT OF ADVANCED TANACH STUDY	with Rabbi Etshalom, Zissy Turner, and Miriam Bornstein
Nov 9-10	JUDAISM AND THE ARTS and the YSTUDS	how music, photography, and painting play a key role in a religious lifestyle
Nov 16-17	LET'S COOK!	Shabbat of special food!
Nov 23-24	THANKSGIVING	Shabbat BaBayit
Nov 30-Dec 1	COED: YUPAC	meet the voices, join the movement
Dec 7-8	College Trailblazers	Meet Adina Lichtman, founder of Knock Knock Give A Sock
Dec 14-15	WRITE ON!	with campus papers, the Observer and Commentator, and journalist Liel Lebowitz
Dec 21-22	COED: TAC & SOY	The Bednarshs will join us from Israel!
Dec 28-29	READING WEEK	study, study study!
Jan 4-5	FINALS WEEK	Join Dr. Yardaena Osband to learn about being involved in Jewish community building as a female physician!



**QUESTIONS? BAADLER@MAIL.YU.EDU**



# A Comprehensive Analysis of Trends in YU Undergraduate Course Offerings

By BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

*Note: This article appears on The Commentator’s website with fuller, more visual-friendly graphs.*

This article, following in the footsteps of previous Commentator data-driven articles, tracks changes in course offerings over the past several years. The scope, which covers Yeshiva University’s undergraduate colleges — Stern College for Women (SCW), Sy Syms School of Business (Syms-Men and Syms-Women) and Yeshiva College (YC) — is broad. The data begins with the Fall 2013 semester and uses only fall offerings.

Yeshiva College									
	ART	BIB	BIO	CHE	COM	COWC	CUOT	ECO	ENG
Fall 2013	3	17	19	11	6	6	7	7	9
Fall 2014	4	21	17	12	6	4	5	7	7
Fall 2015	4	12	16	10	6	4	6	6	9
Fall 2016	4	12	15	9	6	5	5	6	8
Fall 2017	4	12	15	6	9	6	6	7	7
Fall 2018	4	13	17	8	7	5	6	8	8

	JHI	JPH	LAT	MAT	MUS	NAWO	PHI	PHY	POL
Fall 2013	9	3	3	9	7	1	7	15	8
Fall 2014	8	3	1	9	4	1	7	11	8
Fall 2015	9	2	1	9	6	1	5	14	9
Fall 2016	7	1		7	5	2	5	11	9
Fall 2017	8	2		11	4	1	4	9	6
Fall 2018	7	2		11	3	1	5	9	10

	JHI	JPH	LAT	MAT	MUS	NAWO	PHI	PHY	POL
Fall 2013	9	3	3	9	7	1	7	15	8
Fall 2014	8	3	1	9	4	1	7	11	8
Fall 2015	9	2	1	9	6	1	5	14	9
Fall 2016	7	1		7	5	2	5	11	9
Fall 2017	8	2		11	4	1	4	9	6
Fall 2018	7	2		11	3	1	5	9	10

	PSY	SEM	SOC	SPA	STA	YID
Fall 2013	14	1	5	5	3	1
Fall 2014	13	3	6	5	2	1
Fall 2015	13	1	6	5	2	1
Fall 2016	16		5	5	1	
Fall 2017	16		4	5	1	
Fall 2018	15		7	2	1	

The steepest drops in course offerings were in the Bible (17 to 13 courses), First Year Writing (23 to 13 courses), Music (7 to 3 courses), Physics (15 to 9 courses), and Spanish (5 to 2 courses) departments. Other departments mostly remained constant over the past several years, with possible slight exceptions in the Art, Computer Science, Economics, Human Behavior and Social Institutions, Hebrew, Mathematics, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology departments, each of which is offering either one or two more courses in 2018 compared to 2013.

The charts indicate that since the 2016-17 academic year, Yeshiva College no longer offers courses in the French, First Year Seminar, Greek, Latin, Semitic Languages or Yiddish departments. The First Year Seminar (and one-time Freshman Honors Experience) requirements, which were discontinued after Spring 2016, were replaced by alternate requirements among CORE curriculum courses.

The chart below illustrates overall changes, displaying the total courses offerings of each academic year. Note that the chart includes one line that counts cross-listed courses as two courses and another line that counts cross-listed courses as only one course. The third line indicates the number of Honors courses offered each semester (with cross-listed Honors courses counted only once).

	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
Total	241	221	215	193	195	200
Non-Crosslisted	235	216	208	183	183	192
Honors Courses	31	31	34	23	11	14

The data indicates an overall decrease in courses and a slight increase in cross-listings (2013=6, 2014=5, 2015=7, 2016=10, 2017=12, 2018=8). The data also shows a significant drop in Yeshiva College Honors courses, which can most likely be attributed to the consolidation of Honors courses to the CORE departments in recent years.

The next chart illustrates average class sizes, with one line for all courses and the other line for Honors courses alone.

	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
Average (All)	14.7	14.7	14.7	15.6	15.0	14.5
Average (Honors)	8.8	9.2	8.4	9.9	11.4	9.1

The data indicates a mostly steady average class size, for both all courses and for Honors courses, over the past six years.

Syms-Men					
	ACC	BLW	FIN	FYSM	FYWR
Fall 2013	13	4	9	4	
Fall 2014	14	6	9	1	
Fall 2015	12	7	8	3	5
Fall 2016	12	8	8	3	5
Fall 2017	13	6	10	3	5
Fall 2018	13	5	10	4	

	IDS	JVCW	MAN	MAR	TAX
Fall 2013	15		9	8	2
Fall 2014	15		15	12	2
Fall 2015	13	2	11	9	2
Fall 2016	14	4	11	10	2
Fall 2017	14	6	11	10	2
Fall 2018	16	7	9	10	2

Syms-Men saw either steadiness or an increase in offerings in each of its departments. The First Year Writing department, which existed in Syms-Men for a few years, was discontinued this semester as Syms students now take First Year Writing with YC classmates. The greatest increase was in the relatively new Jewish Values in the Contemporary World department, from two courses in its inaugural Fall 2015 semester to seven courses this Fall 2018 semester.

The chart below illustrates overall changes, displaying the total courses offerings of each academic year (the same methodological notes as for the analogous YC chart apply here).

	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
Total	64	74	72	77	80	76
Non-Crosslisted	60	67	66	74	76	73
Honors Courses	2	3	3	2	5	4

The data indicates an overall increase in courses and general steadiness in cross-listings (2013=4, 2014=7, 2015=6, 2016=3, 2017=4, 2018=3). Honors course offerings also remained mostly steady.

The next chart illustrates average class sizes (due to the small number of Syms-Men Honors courses, the average class sizes for Honors-specific courses are not indicated).

	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
Average	23.3	26.5	30.4	26.9	26.7	28.6

The data indicates a significant increase in Syms-Men average class size, from 23.3 in Fall 2013 to 28.6 in Fall 2018. This is likely due to the fact that Syms-Men course offerings, which have increased by a moderate amount in the past few years (18.8% increase), have increased at a proportionally lesser rate than the size of the Syms-Men student body, which has risen dramatically in the past few years, from 397 full-time students in Fall 2013 to 524 full-time students in Fall 2018 (32.0% increase).

## Stern College for Women

	ARTS	BIBL	BIOL	CHEM	COMP	ECON	EDUC	ENGL	FREN
Fall 2013	24	34	21	8	3	7	12	29	1
Fall 2014	19	27	21	9	4	5	13	29	
Fall 2015	17	32	19	7	4	5	8	28	
Fall 2016	17	30	18	6	7	3	8	29	
Fall 2017	16	32	13	7	7	5	8	28	1
Fall 2018	18	32	15	7	8	3	9	30	1

	HEBR	HIST	JEDU	JHIS	JPHI	JUDS	MATH	MUSI	PHIL
Fall 2013	26	7	3	11	7	37	7	7	5
Fall 2014	21	5	4	7	6	32	7	7	6
Fall 2015	22	6	2	8	6	29	6	6	3
Fall 2016	23	7	3	6	4	29	6	6	4
Fall 2017	21	7	4	8	5	32	6	6	4
Fall 2018	21	7	0	7	4	35	8	5	4

	PHYS	POLI	PSYC	PUB	SCIE
Fall 2013	6	9	23		2
Fall 2014	4	10	19		2
Fall 2015	4	9	18		2
Fall 2016	3	9	16	3	2
Fall 2017	4	9	19	2	2
Fall 2018	4	11	18	2	2

	SOCI	SPAN	SPAU	SPEE	STAT
Fall 2013	9	3	6	6	4
Fall 2014	9	2	6	7	4
Fall 2015	8		6	3	4
Fall 2016	9	1	6	5	4
Fall 2017	10	2	6	5	4
Fall 2018	8	2	6	5	4

Stern College experienced declines in offerings in 16 out of 28 departments. The steepest drops in course offerings were in the Art (24 to 18 courses), Biology (21 to 15 courses), Economics (7 to 3 courses), Hebrew (26 to 21 courses), Jewish History (11 to 7 courses), Jewish Philosophy (7 to 4 courses) and Psychology (23 to 18 courses) departments. Other departments mostly remained constant over the past several years. The only major increase in course offerings was in the Computer Science department, from three courses in Fall 2013 to eight courses in Fall 2018.

The charts also indicate the introduction of the Public Health department in the 2016-17 academic year.

The chart below illustrates overall changes, displaying the total courses offerings of each academic year (the same methodological notes as for the analogous YC chart apply here).

	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
Total	317	285	262	264	273	276
Non-Crosslisted	316	282	261	260	269	272
Honors Courses	31	25	23	18	22	22

The data indicates an overall decrease in courses and general steadiness in cross-listings (2013=1, 2014=3, 2015=1, 2016=4, 2017=4, 2018=4). The data also shows a significant drop in Stern College Honors courses.

The next chart illustrates average class sizes, with one line for all courses and the other line for Honors courses alone.

	ACC	BUS	BLW	FIN	IDS	MAN	MAR	TAX
Fall 2013	6	1	2	4	8	9	5	1
Fall 2014	7	3	2	4	7	8	8	1
Fall 2015	5	2	3	3	5	7	9	1
Fall 2016	6	1	3	3	7	6	7	1
Fall 2017	6	1	3	5	7	9	8	1
Fall 2018	5	1	3	6	8	7	7	1

The data indicates a mostly steady average class size, for both all courses and for Honors courses, over the past six years.

## Syms-Women

	ACC	BUS	BLW	FIN	IDS	MAN	MAR	TAX
Fall 2013	6	1	2	4	8	9	5	1
Fall 2014	7	3	2	4	7	8	8	1
Fall 2015	5	2	3	3	5	7	9	1
Fall 2016	6	1	3	3	7	6	7	1
Fall 2017	6	1	3	5	7	9	8	1
Fall 2018	5	1	3	6	8	7	7	1

Syms-Women saw relative steadiness in offerings in each of its departments.

The chart below illustrates overall changes, displaying the total courses offerings of each academic year (the same methodological notes as for the analogous YC chart apply here).

	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
Total	36	40	35	34	40	38
Non-Crosslisted	32	36	31	31	35	36
Honors Courses	3	2	1	1	2	3

The data indicates an overall slight increase in courses and a slight decrease in cross-listings (2013=4, 2014=4, 2015=4, 2016=3, 2017=5, 2018=2). Honors course offerings remained mostly steady.

The next chart illustrates average class sizes (due to the small number of Syms-Women Honors courses, the average class sizes for Honors-specific courses are not indicated).

	Fall 2013	Fall 2014	Fall 2015	Fall 2016	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
Average	16.2	16.2	18.5	16.2	15.6	18.3

The data indicates a moderate increase in Syms-Women average class size, from 16.2 in Fall 2013 to 18.3 in Fall 2018. This corresponds to a similarly moderate increase in the size of the Syms-Women student body, from 137 full-time students in Fall 2013 to 164 full-time students in Fall 2018.

## Summary

Over the last six years, Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women have seen dramatic drops in total courses, with the steepest drop being among Yeshiva College Honors courses. Sy Syms School of Business, meanwhile, has seen a moderate increase in total courses for both its uptown and downtown divisions. Average class sizes have mostly remained constant, with the notable exception of Syms-Men, which has seen a sharp increase in average class size.

Continued on Page 16





June Zman 2017 in the Leo and Leon Eisenberg Beit Midrash on Beren Campus.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## From the TAC President's Desk: Uniting Our Kolei Torah

By ADINA COHEN

A few weeks ago, I was making plans with a friend to catch up about our summers, and I asked him if there was night seder that night or if he was free. Laughing, he told me, “Adina, asking me if there is night seder is missing the whole essence of what night seder is and how it functions.” He proceeded to explain to me that night seder uptown is not an official state of affairs per se. *Chavrutot* do not decide to learn based on whether night seder is technically happening on a given night. In fact, even saying that night seder happens or does not happen is a misunderstanding of the system. *Chavrutot* learn because there is Torah to be learned and, since most classes are over by 8 p.m., what could be a better use of time than sitting in the beit midrash reveling in God’s Torah? This attitude, which seems to permeate the walls of the Glueck *Beit Midrash*, is one that I have been chasing in my time on the Beren Campus. Moreover, I think it is safe to say that I am not the only one who is searching for this feeling within the seventh floor Beren *beit midrash*.

I once thought that passion for Torah learning downtown was incomparable to the fervor emanating from the Wilf campus. However, I no longer believe that to be true. The women on the Beren Campus learn Torah and attend Torah programming. The women on the Beren Campus schedule *chavrutot* and stick to them. Yet, with all that, the *kol Torah* and positive peer pressure of late night learning on the Beren Campus are still lacking. Why is this the reality? And even more importantly, what can be done to change that?

*Kol Torah* in a *beit midrash* does not happen by accident. It happens when large numbers of people choose to learn Torah there at the same time. On the Wilf Campus, the Glueck *Beit Midrash* serves not only as the home for some of the undergraduate

students during their morning seder programs, but houses a thriving *semikhah* program and Kollel Elyon. The *beit midrash* is not another classroom in the university, rather it is a *yeshiva* that exists in its own right. It functions outside of the schedules of busy Yeshiva College and Syms students. When a student in YC or Syms steps into the *beit midrash*, he is entering an oasis and joining his peers as they learn, be it for morning seder, night seder, or even afternoon seder. The *kol Torah* in Glueck is a product of the yeshiva and not the individual students; the students add to it, of course, but writ large, it is the already existing *kol Torah* that propels the students uptown to join the conversation.

*I once thought that passion for Torah learning downtown was incomparable to the fervor emanating from the Wilf campus. However, I no longer believe that to be true.*

On the Beren Campus, we do not have a *yeshiva*. The well-established architecture that exists uptown is still in its initial stages on the Beren Campus. If we play our cards right, one day the seventh floor *beit midrash* will serve as a beacon of women’s Torah learning in the same way that the *yeshiva* uptown does for the greater Jewish community. The question then remains; what can we, the women of the Beren Campus, do as a community to not only increase the *kol Torah* during our time on campus, but help lay the foundation for future women who will walk the halls of the Beren Campus?

Since the beginning of the semester, I have already noticed a shift on campus. I recently went to the *beit midrash* to daven *mincha* and was amazed by the number of

women learning and the chatter of Torah that surrounded me. I was struck with the realization that the ever elusive *kol Torah* that I have been searching for on campus is within reach. It is there and quite frankly it always has been, but it is the medium through which the individual *kolot* can unite that has been missing. In fact, this unification has already begun through the efforts of the campus couples. The number of weekly *chaburot* on campus is more than five times the number of *chaburot* that existed last year. Rabbi and Rebbetzin Bernstein as well as Rabbi Rosenzweig can frequently be found in the *beit midrash* and are friendly faces, responding to the needs of students through scheduling *chaburot* as well as *chavrutot*. Their energy is contagious and they have played a huge role in attracting more women to the *beit midrash* on a day-to-day basis.

Another way in which we — TAC, our related clubs and the campus couples — hope to facilitate the passion for Torah that exists on campus is through the new incentivized Beren Bekiut Program (BBP). The program has been months in the making and has the potential to be a mechanism that solidifies the foundation of a culture of learning that has been emerging since the beginning of the semester. BBP consists of five different tracks — *Gemara*, *Halacha*, *Mishna*, *Tanach* and *Chumash* — and aims to cater to the diverse learning levels and interests that exist on campus. By taking on a Torah project along with the greater Beren community, our individual Torah learning no longer exists simply within the context of our daily schedules but takes on greater meaning. It builds community, positive peer pressure and amplifies the *kol Torah*.

We are at an exciting stage in the development of Torah on the Beren Campus. The passion is here, the (wo)

manpower is here, the facilitators are here as well. If we take advantage of the opportunities offered and unite in our Torah learning, we will be the students who will be able to look back at their time in university and be proud of being part of the beginning of the Beren Campus’ *kol Torah* spreading beyond the walls of the *beit midrash* and out into the world.

## Wind Tunnel

By LEIB WIENER

It wallows and swirls  
It lifts and wafts  
Its body twists and unfurls  
It sneers and taunts

A quarter to three and class begins  
A beast awakens within its lair  
A slow start, small little spins  
A couple kippahs and paper take to the air

The warm up ends  
The beast breathes deep  
The fearful students crouch  
The roiling wind sweeps

It struts around  
It prods and pounds  
It screams a truly awful sound  
It lifts people up off the ground

Alas, with a sigh and puff  
Alas, with nothing to show  
Alas, the beast loses its stuff  
Alas, the wind tunnel ends and silver doors close

COURTESY OF THE YU POETRY CLUB



## Bioethics in Practice

# Ethical Considerations for Incentivizing Organ Donation in the US

By **MOSHE PAHMER** and  
**ELI SHARVIT**

*Yeshiva University's Medical Ethics Society is proud to present "Bioethics in Practice," a regular column featuring moral, political and halakhic perspectives on contemporary medical ethics issues. We hope to inspire interesting and productive discussion around campus and invite the student body to join in on the dialogue.*

In light of the wide disparity between the number of available organs and needful recipients, much debate has surrounded the issue of appropriate organ distribution within the U.S. The current organ allocation system in the U.S. has been developed by teams of doctors, ethicists and lawmakers. The United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS) has created complex algorithms which use specific mathematical formulas that account for a variety of medical factors unique to each organ type, and differentiate between the needs of adults and children. This system is thought to be the most ethical option because it maintains a sense of objectivity by using a numerical scoring system, and seeks to ensure that the patient with the most urgent condition, coupled with the best odds for survival, receives priority for transplantation.

Yet, despite the widespread success of UNOS, an average of 20 people in America die each day while awaiting a lifesaving organ transplant. It is undeniable that America is facing an organ shortage, which has only been increasing. Therefore, in recent years,

strong arguments have been made in favor of incentivizing organ donation in the U.S. to increase the national donor pool.

The most commonly advanced proposition in the realm of incentivizing organ donation is allowing the sale of organs. In 1984, Congress passed the National Organ Transplant Act, which prohibits the sale

irrespective of socioeconomic status. By opening the market to wealthy patients, the poor would be ousted from the organ trade. To prevent this issue, the U.S. would need to impose strict regulation and potentially incur much of the financial burden. Perhaps America should look to Iran as an example; Iran allows organ trade, but tightly regu-

who has donated in the past. This led to an increase in organ donor registration as well as familial consent for posthumous donation, resulting in increased organ transplantation since then, with a record-breaking high in 2017. Using Israel as a case study, it is almost certain that an analogous system in the U.S. would likewise increase organ donations and aid in procuring organs for many people who might otherwise die before transplantation could occur.

However, some have posited that this type of incentivization almost certainly discriminates against those who would opt to not donate organs due to religious beliefs, and question the constitutionality of this policy. Yet, one could fairly argue that this law does not mandate organ donation and therefore does not require a person, by any means, to violate his or her religious beliefs. If the U.S. decided to implement new legislation, following Israel's lead, it would have to address those concerns.

Ultimately, should the U.S. choose to update its policies to help facilitate an increase in national organ transplantation rates, it will have to seriously weigh the possible negative effects of any such policies against the benefit of countless lives saved. Needless to say, new legislation would demand intense government administrative involvement and funding.

As technology improves, with science getting progressively closer to producing synthetic organs — via stem cell generation and 3D printing — it is possible that in the foreseeable future, organ shortages will be a crisis of the past.

*It is undeniable that America is facing an organ shortage, which has only been increasing. Therefore, in recent years, strong arguments have been made in favor of incentivizing organ donation in the United States to increase the national donor pool.*

of organs, or the offering of any financial compensation for an organ. Iran, notably, has commercialized the organ market, and currently has no waitlist for kidney transplants — by far the most needed organ. Furthermore, critics of the American system point out that the only person who receives no benefit from transplantation is the donor. The doctors and nurses are paid for their skills, as are the people who clean up following the procedure. The recipient, of course, is "paid" with a new organ. It seems odd that the person offering the most important thing of all, his or her organ, is the only one left uncompensated.

Oppositionists to this new capitalist system would argue that it enables the wealthy elite to purchase "life," while condemning everyone else. The current system gives all people a chance to receive an organ,

lates the market — both as a way to prevent exploitation of the poor, as well as to limit organ tourism. According to this system, the market is contained within the country; that is, foreigners are not allowed to buy the organs of Iranian citizens. Additionally, organs can only be transplanted between people of the same nationality — so, for example, an Iranian cannot purchase a kidney from a Syrian refugee.

Another such incentive would be to give priority status on the waitlist to those who are registered organ donors. In fact, America would not be the first country to consider such a system. In 2010, Israel implemented new legislation which guaranteed that between two patients in medically comparable conditions, priority status for transplantation would be given to the patient who is a registered donor or who has a family member



America is Facing an Organ Shortage

SCIENCE ALERT

### COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS, continued from Page 14

Explanations for course offering and class size changes are beyond the scope of this article. Readers will perhaps invoke the relevant mobilizing words of former Commentator staff writer Shlomo Friedman (YC '17): "I invite my fellow students to join the hunt, to explain what in the world is going on here. I only ask that you back it up with the glacial, dispassionate and austere beauty of data."

#### Some notes on methodology:

- Course offering schedules from [yu.edu/myyu](http://yu.edu/myyu) (MYUU) were copied into Excel and separated by college, subject and year.
- Research offerings, directed studies and internships were not included in the analysis.
- Recitations and other course sections which counted as zero credits (such as problem seminars in mathematics) were similarly discounted.
- Listed courses for which zero students were registered were discounted.
- No colloquia in any department were counted.
- In the YC and SCW Music departments, 1-credit

courses were discounted.

- In the YC English department, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses were discounted.
- YC and SCW courses connected to the Honors Thesis were discounted.
- SCW senior project courses in the Art and English departments were discounted.
- All courses in the YC and SCW Physical Education departments were discounted.
- The YC Theater Arts department was not included in the analysis.
- The SCW Semitic Languages and Women's Studies departments, which stopped offering courses after the 2013-14 and 2014-15 academic years, respectively, were not included in the analysis.
- The Syms-Women Entrepreneurship department,

which stopped offering courses after the 2013-14 academic year, was not included in the analysis.

- The Syms-Men course Business Algebra was counted, despite sometimes being listed as zero credits.
- Online courses, of which there were very few, were counted as normal courses.
- Individual lab sections (besides for zero-credit labs which were discounted) were all counted as individual courses.
- All cross-listed courses were counted for both departments.
- Enrollment data was provided by the YU Office of Institutional Research.



# Rethinking the Way We Study Talmud

By **JACOB STONE**

The majority of male Yeshiva University undergraduate students spend the first portion of their day studying Talmud. The Mazer School of Talmudic Studies (MYP) and the Irving I. Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP) combined account for over seventy-two percent of the student body, and many students enrolled in the Isaac Breuer College of Hebraic Studies (IBC) and the James Striar School (JSS) are involved with some form of daily Talmud study. These students, for the most part, learn Talmud in the same shiur-based style that they were taught in high school and in yeshiva in Israel.

The creation of an academic Talmudic Studies requirement, however, could complement the morning programs in pursuit of my understanding of our university's goal, to promote a secular understanding of topics as well as a religious one. While almost all shiurim in MYP and SBMP employ classical methods of discourse to Talmud study, be they *pilpul* or *brisker*, few ask many of the questions that would be covered in a corresponding academic Talmudic Studies course. This gap in the education of a typical male Yeshiva University undergraduate student is staggering; a student who spends three years exclusively in the MYP program can spend upwards of 2,500 hours learning nothing about the fundamental questions that should plague us when we approach the Talmud.

Should we assume consistency of opinion between *mesechtot* of the Talmud? Should we assume consistency of opinion within a single *mesechet*? If so, when and why? Can we deduce large amounts of information

from fine variations in textual grammar or word choice, or “make a *diyyuk*” in the terms of those who frequent the *beis medresh*?

I don't know the answers to these questions. I would wager that few MYP and SBMP students do. But the *shiurim* in our yeshiva are based so fundamentally on the answers to these questions that we never stop to ask ourselves why we make these assumptions. Many MYP *shiurim* spend days solving contradictions between statements in different *mesechtot* of the Talmud without researching the editing process that created those statements. Some shiurim use *diyyukim* to extract meaning from Talmudic texts, but it is unclear whether Talmudic grammar can be said to be intentional or meaningful.

Creating an academic Talmudic Studies requirement would solve this issue. In the fashion of the introductory Bible requirement, students could be exposed to the “big questions” within the field of Talmud study,

and shown some of the common approaches towards answering those questions. Whether for good or bad, we spend almost no time daily on the study of *Tanakh*, yet every YC student is required to take three academic Bible Studies courses. Wouldn't it be fair to have at least one required course that deals with the Talmud, arguably the text most important to the modern-day Orthodox Jewish community?

One of the four main course subjects at the Bernard Revel Graduate School is Talmudic Studies. If the university is comfortable with offering such courses at Revel, then there should be few barriers, either practical or ideological, that would stop such a course from being offered on the undergraduate level as well. While a few Jewish Studies majors may be exposed to the type of course material that I am describing, the relevance of an academic Talmudic Studies course is not limited to those who make

Jewish Studies the focus of their education.

Such a course could deal not only with the Talmud, but the history of the development of *halakhah* as a whole, including Mishna and post-Talmudic rabbinic literature. “It's worth thinking about whether our current Jewish Studies requirements best meet the needs of the student community,” commented Professor Aaron Koller, chair of the Undergraduate Judaic Studies department. “Is it certain that knowledge of Jeremiah or the different *Targumim* is more important than a course on *midrash* or the history of *halakhic* literature? I think this is a reasonable question, and student voices on this are much appreciated.”

Some may argue, though, that students already spend hours daily on Talmud study. If our community is near-obsessed with the Talmud, shouldn't the Jewish Studies department try to diversify the material that students encounter instead of compounding the problem by offering yet another Talmud-focused course?

But we should not conflate the time spent inside the *beit midrash* with the time spent outside of it. To justify the massive investment our community makes in learning Talmud from a religious lens, we must invest some time in it academically as well.

I want to know how this beautiful dialogue between the generations of our *mesorah* developed. I want to know why *Tosfot* were allowed to ask the questions they did. I want to apply the same standard of academic rigor to Talmud that I do to the sciences. I want the halls of our university's *batei midrash* to be built on a bedrock of knowledge, not the vague guesswork that makes up their foundations now.



The first page of *Masechet Gittin* in the *Talmud Bavli*

## Reflections on Simchat Torah

By **BRIAN CHERNIGOFF**

Depressing.

If there is one word that could sum up my holiday experience, it would be this one.

I have not stayed home for *Simchat Torah* for a few years now, so I decided to stay home this year to spend time with my family. However, I was quickly reminded why in past years I had been so eager to run away from home for this holiday.

Upon further reflecting on the events of this past *Simchat Torah*, I was actually quite surprised at my initial shock of what took place. What I am about to describe to you occurred in my *shul* this past year, and

*There is a simple question that we need to ask ourselves: How could it be that in the average Modern Orthodox shul the festivities of Simchat Torah are depressingly dry and lifeless?*

as I recall quite clearly, has occurred all the years that I have been home for this holiday. I am quite disappointed in myself for having the naivety to believe that this year would be any better.

As *Hakafos* began, there were a couple of guys standing in the center of the *shul* who tried to get the singing and dancing started, but most people were simply uninterested. Those in high school and college were having a good time fraternizing with the opposite gender. The young married couples were getting their exercise chasing their kids around *shul*. The middle-aged people were standing around discussing work. And the old people

were standing menacingly on the side, as they just wanted to get this over with as quickly as possible. One could barely make out the sounds of “*Toras Hashem Temimah*” amidst all the chatter and chaos.

I would say that I attend a typical Modern Orthodox *shul* in a neighborhood which is heavily populated by religious Jews in the Metropolitan area (or “in-town”, as some in YU might call it, but to be fair, I find that “in-town” has a very condescending connotation to it, and thus I will refrain from using it). There is a simple question that we need to ask ourselves: How could it be that in the average Modern Orthodox *shul* the festivities of *Simchat Torah* are depressingly dry and lifeless?

There is an important point to consider when thinking about this matter. Many of the people described earlier as being overall indifferent to the festivities of *Simchat Torah* are admirably dedicated to being religious Jews. Many rise early in the morning to study *Daf Yomi*. Many studied in *Yeshivot*, not limited to, but certainly heavily, our very own Yeshiva University. Many are even *musmachim* of our own very fine rabbinical school. Intellectually, people are strongly connected to religious observance. But where is the passion?

The same can be said of our student

community here on the Wilf Campus. While the inspiring sounds of *Torah* learning can be heard both day and night in our various *Batei Midrash*, and the quality and quantity of *Rabbeim* here are probably unsurpassed anywhere else, something is missing. While there is usually a strong presence of students on campus for the *Yamim Nora'im*, the other parts of the year could use some improvement. Why is there no *Simchat Torah* program here on *Simchat Torah*? Why are the dorms closed? Most *Yeshivot* in the world are open for *Simchat Torah*, why is ours not?

What about the typical *Shabbos* on campus? While there are some weeks that there is a strong contingent of students here, the typical week is pretty empty. Unfortunately, when conversing with fellow students regarding their *Shabbos* plans, the assumption typically is that everyone is going out, and it is a *chiddush* if one says he is staying in. Additionally, he is met with gasps of horror if he says that he will be consuming his meals, brace yourself, in the *cafeteria* (apologies to those who just choked on what they were eating, fell into a state of unconsciousness due to shock, or suffered a heart attack).

There are a couple of points that I must concede. *Simchat Torah* is a time in which Yeshiva University tries to “share the wealth” by sending various *Rabbeim* to speak in different places as well as promoting Torah Tours, a program that sends students to small Jewish communities to live with them up for the holiday. I can personally attest to the importance of such a program, as I participated in Torah Tours last year and witnessed with my own eyes the impact that I had on the community I visited. Nevertheless, the existence of the Torah Tours should not

preclude Yeshiva University from being open for *Simchat Torah*.

Additionally, it would be foolish of me to ignore the reality that everyone needs to get out every now and then. Everyone needs some fresh air, a home-cooked meal, and a good night's rest in his own comfortable bed (which to be frank, I did not appreciate until having returned to YU after *Simchat Torah*). Nevertheless, there is something wrong with the general attitude that exists in YU regarding staying in for *Shabbos*.

I of course am not the first one to point to the lack of passion that unfortunately exists within our communities. It is appropriate in this context to quote Rav Soloveitchik about the loss of the “Erev Shabbat Jew.”

Even in those neighborhoods made up predominantly of religious Jews, one can no longer talk of the “sanctity of *Shabbat*.” True, there are Jews in America who observe *Shabbat*... But it is not for *Shabbat* that my heart aches; it is for the forgotten “*erev Shabbat*” (eve of the Sabbath). There are *Shabbat*-observing Jews in America, but there are no “*erev Shabbat*” Jews who go out to greet *Shabbat* with beating hearts and pulsating souls. There are many who observe the precepts with their hands, with their feet, and/or with their mouths - but there are few indeed who truly know the meaning of the service of the heart! (*On Repentance*, pp. 97-98)

I hope that this article will generate conversation on campus regarding this issue. I hope that people will submit additional articles discussing their point of view on this matter.



# Hello From the Other Side: One Man's *Selichot* Experience at Beren

By MICHAEL WEINER

When I texted my *chavrusa* that I might miss the tail end of an upcoming night *seder* to help make the *Selichot minyan* on the Beren campus, his response was, and I quote: "They have *Selichot* at Stern? weird *matziv*...."

He had a point. There certainly are legitimate reasons to attend the *minyan* downtown, chief among them being its 10:45 pm start time, which enables you to be asleep before the 1:00 am *Selichot* in Glueck even begin. Fair enough. All that notwithstanding, it still sounded like a "weird *matziv*."

Nevertheless, being an aspirational journalist and an armchair sociologist of Orthodox Jewish culture, I had figured that a "weird *matziv*" might be the best place for me to find interesting stories and discover hidden dimensions of *frum* life. This event was a prime example of the best kinds of sociological adventures — the ones that throw you headfirst into a foreign culture and turn your regular routine upside down. In this case, the foreign culture was the Beren *Selichot minyan*, and the animating question was: what is it like to be one of a handful of men praying in an all-female *beit midrash*? Cool, creepy, inspiring, distracting? I didn't know, and I wanted to find out.

Once I arrived, the first surprise was the feeling of familiarity. Stepping into the Lea and Leon Eisenberg *Beit Midrash* on the seventh floor of Stanton Hall — colloquially referred to as 245 — at first glance, everything looked the same: same sefarim, same room layout, same (looking) rebbeim, same *kol Torah*.

After a few awkward seconds, however, *everything* began to feel different. Usually, I'm quite capable of making myself feel at home in any *beit midrash*, no matter the situation or location. Having spent years inhabiting these spaces in various *yeshivot*, summer camps, and learning programs, it's generally easy for me to find my '*makom*,' broadly defined, and get comfortable. That didn't happen here though; it just didn't feel like *my* space. I was a "stranger and a sojourner" in a foreign land, or to put it less

dramatically, I was a self-conscious minority in the *beit midrash*, a place that always used to feel like home. Not a second class citizen, mind you, but a minority all the same. That was a first.

I became aware of this fact within just a few moments of entering the physical space. Usually, I take the time before *tefillah* begins to thoughtfully choose a perfectly positioned seat several rows behind the *bimah* and conveniently located next to a *sefarim* shelf — ideally the one with sets of Rambam and his commentators. Here, the other men and I quickly packed ourselves into a cordoned-off section of the room, many times smaller

voices echoing throughout the room didn't sound familiar, it didn't sound like mine. In other words, everyone was saying to-may-to while I was saying to-mah-to.

I would never have imagined this to be a big deal, yet it feels very different being in a group where everyone is singing at the same octave verses being in a group where everyone is singing at the same octave except for you because you cannot possibly match her higher pitch.

Consequently, I couldn't just seamlessly join the uniform block of voices in the room. We were singing the same song but were on entirely different wavelengths.

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*Attending Selichot as a man in a predominantly female space was inspiring and a bit uncomfortable, but also something more: it was the first opportunity I've ever had to experience a true role reversal.*

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than the rest of the *beit midrash*, enclosed by thick curtains and far in front of everyone else in the women's section.

A more significant difference than area size was proximity and connection. Sitting in our thickly curtained enclosure and positioned away from the much larger women's section, I felt — for the first time — strangely distanced and disconnected from the vast majority of the other *mitpalelim*.

In reflecting on this baffling new experience, I realized that for me, a crucial aspect of *tefillah b'tzibur* is being "in the middle of things," *ala b'toch ami anochi yoshavet* (2 Kings 4:13). Enveloped by the shouts and murmurs of my fellow daveners beside me, I can tap into their energy and passion for inspiring my own *tefillah*. Here though, I felt like I was on the sidelines, praying with a dozen or so men while the fuller experience of truly immersive group prayer was being had by the 100+ women who were a ways behind us, beyond the curtain.

The recitation of *Selichot* itself made me even more aware of my newfound minority status. As we sang various lines out loud, I discomfitingly realized that the chorus of

Additionally, since my voice was a minority within the larger group, I had to concentrate a lot more than usual just to stay on key and not give in to the temptation to match the ambitiously high octave of everyone else in the room. Finally and perhaps most importantly, I also had to work hard for my voice to not get drowned and canceled out by the majority of other voices behind the curtain through *bitul b'rov*, as it were.

...

The next morning, sitting in my carefully chosen seat in the Jacob and Dreizel Glueck Center for Jewish Study *beit midrash* and relishing being "in the middle of things" once again, the significance of my experience the previous night suddenly dawned on me.

Attending *Selichot* as a man in a predominantly female space was inspiring and a bit uncomfortable, and also something more: it was the first opportunity I've ever had to experience a true role reversal.

The philosopher Thomas Nagel wrote a celebrated essay about consciousness called "What is it Like to be a Bat?" In some small yet significant way, my *Selichot* experience gave me some insight into the rarely

considered question "what is it like to be an Orthodox Jewish woman (in a *minyan*)?" On the Beren Campus, I was the minority in the room, essentially taking the traditional place of women in any other Orthodox *minyan*.

As movies like "Switching Places" and "Freaky Friday" have, in various degrees of profundity, gently reminded us, sometimes you literally need to get out of yourself and see the world as others do in order to truly understand them. I didn't walk a mile in anyone's heels (thank God), but I did sit for an hour on their side of the *mechitza*. Granted that this wasn't a complete role reversal since men still led the *Selichot*. Nonetheless, it's the closest I'll ever come to experiencing *tefillah* "from the other side."

Last year, there was a lot of conversation (both in these very pages and elsewhere) about the place of women on the Wilf Campus. I have no policy prescriptions to pitch or a list of improvements to demand. Remember, I'm just one guy who likes interesting stories and the occasional "weird *matziv*." All I have is the observation, backed by recent personal experience, that it's hard to be fully comfortable as a minority in a space that is not primarily designed for you to be there.

I've known for a while that a non-trivial percentage of Orthodox women experience much of what I felt at Beren — disconnect, distance, and discomfort — **every single time** they *daven* in a *minyan*. But I never really took their experience all that seriously until I put myself in their place.

Beyond the practical steps that should be taken to improve the *tefillah* experience for everyone, there's also a much more general lesson to take home from all of this:

The best way to really **get** the priorities, concerns, and *hashkafot olam* of people who are very different than you is to experience the world as they do. I encourage anyone reading this to run the experiment and flip your normal experience of life on its head in some small way and live instead as others do. I promise that you'll learn something invaluable about what it feels like to be someone else and walk through the world as they do. And if you're lucky, you might even get a good story out of it too.



Women reciting *Selichot* at the Kotel behind a *mechitza*

MARC ISRAEL SELLEM



## Your Voice in the Pro-Israel Community

By SHANEE MARKOVITZ

I am *just* nineteen years old. I am *just* a college student. I do not make money yet; I *just* have time to give. *What can I possibly contribute to the pro-Israel community?*

The answer: your voice.

Welcome to the America of 2018, where polarization — when one's stances on a given issue is determined based on their identification with a political party — is excruciatingly high, and partisanship prevents so many from coming together on basic issues or even communicating on any deep level. In this America, it is hard to imagine both parties coming together on any issue, including America's relationship with Israel, but that is exactly what happens. In reality, Israel is one of the only issues that has managed to remain mostly bipartisan in this day and age. This bipartisanship exists even here, at Yeshiva University, where we all can and should come together to use our voices to engage in the pro-Israel community with our unique perspectives.

Why do we care? Why would we want to be part of this pro-Israel community?

On the one hand, there is the constant hardship that the Holy Land has to deal with.

Terrorism is prevalent: Just last week, on Oct. 7, Ziv Hajba, 35, and Kim Yehezkel, 29, — both parents of baby children — were murdered by a Palestinian coworker. Last

month, Ari Fuld, a beloved teacher and leader in the Jewish community was stabbed in another terrorist attack and his attacker is getting paid by the Palestinian Authority for this horrific act.

Hamas has sent hundreds of kites on fire into Israel in order to cause fear and to cause damage. Rockets continue to be launched at Israeli civilians, causing those amongst the border to live in constant fear.

The threat comes from further away as well, where, in the midst of its civil war, Syria is being used by Iran to hold Iranian military infrastructure that has the potential of creating precision missiles aimed at Israel. Additionally, Iran has smuggled weapons and missiles there as well, and even actually launched a drone into Israel earlier in the year, serving as the first direct attack

Despite the controversy surrounding the timing and method that the President chose in relation to these events, the fact that the U.S. formally recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and even moved the embassy serves as a milestone for both America and Israel in their relationship with one another. Congress has allocated over \$3 billion to go towards Israel again this year, mostly towards military and defense spending back in the United States.

In other words, things are happening in Israel in addition to its general thriving advancement and innovation — good things and scary things. This is precisely why getting involved in pro-Israel activism is important right now — we have so much to celebrate and so much more to defend and protect.

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*You do not need money to lobby a local elected official. You do not need a job. You need a voice.*

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at Israel from Iran. Iran also uses Lebanon and Hezbollah as a proxy, storing well over 100,000 rockets there. These rockets, especially if launched in large quantities, are close enough to seriously harm Israel and Israeli civilians. The weapons are no longer farther away in Iran, but rather right by Israel's bordering countries.

On the other hand, this is an exciting and historic time for the US-Israel relationship.

There are also things happening in the United States that may shift the nature of the US-Israel relationship: The "e" word: elections. Midterm elections approach quickly, and this is yet another election cycle where over 50 members of Congress are retiring, meaning that there will be at least 50 new members in the House of Representatives. Fifty people that can be the biggest supporters of Israel. Fifty people that can be

completely unaware of the issues pertaining to Israel. Fifty people that can be harmful to our current US-Israel relationship. At least 50 members of Congress in need of a relationship with members of the pro-Israel community. That is before you take into account that Republicans, the party in office during this midterm elections, may lose over 30 seats if this election follows the statistical forecasts — and that about 40 new candidates have already been chosen in primaries. This is such an important and influential time to get involved in pro-Israel activism.

*But I am just a college student...*

That is exactly the point. This is the time in our lives where we have time, and where we can invest our voices into our passions. No matter what side of the isle we are on, no matter where we come from and what we do as hobbies. No matter our majors, no matter our class standings, no matter any one of our differences — we care about Israel. And it's about time we do something about it as a University. It's about time we use our voices and act on our right as U.S. citizens to engage with our representatives and tell the — as their voters — what we need them to care about.

You do not need money to lobby a local elected official. You do not need a job. *You need a voice.*

You have a voice, and collectively we have a loud one that is an important for the pro-Israel community as a whole.



College students have the power to make a difference in the pro-Israel Community.

THE DIAMONDBACK



## The Challenges of Right-Wing Zionism

By PHILLIP NAGLER

Ever since I can remember, perhaps as early as nursery or kindergarten, I was taught the concept that there is a Jewish homeland. Educators, grandparents, parents, rabbis, camp counselors and friends would teach me about the greatness of Israel, its history, and its significance to the Jewish people. Around middle school, I first heard the term Zionism, but I was still too young to fully understand what the word meant. In high school, a visiting scholar spoke to us about Israel and Zionism, but the only specific detail I remember of that presentation is that he defined Zionism as Jewish nationalism.

It wasn't until my year in Israel that I developed a personal understanding of Zionism. Zionism to me was a sense of Jewish unity in our own land. It is never feeling scared or embarrassed to express my Jewish identity or religion. I never had to think about taking off my kippah when going somewhere. I felt a special connection to the people of Israel, even the strangers that I met. Whether it was the man or woman I got a hitchhike with, the families I went to for Shabbos through anywhere in Israel, or a friendly stranger on the bus, I experienced this unique emotional bond with my Jewish brethren. Even as I developed an understanding of Zionism during my gap year, I never put much thought into Israel's relation with Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority. I didn't have any strong views on the matter.

A few months ago, I started to think more about Zionism and Israeli-Palestinian relations and

question my previous beliefs. The account of Ahd Tamimi is one of the main factors that sparked this line of thought. Tamimi at the time was a 16-year-old Palestinian girl who was arrested and sentenced to 8 months in prison for slapping and kicking Israeli soldiers who were standing outside her house in the West Bank.

During Tamimi's interrogation she allegedly was sexually harassed by her interrogators. Some of the interrogation methods were also against standard Israeli law procedure. For example, she was interrogated alone by two men, was not granted access to her family during the interrogation, and was not given the option of having a female interrogator.

What bothered me about Tamimi's story is that it didn't fit into what I expected Israel's military policies were regarding the Palestinian people. I thought that the purpose of their forceful military strategy is to ensure the safety and security of the Israeli people. This account seems to contradict that. Firstly, the soldiers were standing directly on Tamimi's doorstep, as if the existence of her family living in their own house poses a threat to Israel. Secondly, does Tamimi, a petit 16-year-old girl, cause any type of true security threat to the soldiers? Even if you can somehow argue that there was a necessary security tactic involved in this, the sentence she received is outrageous. Yes, she was an angry teen who kicked some soldiers, but does that justify locking her up in prison for eight months? To put things into perspective, Elor Azaria, an Israeli soldier who shot an injured Palestinian in Hebron in 2016, only served ten months in

prison — only two more than her.

The interrogation made me wonder whether Tamimi was treated harshly because she is a Palestinian woman. Left-wing media likes to convey the idea that there is a type of prejudice Israelis have towards Palestinians and that Palestinians are harshly subjugated and oppressed by Israeli law. I started to think more about the legitimacy of the media's assertions when the Nation State Law was passed in Israel this past summer.

land. As of now, I think that the law symbolizes a push to slowly minimize the political rights of its Arab inhabitants.

In more recent news, the Trump Administration announced that they are cutting 200 million dollars from humanitarian aid that goes to Palestinians. About a week after this announcement, 25 million dollars in aid for Palestinian hospitals was frozen by the US. On top of all of this, the Trump Administration shut

policy on Israel, Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu seems to be fully on board. In a recent tweet, Netanyahu stated: "The US made the correct decision regarding the PLO mission in Washington. Israel supports American actions that are designed to make it clear to the Palestinians that refusing to negotiate and attempts to attack Israel in international forums will not advance peace."

I disagree with Netanyahu that

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*I thought that the purpose of their forceful military strategy is to ensure the safety and security of the Israeli people. This account seems to contradict that.*

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In short, the Nation State Law declared that "Israel is the nation state of the Jewish people" and that "the fulfillment of the right of national self-determination in the state of Israel is unique to the Jewish People." While this seems to be a benign truism, it was viewed as controversial by many because it contradicts what was written in Israel's Declaration of Independence. In the declaration, "complete equality of social and political rights" was granted to all of the inhabitants in Israel.

The main criticism of the Nation State Law is that it undermines the democratic nature of Israel. Some critics went as far as calling the law racist, because it gives Jews special rights that are not endowed to Arabs, who make up 21% of Israel's population. I think the true implications of the law will be revealed with future legislation. The assertions against the law will be proved or disproved based on how this law is used to affect the rights of Arabs and Palestinian

down the Palestinian Liberation Organization office in Washington D.C. All of these actions are for the purpose of retaliation against the Palestinian Authority's refusal to negotiate peace terms when the U.S moved their embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Israeli security officials have been concerned that the recent U.S actions will only lead to more tensions with Palestinians and Israelis.

What bothers me about these U.S foreign actions is that they are giving in to exactly what the PA wants. They are a government that likes to victimize its people in order to bolster their support from the media. By cutting aid, the Trump Administration is causing innocent and poor civilians to suffer on the account of their stubborn leaders who refuse to negotiate. It also further angers Palestinians, who feel that the western world does not care about them and that it derives enjoyment from their poor treatment.

Regarding the recent U.S foreign

these US actions are giving clear signs to Palestinians. While some may see it as an attempt to push for negotiations, others see it as a further threat to the security and safety of Israelis. These aggressive and punitive tactics are not the correct solution if we want the Palestinians to negotiate terms with the U.S. Cutting away their aid and shutting down the PLO office will only lead to more strife and disconnect between them.

I am a strong believer in the establishment of a Jewish state and a right to Jewish self-determination. For the longest time Jews have faced persecution and they deserve to have sovereignty in their homeland. With that said, this sovereignty should not be at the cost of the mistreatment and subjugation of the Palestinian people who are also inhabitants of the land. I'm appalled with the recent policies that have been made by Netanyahu and the Trump Administration. These policies are not what I see in my own vision of Zionism.



Prime Minister Netanyahu applauded President Trump's initiatives to reduce aid to Palestinians.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



# The Moral Case For Universal Healthcare

By **MATTHEW HALLER and  
THE BOARD OF THE COLLEGE  
DEMOCRATS**

Americans are privileged to live in the wealthiest society on Earth. Despite an ever-widening gap between rich and poor, long-stagnant wages and rising discontent, we still enjoy a standard of living comparable to or better than conditions in similarly industrialized economies. Yet, we starkly differ from our similarly wealthy neighbors such as Canada and Europe in how we choose to utilize that wealth. This is most clearly demonstrated in the realm of healthcare – where Europeans and Canadians are guaranteed government-provided medical coverage from birth, Americans are subjected to the whims of profit-driven private insurers, if they can afford to partake in this badly broken system at all.

The moral case for universal coverage is clear. Just as we as a society ensure the maintenance of robust institutions geared toward minimizing damage to our neighbors – think police and firefighters – so too we have a responsibility to ensure their protection in a medical sense. In an advanced society such as ours, no one should experience preventable suffering. As it stands today, Americans who cannot afford rapidly rising coverage costs live in fear of sustaining an unexpected injury and racking up thousands of dollars in emergency room fees. But truth be told, even covered individuals are not entirely “safe.”

After being violently attacked in Austin, Texas this past January, Scott Kohan was treated for a broken jaw at the Dell Seton Medical Center in Austin. Upon regaining consciousness, Kohan did his due diligence, ensuring that his Humana coverage considered Dell Seton in-network. Unbeknownst to him, the oral surgeon contracted by the hospital was in fact not included in Humana’s network – a common practice nationwide. Only when Vox News publicized the incident did the hospital agree to negate the \$7,924.13 charge. But what are the millions of uninsured or underprotected Americans who won’t make the front page expected to rely on?

One national insurer representing 320 million Americans would have the capability to negotiate fair reimbursement rates while ensuring that fears of doctors’ bills would be a thing of the past.

But even outside of our moral obligation to care for our neighbors, a universal, single-payer system makes a great deal of economic sense. Opponents of a national healthcare system claim that the invisible hand of the market would alleviate healthcare costs on its own – ignoring the fact that unregulated insurers gave us such wonderful developments as coverage denials for customers with pre-existing conditions and complex hospital network systems.

*Just as we as a society ensure the maintenance of robust institutions geared toward minimizing damage to our neighbors – think police and firefighters – so too we have a responsibility to ensure their protection in a medical sense.*

Stories like Scott’s are far from uncommon – we’ve all seen the GoFundMe campaigns raising money for cancer treatments and felt a little bit uneasy. Having worked in an emergency room, I can confirm the almost-paralyzing anxiety that patients experience when informed about expected costs.

The mysterious and exorbitant treatment prices hospitals devise – charging hundreds for a Band-Aid or an Aspirin, or in one California case, \$25,000 for an MRI – are here to stay unless we take direct action.

But how can we afford to cover the entire country? This question was recently tackled by none other than the Mercatus Center, a libertarian, Koch brothers-funded think tank (in other words, the last organization one would expect to deal with such an issue). The research team set out to declare that Medicare for All would be a wildly expensive proposition, flooding the media with headlines touting findings indicating that federal health expenditures would rise to \$32.6 trillion over ten years under such a plan.

And at first, this plan was successful – reputable media outlets reported the story as Mercatus intended it to be described. Yet when the paper was published, Matt Breunig of the Peoples’ Policy Center noted that the paper did not distinguish between *government* healthcare spending (the value that would rise) and *national* healthcare spending (the amount we as a country spend in private and public systems combined). When he examined Mercatus’s findings more thoroughly, Breunig discovered that the paper buried the lede – Mercatus had in fact found a \$2 trillion dollar savings in national healthcare spending (born out of further administrative efficiencies and lower treatment prices, even when broader system usage is considered). The necessary increase in individual tax rates for a functioning healthcare system would in fact be a sum significantly smaller than their current coverage expenditures.

Although Breunig was able to correct the record in the national media, this incident reveals the great lengths single-payer opponents go to disparage the single-payer healthcare as expensive and inefficient.

Nevertheless, the American public broadly supports universal healthcare (70% of the country, 84.5% of Democrats and 51% of Republicans, as of August). Though the current administration resists the will of its citizens, the upcoming election gives us an opportunity to bend the arc of history towards a moral conclusion. Let’s not waste it.



The American public broadly supports universal healthcare.



## The Liberal Capitalist

By AARON KARESH

My political and social views are pretty liberal, but I am a capitalist, and ever since I learned what those words meant, I've struggled to reconcile the two. It started with my desire to be rich — every kid grows up wanting to be “a gazillion-shmillion-aire,” right? — and evolved into an “if it will make money, let's do it,” approach to investing. I am currently interning at a hedge fund who's *modus operandi* is just that, but despite all of the perks and resume-recognition that come along with the job, I still find myself struggling to balance what I view as just and right — my morals — and my economic stance.



Free market capitalism is not clear as day.

Michael J. Sandel's *Market Reasoning as Moral Reasoning: Why Economists Should Re-Engage with Political Philosophy* is a vehicle through which I am able to make progress in my attempt at that balance.

I was able to piece together segments of Michael J. Sandel's article and compose a passage that embodies both my capitalist self and my more liberal self, while maintaining the integrity of the text and the author's intent: “Mainstream economic thinking asserts its independence from the contested terrain of moral... philosophy. Economics textbooks emphasize the difference between... explaining and prescribing. The popular book *Freakonomics* states the distinction plainly: ‘Morality represents the

way we would like the world to work and economics represents how it actually does work.’ Economics ‘simply doesn't traffic in morality.’ But this... division of labor is misleading... as... ‘economics is a moral science’... and... somemarket transactions are objectionable on moral grounds.” Despite the harmful societal effects of differentiating between our morals and economics, Yeshiva University students perpetuate the distinction on a daily basis by separating Judaic (moral) and secular (economic) studies. In addition, come midterm season, we go from emulating *gedolei hador* in the morning to exhibiting an “anything goes” culture in the afternoon — emulating con artists like Frank Abagnale in an effort to achieve the highest grades possible. Let me be clear, I am not above this, but I can admit that it is extremely hypocritical.

If morality and economics do not intersect at the world's premier *Torah UMaddah* institution, where do they intersect? The answer lays in our country's free market, which despite being “free,” has built-in constraints based on society's baseline moral conscience. For example, despite the profit trading the rights to unborn babies may yield, we do not do that because as much as people say they believe in a true, bare-bones free market, no one really does — no one in their right mind believes that baby-trading as a method of alpha-generation is okay.

This leads me to a subject matter in which I developed an interest this summer: ESG. ESG stands for “environmental”, “social,” and “governance,” and they represent a set of standards for a company's operations that socially conscious investors use to screen potential investments.

Environmental criteria look at how a

company performs as a steward of the natural environment, social criteria examine how a company manages relationships with its employees, suppliers, customers and the communities where it operates, and governance deals with a company's leadership, executive pay, audits, internal controls and shareholder rights. Now, ESG is a relatively new concept, and as such, there is no clear set of rules that govern whether a company is considered to be “compliant with ESG factors,” because what may be socially conscious enough for one investor may not be enough for another. That aside, there is data supporting the positive impacts considering ESG factors has on an investment portfolio.

A 2014 report by the University of Oxford concluded that 80% of the studies show that stock price performance of companies is positively influenced by good sustainability practices.

Similarly, a 2015 study conducted by Morgan Stanley concluded that sustainable equity mutual funds had equal or higher median returns for 64% of the periods examined over the last seven years.

There is clear data — both qualitative, as presented by Sandel, and quantitative, as presented by Oxford and Morgan Stanley — supporting not only the intersection between morality and economics, but the profitability of it as well. The conclusion to Sandel's article exemplifies this best: “The more economic thinking extends its reach into social and civic life, the more market reasoning becomes inseparable from moral reasoning. If economics is to help us decide where markets serve the public good and where they don't belong, it should relinquish the claim to be a value-neutral science and reconnect with its origins in moral... philosophy.”

## Trader Joe's: More Than Just Your Favorite Store

By ELI FRISHMAN

A bell rings, and the store manager calls out, “Grab the meringues, mate!” Immediately, another employee responds, “Sure, captain!” This isn't the typical conversation overheard at a grocery store, but Trader Joe's (TJ) is far from your typical grocery store. Known for its beach-vibes, Hawaiian-shirt dawned employees and bubbly personalities, TJ is much more than just a friendly neighborhood supermarket. Instead, it's a company philosophy that is both innovative and lucrative, attracting loyal customers and promoting important values across the globe.

While originally founded in 1958 as “Pronto Markets,” TJ's founder, Joe Coulombe, felt his stores were too similar to already existing bigger chains and that in order to succeed, he needed to be different. After vacationing in the Caribbean, he was inspired to create an island-themed supermarket. A few years later, in 1967, the first TJ opened in Pasadena, California, selling specialty items not commonly found in most American grocers, a business strategy that continues to make TJ unique.

While the Tiki-Culture that TJ modeled its stores after was at its heyday in the 50's and 60's, TJ found a way to successfully preserve this era of history in all of its stores, allowing people to experience an almost tropical vacation during a typical visit. This branding approach is so successful that the American Customer Satisfaction Index listed TJ as number one in customer shopping experience. But that statistic isn't solely

due to the aesthetically pleasing layout. As anyone who has ever visited a TJ can tell you, TJ's staff, or “mates” as they preferred to be called, also play a large role.

Upon entering a TJ, a customer is greeted with an almost unusual kindness, leading many to question whether these employees are simply good-natured or actors putting on a really good show. Senior Noah Hazan, from Columbus, Ohio and a member of YU's cross-country team, even incorporated a Trader Joe's stop into his running schedule. He explained, “there's a Trader Joe's around ten miles away from the heights. While Key Foods may be more conveniently located, you just can't beat the deals and the friendly, small town feel that Trader Joe's has to offer.” Noah is only one of many people around the U.S. who value the shopping experience and the employees they meet. But one is still left wondering why Trader Joe's has such personable employees when other stores seem to neglect this factor. According to David Disalvo, a writer for *Forbes*, the answer lies in the type of workers TJ looks to hire. “TJ hires a certain sort of person, and I don't mean specific personality types,” he wrote. “I mean they hire people who are unabashedly engaged in what they do. And they do everything, from stocking to cashiering to cleaning. TJ wants people working there who care about their jobs, no matter what their job is.” By actively seeking out employees who are enthusiastic about all aspects of the job, TJ's customers are ensured that all their shopping needs are taken care of in an exciting, enjoyable way.

To retain this quality workforce, TJ offers competitive salaries and great benefits. The

job site Glassdoor listed them as number 70 on its 100 best places to work, with annual salary increases ranging between seven to ten percent. In addition to the monetary benefits employees receive, TJ attracts a quality workforce by cultivating a community of kindness and friendship. Many past and present employees rave about their experience at TJ, with one employee stating, “it's been like the only job...where I felt appreciated and supported.” And when the employee feels appreciated, so does the customer.

*Trader Joe's is much more than just a friendly neighborhood supermarket.*

In order to cover the costs of higher employee benefits, TJ has found ways to cut costs in other areas. By buying most of its goods directly from its suppliers, TJ has eliminated the high costs associated with third-party distributors. Additionally, TJ keeps a very small inventory of products on hand allowing them to efficiently sell and avoid losing money from unsold merchandise, a technique that further provides TJ with its small town Ma and Pa shop feel.

In addition to giving customers an all-around great shopping experience, TJ also provides them with great products sourced from around the world. Junior Leib Weiner remarked, “there's something truly different about TJ's products; on the one hand, they're generic, yet, at the same time, they

often taste better than the real deal.” Junior Avi Lewkowsky commented on the eclectic selection of goods, noting, “where else can you buy cinnamon broomsticks and vanilla bean maple syrup?”

TJ is also quite competitive within the supermarket industry. In 2004, *Bloomberg Businessweek* reported that between 1990-2010 the number of stores quintupled, and profits increased tenfold, leading to a 2017 revenue exceeding \$13 billion. A 2014 study by the Investment group JLL found that Trader Joe's sells \$1,347 worth of items per square foot, while Whole Foods only sells \$930 per square foot. Yet, true to their desire for all-around quality, TJ is slow to add new locations. Dan Bane, the current CEO recently said, “we're targeting to open 30 to 35 stores a year in the 48 states...The only thing that holds us back is having the right number of Captains and Mates to open up great stores. So we won't open a store just because we can, we want to open a store that's run by the right kind of people doing the right kinds of things, and that's really important to us.” Emphasizing quality over quantity, TJ does business the right way..

You never know what will happen on your average trip to Trader Joe's. Whether it's trying out carrot cake spread and a hydrating face sheet mask, finding a plastic lobster in the store and winning a lollipop (look it up, it's true!) or picking up that *pareve* vanilla ice cream ubiquitous at every Shabbat table, Trader Joe's has been ahead of the curve for a while and is only going up and up from here. Who knows, maybe one day YU students won't have to travel 10 miles to get to the closest one.



# Virtual Reality Bringing You Back to Brick-and-Mortar Retail

By SARAH TORQUEMAN

We are witnessing a massive shift in the retail space. Not surprisingly, technology has put an end to sluggish movement in the industry and has accelerated growth, while hundreds of retailers have plummeted and eventually disappeared altogether.

2018 has been named “The Year of Retail Bankruptcies” by Investopedia with a multitude of large retailers filing for bankruptcy and over 3,800 store closings in the United States alone, according to Business Insider. Toys R Us has shut down before our very eyes and is currently liquidating all of its 735 U.S. stores and Lord and Taylor may be right behind as it gets ready to close its flagship store on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan in addition to about a dozen more locations. Gap, Michael Kors, Foot Locker, Claire’s and Best Buy have already closed hundreds of locations with plans to restructure, and others are in the process of shutting down after failed attempts to rise back up.

It’s been the topic of our conversations and, ultimately, become the norm for large brick-and-mortar retail department stores to earn negative news headlines as innovative e-commerce channels gained traction.

Meanwhile, brick-and-click retailers, a term used to describe the business model where companies operate both in offline, brick-and-mortar retail locations and with clicks in online stores, have strived to keep up. While shifting to e-commerce has seemed like the best way to avoid closures and increase sales, these retailers have experienced an imbalance between their bricks and clicks. Clicks have evidently outnumbered.

Working to blend online and offline shopping, retailers have turned to technology to alleviate this imbalance, bring customers back and save their brick-and-mortar stores. What started with tablets and touchscreens at store kiosks

and on the walls has grown tremendously as companies integrate technology into their brick-and-mortar stores to lure customers in.

Similar to our handy digital assistants Siri and Alexa, we’ll soon encounter digital sales associates in stores, according to Inc. Magazine. Designed to assist customers with their shopping needs as human sales associates are hired to do, digital sales associates will be programmed to focus on the individual customer’s body language to accurately read cues and identify tastes and preferences. They will have past purchases recorded, using them to predict what a customer would likely purchase next. Unlike purchase recommendations that “pop up” when shopping online, digital sales associates will recommend products by identifying cues after accurately processing customer body language, something human sales associates often err on in stores.

MAC cosmetics has brought in augmented reality mirrors, developed by ModiFace, that allow customers to virtually try on different cosmetics in stores, eliminating the unsanitary norm of sharing cosmetic applicators with others. Since the AR mirror applies the makeup on customers’ faces in the mirror in real-time and correctly applies the makeup as professional makeup artists would, it cuts down cosmetic shopping time and realistically displays a desired look, thus improving sales.

In addition to providing MAC with its AR mirror, ModiFace created a line of AR products for other beauty brands in the industry. It powered Estee Lauder’s AR e-commerce previews that allows customers to virtually try-on cosmetics on their computers, partnered with Bobbi Brown Cosmetics when it upgraded its web AR technology, and was acquired by L’Oreal in March. Its technology has been integrated into the Galaxy S9/S9+ camera and into Sephora’s AI color matching platform, as well.

Interactive hangers have been introduced in Japan with the common goal of promoting an interactive in-store

experience for customers. The interactive hanger has sensors that trigger some sort of visual media to be played on a screen nearby the clothing rack such as relevant pictures and videos of the product when a customer holds it or takes it off the clothing rack. The sensors also trigger background music and lighting to change in the store when the item is held.

At select Lowe’s locations, virtual reality has been integrated to aid in the process of remodeling rooms such as a kitchen or bathroom, allowing customers to see a 3D mock of their potential designs. Lowe’s calls the simulated room the “Holoom,” and customers can choose room sizes and colors as well as clearly picture their space, while employees assist in the process and make changes simultaneously.

Topshop used virtual reality in stores to enable customers to virtually experience its London Fashion Week show and feel as though they were actually there. In Toms’ one-for-one campaign, in which a pair of shoes is donated for every pair sold, VR headsets were placed in stores to allow customers to see children receive boxes of shoes in a schoolyard in Peru.


Neiman Marcus has transformed its customer’s shopping experience by placing MemoMi’s MemoryMirror into its stores. MemoryMirror is a full body size screen with a camera that allows shoppers to see themselves in clothing with a 360-degree view and compare clothing options side-by-side without actually trying anything on. SenseMi Technology Solutions’ VR mirror shows how clothing will move on the customer once it’s on. To top it all off, Amazon patented an AR mirror that will dress customers in different clothes while displaying the digital 360 images in various virtual locations. The mirror will also allow an individual to walk around by controlling the lighting to maintain a realistic image.

The future may be bright for those companies that continue to creatively push brick-and-mortar retail forward. That is, those that can stay in the virtual game, of course, and move with the industry shift.



Retailers attempt to stay in the game by utilizing VR and other technologies.






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