



The annual Seforim Sale was a huge success. Read more on page 4.

Professor Wins Award After Having Contract Terminated

By Adir Fiefel

Yeshiva University's research faculty is well represented in all fields when it comes to receiving noteworthy fellowships and academic awards. One of the reasons for YU's excellent reputation as a highly ranked private university is the quality of research published by its professors in the science, humanities, and business disciplines. Prof. Michael Richter of the economics department is one such faculty member who has had his research recognized this year by receiving the prestigious Bergmann Memorial Award for Young Scientists.

This award is a significant honor for Richter and his peers in the economics department, yet the news of it comes at a bittersweet time. This is because Richter was one of the two economics professors let go by YU a year ago as a result of institution-wide budget cuts. Therefore, despite accepting the award on behalf of YU, Prof. Richter will most likely be teaching at a different university in the coming academic year.

The Bergmann Memorial Award for Young Scientists is presented annually by the United States-Israel Binational Science Foundation. The BSF is an independent academic body whose goal is to "promote scientific relations between the U.S. and Israel by supporting collaborative research projects in a wide area of basic and ap-

SEE RICHTER, CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

Greek Thought, Women's Roles, and Rabbinic Discourse at YU

By Rabbi Yitzchak Blau

This past Chanukah, R. Aharon Kahn delivered a sichat mussar in Yeshiva University emphasizing avoiding the negative influence of foreign cultures and sharply criticizing the call for women rabbis in some Orthodox circles. I found the talk representative of larger trends at YU and would like to present an alternative voice. This essay is not addressing the question of women rabbis per se, but rather the general orientation and mode of conversation reflected in this sicha. Italicized sections will include either my paraphrases of R. Kahn or direct quotes from his presentation and the numbers are the minutes and seconds of the presentation. (The talk can be found at <http://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/846713/rabbi-aharon-kahn/sichas-mussar-CHANUKAH-5776/>).

Problematic elements certainly exist on the liberal fringes of Orthodoxy regarding both halakhic and hashkafic issues. One sometimes feels that, among these groups, modernity casts a critical eye on our Jewish tradition, but that the tradition cannot criticize Western liberalism. Indeed, Chanukah seems an appropriate time to address the encounter with other cultures and the need for caution in not mindlessly adopting what is popular in broader society. That being said, criticism requires nuance and moderation. R. Kahn's discourse overstates the wrongness of his opponents and fails to acknowledge the more complex nature of our interaction with the outside world.

R. Kahn's sicha exemplifies approaches taken by other rabbinic voices at Yeshiva as well. Thus, I am not addressing one specific talk, but using it as a springboard for raising issues relevant beyond one evening's address. As manifest in this essay's title, three themes merit attention. How do rabbis talk about secular wisdom in particular and the gentile world in general? Do they tend to portray it exclusively as a source of danger and corruption? Secondly, how do we react to

changes in women's roles in the modern world? Are we to see all those advocating greater learning and leadership opportunities for women as negative forces with inauthentic motivations? Are there distinctions between different kinds of innovations? Finally, what is the standard tone of rabbinic discourse? Does it exhibit nuance, balance, sympathy, and generosity or is it cynical, extremely critical, and negative? We now turn to the sicha and explore these three issues seriatim.

Chanukah is about rejecting foreign influences. This surely reflects one Chanukah theme but the Jewish encounter with other societies is a much more complex business. Significant rabbinic voices struck very different notes in their Chanukah discourses. R. Moshe Avigdor Amiel, onetime Rav of Tel Aviv, gave a *derasha* on Chanukah about the Jewish ability to utilize ideas from the outside world. R. Amiel's writes: "The Rambam even integrated Aristotle into the realm

of Yahadut and he converted Greek wisdom and brought it under the wings of the shechina, and he followed R. Meir in that he 'found a pomegranate, ate the inside, and cast aside the rind' (*Hanerot Hallalu*" in *Derashot El Ami*).

Those Greeks are not such good guys after all. All that art and all that philosophy and all that culture. What does it boil down to, says the Rambam?... A bunch of gazlanim and rapists" (34:26).

No doubt, the Chanukah story reveals some of the evils of Greek society. At the same time, it is difficult to claim that Rambam had a uniformly negative attitude to Greek culture. Rambam accepted (with slight variations) Aristotle's approaches to the Golden Mean and to friendship, he identified *Ma'aseh Bereishit* and *Ma'aseh Merakva* with physics and metaphysics, and he said that Aristotle achieved a level just short of prophecy.

R. Mordechai Pogromonski thought he could not offer Daas Torah since he had read too widely. Better to go to R. Baruch Ber. who had only studied To-

SEE GREEKS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

"FEMINISM HAS BROUGHT CHALLENGES TO TRADITIONAL SOCIETY, BUT ITS INFLUENCE HAS NOT BEEN PURELY NEGATIVE."

The EDITORIAL

A Sad and Insulting Excuse for Student Input

By Yechiel Schwab

As consumers of the college experience with a vested interest in our institution's success, students offer a unique and important perspective on the inner workings of our University. But despite the easy availability of this valuable viewpoint, many decisions in this University are conducted with little or no student input. YCSA President Josh Nagel's article from two issues ago, "The Yeshiva College Student Senate," and Shai Berman's article from last issue, "The Search for YU's Next President: Exclusion, Priorities, and (Limited) Progress" both discuss the lack of student input in many administrative decisions. In both pieces, the administrators quoted defended their decisions by noting the logistical obstacles involved in soliciting the student voice. But, as they say, where there's a will there's a way -- the administration's unwillingness to push and overcome these obstacles displays the limited value they place on student input. Far worse than this undervaluation of student opinion was the presidential search survey sent out by Provost Botman and Chairman Straus, which showed almost zero interest in obtaining a student perspective on this important issue.

Berman's article mentioned this survey, noting that in an attempt to console students who feel routinely ignored, the Presidential Search Committee would send out a survey to get a feel for what the students expect from their next president. However, the content and manner of the survey did not allow for genuine student input and only served to demonstrate that the survey was most likely sent simply to placate students rather than to sincerely seek their viewpoint.

In terms of the structure of the survey, the form incorporated no built-in verification system, allowing anyone who possessed the link to the survey, even if they had no connection to Yeshiva University, to submit a response. Moreover, there was no limit to the number of responses any given individual could submit, so students, or, for that matter, anyone with access to the survey, could submit as many answers as they pleased. While for student elections the Office of Student Life uses a system which requires students to verify their status and many other surveys prevent multiple responses, it seems that the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and the Office of the Provost do not have access to the types of funds and technological infrastructure available to the Office of Student Life. Or, in less charitable moods, we might more realistically posit that the administration expended minimal effort into this survey since they were not sincerely interested in gathering student input.

The questions on the survey only further highlight the casual indifference that characterizes this survey. Standard surveys offer response options based off the Likert Scale, a five to seven point scale of responses scientifically shown to elicit more accurate results. A simple perusal of almost any other survey conducted at this university, from the class evaluation forms conducted by the Dean's Office, to the Library Survey, the Writing Center surveys, the Honors Council surveys, and so many more, confirms the ubiquity of the five point scale. Indeed, most of these surveys were created in conjunction with professors at this University who specialize in survey design and analysis. These five-point scale surveys allow respondents to analyze the questions and offer nuanced responses without confounding them with too many options. In contrast, the presidential search

survey only offered three options, ranging from a "large extent" to "some extent" to "not at all." This severely limited the students' ability to accurately offer their opinion on these questions.

Additionally, the structure of the questions, or rather question, once again demonstrate the minimal effort involved in this survey. The survey used one question, "To what extent should the next YU President demonstrate these characteristics?" and then offered twelve characteristics allowing students to choose the extent to which the next president should exemplify each of these qualities. If the creators of this survey had bothered to consult with someone about polling, or simply even read the question, they would have known that the formulation of this question is non-conducive to polling and somewhat misleading. As formulated, the respondent is offered twelve characteristics and chooses the President's ideal expertise in each area. To respond "to no extent" to one of these questions would then imply that you actively wish the President did not contain this attribute. So for instance, unless you reject the University's motto of Torah U'Madda, there would be no reason to not respond "large extent" for the President's academic background, since, in an ideal world, of course our next President would be knowledgeable and scholarly. Presumably, what the question meant to ask was not "to what extent," but rather "how important is it that the

next YU President demonstrate these characteristics?" In that case, students who believe in the importance of Torah U'Madda but think that academia is not a vital qualification for President could express their opinion in this survey. This question only becomes more ridiculous for categories like "alumnus of YU"

-- what does it mean to ask "to what extent should the next YU President be an alumnus of YU?" Maybe they meant to ask whether our next President should wear his or her YU hoodie sweatshirt every day, or only on weekends. A similar analysis can be performed on most of the other twelve characteristics. Amazingly, faced with the daunting and grueling task of creating one logical question, the creators of this survey fell short.

The current presidential search process will determine the path and the future of our University for years to come. The Search Committee must take this obligation seriously, and dutifully represent all the stakeholders of this University. They should be actively seeking out input from all interested bodies--from diverse perspectives--and not simply from other Board Members. As stakeholders and possessors of a valuable perspective, students have a right to a voice in this monumental decision. The survey sent out by this committee is a sad and insulting excuse for student input. With the future of our University at stake, we must do better.

"THE PRESIDENTIAL SEARCH SURVEY SENT OUT BY PROVOST BOTMAN AND CHAIRMAN STRAUS SHOWED ALMOST ZERO INTEREST IN OBTAINING A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE ON THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE."

The Commentator

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For 81 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

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

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



1 Jews on the Supreme Court

There are three Jews already on the nation's highest court and now there's a possibility of adding a fourth, potentially bringing us just one justice away from a Jewish majority. The Elders of Zion are shepping nachas.

2 Sausage Party

The trailer for this upcoming animated spoof at first looks like just another charming pixar personification of inanimate objects. But it quickly turns grisly; a group of assorted food items watch in horror as their compatriot, an idealistic potato, is skinned alive and the hot dogs learn that they are fated to be brutally devoured.

3 Security

These fearless fellows deserve a round of applause for putting up with a gym full of tipsy masqueraders holding hands with each other and endlessly running around in circles. Confusing as this may have been, Securitas took it in stride.

4 Reddit

I have no clue what this site is or how to navigate it, but in the interest of maintaining my disguise as a hip millennial I am just going to pretend.

5 Prices at Eizenshtein Bakery

The food and location are great, but purchasing a pastry from this place might require you to take out a second mortgage.

6 Professor Manfred Weidhorn

Breaking news: Professor Manfred Weidhorn's name has been revealed to be simply a string of four unrelated nouns: man, Fred, weed, and horn.

7 The Space Behind the Vending Machines

Originally part of the caf store, the area behind the Rubin vending machines is now empty, making it an ideal space for quiet naps or practicing salsa dancing.

7 UP 7 DOWN



1 Baby

Alright, Jay Sean? You can stop asking. Baby is down.

2 The Man Bun

These seem pretty cool in the abstract, but in real life they tend to make you look like a troll.

3 The Katz School of Graduate and Professional Studies

Is this the same thing as the school of continuing education, or not? And how does this relate to YU Global? Questions abound but one thing is clear: this new branch of YU will utilize a "collaborative course structure" alongside a "multifaceted approach" to create an "array of online courses" in "a myriad of fields." Specificity is clearly not our strong point.

4 Naot

These ungainly clunkers were all the rage around fifth grade, but their popularity has steadily declined since. Their practicality as shoes, though, has consistently remained at zero.

5 Hamantaschen

Jewish cuisine has its highlights, but this isn't one of them. A pointy pastry packed with prunes and poppy seed paste? We can do better than that. I doubt that Haman's hat bore even the faintest resemblance to this ludicrous confection.

6 Bag Checks

Getting alcohol into the dorms is incredibly easy. And complex security measures like bag checks starting three days before Purim is not going to change that.

7 Boom Chicka Pop

Sold in bulk quantities in Nagel Bagel, this snack's catchy name is sabotaged by horrifying flavor combinations such as caramel cheddar.

News Briefs

By Commentator Staff

Yeshiva Representatives Nominated for Activists of the Year Award at AIPAC Policy Conference

A delegation of around 35 YU students attended the Policy Conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee in Washington, D.C. March 20 - 22. Among the YU representatives were several student leaders, including Noam Safier, President of Yeshiva Student Union, Rachel Rolnick, President of Stern College for Women Student Council, and Talia Molotsky, President of Torah Activities Council. Yeshiva University was one of eight schools nominated for the prestigious Activist of the Year Award, which is conferred yearly at the Policy Conference.

AIPAC's annual policy conference is the largest annual event of the pro-Israel lobby, drawing almost 19,000 attendees this year. Several dignitaries addressed the assembly, including Vice President Joe Biden and every presidential candidate still in the race except for Bernie Sanders.

Preparations for Purim Include Chesed, Laughter

By Elliot Heller

Students turned up in droves this past purim to help spread the purim joy to those less fortunate. iGive coordinated their annual "Simcha Deliveries on Purim," a mishloach manot preparation and delivery event. Two nights before Purim, approximately 30 student volunteered to assemble food packages and make decorative cards for senior citizens. On Purim day, about 100 student volunteers delivered the packages to local nursing homes and hospital following a special megilla reading and breakfast. Music Vs., TheEruv, Tzedek Society and Zmanim Club co-sponsored the event.

"I went to the Hebrew Home at Riverdale, a beautiful nursing home on the Hudson River just a 15 minute drive from the Heights," said Rachel Lelonek (SCW '18). "It was such a meaningful experience that really enriched my Purim. We were able to brighten so many residents' days and bring holiday cheer to not just the patients, but ourselves as well."

Eitan Blumstein (YC '19) agreed. "I had great time. I had a lot of fun being mesameach [making happy] others, who don't always have something to be happy about. Seeing the smiles on the residents' faces - it's what Purim is all about. I am glad to have participated in such a great event."

"It is absolutely incredible how many students from Yeshiva University are truly devoted to enhancing the Purim of others," said the heads of iGive, Shira Aharon (SCW '17) and Shayna Rabin (SCW '17). "Students traveled near and far while carrying heavy packages and wearing their costumes, and succeeded in making a great impression on all the people they met!"

Other groups chose to spread the pre-purim/post-midterms joy by treating their fellow students to a revival of an ancient debate. Kol Hamevaser hosted the "annual, first in two years" Latke vs. Hamantaschen Debate in Rubin Shul with the ambitious goal of determining once and for all (for this year) which traditional holiday treat is superior. While the discussion likely goes back millennia, it was first formally debated in the University of Chicago in 1946. Merav Gold (SCW '16), Chaim Metzger (YC '16), and Joshua Skootsky (YC '17) presented for Team Latke in the epic battle, while Becca Epstein (YC '17), Josh Nagel (YC '16), and Elisheva Rabinovich (SCW '17) represented Team Hamantaschen. Both foods were served.

Reuven Herzog (YC '19) and Elana Perlow (SCW '17) organized the event, which was moderated by Danny Shlian (YC '17).

Epstein focused her presentation on the issues of food equality and social justice. She likened latkes to oil-guzzling corporations, who "steal oil from those who really need it - like French fries." She also argued for the acceptance of fruit-filled hamantaschen, noting that "taste is blind," and urging the public to "Free the Poppy Seed." She added that if one must eat latkes, they should be well done (Feel the Bern).

Judge Bronstein praised her for her noble focus on inclusion, but said that accepting fruit-filled hamantaschen was going too

SEE PURIM, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Seforim Sale Marks Third consecutive Year in the Black

By Judah Stiefel

For the third year in a row the Seforim Sale is in the Black, a massive achievement considering the fact that only four years ago in 2013 the sale had lost a not so insignificant \$57,000. This tri-consecutive trend suggests that financially stable Seforim sales are the new reality. While the numbers are not finalized, according to the sale's CFO Natanel Brakha, in 2016 the sales increased by approximately "10%" from last year despite the fact that the sale was an entire week shorter, or three weeks instead of four.

According to last year's CFO Nathaniel Kukurudz, the 2015 sale generated \$722,000 in revenue and a net income of "approximately \$46,000," which suggests that this year's sales broke \$50,000 in total revenue. The growth in sales is likely to attribute to the significant increase in transactions this year. According to 2016 CEO Nissim Franco, this year's sale recorded approximately 6,600 transactions, many coming from the sale's expanded online division.

The Seforim Sale's dramatic turnaround from financial nuisance to successful business is due mainly to the incredible effort and diligence the sale's managers have invested. According to Franco, the sale managers spent approximately 7 months preparing for this year's 3-week sale. Each year the staff considers the various financial and management decisions of the previous years' sales and attempts to add to and improve on them.

This process began between the 2013 and 2014 sales. Sy Syms Dean Michael Strauss pointed out that the sale had previously lacked process and business function while also having no real inventory or consignment. The sale is now run as a legitimate business, balancing its excellent pricing with financial stability. Beforehand the sale lacked even a website. Now it boasts an excellent one.

While the sale has acquired a new financial vigilance, it remains a 501(c)3, not for profit. "The main goal of the Seforim Sale is to make seforim available to as many people as possible," says CFO Natanel Brakha. This mission was as apparent as ever this year as the sale used its online division to spread sales to shuls (synagogue) across the United States. For the first time the sale attempted to market to shuls in order to broaden its client base. "We offered a credit back program to shuls across the country where a shul receives 5% credit to the sale of every pur-

chase their congregants make in their name. This encourages the shul to market the sale while increasing their desire to purchase from us in general.

"We also launched shul and wedding registries," explained CEO Nissim Franco. This new program led to many more online sales and opened a wider range of people the sale reaches. Said Franco, "This was our best year yet for online sales perhaps due to our efforts in branching out. We strive to improve the website and online sales every year." Chief Productions Manager Baruch Schonbrun ensured that online ordering went smoothly.

Of course, while the main goal of the sale is to sell as many seforim as possible, balancing pricing with responsible financial practices is very difficult. According to COO Sami Ginsburg, "We spoke a lot about what our

were more floor managers at the sale than customers."

Head floor manager Ofir Afenzar suggested future floor managers hire more than this year's approximately 100 volunteers and also suggested there be more communication between volunteers and the board. To drum up more buzz, there was a great deal of advertising done for the sale.

Advertising was lead by Sarah Sheps, Head of Marketing. The sale advertised by placing ads in local papers, placing a large ad on YU Torah, and launching a Dan's Deal, a website that highlights well priced sales.

Despite the healthy revenue of this year's Sale, it was not without a bit of controversy over the refusal to sell Rav Kahana's books, which even drew a minor, one man protest outside of Belfer Hall.

According to CEO Nissim Franco, "The Seforim Sale Board of this year and last made a collective decision with YU Administration that selling books containing content of Rav Kahane is not fit for the Yeshiva University crowd. There is a discussion every year whether certain seforim and books should be sold."

This year's successful Seforim Sale is due to the countless hours of work the managers put in to ensure the sale was fiscally stable while also true to its mission to spread seforim to as many people as possible at the best prices possible. Each year the managers seem to leave their own

impacts on the sale. The dedication and innovation introduced each year suggests the sale will continue to see success in the future.

**"THIS WAS OUR BEST YEAR YET FOR
ONLINE SALES PERHAPS DUE TO OUR
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- NISSIM FRANCO, CEO**

markup for the year is going to be and went back and forth about whether we could go lower or if we had to go higher to cover costs." Ginsburg continued, "at the end of the day a lot of our pricing depends on how good of a deal the vendors can give us. If they give us the products for cheaper, then we sell it for cheaper."

The positive relationships the sale has built with its more than 100 vendors have allowed the sale to maintain stability while keeping prices as low as possible. Being that as one would expect, the purchase of seforim is the sale's largest expense, Sami emphasizes that the managers heavily consider sales and orders from previous years in order to select what to purchase and in what quantity.

This year saw many other creative initiatives to cut costs and raise sales. According to Dean Strauss, the sale offered a 5% discount to alumni during YU Basketball's big home playoff game. As well, the number of student volunteers was cut due to the fact that at points during previous years' sales, says COO Sami Ginsburg, "there



PURIM, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

far. He gave her an 8 for being too open-minded. Judge Sandman also praised the presentation, but gave an 8 as well, asking "taste may be blind, but is texture?"

Representing "all of the defunct sports teams at YU," Metzger took a unique approach, giving a dramatic reading of select passages from the Book of Maccabees and Josephus, and replacing the words "Greek" and "Hellenist" with "Hamantaschen." "There was such an extreme of Hamantaschen... that the priests were no longer intent upon their service at the altar." His main talking points included not abandoning Hamantaschen, the fact that Hamantaschen are chametz, a t-shirt is an oversized napkin I wish I didn't have to use, and other absurd arguments.

He received a 9 from Bronstein for being "intellectual, intelligent and historical." Sandman dished out a 5, calling his logic "hard to follow."

Rabinovitch began by sharing that had she decided what to talk about on the shuttle ride uptown. She settled on an "empirical evidence"-based approach. Triangles are used in architecture, she noted. Specifically, that "they measure size of circles by putting a triangle inside it and guessing the rest." Latkes, she warned, were dangerous for "kids, old people, and people with acne." She also pointed out that a square or rectangle is two triangles coming together, while a circle is "always just a circle" and "represents isolation."

Bronstein: "Speaking as an English major, you lost me at basic shapes...It sure sounded smart. I also don't like war or old people. 9." Sandman said, "I liked the dvar torah. 8."

Representing the "fine arts," Skootsky began by reciting the aramaic "akdamut" from Shavuot, as well as a yotzer for shabbat zachor. He then recited a rap/poem, based on the Broadway show Hamilton, about the greatness of the latke, yelling the word "Latke!" at the end of each stanza. He noted that his food "won't cause indigestion" and "isn't named after a villainin."

**"I BELIEVE THAT THE DEBATE ANSWERED
MANY QUESTIONS, BUT IT RAISED EVEN
MORE, GIVING OUR ATTENDEES MUCH
FOOD FOR THOUGHT!"**

- DANIEL SHLIAN



Despite admitting that he "just couldn't relate," Bronstein gave Skootsky an 11. Sandman followed suit with a 9.

Skootsky later provided further explanation. "It was a parody of songs from the Broadway show Hamilton, which tells the story of political revolution with the language of hip hop. It told the story of how the Maccabees sailed to America to obtain the potatoes necessary to defeat the Syrian-Greeks."

That brought the score to a 46-46 tie, which, as the official rules stipulated, was followed by a three-minute rebuttal by each side.

In their rebuttal, Team Latke quoted the power rangers theme song: "a circle is round it has no end/that's how long I want to be your friend" - they weren't talking about triangles."

Team Hamantaschen seemed to misunderstand the rules (the hamantaschen were not tested for drugs) and attempted to use their rebuttal to "rebut" the judges. The risky move did not pay off. "I should probably award you points for chutzpah," quipped Sandman. "But I won't." Team Latke was declared the winner.

Despite calling hamantaschen a "crumpled stale crummy pastry," Skootsky said that he does eat them on occasion. No word from Team Hamantaschen on if they plan on boycotting Chanukah this year.

The event promised to "reveal the truth" and "give solace to the tastebuds that have been perplexed for millenia." Did it succeed? "I believe that the debate answered many questions," said Shlian. "But it raised even more, giving our attendees much food for thought."

The Meaning of Sarachek

By Aaron Szydlo

What is Sarachek? It is an annual basketball tournament that takes place in March; bringing Jewish high schools from all over the country to Yeshiva University from Thursday through Monday. Excitement roars throughout the country as the tournament approaches, and this year had much to be excited about.

When the tournament began Thursday March 10, angst and jitters filled the stomachs of the players. JJ Zakheim, a junior guard from Frisch said, "Playing in front of all the people is energizing and exciting. It feels like everyone's eyes are on you whenever you are on the court."

Edan Sokol, a junior forward from Shalhevet stated, "Playing in front of all of those people is nerve racking, but once the game starts you just get into the flow of things and forget about the crowd." The nerves showed, as the opening games featured lots of sloppy play. However, as the teams settled in and the tournament hit full stride, the players seemed to find their groove.

Thursday's action showed remarkable skill and athletic ability, as numerous players, including Andrew Langer of Frisch and Ethan Lasko of Yeshiva High School, scored over 30 points. As the players put on tremendous performances, the fans at the games and watching via Macs Live got their money's worth.

Daniel Lasko (Syms '18), cousin of Yeshiva's Lasko, posited, "It is cool to watch my younger cousin play in the same tournament I did only a few years ago. Especially considering he put up 36 points in the first game."

As Thursday wrapped up, the players relaxed and prepared for Friday's games.

As Friday came around the heat of the competition turned up. The day featured a series of close games, with six out of eight decided by less than 10 points. Several games came down to the closing seconds, testing the mental toughness of the high school athletes. Yet, whether players won or lost on Friday, the tournament seemed to have something for everyone, as Shabbos was something they would cherish for the remainder of their lives.

The players had live speakers, large assortments of food, and played competitive games of jeopardy versus one another. However, the programing, food, and entertainment on the shabbaton were only an appetizer for the camaraderie that took place. Sokol commented, "It is good to have a short break from playing ball. It is also really fun to meet kids from all over the country that I would never had met otherwise." Perhaps more important than the basketball that goes on is the bond Sarachek builds between players.

Play resumed Saturday night with two games, while the majority of the remaining games, including the Tier I and Tier II semifinals, were played on Sunday. Fortunately for the crowds watching, the teams did not disappoint. Many exciting games took place, including a nail-biting one-point victory by the favorite DRS Wildcats over the YULA Panthers to propel them into the Tier I finals. The buzzer

beater by the RASG Warriors to defeat the IDA Crown Aces, boosted them to the Tier II finals and topped off a day of close games and down-to-the-wire finishes. This exciting play received a good deal of internet fame, and even appeared on the local news

The final games of the tournament took place on Monday. In the Tier 1 Championship, Gabriel Leifer and the heavily favored DRS Wildcats, looked to add another victory to their perfect season against the Shalhevet Firehawks. In the first half, the Firehawks contained Leifer and the Wildcats, keeping the game tied at 13 going into the break. However, an explosion in the second half by Leifer and DRS proved to be too much for Shalhevet. As the final buzzer sounded, DRS won 47-32, adding to their perfect record of 32-0. Yoel Schreier, former DRS player and current YU student (Syms 18), said, "I am overcome with joy to the team bring another title home to DRS."

Commenting on what the tournament means for the

players, former player for YULA, and current coach of Kohenet, Josh Friedman said, "Sarachek is an amazing thing because it broadens the local teams' basketball seasons and adds meaning to the seasons of the teams from across the country. In doing so, it creates this incredible atmosphere that brings kids together. I want my players to have the same incredible experience I had. To compete with the best in the country." The tournament teaches the players about much more than basketball.

For the Sarachek tournament, players travel in from all over the country to compete against other teams. However, what lasts longer than the wins, are the friendships and bonds that are formed over the extended weekend. Isaac Laifer, junior guard from Frisch offered his opinion on Sarachek, "Playing against everyone is obviously very fun, but I think making new friends is the coolest part about the tournament." Players and fans cannot wait to see what Sarachek has in store for them next year.



At Schneier Program Event, Experts Weigh in on Future of U.S.-Israel Relations

By David Mehl

On March 7, Yeshiva University's Schneier Program for International Affairs brought together three distinguished experts on American-Israeli relations for a symposium on the topic of "The U.S.-Israeli Partnership: What Is It? Where Is It Going?"

The event began with the singing of the Star-Spangled Banner, Hatikva, and a prayer for the state of Israel, led by Cantor Joseph Malovany. When the singing and numerous introductions concluded, the panel discussion commenced.

Leading the discussion as moderator was Dr. Bernard Firestone, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Hofstra University. The panel consisted of Daniel Kurtzer, former U.S. ambassador to Israel and Egypt and currently a professor at Princeton; Danny Ayalon, who represented Israel in the United Nations, served as deputy foreign minister, and is currently a visiting professor at Yeshiva; and Colonel Elan Lerman, a former Israeli

deputy national security advisor who now teaches at Tel Aviv University.

The conversation ranged from the panelists' broad visions of Israel's relations with the United States to detailed observations about the personalities of each country's leaders. At times, the discussion itself made quite clear which of the panelists had represented Israel in their previous careers and which one had represented the United States.

One of several such examples was the exchange between the panelists on the topic of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address to Congress in advance of congressional consideration of the Iranian nuclear accords. Both Ambassador Ayalon and Colonel Lerman praised the speech and Netanyahu's decision to make it. Lerman argued that speaking before Congress was the right choice for Netanyahu because it gave his words the widest possible audience. Ambassador Kurtzer pointedly disagreed, saying that Netanyahu's actions damaged Israeli-American relations significantly enough that "it will

take time for that wound to heal."

All of the panelists, both during the discussion and the question-and-answer period which followed, were bullish on the future of the bilateral relationship. Explaining the reasons for his optimism, Lerman described the durability Israeli-American ties as stemming from three sources: an affinity of values, common interests, and connections between the people of each nation. It is the stability of these three sources, he concluded, which gave him hope. Kurtzer, too, had a positive outlook, though he seemed to place his hopes farther in the future emphasizing future changes in governmental leadership in both countries as the way the relationship could potentially improve and "heal."

In the end, Ayalon added, maintaining friendship and close cooperation with Israel is in the United States' interest, even beyond mutual interests prosecuting the War on Terror and preserving stability in the Middle East: as a democracy, Israel is valuable "because democratic regimes don't start wars with other democratic regimes," he said.

Student vs. Faculty/Staff Basketball Game Returns After 14 Year Hiatus

By Elie Lipnik

Ever wanted to see your professors, Rabbis or your favorite staff member shoot hoops or run laps around the gym? Well, you finally have your chance. On March 31st at 8 PM the Office of Student Life (OSL) will be hosting a student vs. faculty basketball game that is sure to attract students from around campus. For the first time since 2002, faculty and Rebbeim from Yeshiva College, Sy Syms School of Business and the Undergraduate Torah Studies program, along with staff from the President's Office, Admissions, Food Services, Facilities, Security, University Housing and Student Life will give everything they have to beat the student team in a game that is sure to make YU Basketball history.

Every year the OSL plans many exciting and di-

verse events – the addition this year of the basketball game is the return of a success from years ago. Working with the Director of Athletics, Joe Bednarsh, Linda Stone, Assistant Director of Student Life came across a poster from when this event was last run in '02. Bednarsh explained how fun and successful the event was back then, and a decision was made to bring it back.

"We want to ignite school spirit on the Wilf campus and we believe that this event will be compelling and appealing enough to unite the student body," said Stone. Along with Stanton Fellow, Malka Sigal, Stone and her colleagues in OSL have worked to assure that this will be one of the best events of the year. There have been several promo-

"WE BELIEVE THAT THIS EVENT WILL BE COMPELLING AND APPEALING ENOUGH TO UNITE THE STUDENT BODY!"

- LINDA STONE



tions for the game, including a promo video made to get the student body excited for the return of this event.

To choose which students would be playing in this year's big game, students signed up for a lottery sent through a ystud. According to Akiva Lautman (YC, '18), "it was completely random, which I think is a really good thing because everyone was given an equal shot at playing." Moreover, Lautman said that "I am most excited to play against my Rebbe, I think the game is going to be a blast!"

The players on the student team differ in age, year in college, morning program, major, and more. The major theme of this event is about bringing together the entire student body. Stone said that "it is going to be a competitive, fun game, but it is more about the spirit of friendship and unity."

This night is sure to be one to remember. Be sure to be one of the first 250 students in the MSAC Gym to receive your free T-shirt! In addition, although details have not yet been revealed to The Commentator, there is going to be a fantastic half-time show. Stone explained that she "likes the challenge of bringing something new to campus each year," and this year OSL is sure not to disappoint! So mark your calendars, and make sure to bring your school spirit to cheer on your team!



The Politics Behind Every Bite: Undue Tax Charged at All Omni Dollars Restaurants

By Noam Feifel

The local restaurants around Yeshiva University's Wilf campus have seen an increase of attention and scrutiny in the past few weeks since news surfaced Golan Heights had overcharged students and that YU and Golan would be severing their relationship.

Although initially it was only reported that Golan ceased to accept students' Caf Cards for purchases made in the restaurant, it seems the split involved a clean break. Both the restaurant and the university have now confirmed that all business between the two parties, such as having Golan cater certain events on campus, has been discontinued.

Golan declined to comment on how the recent cessation of business with YU or students using the Omni plan has affected their business.

"Golan chose to no longer work with the University on the Meal Card. Catering is part of that relationship" commented Director of the Yeshiva University's Administrative Services Department, Joe Cook.

The fallout began when students reported that Golan was wrongfully charging them tax on transactions paid with Omni Dollars, which are supposed to be tax exempt. A recent update to student services enabled students to monitor their transaction history online through "eAccounts," which confirmed the suspicions of the students.

But this update hasn't affected only Yeshiva University and Golan. Ever since Caf Card users obtained the ability to review their transaction histories, students have reported that other restaurants besides Golan have been charging tax unduly to students when using Caf Cards.

A senior in Yeshiva College, who wished to remain anonymous, noticed he was being overcharged when reviewing his transaction history, specifically on an order he had placed at Chop Chop, the local Kosher Chinese restaurant. "I get the same thing at Chop Chop every time I go," he said. "So I quickly noticed that something was off when this one particular

time, my order cost more than it usually does. I happened to have saved my receipt, and a look at it confirmed what I thought. It may have been unintentional, but it seems like this issue exists beyond just Golan."

When informed of the instance, Matthew Chan, Chop Chop's manager, responded, "my priority is the students. I do as much as I can to give to the students from YU. I offer promotions online to get discounts here, sponsor and host a weekly Chabad learning program, and above all, view YU students as my family." He continued, "A rare mistake can happen when ringing up a customer, but of course I would refund them. I always provide receipts so that customers can review their order on the spot."

Mr. Chan recalled a story where he accidentally charged a customer for a drink that wasn't purchased. "When I saw the error, I refunded him in cash!" told Chan. "I really have the students' best interest in mind."

Mr. Chan also noted that he has seen an increase in sales since Golan stopped accepting Caf Cards.

Lake Como Pizza and Grandma's Pizza have also been accused by YU students for taxing their orders on Caf Card purchases. Both Seth Rudin and Asher Amsalem, who manage Lake Como and Grandma's respectively, assured that if tax was charged when it should not have been, it was surely a mistake, and that they would be happy to refund the money with the student providing a record of the error.

It seemed that all parties involved were moving to resolve this issue as soon as possible. In an e-mail to the student body, University Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel explained "We have received a few reports from students who were mistakenly charged sales tax for purchases made with Dining Club- Omni funds. If you were unjustly charged sales tax from any of our local eateries, please bring your receipt back to

the restaurant and speak to the manager who will refund any sales tax collected."

Strikingly, the four local kosher restaurants have had tax-related gaffes. This may be due to the slight discrepancy of policy between YU and MTA student Caf Cards.

MTA, Yeshiva University's high school for boys, which is located adjacent to the Wilf Campus in Washington Heights, also provides Caf Card use to its students. But while YU and MTA student purchases with Omni Dollars are both subject to a commission by YU, only MTA students, and not YU students, are to be taxed when using these funds. The cashiers at the restaurants may fail to distinguish between the two brands of students, ultimately leading to confusion and execution of incorrect tax procedures.

A young-looking college student may be erroneously perceived as a high school student, and therefore could get wrongly taxed. On the flip side, a more mature-looking MTA student may give off the impression of a YU student and could get away without paying taxes.

In any case, although Golan has opted out of the joint "Omni Plan" partnership with YU, the deal remains intact with Chop Chop, Lake Como's Pizza, and Grandma's Pizza.

Mr. Rudin of Lake Como stated regarding the Omni Dollars deal, "While the university does take a big cut from us, it is most important to keep our strong relationship together with YU. It makes much more sense not to pull out and to remain on good terms."

Mr. Amsalem of Grandma's Pizza declined to offer his opinion of his restaurant's partnership with YU.

Mr. Cook of YU stated that no negotiations are currently taking place regarding

a potential restructured deal that would be more appealing to the restaurants and that would possibly give Golan renewed interest in doing business with the university.

With the addition of Eizenshtein Bakery to Amsterdam Avenue, the local Kosher restaurants around Yeshiva University have had an eventful month. Wherever you next go out for a bite to eat, and however you pay, take a moment to recognize how fortunate you are to only be required to sit down and enjoy your food, and not be involved in the turmoil and politics behind every bite you take.

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**Commencement is Wednesday
May 25, 2016**



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Please Note: No attire will be given out at The Theater at Madison Square Garden on Commencement Day. If you are unable to pick up your academic attire on these days, please contact the Office of Student Life.

RICHTER, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

plied scientific fields, for peaceful and non-profit purposes." By and large, the BSF is well known to researchers in both countries for its substantial research funding, in addition to the fact that some awardees have gone on to receive greater honors like the Nobel Prize.

Richter was one of just three recipients for the 2015 Bergman Award (all of whom are under the age of 35) for his research on abstract competitive equilibriums. Although the award is more noteworthy for its prestige than its monetary component, it does contain a research grant worth close to \$100,000 in value. Regarding this money, Richter commented: "The funds will enable me to plan to travel back and forth from Israel working on my research, to buy equipment, and to fund students which will be helpful for me and I hope just as helpful for them." However, the grant was not accepted by YU because of Richter's impending departure from the school after this academic year, and he has been unable to access these funds as long as he is still technically employed by Yeshiva University.

"This award is a great honor for

Professor Richter, and one that will reflect well on whichever institution is fortunate enough to hire him" said Dr. James Kahn, head of the Yeshiva College's economics department.

The decision last year to terminate Richter's contract was made against the wishes of Kahn and the economics department as a whole. Prof. Richter's

accomplishment did not get any official coverage on the YU News page, but a picture of him at the award ceremony was shared on the Yeshiva University Admissions' Facebook page. Ironically, the caption given to the photo was "#TopFaculty teaching #TopStudents ~ #NowhereButHere."

When reached for comment, the Office of Communications and Public Affairs said, "We congratulate Professor Richter on this achievement."

At the present time, there been no reversal in the administration's decision to terminate the contracts of Prof. Richter and Prof. William Hawkins (the other economics faculty member whose job fell to budget cuts), and it is unlikely the recent news will have any effect on their status at YU. Both professors are currently visiting economics professors at Ivy League schools--Richter at the University of Pennsylvania and Hawkins at Yale University. Richter is the first-ever Yeshiva University faculty member to receive an award from the BSF. Reflecting on his current situation, Prof. Richter said: "In our lives we make decisions not knowing what the future holds. As a Jewish scientist, I took an offer from Yeshiva over other more prestigious universities and it is a decision that I regret."



Prof. Richter (far right) at the February 10th ceremony for the Bergmann Memorial Award at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

Getting an Indecent Education: The Joys of Naked Statistics

By Yitzchak Fried

Often enough, statistics can seem like science's mystifying tool for disproving common sense. Both the natural and social sciences employ statistical methods, and their findings make headlines and form the basis of the latest scientific and popular orthodoxies. That's why there was such a commotion when, last year, the Reproducibility Project found that 60 out of 100 studies published in leading psychology journals yielded different results the second time around. This bombshell was deemed a "replication crisis". Debate now rages between top psychologists over the field's methodological soundness and the direction of its future. To a great extent, the discussion comes down to the power and limitations of statistical inference. As Yale psychologist Paul Bloom wrote in his article, "Psychology's Replication Crisis Has a Silver Lining": "[M]uch of psychologists' standard operating procedure—our style of collecting data, analyzing our results, reporting our findings, and deciding what to submit to publication—is biased toward "false positives," where random effects are reported as significant findings. Too many of us engage in "p-hacking,"...where we rummage through our data looking for statistically significant findings, and then, with the most innocent of intentions, convince ourselves that these findings are precisely what we predicted in the first place."

For the conscientious consumer of modern science, it's natural to have some curiosity about what all the fuss is over.

Charles Wheelan's *Naked Statistics* is the perfect book to satisfy that curiosity. As the subtitle suggests ("Stripping the Dread from the Data"), the book is an easy-to-read guide to the foundations and limitations of statistical methods. Wheelan cuts out as much of the math as possible, instead using long-winded (but very entertaining) stories to drive home key statistical concepts. This method does have its drawbacks. For some reason, Wheelan sometimes seems to compromise accuracy in the interest of his beautifully clear prose. (He claims erroneously on page 79 that adding "each outcome multiplied by its expected frequency" will always give you 1. It won't. It will give you the expected value -- but more on this soon.) If he occasionally misspeaks, however, he deserves to be forgiven. The prose is good.

For a student who's taken a course in statistics or probability theory, the book's more technical math will be a review. Wheelan gives a brush-up on how to calculate variance, and how that relates to standard deviation. He also devotes a chapter to an intuitive account of correlation, without going into the mathematical details. Those who aren't math geeks may be tempted to skip these parts – you can, without losing much of the big picture. The "Basic Probability" section is important though, because it explains how to calculate statistical averages, or "expected values". (You may have encountered this term if you've taken statistics, probability, or an intermediate economics course.) Expected values are important – they tell us the overall outcome you can expect over a long period of time. Take rainfall, which is usually calculated as a yearly average. While the rainfall on any given day may be pretty unknowable, the average rainfall in an area is a good measure of whether it's the right place to grow your crops.

The really interesting math comes in when Wheelan explains statistics' theoretical underpinnings. When a study says that 70% of males between 18 and 36 tend to brush their teeth at least once a day, how did statisticians come up with that number? Gener-

ally, statisticians studying a population don't actually evaluate every member of the population; they judge a sample group, and extrapolate the results of the group to the larger population. But how is that valid? As Wheelan explains, it comes down to the "normal distribution" and something called the Central Limit Theorem. Some useful background will help us here. The normal distribution is another name for

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the famous bell-shaped curve; it's probably the most famous of what are called "probability density functions". A probability density function (PDF) is a pattern that shows what the statistical likelihood is of a "continuous" set of outcomes. Let me explain what I mean by "continuous". Take, for instance, the height of male orthodox Jews in Yeshiva College. Something like height doesn't come in discrete intervals; someone can be five foot five, five foot five and a half, five foot five and a half and a hundredth, or any conceivable fraction between five foot five and half and five foot six. Assigning a statistic to each possible outcome is impossible. For example, consider the probability of finding someone that is exactly five foot five and three

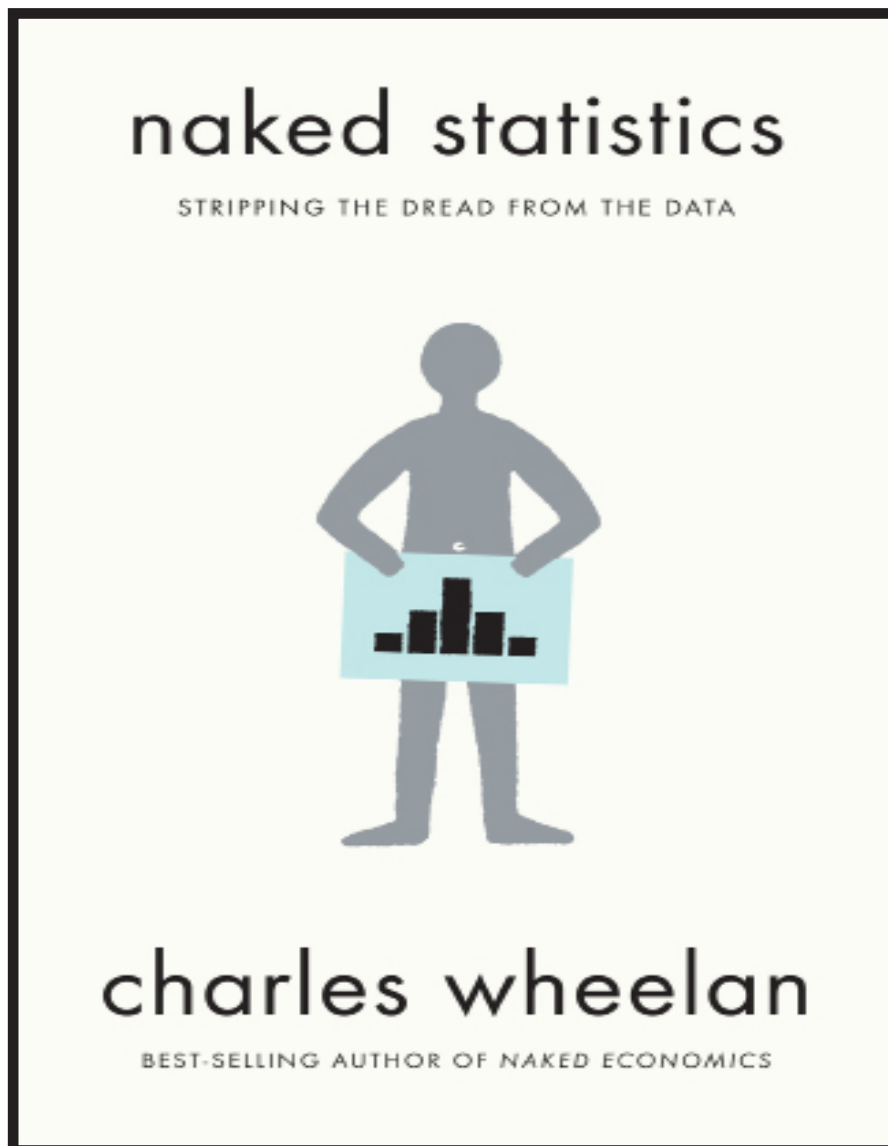
because it neatly conveys the likelihood of given intervals. If something is described by a normal distribution, then 95% of the time it manifests within two standard deviations of the average outcome. As long as the standard deviations are not that large, this can give us a pretty narrow window of what values we can expect. For example, if the average height of Jewish males in Yeshiva College is five foot five, standard deviation two inches, then 95% of Jewish males can be expected to be between five foot one and five foot nine.

All well and fine, if something follows a normal distribution. But who says everything does? Is it really true that 95% of heights are dispersed within two standard deviations of the mean? What's amazing is that almost anything can be brought into relation to the normal distribution, at least in terms of calculating averages. If you take a random sample of a population, say a group of Yeshiva students, and measured them, it's very likely that their heights won't correspond to a normal distribution. However, if you calculated their average height, that average height would likely be close to the average height of the entire Yeshiva population. In fact, if you took multiple sample groups and calculated their averages, those averages would be scattered in a normal distribution around the actual average of the entire population. By measuring a few sample groups, we can calculate with high likelihood the average height of everyone in YC. This fun fact is called the Central Limit Theorem.

Sorry if the math was a bit dense. But if you found this interesting, you'll love Wheelan's chapters on "The Central Limit Theorem", "Inference" and "Polling". Perhaps the most important take-away from the book, however, is the limitations of statistical studies. The hard part of a statistical study is organizing the experiment, not crunching the numbers. The process is laden with pitfalls. One is getting a representative sample, which isn't as easy as it might seem. To take an example from the elections, The Atlantic's polling expert, Andrew McGill, recently discussed the difficulty of using web polls to predict how people will vote. The problem is, many older people, who are most likely to vote, don't spend much time on the web. More generally, sometimes the way a poll is conducted gives too much weight to a specific sector of the population. This is known as selection bias, and Wheelan discusses it in "The Importance of Data" along with other issues that can confound statistical conclusions.

The greatest and most systemic source of concern – and this will take us back to psychology's replication crisis – is the fact that statistics only measure probabilities. If patients in a drug study show "statistically significant" improvement, it means the said improvement is not likely the result of chance. But unlikely things do happen, and if enough trials are repeated, then they are bound to happen. This leads to "publication bias": the fact that only studies with positive results get published. The ones that yield no results don't, which skews the published studies' statistical validity. This is what Bloom was talking about when he said psychologists' method of publication "is biased toward 'false positives'". Organizations that fund research try to address this: they force researchers to submit records of all their trials. But for every study that produces significant results, it's important to ask: How many came up negative and weren't published?

Its dangers notwithstanding, statistical inference remains a powerful tool of the scientific method. (I haven't even mentioned regression analysis!) New statistical studies are published every day, advancing the front of human knowledge. Or at least purporting to. It's not a bad time to take a peek under their hood with *Naked Statistics*.



thousandths of an inch. The odds are essentially zero. Instead, a probability density function describes the probability of finding heights within a certain interval – say, between five foot five and six foot, including all the infinite possibilities contained in between.

The "bell-shaped" normal distribution is useful

Featured Faculty: Professor David Lavinsky

By Arthur Schoen

Arthur Schoen: Can you tell us a bit about your life story/background? Where are you from originally? What influenced your decision to attend a small liberal-arts college?

David Lavinsky: I grew up in Boulder, Colorado, where I never learned to ski, and where I attended a public high school with an extremely limited humanities curriculum. The idea was to go on to the big state university and then get a job at one of the tech companies dotting the western landscape. But when I started to look more closely at my college options, I realized that the prospect of a curriculum with small classes and accessible professors appealed to me. I eventually found myself at a small liberal arts college with a robust humanities program, innovative courses, and absolutely dedicated faculty. Even then, in the late nineties, the humanities were in decline, but you wouldn't know it looking around campus, where the most popular majors were English, Art History, and maybe Philosophy. Despite how long it took me to pay back my student loans, there was never any sense, as there is now among many US undergraduates, that a degree in the humanities was a form of conspicuous consumption. I'll add that when I found a job after college, as an investigator of police misconduct allegations for the city of New York, what mattered most in making sense of any case was critical thinking and the ability to write well. I think those skills continue to make humanities majors highly employable.

AS: Can you please elaborate on your time spent as an investigator of police misconduct allegations for the city of New York? How did you get that job? What specifically did you do in that role? Who were you working for? NYPD? The city? How long did you do that for and how did you decide to return to academia?

DL: After college, I worked in New York for a city agency that investigated allegations of police misconduct. This was a civilian agency, not part of the NYPD, and involved investigation rather than law enforcement. I had spent only a little time in NYC prior to accepting the job, and had never been to many of the neighborhoods, including Washington Heights, where my cases were typically located. I got to know NYC very well while also learning a lot about the NYPD and policing. But it was hard to feel effective when credible allegations of misconduct, especially those involving excessive force, did not always result in disciplinary action against police officers. With this kind of experience, I assumed I would eventually go to law school, but the more I interviewed victims, witnesses, and especially police officers, the more I started to think about narrativity itself, especially as an epistemological problem. Suddenly literature promised a broader intellectual context, and it was that idea, along with my terrible LSAT practice scores, that put me on a different path. No one who chooses academia hasn't experienced the transformative power of good teaching and compelling scholarship. But in my case, it was experience in the "real world" as much as anything else that led me to contemplate a Ph.D. program.

AS: What was the focus of your graduate studies in Michigan? Can you please tell us a bit about your dissertation?

DL: I entered grad school as an early modernist, with an interest in the literary contexts of Reformation England, but then gravitated towards medieval studies for a number of reasons. For me, it was the pleasurable disorientation that comes with studying a period which is both culturally distant and uncannily relevant in all kinds of ways. I also found that I enjoyed encountering material that had not yet been packaged up into anthologies and edited volumes—though as a teacher I'm also very grateful for the painstaking efforts of editors and

textual scholars who make difficult material accessible to undergraduates and non-specialists. One of the best things about working on the era before print is that you get to spend a lot of time in archives looking at handmade books and manuscripts, often in ornate and beautiful medieval libraries such as those at Oxford and Cambridge. So in turning to earlier contexts there was the promise of discovery as well as a special kind of proximity to the past, its artifacts, even to a certain extent its physical settings. I sort of stumbled on my dissertation topic when I became curious about English



biblical translation before the so-called King James Version of 1611, which I had always assumed was the key text. But as I soon realized, a lot of complex and interesting questions about English as a literary and theological language converged in the 1380s and 1390s. I eventually settled on a project concerned with heresy, censorship, and the first full translation of Latin scripture into English, writing a dissertation that very conveniently overlapped with the birth of my first child. Both the child and the dissertation have grown into much larger projects; the latter is now a book, to be published later this year by Boydell & Brewer press.

AS: Outside of your teaching duties, are you working on (or have you recently worked on/been involved with) any interesting projects (research, articles, books, etc.)?

DL: I've had to focus a lot on polishing the book manuscript, but I've found time to publish articles on other topics as well, including clandestine printing in sixteenth-century Antwerp and, more recently, an eleventh-century adaptation of Exodus edited by J. R. R. Tolkien. The latter project had its genesis in a class I taught for the first time last semester called Tolkien: Fantasy, Scholarship, and Popular Culture. Allow me a brief, hopefully not too polemical digression here: when I started at Yeshiva, I worried that the teaching load would mean losing touch with my research. That's something every scholar with an active research agenda thinks about to some extent. But instead I've found that certain courses—those, for instance, where there is a lot of group discussion, a lot of vigorous engagement and restless debate—also shape the intellectual work I do beyond the classroom. Perhaps in part because of their immersion in Talmudic study and analysis, students here are good at asking counterintuitive questions, the ones I myself would not have thought to ask, and I think this is often where interesting research projects begin.

AS: What are some of your extracurricular interests?

DL: Being an English professor and utterly predictable, I'll say reading. Texts holding my attention at the moment include Philip Roth, *The Human Stain*; Ron Chernow's new Hamilton biography; poetry by Wallace Stevens; Dante's *Divine Comedy*; memoirs by Ta-Nehisi Coates and Gary Shteyngart;

and whatever strange or neglected item I can find in the rare books room at the Strand. I've come to enjoy film more in recent years and the classic old NYC venues like Film Forum, where I just saw Orson Welles' version of *Othello*. My curricular life unfolds uptown; my extracurricular one, downtown.

AS: Who are some of your favorite authors and thinkers? What are some of your favorite books?

DL: Well, some titles immediately come to mind: *Tristram Shandy*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Faerie Queene*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Blood Meridian*, *The Sound and the Fury*—I could go on. One of the few books I was actually required to read in high school was, appropriately enough, *Crime and Punishment*, by Dostoevsky; that may have been the text which first prompted me to hold religion and literature together within the same interpretive scope. There are also those books that have influenced to varying degrees my intellectual sensibilities and style. Favorites here include *The Making of the English Working Class*, by E. P. Thompson; *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, by Keith Thomas; and basically everything by Patrick Collinson and Roy Porter. These are all historians, mostly of early modern England, and yet they also seem relevant to me as a medievalist and a humanities scholar with a decidedly historicist orientation. Erich Auerbach and Marc Bloch are also favorites in this sense, especially the latter, a French historian and member of the Resistance whose work focused on feudalism but extended to a wide range of topics in medieval intellectual and social history.

AS: How (if at all) does your interest in ancient/classical texts relate to your interest in the works of Tolkien and Augustine?

DL: Tolkien might be a special case insofar as he was also a medievalist, having taught first at Leeds and then Oxford, and someone whose fiction was deeply intertwined with his philological scholarship. So he makes it necessary to span contexts and to think about how his work was in dialogue with much earlier traditions of English literature, such as those centered on *Beowulf*. Many students who have taken English 2010 or an INTC class with me have read something from Augustine, most often excerpts from his *Confessions*, a wide-ranging spiritual autobiography, or his writings on biblical interpretation. This also gives you some idea about the breadth of the Middle Ages as a concept and a methodological field: from fifth-century Latin theology and exegesis to twentieth-century fiction and fantasy.

AS: One of the classes you offer in YC is "The Monstrous." Could you briefly describe that class for the benefit of curious readers who might have noticed it in the course catalogue and wondered what "The Monstrous" was all about?

DL: This class began as a kind of trial run for the category of the core curriculum we refer to as *Cultures over Time*. It explores representations of monsters and the monstrous across different contexts, drawing on methods from literary and historical scholarship. The idea is that such representations reveal a lot about the cultures which produced them. We take an interdisciplinary approach to much of the material, which includes early historical writing from classical Greece and Rome, medieval werewolf stories, world maps depicting strange creatures at their edges, and first-hand accounts of witchcraft investigations. There's also a film component to the class; we kick off each semester with the famous "chestbuster" scene at the beginning of Ridley Scott's 1979 horror/sci-fi film *Alien*, and end the term with clips from David Cronenberg's 1986 remake of the *"The Fly."*

SEE LAVINSKY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

The Imprecise Nature of Calories

By Kochava London

Calories in < calories out = weight loss. This ubiquitous diet formula has been around for years, and is still propagated by reliable organizations today. According to the CDC, "To lose weight, you must use up more calories than you take in." Is it really that simple? Do our bodies operate like machines that perform precise mathematical calculations every time we eat?

Calorie counting and dieting are rampant in our society. According to the Boston Medical Center, 45 million Americans go on a diet every year. Many of these people count calories because they think that consuming fewer calories will result in weight loss. However, recent research indicates that the process of caloric absorption is much more complex than we think. It turns out that all calories are not created equal, and that nutrition labels are often inaccurate measurements of the amount of energy actually extracted from food.

Chemically speaking, a calorie is the amount of energy required to raise the temperature of one gram of water by one degree Celsius. The word "calorie" is actually derived from the Latin word calor, which means "heat." Calorie content can be calculated a number of different ways, and the FDA currently permits food manufacturers to use any of five different methods. Only some of these methods take into account the body's inability to digest certain dietary fibers, which means that many nutrition labels are inaccurate estimates of caloric content. This is why different brands of cashews, for example, can have different calorie contents - even though they are the exact same food, the calories were calculated using different methods.

In addition, there is a significant difference between the amount of calories listed on a label and the amount of calories actually absorbed. Research conducted last year at the Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center in Maryland found that people absorb about 30% fewer calories than what is listed on the nutrition facts for almonds, and about 20% fewer calories than the number listed for walnuts. Dr. David Baer, a physiologist at the research center, says this is because of the structure of nuts: "All the nutrients - the fat and the protein and things like that - they're inside this plant cell wall." The cell walls must be broken down through chewing and digestion for the calories to be absorbed. And because the cell walls aren't completely broken down, some of the calories are not absorbed and are eliminated.

Another factor to consider is that not all calories are created equal. After studying wild chimps in Africa in the 1970's, Dr. Richard Wrangham, an anthropologist at Harvard University, discovered that the chimps ate a completely raw diet of fruits, vegetables, seeds, and insects. Wrangham attempted to adopt this diet himself, but it left him ravenous. In his novel *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* (2009), he argues that cooking breaks down certain molecular structures in food, making it easier for people to digest. In one of his experiments, he fed raw peanuts to one group of rats and roasted peanut butter to a second group of rats. After a number of weeks, the rats fed the raw peanuts weighed less than the rats fed the peanut butter.

Wrangham's research demonstrates that cooking methods can significantly alter the amount of calories we extract from our food, yet nutrition labels do not take this into account. Based on his research, Wrangham proposed that the more processed a food is, the easier it is for our bodies to extract and absorb all of the calories, since processing involves exposing foods to extremely high temperatures and pressures. In other words, a 100-calorie bag of potato chips is not metabolized in the same way as a 100-calorie apple, which is why looking at calories alone can be misleading.

Another problem with counting calories is individual variation. Every person has a unique genetic makeup that determines his or her caloric needs and expenditure. Gender, height, weight, liver size, and stress level are only a few of the many factors that affect how many calories an individual burns. For example, the caloric requirements for two people of the same gender, age, and weight can vary by more than 600 calories!

One reason for this is that we have different gut microbes. Dr. Peter Turnbaugh of the University of Cali-

fornia transplanted gut microbes from a pair of twins into two groups of mice. One of the twins was obese and the other was average weight. All of the mice were fed the same diet, yet the mice who received the microbes from the obese twin gained considerably more weight. Turnbaugh concluded that "microbes might actually be contributing to the energy that we gain from our diet."

There is also considerable variability in individual glycemic response, as demonstrated by a recent study conducted in Israel. Over the course of a week, the researchers measured the blood sugar levels of 800 participants. They found that even when the participants con-

sumed the exact same foods, their glycemic responses varied greatly. This provides evidence that the glycemic index (GI), used to determine how specific foods will affect blood sugar, cannot be applied universally since glycemic response is such an individual phenomenon.

The presentation of these research findings is not intended to imply that calories are completely worthless, rather that calorie counts are merely estimates and should be regarded as such. They are far from being a precise measurement of energy absorption. Dr. Adam Drewnowski, an epidemiologist at the University of Washington, proposed that nutrition labels include a nutrient density score that considers the amount of nutrition per calorie, as opposed to only the number of calories.

It is important to remember that the human body is a complex organism that utilizes food in a variety of ways, only some of which are understood by scientists today. By turning eating into a numbers game, we fail to consider the nuances of nutrition and risk missing out on important vitamins and minerals that are present in many calorically dense foods, like nuts and seeds. These nutritious foods are metabolized differently by the body than their processed counterparts, and should certainly be included as part of a healthy diet.

"A 100-CALORIE BAG OF POTATO CHIPS IS NOT METABOLIZED IN THE SAME WAY AS A 100-CALORIE APPLE, WHICH IS WHY LOOKING AT CALORIES ALONE CAN BE MISLEADING."



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“By the Sweat of Your Brow”: Counter-Biblical Themes in the Movie WALL-E

By Moses Dyckman

If you are in a movie theater surrounded by toddlers, teenagers, adults and elderly people, odds are you’re watching a Pixar film. The studio has proved again and again their prowess at producing movies that are funny, colorful, and engaging enough to attract younger audiences, while illustrating thought-provoking ideas to bring in the adult crowd.

Take the movie WALL-E. It’s about the last robot on an abandoned earth, who, in pursuit of love, finds his way onto a spaceship filled with humans who have been infantilized by technology. There, he leads a rebellion to bring humanity back to earth. The movie has been praised for its intriguing ideas about politics, humanity, technology and conservation. However, very few critics have picked up the powerful biblical themes which run through the movie.

WALL-E can be compared with many biblical narratives, including the story of Noah. Here, I chose to focus on the most fruitful (pardon the pun) of the comparisons: the story of Adam and Eve. The premise of the movie is that there is a robot named WALL-E who lives entirely by himself on an isolated and trash covered earth. He is very lonely. Suddenly, a female robot named EVE is sent down to Earth. Sounds familiar, doesn’t it? Andrew Stanton, the director of WALL-E, said in an interview that he named the female robot “EVE” because WALL-E struck him as an Adam figure: all alone on Earth, longing for companionship.

The parallels don’t stop there. On Earth, EVE discovers a lone living plant, the film’s equivalent of the tree of knowledge. In the movie, EVE was built as a probe to search for growing plant life on earth: a sign that Earth is capable of supporting life again. When the plant is discovered by EVE, humanity leaves the indulgence of the starliners to return to the now habitable earth. Thus, EVE’s seizing of the “tree of knowledge” results in a fall from the comfort of a technological Eden to a harsh earth.

However, that does not mean that the movie has the same messages as the biblical story. Just the opposite! Everything that is evil in the Adam and Eve story becomes good in WALL-E. For example, the moral of Adam’s fall from grace is that he sinned because he disobeyed the instructions of G-d. On the other hand, WALL-E valorizes disobedience as a true expression of free will. For example, WALL-E is

literally programmed to do nothing but mindlessly compact trash into cubes. In spite of this, over the course of the movie, WALL-E and EVE are able to overcome their directives in pursuit of love. Andrew Stanton, the director of WALL-E, wrote that “It took these really irrational acts of love to sort of discover them against how they were built.” In other words, through their love, the robots discover that they are something greater than their constructors intended. In the story of Adam, it is repeatedly emphasized

“THE MORAL OF ADAM’S FALL FROM GRACE IS THAT HE SINNED BECAUSE HE DISOBEYED THE INSTRUCTIONS OF G-D. ON THE OTHER HAND, WALL-E VALORIZES DISOBEDIENCE AS A TRUE EXPRESSION OF FREE WILL.”

that he was a creation of G-d. Since his value is determined solely by fulfilling the purposes of his creator, eating from the tree of knowledge was a terrible sin. On the contrary, the creators of WALL-E believe that true value can only be found outside of the creator’s intentions.

WALL-E and EVE are not the only characters in the movie to resist their instruction. In fact, just about every character in the movie rebels, from the captain, who fights against complacency (and the ship’s autopilot) to bring humanity back to earth, to the robot M-O, who steps off his illuminated floor line to follow WALL-E’s dirty tracks. The only major character in the movie who is totally incapable of disobeying his instructions is AUTO, the villainous autopilot of the starliner “The Axiom”. He was instructed not to allow humanity to return to Earth and obeys those orders blindly, even when he sees the plant, evidence that earth is capable of supporting life again. By making the obedient character into the villain, the movie WALL-E creates a code of ethics which is completely different from the story of Adam.

Throughout the story of Eden, there is a motif of

dust and ground being associated with Adam. First of all, Adam is created from “dust from the ground”, which is the root of his name, Adam. However, this dirt aspect of man is portrayed as something crude, especially since it is juxtaposed with G-d breathing into Adam’s nostrils, the action which actually makes him a living soul. When G-d punishes Adam with mortality, he says that he will live “until you return to the ground, for you were taken therefrom, for dust you are, and to dust you will return,” associating man’s earthy beginnings with his mortality. Similarly, when Adam is exiled from Eden, the verse reads, “And the Lord God sent him out of the Garden of Eden, to till the soil, whence he had been taken,” which connects man’s punishment with his earthiness.

The Pixar movie also connects natural man with dust and earth. Earth, the planet, has become completely covered with dust, with dust storms occurring periodically. In contrast, the unnatural Axiom starliner is absolutely dirt free, to the extent that the sole purpose of one of the robots (M-O) is to eliminate filth. However, when WALL-E enters the Axiom, he simultaneously disrupts its mechanical routines with his human spontaneity and tracks dirt all over its pristine white floors. When he meets the human captain, he shakes the captain’s hand, leaving a dirty residue. The captain later analyzes that very dirt on the ship’s computer (which it defines as “earth”) which leads him to learn about and falls in love with planet earth and all the facets of natural human life, such as farming and dancing. In the end, the captain is so enchanted by Earth and natural man that he fights to bring the passengers of the Axiom back to a dusty Earth. This movie, unlike the Bible, shines a positive light on the earthy side of man, proclaiming that it is what makes us human.

In the same vein, the punishments which Adam received become blessings in WALL-E. Adam was also cursed that he would only be able to eat bread “with the sweat of his brow” through planting and harvesting. On the other hand, the humans of the Axiom fight for this very opportunity! They choose to abandon the comfort of the starliner so that they could grow their own food in the dust-filled desolation of earth. One of the final scenes of the film consists of happy human children planting a seedling on Earth while their captain exalts “This is

SEE WALL-E, CONTINUED ON PAGE 13



WALL-E , CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

called 'farming'! You kids are going to grow all kinds of plants: vegetable plants, pizza plants!" In the biblical story, Adam was cursed with mortality: "for dust you are, and to dust you will return." However, the humans of WALL-E are willing to risk death for a chance to return to earth. For example, AUTO, trying to dissuade the captain from returning to Earth, says "On the Axiom you will survive." To this, the human captain replies "I don't want to survive! I want to live!"

Despite all that I have written, there is one theme in WALL-E which is synonymous with the biblical story. When Adam is first created, "he placed him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to guard it." This verse implies that Adam has a responsibility to care for nature, an ecological duty. In the movie WALL-E, the human captain realizes that humanity has forsaken their responsibility by polluting and abandoning Earth. When the captain is watering the seedling which EVE retrieved from earth, he remarks "There you go little guy. You came a long way for a drink of water... Just needed someone to look after you, that's all--" and then glances symbolically at a globe of Earth lying on the floor. Even in the world of WALL-E, every human has an inherent responsibility to take care of the earth.

Though I earlier compared the Axiom to Eden, in some ways, Earth too has the capacity to become an Eden, if humanity works it and guards it. This is expressed in one of the last images of the film, a painting in which WALL-E and EVE stand in a green landscape, in the shade of a giant tree. By cultivating the earth, humanity has nurtured a new tree of life and created their own Eden.

LAVINSKY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

AS: What led you to come to YU? How has your experience teaching in YU differed from what you expected coming in?

DL: Well, I didn't quite know what to expect, to be honest with you. But while I had no personal connection to the school, I knew something about its history, its significance, a little about its curriculum. Also, a family friend of many, many years had graduated from Yeshiva in 1960 and spoke often of his time here, so when the job was listed, it caught my eye. I also very much wanted to return to the NYC area after enduring grad school in Michigan and promising myself I would never again live somewhere that resembled Hoth eight months of the year. When I finally had a chance to visit the campus for interviews, I was intrigued at the idea of a dual curriculum, even if my own checkered Hebrew School attendance record precluded any informed ideas about the yeshiva itself. But I immediately noticed that the kind of work students did in the morning program prepared them to frame texts and criticism in interesting ways, and that as a result I could do things here as a teacher and as a medievalist that would be impossible elsewhere. Here my research topics—religious belief and practice, hermeneutics, translation, Jewish-Christian relations in the Middle Ages, the history of the book—have a natural place in the undergraduate classroom. That would not be the case at most other colleges and universities.

AS: Many of your classes (e.g. Burning

to Read; Literature, Morality, and Entertainment; The Monstrous) are organized around original questions and concerns. What inspires you to craft these kinds of creative courses?

DL: Well, I think first of all this is something that characterizes the core curriculum, where there are many examples of innovative and deliberate course design. In my case, electives like Burning to Read also reflect the priorities of a department that has largely moved away from traditional models of literary-historical "coverage"—the overarching Brit Lit I and II surveys taught at so many other colleges and universities. Such courses have their uses, to be sure, but they also reinforce longstanding assumptions about canonicity and literary value; I worry that they invite the passive consumption of great books, when my interest instead is to embolden students to become active producers of knowledge, even in the routine practices of essay writing and class discussion. Listen, if in some lapse of good judgement Norton asked me to edit one of their anthologies, I probably wouldn't say no, but I think it's more often the case that literary texts actually disrupt secure frames of reference, and this is one thing my classes are designed to model. And I would hope that a student studying in the YC English curriculum would likewise learn to see himself as taking part in this larger enterprise of critical consciousness.



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Yeshiva University

An Interview with The Scope

By Benjamin Koslowe

Students, faculty, and those otherwise involved with Yeshiva College have likely by now encountered The Scope. Subtitled "YU's Comedic Lens," this new magazine garnered laughs across Yeshiva University from satirical articles about the new library mural, YU security policies, Rabbi Wieder's stance on women's issues, and more. This author had the opportunity to sit down and talk with those in charge of The Scope: Yaacov Bronstein, Daniel Goldstein, Devir Kahan, and Zach Sterman. Here is the inside scoop on The Scope.

Benjamin Koslowe: How did The Scope get started?

Yaacov Bronstein: Mr. Koslowe, I'd like to thank you and the rest of the moderators for asking that question. For years, the American people have been wondering precisely the same thing, and Washington certainly isn't providing the answers. When my father first came to this great country from Cuba in 1957, he brought with him the clothes on his back, a vehement hatred for Obamacare, and a love for writing comedy about YU campus topics. Thank you, and God bless the great state of Texas.

Benjamin: Thank you for that insightful answer. You are aware that this is a Commentator interview, not a Republican debate?

Yaacov: Mr. Koslowe, I will never apologize for my love for this great nation.

Zach Sterman: The Scope began as a political entity during our junior year at MTA. We ran a satirized campaign for the student we perceived as least interested in becoming president, and sure enough he went on to serve as vice president of MTA for a year. After tasting victory on the campaign trail, we pivoted away from the cutthroat world of politics to become MTA's official satire publication.

Benjamin: So did you just restart what you guys did at MTA, or is this somehow a new brand?

Yaacov: Progress is the backbone of our proud American Industry. This week in Ohio I met with a group of steelworkers who told me they don't like taxes. I'm proud to still believe in the American dream, Mr. Koslowe, and so are all the hardworking American dreamers. And despite what our current president has done to deliberately destroy this nation, our children will keep dreaming! God bless The Scope!

Zach: This is a new brand, as we are presenting to a new audience about new content. As satirists, our perspectives and skills have been honed since then, and we hope our work reflects that.

Benjamin: Thanks, Yaacov and Zach. Let's get a bit more specific. What do you envision that The Scope will achieve? Is it just about getting a chuckle out of YU folk, or is there something more?

Yaacov: We need to return to the ideals of our Founding Fathers. I am the only candidate who currently maintains a deep, romantic, and intimate relationship with the Constitution of the United States. I don't like terrorism. I like the Constitution. I promise the American people that as my very first act in office I will tear up every single amendment added to the Divine perfection that is the Constitution of the United States of America. I will ascend for 40 days and 40 nights, and return with a balanced budget and a God-given decree of destruction against Planned Parenthood.

Zach: Certainly it is our intention to make people laugh, but our publication intends to accomplish something a little deeper than that. While delivered humorously, the discussions we raise are relevant and real. That is the distinction between satire and comedy.

Daniel: Wow. Well said Zach.

Yaacov: I commend my colleague on an eloquent delivery.

Benjamin: Inspiring indeed. Devir, what would you like to add?

Devir: Without getting too philosophical here, I think that comedy, and the ability to laugh at things that may sometimes seem frustrating, is a good way to bring people together, and allow everyone at YU to feel a part of the same community. If everyone is able to see the same humor in the same things, and be able to talk about and discuss it, as Zach mentioned, I just think it creates a certain sense of unity. More fundamentally, college is stressful, midterms

Yaacov: Mr. Koslowe, I'm no career politician. I have no eloquent speeches, like my opponents. I'm just an ordinary American trying to speak my mind. I'm proud to represent the working man and average Joe, who have lost faith in the Washington establishment. When I speak, you don't hear the words of Super PACs and super lobbyists, you hear the voice of the American people. And that's a promise.

Benjamin: Ok then. Maybe let's direct the following question to someone else. What has the reception to The Scope been like? Has anyone been notably offended?

Daniel: The response has been very positive. We've received a lot of positive feedback and people are very excited to see something new like this on campus. Thankfully we think we've managed to write quality comedy while offending very few, although obviously when writing a comedy paper it can be very hard to not offend somebody.

Benjamin: What about the subjects of the articles? Did you hear about any reactions from YU security guards, Rabbi Wieder, etc.?

Zach: We've heard that Rabbi Wieder very much enjoyed it. That's the only specific reaction we have heard to-date.

Benjamin: Alright, you guys have been great. How about one final statement from each of you to wrap this up?

Yaacov: The American people have spoken, Mr. Koslowe, and their decision is clear. The Scope has swept the last few primaries, and we're polling way ahead going into Wisconsin. We're a movement funded by the people. Our average donation is only 37 cents, and by God, we will continue to accept all the spare change we can get from this proud nation.

Daniel: Like Yaacov so eloquently stated, we're very happy with the positive feedback on what we've done so far and we are eager to see what the future holds for The Scope.

Devir: Yup. There's not much more to say than that. We were really excited to launch The Scope, and we're just as excited to see where it goes. We hope the YU populace will join us.

Zach: We had a really good time writing the first edition of The Scope and we hope the YU student-body enjoyed it too. We are very excited to continue bringing great satire to our campuses.



are stressful, Lord knows YU as an institution can sometimes be stressful, and the ability to laugh at it all and relax a bit is always a good thing.

Zach: {Applauds}

Daniel: This racially diverse group of people think you did well {says while noting several emoji faces and hands}.

Benjamin: Can you guys talk about your status as a club, and the extent to which YU was willing to sponsor The Scope?

Yaacov: Mr. Koslowe, in 1776 when Ronald Reagan descended from Heaven to start this Godly nation, he didn't take handouts from the federal gov-

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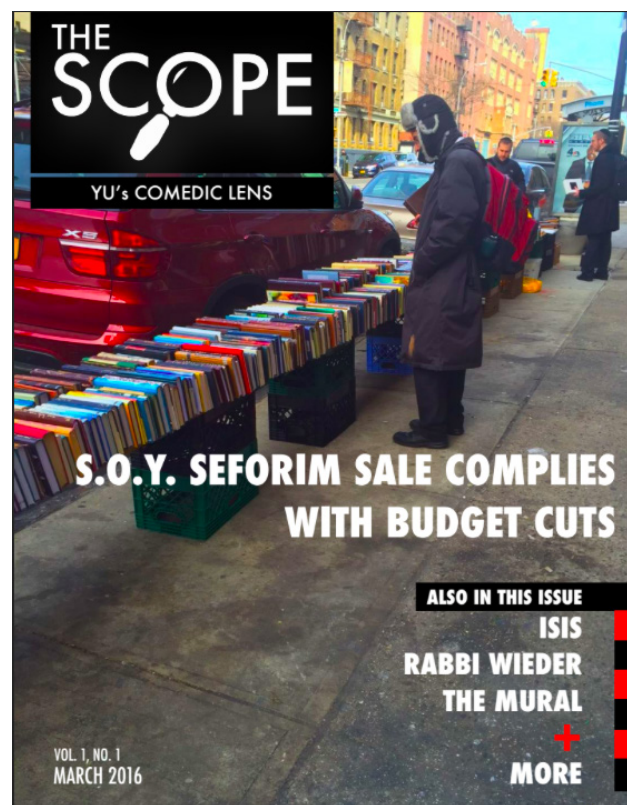
ernment. He rolled up his sleeves and got to work. I am the only candidate on this stage who has offered a viable plan to put a machine gun in the hands of every schoolchild in America, because our children deserve a Washington that works for them.

Zach: We are an unofficial club. We approached YU about becoming official, however, they expressed to us that they were uncomfortable sponsoring satire due its potentially offensive nature. In response, we worked very hard to keep our jokes in good taste and of good nature. We would be totally open to becoming an official club in the future.

Benjamin: Can students expect any more issues this semester?

Devir: More ever? We very much hope so, yes. More this semester? We'd rather not commit ourselves to a precise timeframe. Certainly, even in the absence of another print issue, we hope to be rather active online at scopeyu.com and on Facebook and Twitter (ScopeYU on both).

Benjamin: Bronstein, do you have anything non-debate-ish to add?



GREEKS, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

rah (19:46). If we truly accept this idea, we cannot rely on the opinions of Rambam, R. Hirsch, or R. Solovetichik, since they all read Western literature. For that matter, we could not trust R. Kahn himself, since this *sicha* reveals that he clearly knows Horace and the Greek etymology of “enthusiasm.” I think the contrary true. In many scenarios, we should prefer that Daas Torah, the application of Torah ideals to worldly questions, come from those with broader exposure since they have the knowledge of the outside world necessary to comment intelligently about it. In fact, R. Baruch Ber’s lack of exposure led him to misinterpret Rav Hirsch’s endorsement as of secular studies as an emergency measure, a *hora’at sha’ah*. Someone who had read R. Hirsch extensively and knew the nature of German Orthodoxy would have arrived at a different conclusion. According to my grandfather, R. Mordechai Pinchas Teitz, yeshiva students at Slobodka and Mir would eagerly gather around R. Pogromonski to discuss their philosophic questions. Apparently, there are some religious advantages to reading widely.

The mere fact that an idea comes from non-Jewish society does not in and of itself constitute reason to invalidate it. We should evaluate each idea based on its own merits. Democracy may have come from Western sources, but it has enabled the state of Israel to survive despite fierce disagreements within Israeli society. It has also safeguarded Jewish life, culture, and observance in America (and many other western democracies) in ways our forefathers living under Czars and Kings would have found unimaginable.

I once spoke at a Seattle high school about Rachel, the wife of R. Akiva. After the talk, a girl came over and informed me that they wanted to hear about Beruria and not about Rachel. Why is the Rachel model not good enough? “There is a Rashi in Avoda Zara, but I do not think she wanted to hear that Rashi” (followed by student laughter, 27:14). A Rashi about R. Meir asking a student to seduce Beruria because she did not like rabbinic comments about women is not something to joke about. The story is quite embarrassing; indeed, Rashi’s account includes R. Meir himself fleeing in shame. Moreover, why be negative about a girl who identifies with Beruria more than Rachel? Those who love Talmud Torah should appreciate someone who wants to learn herself and not only support the learning of others. Additionally, the entire question of husbands going away for extended periods to learn and leaving their wives behind is far more complex than one Talmudic story indicates. The same Talmudic section that cites the Rachel and R. Akiva story also mentions stories in which the husband gets punished for not coming home when he needs to (Ketubot 62b).

Sarah is megayes et ha’nashim, not et ha’anashim (38:38). Presumably, R. Kahn utilized this line as a rhetorical flourish and not as an argument. If this inference from the midrash indicates that Sarah did not teach the men, it also indicates that Avraham did not teach the women. This hardly supports the notion that men must have a more significant leadership role. In general, it is difficult to accept a haredi message about women’s more private roles when haredi kollel culture means that their women have to take jobs requiring much more exposure to the broader world than their men experience in the beit midrash. If supporting Talmud Torah can justify women in the workforce interacting with men and with secular Jews, then apparently other values can trump the privacy of a bat melek.

We should adhere to our mesorah about men and women’s roles as outlined in Rambam Hilkhos Ishut 15:20

(35:32). There, Rambam writes that the wife “should be in awe of her husband, base all her actions on his word, and view him as an officer or king.” Rambam does not here present the exclusive model of spousal interaction within our tradition. R. Aharon Lichtenstein writes in a 2005 Tradition that issues between spouses such as “areas and degrees of authority and responsibility, the prioritization of respective individual interests, the nature of decision making” are mostly *devar hareshut*, “an area not axiologically neutral but neither fully normative, with regard to which personal preference, with a possible eye upon meaningful variables is characteristic. In a word, they are subject to the discussion, predilection and decision of individual couples.” Given the element of flexibility regarding these questions, we need not feel compelled to adopt Rambam’s model. Does R. Kahn think we should follow Rambam’s position that a woman should only leave the house once or twice a month (*Ishut* 13:11)?

Feminism has brought challenges to traditional society, but its influence has not been purely negative. Halakha is clearly not egalitarian and we must oppose a feminism that downplays the significance of having and raising children. At the same time, added Torah-study opportunities for women enable many in our community to practice a more profound and committed Judaism. About a century ago, the Mishneh Berura (489:3) advised women not to count *sefirat ha’omer* with a *berakha* since they do not know the meaning of the words. Is such ignorance an ideal that we strive to return to, or are we happy that women are currently more educated?

“Mashiach comes by recreating yiddishkeit. No different than mashiach comes when he doesn’t come and you say he came” (44:20). Given the negative nature of much rabbinic discourse about Christianity, this comparison is rhetorical overkill. Is the initiative to ordain female rabbis the equivalent of a false messiah?

Al Hanssim refers to a clash with Jewish Hellenizers who are the “zeidim” (3:40). Elya Rabba does mention one interpretation that *zeidim* refers to Jews, but he also cites an alternative reading that the term is about the Greeks. Chazal certainly do not emphasize the internal Jewish battle in their depiction of Chanukah (Shabbat 21b), perhaps because they did not want to celebrate an internal Jewish struggle. Ironically, a portrayal of Chanukah that stresses the Jewish Hellenizers relies on non-Chazal sources, such as the Book of Maccabees.

“No one wants to reject the culture around him because that alienates you and makes you feel that you don’t belong and everyone wants to belong” (11:10). This statement attributes an ulterior motive to those looking for expanding women’s leadership roles in our community. They are not motivated by ethical and religious values but by a desire to fit in. Attributing negative motivations to your opponents is an unfair tactic that avoids discussing the real issues. We could easily think of ulterior motives driving those of a more conservative bent on women’s issues. The argument would then degenerate into competing accusations of misogyny and imitating the gentiles. Rather than each side accusing the other of bad faith, it behooves us to keep the debate centered on matters of substance.

R. Kahn’s approach to these topics reflects larger tendencies in the YU world. YU Roshei Yeshiva rarely mention the benefits of a good university education and never talk about problems on the right. They frequently complain about the Orthodox left, very often with an intensive focus on women’s issues. Those who promote more ritual opportunities for women are compared to heretical groups such as the Sadducees. Excessive frequency and vehemence reveal lack of proportion and perspective. A more nuanced discourse would promote a far healthier institutional and communal atmosphere.

This current mode of discourse has three negative ramifications. What impact does it have on students to hear several of their rabbim adopt positions in direct opposition to the entire philosophy of the institution they teach at? If secular studies and encountering the broader world are truly so pernicious, then the students should not be attending YU, and the Roshei Yeshiva should be teaching elsewhere. Furthermore, this type of expression may please some students currently in YU, but it drives others away. Students who could have attended Yeshiva hear this *sicha* and immediately find NYU and Maryland more attractive. A fellow looking for a more moderate rabbinic voice now chooses other semikha programs over RIETS. The larger Jewish community becomes more estranged from Orthodoxy. Finally, this model trains students to adopt cynicism and negativity as basic character traits.

Both Yeshiva University and the larger Jewish world would benefit from hearing other notes sounded by YU *Roshei Yeshiva*. Of course, they can continue to voice important opposition to left wing innovations, but those criticisms should be balanced: after all, many difficulties lurk on the right as well. Furthermore, criticism should maintain a healthy sense of proportion. Not every innovation is invalid, nor is every mistake an act of heresy. Proportion also requires avoiding obsessively talking about the same battles all the time. A softer and more nuanced critical voice would significantly enhance the honor of Torah and Am Yisrael.

Rabbi Yitzchak Blau is a Rosh Yeshiva and Shana Bet R”AM at Yeshivat Orayta in Jerusalem.



The Glueck Beit Midrash: A View From the Outside

By Mindy Schwartz

I've only been to the Wilf Campus about four times in my first year in Stern, but each time I go I always make the same stop. I walk up to the big glass windows that line the Glueck Beit Midrash and look inside. Peeking through the blinds, I take in the handsome, massive room, the grand *aron kodesh*, the towering shelves stuffed with *sefarim*. I try to count the clustered tables and the students that hunch over them, beside hills of more *sefarim* and notebooks.

My friends usually have the same reaction to my pit stop: frustration. They can't understand why I like to look at the beit midrash so much. From 8:15 till 9:00 am every morning of the school week, I sit with my *chavruta* and prepare for my Gemara class in the Stern Beit Midrash, a beautiful but undeniably small room on the seventh floor of 245 Lexington. "Don't you resent this enormous hall?" they wonder. "Doesn't it make you feel upset, jealous, inadequate?"

"Of course it does," I always say.

But it also makes me feel something very different. Something that took a long time to understand.

It makes me happy.

Not because I've deluded myself into thinking I'll ever get a chance to learn in a place like that, at least not any time soon. Looking through into the Glueck Beit Midrash makes me feel optimistic for the Jewish future, even though it makes me sad about my own present experience.

A few months ago I was talking to a boy in YU at some event or other and as the conversation began to dwindle, he asked me what Jewish classes I was taking. I said Shoftim and Gemara. His face screwed up as he processed, and after a moment he said,

"You're taking Gemara? Why would you ever want to?"

"I enjoy it," I said simply.

"But Gemara is so dull," he pushed.

"I'm sorry you feel that way, but I think it's really fun."

Since I started taking my Gemara learning (and women's learning in general) more seriously last year, I have had tons of conversations that start just like that one. I've been approached by handfuls of men and women, boy and girls, who all want to know why I do this or think that. I try not to get into disputations with people about women's learning. The returns are always almost nonexistent, and I always walk away with a ball in my throat.

But that hasn't stopped people from trying to argue. Many people choose to challenge women like me, even though

all we want to do is end the interrogations so we can focus on actually learning. Our sincerity, our intellectual capability, and even our *yirat shamayim* have been brought into question more times than I like to think about. Of course these comments hurt, and I don't know if I'll ever be numb to their sting. But it's comments like the one from that boy from YU that bring me the most sadness.

**"WE SHARE THAT PASSION.
WE LOVE THE SAME THING.
WE PROTECT IT WITH OUR
EVERYTHING. I SEE THAT WHEN I
LOOK INTO GLUECK."**

People who challenge women's learning for all the other reasons do so because they sincerely care about Torah and want desperately to protect it. They fear the rising tides of feminism or egalitarianism; they gaze at the rapidly changing world with horror and suspect women who learn Gemara of hiding in a Trojan horse. They are afraid to share their treasure with us because they think we will spoil its purity with an agenda. That we will taint it, subvert it, crush it. They want to guard

their precious treasure from bandits.

But this boy wasn't trying to protect Torah from some bra-burning interloper. Because people like this boy don't really understand why anyone would want to protect it all.

And, for me, that is much sadder than some misguided opinion on women's learning.

I know that Gemara learning isn't for everyone, boys or girls. Not everyone connects to that sort of logic and nitpicking that I, and many others, find so thrilling. *Chanoch l'naar al pi darko*.

But I've heard too many boys say that they just don't understand why I would want to learn, or why I even care, for me to think it's only about *al pi darko* here.

What I see is a lot of young men disenchanted with fundamental texts of our faith, ones that they have been staring at since elementary school. Boys that just can't understand why a girl would fight to learn Gemara when all they want is to escape it. And many of them have escaped.

That is why I love peering through the windows of Glueck. Sure, I wish with all the stardust from every fairytale that I could learn in a room just like that one. That I could sit at a table like those, surrounded by all the wonderful, passionate women of the Stern Beit Midrash, and debate a *sugyah* with my lovely *chavruta*. That I could run to shelves sagging with *sefarim* and pull one off, bring it to our table, and prove my point with the words of an *acharon's* commentary.

But at least there are enough young men who really do feel the passion of Torah, who value it and want to protect it, to fill this massive room. Sitting there is a huge number of men who see the treasure of Torah. Who think learning is fun. Who enjoy it. Who have sat through yeshiva day school, yeshiva high school, one or two years in Israel, and now Yeshiva University and haven't let that treasure dull its shine.

And that makes me optimistic about our future, as the Jewish People.

Maybe some of these men would like to protect the treasure from "bandits" like me. But at least we all see it for what it is. A treasure. Worth treasuring.

We share that passion. We love the same thing. We would protect it with our everything. I see that when I look into Glueck.

So even as the stardust grows stale around me, how can I not be happy? At least a little.



Trump Rally Equivalent

By ~~Donald J. Trump~~ Daniel Luxenberg

Thank you very much for reading this article. I love you, I really do. And you love me. I know you do, because who wouldn't? I'm great. I've written two great articles for this paper. I have two fantastic internships. I attend the best Jewish University ever. But I'm willing to put everything on hold in order to write this article for this paper. Pretty great, huh?

Oh, you're scrolling down? Closing this link? Get out of here! I don't need you. I'll get a hacker to shut off your computer. Just ask the many, many, the most actually, people in the university, (and probably the world, but we won't get into that here), reading my articles.

I'm the leading writer for this paper. When people click the link to this wonderful paper- by the way, one of the best run papers in the world. The editor-in-chief, a very good friend by the way. Very, very smart and talented person. It's people like him who I surround myself

with: the smartest people in the world read my articles before I publish them. Obviously I have final say. But the smartest people. I've written some pretty great articles.

I want to give you the access to my knowledge in order to better form your opinion about the goings-on of the world. Who better to do that than me? I mean- students write and write and write. They write what the administration tells them to write! They are controlled by the administration of this school. Richard Joel? Controls the writers. Not all of them. Some of them. Most of them. Not me. I don't need their ideas. I have the best ideas.

Some of the writers for this paper- they're young and weak. They are liars. A lot of them lie. I don't lie to you, because the administration can't control me. I don't need access to their information, because I'm the smartest person. I attend the best Jewish University. Still do. And when I'm an alum, I'll donate a wing. I could donate



two, but I'll see how they treat me.

~~And who's going to pay for the wall? Mexico!~~

Thank you. Thank you very much.

Jewish Self-Interests Must Not Trump Basic Values of Humanity

By Judah Kerbel

I left my first AIPAC Policy Conference with a strong feeling of optimism and inspiration, on the whole. The major takeaway for me was AIPAC's ability to compel people to "come together," as was the conference way, with respect and kinship, in a way that is not replicated almost anywhere in the United States. 18,000 people came together with the shared goal of supporting the United States-Israel relationship, representing an extremely diverse makeup of religious, political, and ethnic backgrounds. As part a program for the Leffell Fellowship for rabbinical students, an Orthodox rabbi and Reform rabbi sat together on panel, discussing why they love Israel, drawing from their own set of values and experience. The theme for the Leffell segment of the conference was "Unity vs. Unanimity" – and indeed, the sort of *achdut* (unity) that we preach about becomes more real at AIPAC than any place else I've been. This is what I like to think about when people have asked me about the conference.

Before Donald Trump took the stage at the Verizon Center on Monday night of the conference – 72 hours after I arrived in DC – his appearance was not a popular topic of conversation, and I was happy that this was so. It would be a pity for his divisiveness to block out all that was good at this conference. I have generally felt that media and social media have turned Trump into a *hock* (chatter) that only fuels all that is undesirable about him, and thus I would not have wanted to focus an entire article talking about him. But I feel that what happened at Policy Conference when Trump spoke requires comment. While the internet has been saturated with commentary on this incident, I feel compelled to speak to an audience of what perhaps will be the future leadership of the Modern Orthodox community, the Jewish community, and even the larger American society. As our institution encourages us to be engaged with the world while remaining grounded in Torah values, we must remain acutely aware of our mandate in this context.

First, let us remind ourselves about whom we are talking. The New York Times, as of March 4, had documented a "complete list" of "The 202 People, Places and Things Donald

Trump Has Insulted on Twitter." That, as columnist David Brooks reports, amounts to 33 pages of Donald Trump insults. It is clear that Trump is not someone who deals with substantive policies, but rather stoops to bigotry (racism, misogyny, xenophobia) to attack people with whom he disagrees. This is a man who the former ADL chief Abraham Foxman, a Holocaust survivor, fears is successful specifically because of his hate mongering. When Trump asked supporters to raise their hands and pledge their allegiance to him, Foxman commented "to see an audience of thousands of people raising their hands in what looks like the 'Heil Hitler' salute is about as offensive, obnoxious and disgusting as anything I thought I would ever witness in the United States of America... to see it at a rally for a

legitimate candidate for the presidency of the United States is outrageous."

With all of this in mind, it goes without saying that AIPAC's invitation to Trump met controversy. While I cannot speak for AIPAC, the following thoughts reflect my own perception of the situation. Generally speaking, AIPAC invites all presidential candidates to speak during an election year. In its commitment to serving as a bi-partisan organization focused on the single issue of the US-Israel relationship, AIPAC invited the leading Republican candidate. Its several warnings issued to delegates to be respectful throughout the conference suggests that AIPAC was aware of the negative feelings in the air surrounding this issue at the very least, and perhaps it even suggests that the organization itself felt some discomfort dancing this dance of having to invite a candidate whose values counter their own. Many who lean liberal or progressive believe AIPAC, in this laser focus on the bi-partisan support of the US-Israel relationship, lacks moral backbone in standing for other important values. While none of the religious movements dissented with AIPAC's decision, many Reform and Conservative rabbis organized a walk-out to study Torah on *derekh erez* to counter Trump's messages, their movement arms issued statements warning

"TO MY UTTER SHOCK (I HAVE BEEN NAÏVE BEFORE), I HEARD THE ERUPTION OF APPLAUSE AND SAW STANDING OVATIONS ON THE SCREENS OUTSIDE THE ARENA AS TRUMP PANDERED TO THE CROWD, DESPITE HIS DISCLAIMER THAT HE DID NOT COME TO PANDER."



against Trump's values, and Orthodox rabbis wrote an open letter to Trump calling on him to use this opportunity to recant his many problematic statements.

My personal opinion is that AIPAC, as an organization, can only remain successful if it remains bi-partisan and stays out of other issues because "*tafasta merubeh, lo tafasta; tafasta mu'at, tafasta*" – take on too much, and the whole thing is guaranteed to fall apart. There are many organizations that can, and do, lead the effort in dealing with whatever political or moral issues face our society. It is vital that we maintain bi-partisan support for Israel, which is not to be taken for granted anymore, and therefore

AIPAC must maintain relationships with all politicians to the best of its ability. There are few other places, if any, where all of the presidential candidates come to speak, where both Yitzhak Herzog and Binyamin Netanyahu come to speak, and where the House Majority Leader and Minority Whip speak in conversation. It is also clear that AIPAC's invitations to candidates do not serve as endorsements of their views. It simply provides an important opportunity to get candidates on the record regarding policies affecting Israel, and it also acknowledges that whoever gets elected president is with whom AIPAC have to work. The need to secure the US-Israel relationship will not disappear even if we have to fight a president on other policies he maintains that we must abhor. None of this means, though, that AIPAC as an organization buys into what Trump believes whatsoever, and I think it would be absurd to suggest so.

At the same time, I felt that the *people* who make up AIPAC's delegation have the power and responsibility to act as individuals aware of Trump's problematic character. I chose to walk out quietly as Trump approached the stage. Loud demonstrations only add fuel to fire, yet I did not want to have to tell my grandchildren one day that I sat complicit as a dangerous demagogue was rising to power. My experience this past summer on the Fellowship at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics engrained in me the moral obligation, as a future rabbinic professional, to smell evil where it is to be found – what Professor Donald Nicholls termed the "discernment of spirits" – and I see this issue through the prism of my experience in Europe. But many rabbis across the denominational spectrum chose to remain inside for the speech, knowing that they were not going to applaud or cheer Trump and concerned with what

he would say, and I respect that decision. And in that vein, I expected that the crowd in general would at best politely applaud while remaining relatively lukewarm in comparison to other candidates. I have already received pushback for my nuance on this issue, but I thought it could work. In short, I understand why people stayed in for his speech, even though I did not, and I understand why some people were upset that AIPAC invited in him the first place, even though I see the merits.

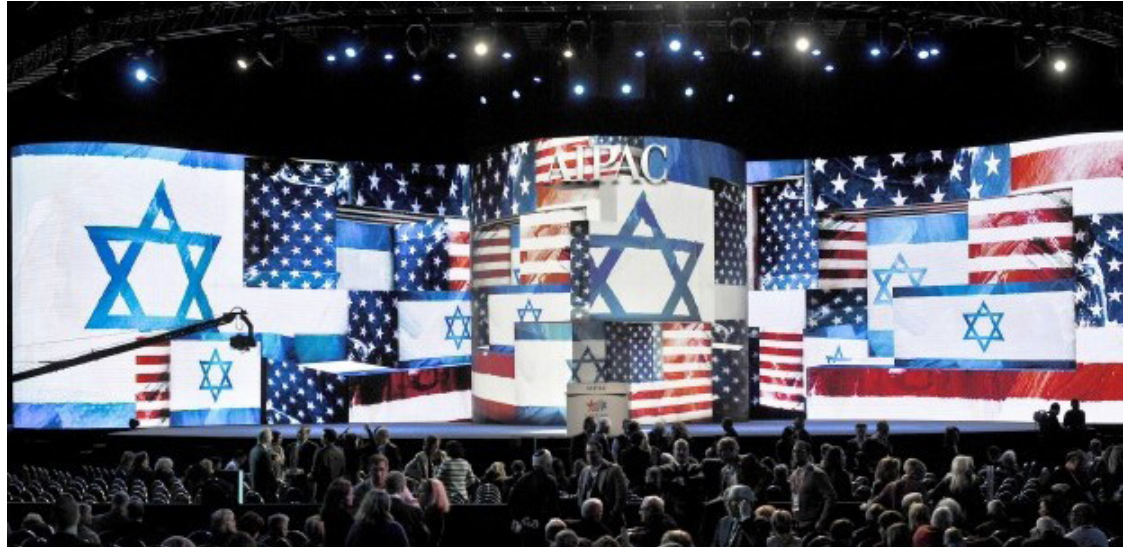
To my utter shock (I have been naïve before), however, I heard the eruption of applause and saw standing ovations on the screens outside the arena as Trump pandered to the crowd, despite his disclaimer that he did not come to pander. Granted, it's unclear exactly what proportion of the audience cheered, but all reports indicate that it was significant that it cannot be dismissed. For some people, it only mattered that they heard what they wanted to hear (regardless of glaring contradictions with reality or his own previous statements). For some people, it only mattered that he was entertaining. What did not matter was that the context of this speech was his campaign that stands antithetical to American or Jewish values. It

SEE AIPAC, CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

AIPAC, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

did not matter that he himself has never, in his entire career, been someone we would want our children to see as a role model. There was a pervasive myopia in the room as a man, who has a strong record of denigrating others, received so much applause because it seemingly serves our own purpose. The story could have been that AIPAC invited Trump out of its necessity to fulfill its mission, while its constituency faced him with critical minds and hearts. Instead, some delegates made it seem as if the Jewish community is blind to the risk of other minorities in our country. Interestingly, someone I know overheard two people in conversation the next day, expressing their embarrassment that they had applauded. It is scary how quickly Trump was able to win over hearts when he, in an unprecedented manner, presented what he believed from a well thought-out script.

To be sure, the next day, AIPAC issued an apology, chastising delegates for cheering when Trump said, “this is Obama’s final year of the presidency – yay!” because it does not condone ad hominem attacks on leaders. What’s telling, though, is the last sentence, which states, “Let us pledge to each other that in this divisive and tension-filled political season that we will not allow those that wish to divide our movement—from the left or the right—to succeed in doing so.” While one particular comment seemed to cross the line, Trump’s unique ability to be as divisive as he is, when elections are always divisive, is extremely frightening. One person I encountered after this episode was upset that the AIPAC president was expressing what was “personally offensive to her.” Perhaps, though, there is a slight possibility that the leadership was genuinely concerned that AIPAC’s mission was in the process of being undermined by people letting their



emotions and opinions overcome the serious importance of maintaining an atmosphere of *derekh erez* towards the leadership of our country in this setting.

I assume that this readership generally cares about Israel strongly, and many of AIPAC’s concerns are our concerns also. There are two final things to note. First, as carriers of the “Never Again” slogan, we must be extremely sensitive when someone presents bigoted views against other groups. Whether or not Trump is comparable to Hitler, we must take him seriously when he shares ideas about discriminating against Muslims and Mexicans, and as a student of history, there is what we must learn from our past in this respect. There were Catholic leaders in Germany who stayed away from criticizing the Nazi party, even though it was opposed to its values, because they feared it would be self-defeating, and they figured the Jews would

help themselves. We must not repeat that mistake by leaving our brains at the door when such a demagogue panders to our own interests. Second, what I see not just in the context of AIPAC, but also in the context of the Orthodox community and Religious Zionist community, is a plaguesome inability to stand for nuanced and civilized conversation. I am also scared of apathy often found in our generation, and so I believe in the importance of passion for important causes, and Israel’s security is one of them. But we desperately need to learn how to check our own cynicism and self-certainty when we engage with others if we truly desire to fix what is broken. We need to look at ourselves in the mirror and figure out how we will rally behind leadership that can deal with these issues in a way that does not cause strife and division, but instead allows people to “come together.”



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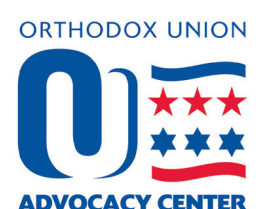
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The Case for a Medical Humanities Minor

By Tzvi Levitin

The pre-med track, consisting of a grueling set of requirements and high-pressured demands for specific extra-curricular activities, often leaves students feeling disconnected from their ultimate goal of becoming doctors. Over the course of spending three to four years enduring the pains of organic chemistry, calculus, and physics, it becomes tempting to perceive undergraduate education as nothing more than a series of boxes to check off, and the pressures of pre-med reduce the desire to heal people into a desperation to maintain a good GPA.

Personally, I've immensely enjoyed most of my hard science courses at YU; they've deepened my understanding of how the world works, piqued my interest in specific areas of medicine, and helped me establish a solid network of knowledge that I'm confident I can build upon in my future studies and career. However, I realized after my first year at YU that I was losing sight of what lay at the center of my interest in pursuing medicine: a desire to understand the human condition.

Knowing how to diagnose and treat illness is only a part of practicing medicine. Jack Coulehan, Professor Emeritus at the Center for Medical Humanities and Bioethics at Stony Brook University, claims that being a doctor "requires communication skills, empathy, self-awareness, judgment, professionalism, and mastering the social and cultural context of personhood, illness, and health care." Stony Brook, along with many other schools, including Columbia, Yale, and Boston University, offers a medical humanities program to

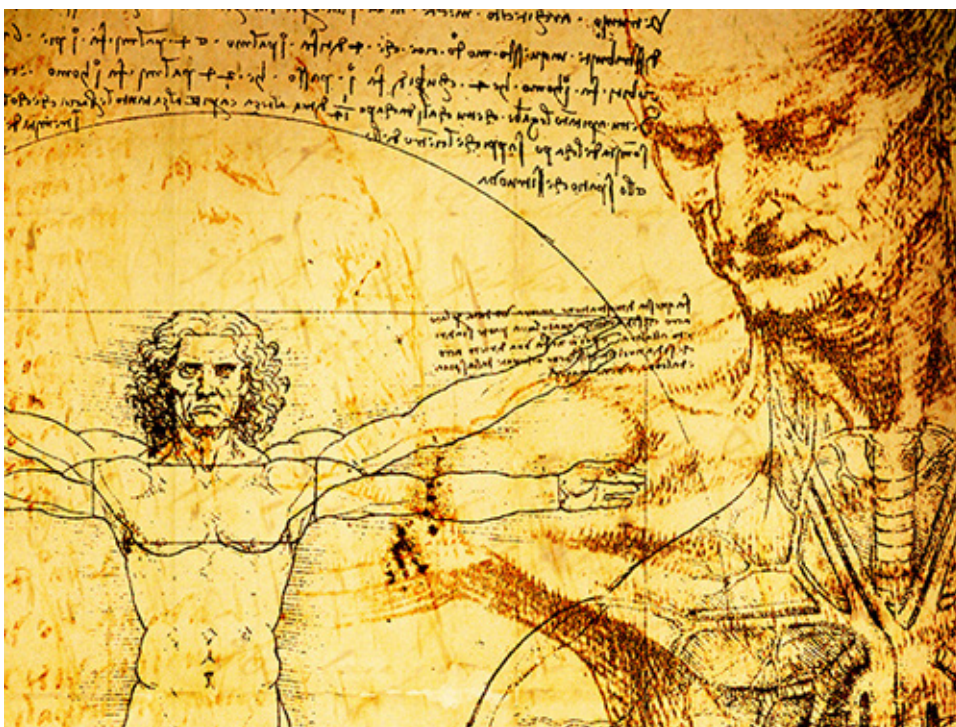
help students go beyond the physiology of medicine and understand the social, economic, political, and ethical influences on health and medicine.

The medical profession is changing at a rapid pace: doctors are becoming more specialized, Obamacare is changing how hospitals run, and new technologies such as genome editing and artificial organs are challenging doctors to confront new ethical dilemmas in their pursuit of providing health and satisfaction to

education should reflect the non-scientific factors that may influence our professions as well. Just like organic chemistry provides the basis for understanding how biological pathways and drugs function, medical humanities may lay a foundation for grappling with major problems that will face the medical profession in the future.

Yeshiva College already offers several interdisciplinary courses exploring the intersection between medicine and the humanities. One of my favorite courses I've taken so far at YU, Professor Daniel Kimmel's Medical Sociology, explored topics like the history of the medical profession, the medicalization of deviance, and the constantly evolving jurisdiction of medicine. This course, more than any of the biology or pre-med courses I've taken at YU, shaped my perception of the field I seriously considered pursuing. Other courses, such as Bioethics, Health Economics, Medical Psychology, and Psychopharmacology - a new course coming to YC next semester - investigate the relationship between medicine and social sciences.

With YU's new plan to revitalize minors, a Medical Humanities minor may not be so far off. The administration's new approach to the core curriculum encourages students to supplement one or two interdisciplinary core courses with four or five other courses related to an area of interest. While a discussion of the changes (or lack thereof) to the core would require an entirely different article, the new system allows students to have more control over their education, which I believe is a move in the right direction. I can't wait to see which new minors take shape over the next few years at YU, and I hope Medical Humanities will find a place amongst them.



their patients. By the time current undergraduate students enter the medical field, it will likely look vastly different than it does today. In addition to addressing developments in medical research and technology, our

My Sad Stomach

By Jake Schrier

Since starting YU two years ago, one of my favorite places to eat has been Golan Heights. Scratch that, one of my favorite things in general has been Golan Heights. "Golan is the best!" I used to tell everyone. Who doesn't love that awesome laffa, the one that no actual human needs to eat in one sitting, but does anyway? Golan was always there for me. I would have Golan on a random Thursday night with friends. I would have Golan after taking a tough midterm. I would have Golan to break a fast. I would have Golan on pretty much any occasion possible. But recently, I've been inhabiting Chop Chop instead.

As I'm sure you all know by now, Golan is no longer on YU's Omni Card plan. The fact that it is no longer on the plan is upsetting, but the manner in which this occurred is way more irritating to me personally. I overheard people discussing the recent Golan scandal and I highly disagree with the way many present the details. Are there two sides to every story? Yes. However, in this particular story, it's impossible to ignore the fact that one of the sides actively steals money. Golan has very legitimate claims against YU. Golan has every right to cry foul when its business partner acted unethically. It isn't fair that YU decided to add more money to the student restaurant plan and allowed students to refill their cards independently, all without informing Golan. (Let's assume that Golan is telling the truth on this one). If this were my business, I would probably be very upset. What would my course of action be? Hmm. Well, I could go to the other party and state my issues and work out a new deal that is more beneficial to both parties involved. Another option would be to cut the deal entirely and walk away. There are many logical next steps, but you know what isn't one of my options? STEALING!!!

Since when is it permissible to steal money from innocent people? Since when is it acceptable to then

claim, after acknowledging that you stole, that you were entitled to steal that money? And to think, they didn't even apologize for the misconduct. It is this sheer audacity on the part of Golan's owners that gets me.

Here is my favorite part. A Y-Stud that went out last week stated that there have been students who were "mistakenly charged sales tax" at Golan. In fact, it wasn't

" I JUST DON'T FEEL RIGHT SUPPORTING A PLACE THAT STEALS FROM ITS CUSTOMERS, EVEN IF IT MAKES EXCELLENT FOOD."

a "mistake" at all- Golan specifically said that they carefully chose each victim to charge the additional tax to. The email urged students affected by this unfortunate mistake to "Please bring your receipt to the restaurant and speak to the manager, who will refund any sales tax collected." When was the last time anyone in the history of the caf card took a receipt? And if they are referring to the online receipts, those only date back to January, but how long has Golan been stealing from us?

So all of those sneaky sales taxes are gone. And they add up. For those of us who inhabited Golan frequently (and again, we were the ones they claimed to specifically target, as ridiculous as that sounds), we probably lost a good amount of money. So where does that leave us now? With no formal apology, or even an acknowledgement of error, I see no option to eat at Golan. It's possible my stance will change if I simply can't resist, but for over 80 days now I have not eaten Golan, by far the longest streak since starting YU in August of 2014.

(This 80 day streak includes winter break. I returned to the Heights eager for my laffa, only to find out the bad news). I just don't feel right supporting a place that steals from its customers, even if it makes excellent food. And to be honest, maybe a part of me hopes that they will see revenues decrease and realize they need to apologize and get back on the caf card plan. Until then, I'm just left with this sad stomach.



Marketing YU's Latest Graduate School Program

By Dovid Simpser

The Syms administration is constantly updating and reinvigorating the programs they offer. For example, over the past few years, the faculty has refocused the major concentrations, making the majors more distinct and focused. More recently came the creation of the Business Honors and Entrepreneurship Leadership Program along with the Kukin Lecture Series. Continuing in this trend of adapting to a changing business environment, The Sy Syms School of Business, with the support of The Mordecai D. and Monique C. Katz School of Graduate and Professional Studies at Yeshiva University, is launching a fully online M.S. in Marketing Program. This is the first offering from the Katz School, with the inaugural class beginning August 29th.

What is a M.S. in Marketing, you might ask? Speaking with Dr. Tamar Avnet, Chair of the Marketing Department, she explained that an M.S. in Marketing is a master's degree that "Specializes in digital and social media, mainly in the application of projects done online with online tools." This degree gives one the ability to strategize, create advertising campaigns, and fully utilize online tools to make a successful marketing scheme.

The year-long program is comprised of three semesters, adding up to a total of thirty credits. The first three core marketing courses in the first semester will be marketing management, buyer behavior, and applied research. Dr. Maria Blekher, Director of the Online M.S. in Marketing Program, explained that "Every person in marketing has to know this, whether in digital [marketing] or not. This is the basis." The remaining courses will be divided up into data analysis and analytics, digital media, social media, advanced social media and advertising, business communications, and brand management. This will be a pyramid of advanced class-

es built on the three core basis classes students take in their first semester.

According to Professor Avnet, the program is unique in that "Unlike a regular brick and mortar [school], where there are three courses in the first semester with each professor providing their own assignments and projects, we designed the program in the way that the first three courses were created together in collaboration. Although students see separate modules in each course, we know what is being taught. There is no overlap in material. We know exactly what will be taught and when." This helps provide similar casework and projects, but focused through the lens of each course respectively. Professor Avnet told me that "Students will be able to attack business cases from all different angles, which is what happens in the real world. So this program will be much more coherent and fun for students than having to take courses that were designed separately."

The program is designed to meet the needs of early and mid-career marketers seeking new skills for career advancement, as well as for professionals working in related fields like graphic design, social media, journalism, photography and video, who want to pursue a career in marketing.

Dr. Blekher explained that "In order to step forward, to take the next job, to get to the C [corporate] level, marketing professionals have to be industry leaders. Taking a digital marketing course is an option, and you will get some tools, but if you get a degree you will get the science behind the strategy. A leader should be able to understand and analyze the "why" behind the "how". We will provide our students with the tools, but we will also provide our students the background, the logic, and the theory behind how things are done – and this is very valuable." She continued, "It is not just clicking

on buttons, which we all can learn very fast, but actually understanding why you are clicking on this button and what will happen if you change something. Business environment and marketing environment are constantly changing, so our job is to create a graduate who can be able to think and make decisions based on the changing environment."

The difference between The Katz School for Graduate and Professional Studies and Sy Syms School of Business master's degree and the undergraduate marketing degree is that having a master's degree can help propel your career to the managerial level. It will give you the knowledge and ability to get to the next level. Professor Avnet explained that "If you received a degree in marketing, it's not like you can now be a brand manager; if you major in finance, it's not like you can directly become a managing director. Obviously one way of getting the knowledge to become a brand manager or a managing director is by working for ten years. Another way is to work for three or four years and then get a graduate degree."

This program is a great step into a bright future for YU. In a hopeful tone Professor Avnet said: "Online degrees are taking off, and this will be the pioneer program for Yeshiva University to start with. If we are good at it, if we attract many students, we can take off from there and develop more similar programs. We chose marketing because the online platform of digital media and social media fits so well as the students will be working online [in their professions]. These are people who shouldn't be afraid of technology. It's a great fit of what you will do with your life when you graduate and what the program can offer."

Pixie Home

By Adam Kramer

Pixie Technologies, a startup co-founded by two Israelis and currently based in Los Altos California, is hoping to create a product and network to ensure that no one loses anything ever again. They are pioneering a technology that matches location trackers (they call them Pixie Points) that can be attached to items, with a mobile app that directs the user to the item's location, using walking instructions and augmented reality video. According to their website, Pixie's technology is accurate to a measure of inches, and this is clearly visible in their demo videos where one can see the app giving the user instructions to turn right after walking for a certain number of inches.

These Pixie Points operate through Bluetooth technology and look like large guitar picks. As these Pixie Points will ultimately determine how useful the technology is, specifically in terms of how many Pixie Points users purchase, how they're priced is a critical question. Currently, Pixie is pricing them at one pack of four Pixie Points for \$69.95. This pricing strategy compares very favorably to some of the competing technologies in the market. Settings such as factories and hospitals, which need to track people or high-value equipment, often use RFID (radio frequency identification) or clusters of Wi-Fi transmitters and receivers, but these trackers can cost \$50-\$80 according to a Wall Street Journal article that profiled Pixie.

Once Pixie Points are attached to multiple objects, they create a network, with the different sensors talking to each other. Where this can be really useful is in creating kits of things. For example, you can put sensors on your computer, homework folder, and pencil case to ensure that these items are always together in your bag. If one of these

objects is removed from the bag, you can receive an alert on your phone through the app.

While they've filed eight patents around their technology, Pixie is also taking steps to open their technology for others to use by creating developer API's (programming instructions for accessing application software). Pixie envisions creating an open ecosystem where developers and manufacturers, can build their

"PIXIE AIMS TO TAKE THE INTERNET OF THINGS TO THE NEXT LEVEL IN WHAT THEY CALL THE 'LOCATION OF THINGS -- A TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM THAT KNOWS WHERE EVERYTHING IS, ALL THE TIME.'"

own location-based apps utilizing the technology and Pixie Points.

As an established start-up with over \$6 million raised in two rounds of venture funding, Pixie employs over 20 people. Among these are the two co-founders, CEO Amir Bassan-Eskenazi, and CTO Ofer Friedman. Bassan-Eskenazi received a degree in Electrical Engineering from the Technion Institute of Technology, and proceeded to co-found BigBand Networks Inc. in 1998. BigBand revolutionized a new platform of digital video networking, and Bassan-Eskenazi helped take the company public in 2007 and remained at the company through its acquisition in 2011. Friedman holds bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering from Tel Aviv University. He spent 13 years working at Texas Instruments in Ra'anana before leaving to co-found and be CTO of Pixie.

One of the most popular areas that startups are innovating in is known as the Internet of Things (IoT), which creates a network between different objects, allowing them to send and receive data. Pixie aims to take the IoT to the next level in what they call the "Location of Things - a technology platform that knows where everything is, all the time," according to their website.

While one could debate how much the "Location of Things" actually differs from existing Internet of Things technologies, and it's clear that Pixie is by no means the limit to connected devices technology, Pixie certainly does showcase some cool innovation in this space. How Pixie is able to continue connecting people's devices behind the scenes, what this will look like from the user's perspective, and how the industry as a whole continues to evolve should be exciting to monitor in the years come.



Getting to Know Professor Leonard Fuld

By Etan (Alex) Neiman

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with popular Sy Syms Professor Leonard Fuld, who is known for his engaging personality and unique approach to hair styling. After a wide-ranging career in corporate America, Professor Fuld came to YU, where he currently teaches on the Wilf campus and at Cardozo during the summer. His course offerings include both of the Accounting Principles core classes and both Federal Income Taxation courses for accounting majors. We discussed a broad set of topics ranging from his extensive corporate and academic experiences to the one piece of advice he makes sure all of his students know.

Neiman: I'm just going to come right out and say it: what is the story behind your luscious locks and which barber can students go to if they'd like to get that cut?

Fuld: They would have no barber to go to. I don't go to any barber, as you could probably tell. There is no story; there is no reason. I just stopped cutting my hair about three or four years ago. Previously, I had to live the corporate life and couldn't completely do what I wanted. Now, I'm doing things the way I want to do them.

Neiman: Hopefully, YU students can have a similar haircutting policy one day soon. Right now, we have to apply for jobs, unfortunately. Speaking of employment, how long have you been at YU for and in what capacities?

Fuld: I've taught at YU in some capacity going back for probably 15 years. I started as an adjunct professor and then advanced to a full-time professor four years ago, primarily teaching tax and accounting. Another role that I enjoyed was helping institute controls that turned the Seforim Sale into a more profitable venture. Currently, I am part of a team effort trying to put together an M.S. in Taxation graduate program at Syms.

Neiman: How is that progressing?

Fuld: There is certainly a lot of demand for it amongst our current students. Everybody in the Syms administration is very excited about the potential of having the program. At this particular point in time, the application for approval to New York State is being reviewed by an independent third party. When that is concluded, we'll submit the application to New York State and hopefully get approval to move forward. If all goes well, the M.S. in Taxation program would be looking at a launch for the 2017-2018 school year.

Neiman: What inspired you to join academia?

Fuld: My first teaching experience was at George Washington High School, which I did concurrently with graduate school (at NYU for an MBA specializing in Accounting). I fell in love with teaching then. When I started in the corporate world, the plan was always to teach full-time one day. In fact, throughout much

of my corporate career, I taught in one capacity or another. Specifically, I taught as an adjunct at various NY based graduate schools and led training seminars for the companies I worked for. For example, at Coopers & Lybrand (now PwC), I taught accounting and tax seminars across the country, and Schlumberger would periodically send me to Paris or London to teach a two-day mergers course.

Neiman: Was there a specific reason you chose to teach at YU?

Fuld: When the time came to pursue teaching on a full-time basis, I gave some serious thought as to where would I feel most comfortable and have the most fun. Throughout my corporate life, I had the pleasure of traveling and teaching all over the world and, and as an academic, I taught in several universities, including YU, Queens College, NYU and Baruch College, but I felt and continue to feel that the general spirit, midot

Times to publish.

Neiman: What about the accounting and tax subjects make them particularly important skills for a business student?

Fuld: I wouldn't limit the importance of these subjects to just business students. I actually believe that basic accounting and individual taxes should be taught to every high school student in the country, along with basic finance. Whatever a person does in life, he or she is going to need to have some knowledge about finance, accounting and tax. There is just no way to avoid it.

Neiman: Well Ted Cruz may be taking care of the IRS for us, so maybe one day soon.

Fuld: (Laughs) That would be nice.

Neiman: What are some things about you which students might not know that would interest them?

Fuld: I am not your run-of-the-mill C.P.A., professor, as I've followed my own path and continue to do so. To illustrate, on the one hand, I ride a motorcycle, listen to The Grateful Dead (a popular rock band), do construction projects and regularly hit the gym. On the other hand, with much gratitude, I've completed Shas (all of the books of Talmud), became a schochet (certified to kill an animal as prescribed by Jewish law) and enjoy my children and grandchildren (who live in Efrat, New York, and New Jersey) to the fullest. Overriding everything, though, is that the Republican backroom kingmakers have asked me to become their candidate when the contested convention breaks down. I'll give it some thought, but I cannot imagine giving up teaching at YU.

**"ON THE ONE HAND, I RIDE A MOTORCYCLE, LISTEN TO THE GRATEFUL DEAD, DO CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS AND REGULARLY HIT THE GYM. ON THE OTHER HAND, WITH MUCH GRATITUDE, I'VE COMPLETED SHAS AND BECAME A SHOCHET."
-PROFESSOR LEONARD FULD**



(behavior) and overall respect of the students here at YU is unmatched. I look at all of my students as if they are part of my extended family.

Neiman: Can you detail some of the corporate jobs you previously alluded to which you had before you became a full-time professor?

Fuld: I started at PwC and left as a Tax Manager. From there, I went to Schlumberger (a large oil and gas exploration/technology firm) where I was the Deputy Director of Taxes. Next, I went to Citigroup and worked in Mergers & Acquisitions as a Senior Tax Counsel. After that, I moved on to my final corporate job as Vice President of Taxes at Griffon Corp, a publicly traded company on the New York Stock Exchange.

Neiman: Were there any lessons which you learned in your time in the corporate world that may be of benefit to YU students?

Fuld: I always teach this to all of my classes: do the right thing. Don't ever do anything that you would not want your mother to know about or the *New York*



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Start-Up University: Nucleus

By Philip Neff

Yonatan Frankel, founder and CEO of Nucleus: The Smart Home Wireless Intercom, received a BA in computer science from Yeshiva University, semicha from RIETS, and a Juris Doctorate from Harvard Law School. He didn't expect to start his own company until he came up with the idea. Two years ago, while renovating his house in Philadelphia, he was looking for an intercom system to be able to keep track of his three rambunctious sons as they run around the house and to let them know when it's time for dinner. He was surprised when he was quoted a steep price of \$5,000 for the "old, beige, ugly analog" intercom systems. He looked everywhere for a wireless intercom system, but the search proved futile, so he decided to take on the task of making his own, realizing there was a real market for it and that this was an amazing opportunity. He knew the basic components his idea would need—a Wi-Fi chip, a wide angle camera, and an affordable price, so he just jumped in. And on the day that I spoke to him, two years after the idea was born, he told me that he had just received a picture of his first product coming off the production line in China, ready to be shipped. Families across the United States have already reserved thousands of Nucleus intercoms, which are set to be released this summer (available for sale in Lowe's and on Amazon).

The Nucleus intercom elevates the standard household intercom system to a whole new level, but at an affordable price. Not only can you talk to anyone in any room in your house—with a wide-angle camera to capture the entire room—but now you can talk to your family in another state and even country. Frankel told me that at the click of a button, within 200 milliseconds, he can talk to his mother in New York or his grandmother in Toronto. The intercom can also integrate with other house-connected devices, serve as a baby monitor, and keep an eye on your house when you're away. There is also an option to answer calls without lifting a finger—and a way to silence it when you need peace and quiet.

To turn his idea into a reality, Frankel initially invested a good amount of his own money hiring development firms and freelancers to develop a prototype. The result was "ugly hardware with barely-functioning software." But he used this rudimentary model to win over his first round of investors—friends and family. With these funds, he was able to improve his technology, which led to even more money—what Frankel described as a "virtuous cycle" (as opposed to the alternative, a "vicious cycle").

Frankel's next step was to build his team, which he began by bringing his friend, Isaac Levy, aboard as the second cofounder. Levy was one of the software architects behind Google Hangout and introduced the WebRTC (Real-Time Communications) software to the Nucleus intercom. In their first official round of funding, Nucleus raised \$3.37 million, including



from Foxconn Technology Group, which manufactures Apple's iPhones. As the product developed and more funds were raised, he expanded and improved his team, most notably with the addition of Morley Ivers as the third cofounder. Ivers specializes in business development—he helps develop rapid growth organizations and worked to create partnerships for Nucleus. Frankel also added some junior engineers to his team. While the company is based in Philadelphia, which currently has a relatively small technology scene, most of his team is based in New York, with some in Israel and Mexico, using Google Hangouts and, yes, the Nucleus intercom, as platforms for company meetings.

Frankel emphasized to me that there are two things to look for when building your team: trust and diversity. Starting off with his friend, Levy, was a good first step, because, in Frankel's opinion, when you have a shared culture and background with someone, there is a sense of trust, which creates a strong foundation on which to build a company. Trust in this situation

was a two-way street—Frankel trusted that Levy would bring solid technical and software advancements to the company and Levy, who left a dependable, paying job to join Nucleus, trusted that Frankel's idea would succeed. With a diversified staff, on the other hand, comes a diverse range of ideas and approaches to problems that will inevitably arise, which is an important factor in innovation.

One of the great things about founding a startup—and Frankel pointed out that there are many—is being able to explore a new territory. His BA in Computer Science helped Frankel talk to his engineers and understand them on a basic level and his Harvard Law education helped him understand the legality of the process. Prior to this venture, he worked as a legal intern for Weiss Asset Management, a developer for JPMorgan-Chase, and a management consultant for Boston Consulting Group. All of these jobs provided invaluable experience and prepared him for various aspects of starting Nucleus, but every day he goes to work, he learns something new. Another amazing benefit of working for yourself is being able to make your schedule around your family and your life. Frankel told me that he was

able to bring his sons to school the morning that we spoke and wasn't late for work.

Frankel expressed his excitement to talk to me about his company, because he wants to encourage as many YU students as he can to pursue entrepreneurship. One message Frankel especially wanted conveyed to Yeshiva University students was that if you have an idea, just go for it. Frankel never thought about starting a company until he had the idea dropped in his lap. He believes that if you're competent enough to get into a good program, be it law or medical school, or a programming job, then you're competent enough to start your own company. He believes people otherwise talented shouldn't be afraid to take the path less travelled for fear of earning a steady living—the chances of someone being successful in a startup are roughly the same as following the safe path, if they are motivated to put in the requisite work.

Finance and Tamid Clubs Host Joint Event to Inform Students About a Wall Street Career

By Adam Gutman

The Tamid Club teamed up with the Finance Club on Wednesday, March 16th, to bring in a dynamic YU alumnus to speak about what it takes to successfully work on Wall Street. Students across numerous majors gathered to listen to David Schiff, Managing Director of US Equity Trading at J.P. Morgan Asset Management, as he drew upon his vast experience to advise those in attendance about the Wall Street life. After majoring in Computer Science at YU, Schiff started his career as a computer consultant at the infamous former Big Five accounting firm Arthur Andersen (which collapsed amid the Enron scandal). From there, Schiff moved to Fidelity Investments, where he became interested in the financial market. After his time at Fidelity, Schiff made the decision to go back to school in order to get a degree in finance from Columbia University. Schiff worked his way up the finance world from there, reaching the executive position he has at J.P. Morgan today.

Speaking at the event, Schiff broke things down into three fundamental pieces of advice which will help ready a YU student to work on Wall Street. Firstly, over the course of the evening, Schiff reiterated several times that a moment of crisis should be viewed as a moment of opportunity due to the learning experience. The crisis may be very stressful and difficult; however, once it is in the past, only the memory of navigating it remains. Those experiences will be invaluable as Wall Street employees, providing the skills to overcome a similar crisis or situation that may arise. As for the best method

of conquering a crisis in the moment, Schiff has found that the more passion a person brings to their work, the easier it will be to work through crises and achieve great things. There are certainly no shortages of crises one would face in a Wall Street life, and the best way to prepare for them is to embrace your experiences of crises and learn from them.

Schiff then pivoted to his second piece of advice, which was directed specifically at Jews working on Wall Street. As observant Jews, we must be able to confront challenges that work may present. For example, late hours on Friday afternoons may result in challenges with preparing for Shabbos. Such challenges will inevitably happen and it is important to be prepared for them, whether that means coming in on a Saturday night or working late on a Thursday night. Schiff closed this segment by preaching that we should be proud of being Jewish. Though they may not say it straight out, our future colleagues will generally respect our religious devotion.

The third and final fundamental piece of advice which Schiff offered was the importance of strong communication skills. While some may consider communication skills to be of minor significance, it is actually one of the most important aspects to being successful on Wall Street. The ability to make a good first impression can often be the difference-maker in landing a great job. A bad first impression, however, is very difficult to overcome. Considering this, a very smart and capable person with poor communication skills may very well not be able to succeed. Schiff remembers the resume process and mock interviews were very helpful

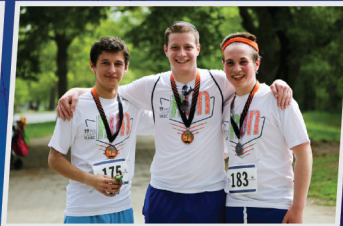
in preparing him for the communication skills necessary in his current Wall Street life.

Even the non-finance majors in the crowd were treated to a very applicable talk. Many of the Wall Street principles Schiff offered hold true for a number of industries. As far as selecting the right major, Schiff, a computer science major turned financial whiz, specified that the major a student chooses must be something they feel passionate about; that passion will help carry them through the inevitable hard times ahead. A major should not be chosen based on the glamor or prestige. By adhering to that principle, along with the three fundamental pieces of advice detailed above, Schiff has been able to climb the Wall Street corporate ladder to the high level position he enjoys today.



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