



## INSIDE: SPECIAL PRESIDENTIAL SECTION

### Interview with Outgoing President Richard Joel

By Doron Levine

*For this year's final issue of The Commentator, we sat down with outgoing YU President Richard Joel and asked him to reflect on his fourteen as president. President Joel will step down on June 5, and will be succeeded by Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman.*

**Doron Levine:** What are some of the most important changes you've made to YU during your presidency?

President Joel: First of all, nothing was me. It was we. I think maybe one of the most important changes was that it became a place of "we." In other words, the people I worked with bought into a vision. It was a time of really going to next. The first appointment I made before I even started was Dr. Hillel Davis, who was to serve as Vice President for Kavod HaBriyos. Because my mandate was to increase the warmth, friendliness, and student-service orientation of our community.

A small cultural example is, when I arrived, the entrances to all the buildings read either "enter only" or "exit only." And within a month every door said "Welcome to Yeshiva University." From the beginning, the aspiration was to make YU an environment that ennobles and enables. That's not a slogan. The quality of the education would be premier, both Torah and secular, and the quality of the environment would be noble, would be kodesh. If there's one thing that yeshiva is supposed to do, it's to have us develop a sacred self consciousness, a consciousness of kedusha; the notion of being mekadesh the chol – that's why we're here. And I think that's the most important thing

It has been fourteen plus years, and I think the faculty is far stronger than it was, there's a larger tenured faculty than there was, the yeshiva has never been more formidable and in its own way diverse, and I think the degree to which yeshiva lives beyond its walls, the degree to which the community sees YU as the vouchsafer of a movement, is better than it ever was. This is manifest by who the musmachim are, how they're

SEE JOEL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

### The Joel Years from the Perspective of One YC Faculty Member

By Dr. Will Lee

Ever since Richard Joel delivered his investiture address on September 21, 2003, I have regarded him as the heir of YC's founding president Bernard Revel. Both men eloquently expressed and furthered the mission of Yeshiva College, now Yeshiva University: the mutually reinforcing harmony of Torah Studies, Jewish Studies, and the liberal arts. Both men recognized and nurtured the historic uniqueness of the institution

they loved. Both men realized that for the education they supported to succeed, they had to encourage the strengthening and multiplication of modern Orthodox Jewish communities by training rabbis and leading a religious movement. Both men reached out beyond Centrist Orthodoxy to other religious Jews, all Jews, America, Israel, and beyond.

I have been asked to represent the faculty of YC through this article on the Joel era. Although I serve on the Manhattan Campus Faculty Council as one of the representatives from YC, and although I have thought long and hard about YC and YU since arriving on campus over thirty-three years ago, I will be presenting my own perspective on issues especially relevant to faculty members. No doubt many of my colleagues will disagree with many of my points. Thanks go to several colleagues who responded to earlier drafts and guided me toward some beneficial revisions.

Full disclosure: I have enjoyed a good personal and working relationship with President Joel, though of course I have not supported all of his practices, positions, and decisions, as you will see. As the director of the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program in its early years, I asked him to host one of our annual dinners, at which

graduates of YC and the program briefly present their research each year. He and his wife acted as wonderful hosts for an especially memorable evening in their home. My longest and most substantive interaction with him helped prepare both of us for the almost entirely successful visit by the Reaccreditation Team of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education in 2012. I say "almost" because the visiting team concluded that we needed to professionalize and systematize our assessment of academic programs, a goal we have accomplished thanks to Rachel Ebner, Director of Student Learning Assessment, and the cooperative efforts of deans and faculty members.

The financial recession that struck the country in September of 2008 divides the Richard Joel years into his first six versus his last eight plus. After a long search process, the Board of Trustees elected him on December 5, 2002 as the fourth president of Yeshiva University. He lacked rabbinic qualifications, but he had served early in his career as a YU administrator, he had successfully expanded Hillel on campuses across America, and they considered him highly qualified in ways they valued. In his investiture address he called for

SEE JOEL YEARS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 18





# The EDITORIAL

## She Did Not Give Me Wasabi

By Doron Levine

Alas, my college years are fading and my dream of becoming a published poet remains tragically unrealized. Glory has rebuffed my repeated advances. Literary fame eludes me; my stomach is famished of that fickle food, satiated instead on wormwood and gall. And it's not for lack of trying.

Twice during my years at YU I submitted a poem to YU's *Journal of Fine Arts*, and twice my work was rejected. I also entered a poem into Yeshiva College's writing contest, only to learn that the faculty judges value my poetry as little as the *Journal's* staff does. My career as a balladeer lay in shambles and I wept.

Seeking solace, I recalled the normative epistemic principle that my professor taught me in First Year Writing: be skeptical of everything. The only heresy is certainty – we must ruthlessly interrogate every last one of our beliefs, no matter how dearly held. I was young and credulous, so I trusted my professor's advice and was quickly converted, baptized in the sweet waters of uncertainty. In the inquisition of doubt, no creed was safe from the auto-da-fé. I zealously adhered to my newfound disbelief, becoming devoutly skeptical of everything. (This of course included being skeptical of the idea that I should be skeptical of everything, skeptical of my teacher's motivation for producing this maxim, and skeptical of the selective manner in which people tend to adhere to this sort of imperative.)

Three years older now but no less dubious, I am skeptical of the *Journal's* decision. How can anyone be certain of anything, let alone the poor quality of a poem? But you can judge for yourself -- here is the poem I submitted to the *Journal of Fine Arts* this year:

She asked if I wanted wasabi  
I said yes  
She did not give me wasabi

Brilliant verse? Perhaps not. I am more than open to the possibility that my poetry is bad, and I do not wish to come across as a sore loser. So instead of wallowing in self-pity, I elect to approach this sad ordeal as a teachable moment. The experience of being thrice denied before graduation solidified one of the primary lessons that I learned during college.

We are told that college is discovery. We are told that during our undergraduate years we unlock our boundless potential and explore the world of opportunities open to us; we can choose from diverse areas of study; we can mix and match courses in math and science with the liberal arts; we can relax and explore the YU core; we might double major; we might double minor; we might even join a club. People who we trust shower us with optimism, enjoining us to use these four formative years to shop around and discover our calling.

But this promise is more aspirational than realistic. Opportunity soon turns to desperation as we quickly succumb to the crushing pressure to choose a profession. By the second year of college, time is running out and there is no more postponing the decision; we've reached the end of our general education and now it's time to specialize, to pigeonhole ourselves and determine what line of work will occupy our thoughts and dictate our actions for the majority of our remaining waking hours.

And at the end of the day, there aren't very many options. Supporting a Jewish family is expensive, so when push comes to shove YU students tend to choose from a small menu of classic professions: law, medicine, computer science, accounting, finance. The spectrum of possibilities, we soon discover, is miserably narrow. Even the very notion that we must decide "what to do in life" is severely constraining. The requirement to choose, at such a young age, one area of specialty that will regiment the rest of our existence is almost tragic.

Thus college was, at least for me, a time of contraction rather than expansion. It was less about discovering hidden potential and more about discovering hidden limitations. For me and for many of my peers, college was a transitional period when we discovered that "anything is possible" is a pipe dream. We

are restricted in countless ways – by our social and economic circumstances, by our religious values, by our skills and by our shortcomings, and by the crushing obligation to make money. Reality sets in, and objective considerations overwhelm our subjective aspirations.

In other words, in college we learn the limits of that thing we call self-expression. The cloudy implication behind this idea, the suggestion that we are able to say and do and think and become what we want, that we have the ability to live our lives in a way that maximizes personal fulfillment and happiness, contradicts much of what we know about how the world functions.

This is the idea conveyed in my poem and mirrored by my experience attempting to have it published. The story it tells is factual, a simple but harrowing tale of desire and denial: I wanted wasabi, but she did not give me wasabi. The story of its publication is similarly heartbreaking: I wanted to publish it, but the *Journal of Fine Arts* did not publish it. I wished to express myself publicly through the medium of poetry, but the powers that be determined that my self-expression was not worth expressing. I'm lucky to have this editorial platform to self-publish my work; others are not so fortunate.

What if writing poetry is what gives my life meaning? Must I forgo fulfillment merely because my calling happens to involve something I am bad at?

Though college is full of frustration and disillusion, this episode is particularly striking because it revolves around poetry. The introduction to this year's *Journal of Fine Arts* says: "Art is the expression of the most inexpressible emotions and observations, tragically and elegantly, sometimes grotesquely portrayed, all for the basic goal of humanizing ourselves." Poetry is supposed to express deeply personal reflections, to bare a piece of the poet's soul.

But the conception of poetry as pure self-expression is challenged by this incident. If poetry is truly an expression of our innermost thoughts and feelings, then how can a publication determine that certain poems are better than others? Without direct access to my mental life, how can anyone judge how effectively I am expressing myself? I wonder, then, not how could they reject my poetry, but how could they reject anyone's poetry? Judgment on these matters should be for God alone, for he knoweth the thoughts of man.

Obviously, the solution is a rejection of the assumption. There is some objective standard of beauty being applied, some measure of value that passes judgment over the works submitted and determines that certain pieces of self-expression are better than others.

The same principle applies to our careers, during college and beyond. Despite our best efforts to express ourselves and become what we want to become, reality limits us in every direction. I want to be a physicist, but I lack the requisite intellectual prowess. I want to be a professional basketball player, but my stature precludes that career path. I want to be a poet, but I am lousy at writing poetry. I want to be a professional couch potato, but potatoing doesn't pay the bills.

I wanted wasabi, but she did not give me wasabi.

So this one goes out to all those harboring unfulfilled dreams, my fellow unpublished poets who dejectedly wander the doldrums of denial and suffer in silence. If there can be any solace for these poor languishing souls, it must be the promise of a world of truth where men are free to express themselves, liberated from the earthly fetters that once trammelled their spirits. In that sparkling Valhalla, all poems sincerely composed are published and all who ask for wasabi receive it.

*"But gulp down your tears and hie aloft to the royal-mast with your hearts; for your friends who have gone before are clearing out the seven-storied heavens, and making refugees of long-pampered Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael, against your coming. Here ye strike but splintered hearts together—there, ye shall strike unsplinterable glasses!"*

—Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

# The COMMENTATOR

2016-2017

Editor-in-Chief  
DORON LEVINE

Managing Editor  
TZVI LEVITIN

Senior News Editor  
DAVID RUBINSTEIN

Junior News Editor  
EITAN LIPSKY

Junior News Editor  
SHOSHY CIMENT

Senior Opinions Editor  
AVI STRAUSS

Junior Opinions Editor  
YITZCHAK FRIED

Junior Opinions Editor  
SAM GELMAN

Senior Features Editor  
HILLEL FIELD

Junior Features Editor  
BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

Senior Business Editor  
ADAM KRAMER

Junior Business Editor  
EVAN AXELROD

Senior Layout Editor  
SHIRA FEEN

Senior Programmer  
MICHAEL PERES

Junior Programmer  
JUSTIN SAFIER

Senior Business Manager  
YONI FLEISCHMANN

Junior Business Manager  
JACK GANCHROW

Layout Editors:  
BRIELLE BRODER  
STEVEN KOHANE  
RACHEL LOFFMAN

Staff Writers:  
AVIGAYIL ADOUTH  
ILAN ATRI  
YISROEL BEN-PORAT  
EZRA BERMAN  
DANIEL FERBER  
ELLIOT FUCHS  
ELLIOT HELLER  
ILANA KISILINSKY  
ARTHUR SCHOEN  
MICHAEL SHAVOLIAN  
JUDAH STIEFEL  
BENJAMIN ZIRMAN  
NOAM ZOLTY

The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

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.

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



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





## 1 Averroes

According to the Internet, this 12th century Muslim polymath and philosopher was known as "The Commentator."



## 2 Bridge Between Furst and Glueck

What better metaphor can there be than a thin bridge connecting Torah and Madda, surrounded by a war zone on both sides and threatening to implode any day now? *V'ha-ikar lo lefached klal.*



## 3 Salt Bae

Nusret Gökçe is his real name, and he's got nothing on Cabey. "You want fries with that, kid?" "Talk to me, babe."



## 4 Halakhot You've Never Heard of Because They're False

This hilarious Facebook page is the greatest cause of YU *bochrim* going off the *derech* since Intro to Bible.



## 5 Yeshiva World News

For a news outlet with shockingly low journalistic standards, they actually break a surprisingly high number of stories.



## 6 Jonathan Schwab

All hail the creator of the 7up/7down column. Look at the chaos you've wrought, Schwab! We're hideous!



## 7 Rubinstein v. Canvassing Committee

The most legit-sounding totally not legit thing since the YAS! club

# 7 UP 7 DOWN



## 1 Israel 69

Grow up, pervs.



## 2 YU Basketball Hall of Fame

Judging by the empty placards, we can officially confirm that, indeed, Jewish men cannot jump.



## 3 Dunkin' Donuts

Due to the 185th construction war zone and YU *bochrim* unwilling to walk more than 3 minutes, Dunkin' Donuts will soon lose its *hashgacha*. You heard it here first.



## 4 Boring Elections

Where are the good ol' days of "Get Gush out of SOY" chants? Next year better have some more *sinat chinam*.



## 5 Leftover Yom Haatzmaut B/W Cookies

They are probably hiding somewhere with all of the missing leftover cakes from Cake Wars.



## 6 "Before Proceeding to be Forgotten About Forever"

Used as a 7up/7down gag every issue this year, noticed by a few, before proceeding to be forgotten about forever.



## 7 7up/7down Vol. 81 Honorable Mentions

And finally, here are this year's headlines that never wound up making the final cut for 7up/7down (you'll have to guess which side they would've been!): Corn Checkers; 1,000 Chickens; Fairbanks, Alaska; People Who Don't Flush the Toilet; Ashkenazis; The Radziner; Cash Me Ousside Howbow Dah; YU Environmental Action Society; That WhatsApp Crash on May 3rd from 4:15 to 6:00; Urban Dictionary; Two Toilets for the Entire Glueck Beis; Stern College In the Know; and, last but not least, Bridge Carpool.



# YU Inducts Inaugural Class to New Athletics Hall of Fame

By Ilan Atri

It has always been considered an honor and a privilege to represent Yeshiva University as an NCAA athlete. With eight men's and seven women's sports teams, students have ample opportunities to participate in collegiate athletics.

The downside is that Yeshiva University athletes tend not to go professional; so once they have reached their potential as an athlete, there is nowhere else to grow. Until now, that is.

In February 2016, YU announced that they plan to establish an Athletics Hall of Fame in Spring 2017. This did not cause much buzz around campus when it was originally announced. However, over the past two weeks, construction has begun by the entrance to the Max Stern Athletic Center for a Hall of Fame shelf. Now, once an athlete reaches his or her potential, there is still a spot on the Hall of Fame shelf to strive for.

"As a YU athlete, you think about all these guys who came before you and made a name for themselves as a player", remarked Kevin Bokor, a sophomore member of the Men's Basketball Team. "But now we will all see their name and picture every time we walk into the gym, and that will make it much more meaningful for us."

The athletic department accepted nominations until May 31, 2016. The selection committee was formed in June 2016 and announced the inductees in July 2016. An induction ceremony was held on May 8 to celebrate the first class of athletes and coaches to receive this distinction.

Director of Athletics, Joe Bednarsh, remarked, "This Hall of Fame will help enshrine Yeshiva's long tradition of athletic excellence by selecting students, coaches and other individuals who best exemplify the exceptional athletic ability, personal integrity, high standards of character, ideals, and philosophy of Yeshiva University."

The headline inductees include three late coaches: basketball coach Bernard "Red" Sarachek ('42-43, '45-68), fencing coach Arthur Tauber ('49-85), and wrestling coach Henry Wittenberg ('57-67).

Men's basketball dominates the other honorees, making up six out of eight inductees. They are Irwin Blumenreich ('57), Marvin Hershkowitz ('53), Yossy Gev ('02), Sheldon Rokach ('66), Herbert Schlusel ('57), and Abe Sodden ('56). The female honorees are Daniela Epstein ('03), women's basketball, and Heidi (Baker) Nathan ('00), women's tennis.

The intention is to continue to add members to the hall, with a new class of distinguished Yeshiva University athletes to be named on a biannual basis. Nominations are already being accepted for the Class of 2019.





## Yeshiva University Celebrates the “Yoms”

By Ilana Kisilinsky

On May 1, the Yeshiva University student body gathered for what is perhaps its largest annual event, the Yom Hazikaron and Yom Haatzmaut ceremony. Yom Hazikaron is a day of remembrance for fallen soldiers and victims of terror. It is celebrated on the day before Yom Haatzmaut as a reminder of what was sacrificed to gain the freedom of independence. The ceremony was a display of the challenge of living as a Zionist Jew in Diaspora and still finding a connection with the State of Israel from afar.

“This is an important event to have at YU,” said Beth Gindi, a senior at Stern College and a member of the planning committee for this event. “There are so many different groups and types of people here, and the days of Yom Hazikaron and Yom Haatzmaut are days that everyone can relate to in different ways.” This is a ceremony that begins with reflections on the past and those who have been lost, shifting to the celebration of liberty and the hope for the future.

The event was organized by a committee of students from both the men’s and women’s campuses, working for months to ensure the ceremony’s success.

The ceremony started with a moment of silence and the sounding of the siren that plays throughout the State of Israel on Yom Hazikaron. The Lamport Auditorium, where the ceremony was held, was filled with over 1,000 students, alumni, and faculty, all there to pay their respects and celebrate this incredible day.

Raffi Wiesen, a former IDF soldier and current student at Yeshiva College, spoke about his time in the army and the difficulties of being a lone soldier. “When you grow up in Israel, the army is a major part of the culture and with that everyone knows what goes on and understands the lingo,” he said. “Americans have no idea; they don’t understand the culture, the language, the process and procedure, which makes it all the more difficult to



explain yourself.” He continued with stories and experiences that he would never forget, explaining situations that civilians would never be able to understand. At the end of his speech he touched on the sensitive topic of the distance between Diaspora Jews and IDF soldiers. “Too many times when we hear about someone serving in the army we validate them and say what they are doing is very nice but we miss something, we miss the fact that these are our sons and daughters, our brothers and sisters, these are our friends.

These soldiers are so much more than we realize. And today we take the opportunity to think about that.”

The ceremony took an emotional swing with a slideshow of Ezra Schwartz and a speech from his mother Ruth remembering him. Schwartz was a student studying at Yeshivat Ashreinu in Beit Shemesh, who was murdered during a Palestinian terrorist attack on his way to volunteer in a park near Alon Shvut. “Yom Hazikaron is a special day, last year I was in Israel... it was a hard day, an exhausting day, and an emotional day but it was a powerful day as well. I was able to step out of my own grief and grieve for others.

---

**“EACH OF US ON THE COMMITTEE GAVE OUR ALL AND TURNED ALL OUR IDEAS INTO AN AMAZING TWO DAYS AND A PARTICULARLY AMAZING TEKES.”**  
- RAFFI WIESEN

---

That day taught me that my family was not alone, that tragedy is everywhere, that nobody is immune, that I need to fight for my family to be strong.” Mrs. Schwartz continued to thank the friends and family that still continue to help her and her family to this day and the outpouring of love and support she has seen from people all over the world. “I am lucky to be Ezra’s mother. I cherish the time he was with me. Ezra was a special person with a good heart he enjoyed life and wanted to have fun. He was a wonderful son, an amazing brother, and a great friend.”

Candles were lit, prayers were said, songs were sung, and Yom Hazikaron ended. It was time to step out of mourning and into celebration. The Y-Studs, an all-male acapella group, gave a rousing upbeat performance of “Hashem Melech” allowing the audience to shed their sadness and begin to rejoice. “These days are inherently and purposely linked to one another,” said Shayna Michalowsky, the PR secretary for Stern’s student council, as she introduced the keynote speaker, Jerry Silverman, the CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America. “To celebrate the existence of the state without commemorating or appreciating the lives we lost along the way would be a superficial celebration, devoid of true meaning and emotion.... The nature of these days’ demands that they stay together.”

Rabbi Meir Goldwicht, who spoke in Hebrew, gave words of inspiration and Torah, which was then followed by the prayer for the welfare of the State of Israel, Hatikva, and a festive Ma’ariv filled with singing and happiness.

Many of the students were happy with the programming “The *tekes* was really emotional, said Chaviva Friedman a junior at Stern College. “You could tell that people were there because they wanted to be involved with YU, they wanted to be involved with the state of Israel.” Others felt that although the ceremony was good, it could have been even better. “Overall I thought the *tekes* did a decent job at celebrating the emotional transition from Yom Hazikaron to Yom Haatzmaut. I think the University’s chagigot and programming help cultivate the spirit and joy of the day,” said Nolan Edmonson, a sophomore at Yeshiva College. “I did think, however, that at least one of the speeches at the *tekes* was unnecessary but it in no way took away from the enjoyment of the day.”

The “Yoms,” as they are colloquially referred to by YU students, had been planned and organized for seven months by a committee of students from both the women’s and men’s campuses. “The event took about seven months of planning and working together as a committee,” said Raffi Wiesen, who, in addition to being one of the day’s speakers, was also a member of the “Yoms” committee. “Each of us on the committee gave our all and turned all our ideas into an amazing two days and a particularly amazing *tekes*. We wanted to focus the *tekes* on the individuals, who they were as people, actualize them as individuals who have personalities and interests. Doing that we hoped more people would be able to be affected and moved.”

## Daniel Kimmel Named Professor of the Year

By Elana Luban

Professor Daniel Kimmel was announced as this year’s recipient of the Professor of the Year Award on May 3rd.

While there are countless indicators of a YU professor’s success among students, the Silber Award, also known as the “Professor of the Year” Award, is probably a pretty accurate gauge when it comes to student response to a YU instructor.

This award, endowed by YC alumnus and SSSB Board secretary William Silber, Ph.D., and his wife, grants three annual gifts of \$1,800 each to YC, SCW, and SSSB faculty members chosen by students for special recognition.

As YC Dean Fred Sugarman explains, “All full time faculty are in the first survey which is sent to our U8/U7 students – basically seniors only. The survey is sent by Institutional Research to the Seniors and is live for about a week; each student votes for three candidates from the initial list, and I receive the results.” Then the top three faculty member choices are sent to the seniors, this time each senior getting only one vote only (not three), this portion of the survey being live for about a week as well.”

“The IR tabulates [the results],” Sugarman continued, “and sends to me with the winner.”

When asked about what sets this particular award apart, Dean Sugarman explained, “the award is very meaningful

since it’s the students indicating which professor they most enjoy and respect. Professor Kimmel is a fantastic teacher and young scholar – his classes are usually the first to fill, and students gain a great deal from his scholarly approach and human touch.”

Kimmel first began teaching at YU as an “all but dissertation” visiting instructor from the University of Chicago stepping in to replace Silke Aisenbrey, the Chair of YU’s Department of Sociology. Kimmel was supposed to teach a course titled “Human Behavior and Social Institutions,” and as he puts it, “I asked them what that means and they said ‘we don’t know’! One of the great things about YU is that the Sociology Department is pretty small – it’s very brave and very flexible.” Kimmel explains, “I said to myself, ‘Well, violence is a human behavior and schools are a human institution...’ – and that’s how the idea for one of his most fascinating and innovative classes, Violence in Schools and Education, was born.

Kimmel expressed that one of his favorite aspects of YU is the experimental, almost adventurous, attitude when it comes to new courses: “If there’s a crazy idea, students are willing to give it a try. Somewhere else they might say ‘Interrogating Masculinities? What the heck is that?’ but at YU I’ve had students that are adventurous and willing to come along for the ride.”

And what did the students say? Well, one would

assume that the award speaks for itself, but it seemed as though anyone who has taken his classes, when asked, can’t imagine passing up an opportunity to rave about Professor Kimmel. Moshe Zippel, a junior at Syms who took Kimmel’s “Interrogating Masculinities” reveals that though the course had plenty of potential for misunderstandings and for awkward moments, Kimmel couldn’t have made the discussion more comfortable and relatable: “If anything was confusing, he would just give real-life examples, or bring up funny, embarrassing scenarios from his own experience.”

Talia Korn, who discovered her appreciation for sociology through Kimmel’s Intro to Sociology course, says, “I found myself constantly using his ideas in so many other classes – English, Political Science, Theories of Human Development....”

Isaac Snyder, a senior applying to medical school for whom Kimmel wrote a letter of recommendation, said, “He knows every student’s name...If someone doesn’t do well on an assignment, it hurts him more than it hurts the student.”

Gedalia Penner, a music major, describes, “He’s extremely engaging, hysterical, and full of life -- he never sits down once while teaching.” The overall consensus among the student body seems to be, simply put, “whatever you’re taking, take Kimmel!”



## Bridging the Gap: Yom Hashoah 2017

By Ilan Atri

On Monday night, April 24, the Student Holocaust Education Movement (SHEM) hosted a commemoration ceremony in Lamport Auditorium in honor of Yom Hashoah.

The program, entitled Bridging The Gap, was a great success and was attended by approximately 700 students, parents, faculty members, and guests. It featured moving speakers, a candle lighting ceremony, and a performance by the Y-Studs.

SHEM, spearheaded by Presidents Yedidya Weiss and Tali Golubtchik, had been working on the program and securing their speakers since November. Once January came along, they began working even harder to get the whole event in order.

Tali Golubtchik remarked, “a necessary part of Holocaust education is emphasizing the responsibility we play in passing on the stories to the next generation. Having had the chance to hear from both a survivor and a second generation survivor as well as students who had already taken this responsibility upon themselves, students were able to be inspired and continue to bridge the gap.”

In the majority of the seventy plus years since the end of the Holocaust, Yom Hashoah has been commemorated through the voices and first-hand experiences of survivors and heroes of the tragic event. As Yosef Sklar, one of the board members of SHEM, observed in his opening remarks at the program, that privilege is becoming a rarity today.

Following Sklar’s opening remarks, the audience was asked to rise for the sounding of the siren as a tribute to all of the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. Soon after, Survivor Irving Roth told his Holocaust experience.

Irving Roth was in Auschwitz I for about five years until he was finally liberated and regained his basic human rights. Mr. Roth began his discourse with the graphic events of his train ride from Eastern Slovakia to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The heat of the summer and lack of food, water, and bathrooms came together to create a

torturous environment for the cramped Jews of his town. He explained how a seemingly innocuous situation in which he was barred from entering a park to play with his friends slowly devolved into a systematic oppression of the Jews of his town. He recalled his father being forced to pretend to sell his business to a Christian friend of his named Albert who eventually stole the entire business from him. Eventually, all of the Jews of the town were told to gather their belongings and meet in the shul where they were either shot into a mass grave or loaded onto a train.

Roth concluded by urging the audience to pass on his specific story and the entire atrocity that is the story of the Holocaust in order to silence the deniers of it and further prevent another similar occurrence.

The Y-Studs sang assorted songs throughout the ceremony. “Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no harm, for You are at my side. Your staff and Your rod comfort me.” These words, beautifully sung, followed Mr. Irving’s words in the Hebrew song *Gam Ki Elech*. The meaning of the passage in the Book of Psalms reflects the mentality many Jews had while in concentration camps. They trusted and believed that *HaShem* was by their side and gained comfort from that.

On a different note, Professor Smadar Rosensweig told the story of another survivor, her recently deceased mother, Yaffa Eliach. Professor Rosensweig spoke primarily about her mother’s story, legacy, and involvement in preserving the history before and during the Holocaust. Professor Rosensweig strongly emphasized the importance of bridging the gap between the survivors of the Holocaust, a growing rarity, and the future generations who will never have the privilege of hearing from them. She urged the audience to actively remember and respect those who endured this atrocity and pass on their stories to everyone around them. She requested that the audience commemorate Yaffa Eliach by recognizing that every Jew is a hero in his or her own way and that every story is important.

Following that, Chani Grossman called up six different individuals for the candle lighting ceremony while she

explained the significance of each candle. The first candle was for the 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. The second was for the one and a half million children who were brutally murdered at the hands of the Nazis. The third was for the righteous gentiles who helped the Jews escape death, and for the non-Jews who were killed in the Holocaust. The fourth was for the glorious and vital world of Torah in Europe that was lost and for the world that we must rebuild. The fifth was for our role as a link between victims and future generations. The sixth and final candle was in honor of the survivors whose incredible strength and perseverance inspire us to this day.

After the candle lighting ceremony, Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky led everyone in reciting a special *Kel Malei Rachamim* written specifically to commemorate all of the Jews that were murdered in the Holocaust.

Tali Golubtchik led the closing remarks and stressed how important it is to pass on stories from the Holocaust to ensure that the next generation will remember and commemorate the Holocaust. She then introduced a video of students speaking about how they have internalized the stories of survivors and how they will pass them on.

The response from those who attended was overwhelmingly positive. Michael Kohan, a sophomore in YC, said, “I felt that the event had a great impact on those who attended and was successful in rendering its message.”

Ending the night, the Y-Studs sang *Ani Maamin*, the 12th of the 13 principles of faith of the Rambam. Legend says that the tune was born when Reb Azriel David Fastag was divinely inspired to sing it on a train to Treblinka. A fellow captive who jumped out of that train and escaped eventually taught the tune to the Modzitzer Rebbe, Rabbi Shaul Yedidya Elazar.

“I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah,” goes the song. “And, though he tarry, I will wait daily for his coming.” These words, relevant in tune and meaning, were a perfect close to a successful event.

## Councilman Mark Levine, Subject of “Greedy Jewish Landlords” Campaign Attack, Visits YU to Discuss Social Work Initiative

By Avi Strauss

On May 1, Councilman Mark Levine visited the Wilf Campus to meet with Vice President of Governmental Affairs Phil Goldfeder as well as a group of students. Councilman Levine was recently the subject of a bigoted attack by his opponent in the upcoming democratic primary for his seat, in which candidate Thomas Lopez-Pierre accused Levine of being in the pocket of “greedy Jewish landlords” in a video posted to Facebook.

Levine represents the 7th district of New York City, which includes Morningside Heights, West Harlem, and parts of the Upper West Side and Washington Heights.

The councilman was on campus to discuss securing funding for programming coordinated by YU’s Wurzweiler School of Social Work. The program Levine discussed with Goldfeder would create “repair cafes,” where social work students could help “repair” the emotions of local community members in distress.

Levine credited the idea to Dean of Wurzweiler Danielle Wozniak and called the initiative “an exciting model” for social work students to use their training to benefit those in need.

Goldfeder was happy to have the councilman on campus, stating, “Councilman Mark Levine is a great friend and it was a pleasure to have him on campus to meet with faculty, staff and students. Mark is a tireless fighter for every family in his district and across NYC and at YU, we are constantly looking for ways to collaborate and create creative new partnerships to benefit our students and the community.”

Levine said the two were both “political junkies” who met several years ago, and that he was happy to work with Goldfeder during his time at YU.

When asked about the infamous attack, the councilman did not shy away declaring, “it is anti-Semitism of the most classic form,” grouping Lopez-Pierre with “demagogues who try and exploit legitimate concerns of a community, in this case tenants,” while demonizing a minority group.

“Sadly, so often, its Jews exploited for political benefit” he added.

In the video, Lopez-Pierre accused Councilman Levine repeatedly of being in the pockets of “greedy Jewish landlords,” accusing them of “ethnic cleansing” of “Black and Latino people.” Without explaining the connection, Lopez-Pierre tried to tie Levine to Donald Trump, calling on voters to defeat both Levine and Trump on election day by voting for him.

As of printing, Lopez-Pierre’s campaign website simply refers to a fight against “greedy landlords,” conspicuously missing the racial/religious descriptor he seemed fond of using in his video.

His website’s section on his public policy positions contains no description of his stances, simply listing non-clickable titles like “Housing and Tenants Rights” and “Campaign Finance.”

Levine was unequivocal about the need to respond, saying such negative and racially tinged attacks must be stood up to and revealed for the bigotry they display. “We have to label it as anti-Semitism and link it to the anti-Semitism of the past,” he said.

Further, he said he was “heartened by the response of leaders of this community, not just Jewish leaders, but leaders of all backgrounds,” to Lopez-Pierre’s video.

He said his campaign intends to counter his opponent’s hateful rhetoric with a message of tolerance that rejects bigotry of all forms and that he welcomes “good meaning people” interested in joining his campaign “of tolerance, inclusivity, and love.”

In terms of the content of Lopez-Pierre’s attack, Levine stressed that housing issues cannot be made into a “racial or religious issue.”

“It’s tenants who are suffering and we can acknowledge

that suffering while rejecting in the strongest terms the branding of any one minority, Jews or any others.”



When asked about what he’s done to relate to different minority groups in his district, Levine emphasized that he is a fluent Spanish-speaker, who speaks more Spanish than English when meeting with constituents. He said that “people just want their problems solved – they don’t care what your last name is, or what your ethnic or religious affiliation is.”

Levine continued by referring to his three and a half years in office, with a record that includes “fighting for tenants, fighting for public education, and fighting for public safety.”

Confidently, he asserted, “anyone can challenge me on that and I know the community will respond.” He was also sure to mention his campaign is taking nothing for granted.

The Democratic primary for city council will be held on September 12.



# Controversial Ben Shapiro Talk Still Rocks Campus, Dr. Joy Ladin Speaks Up

By Shoshy Ciment

On Monday, May 8, Dr. Joy Ladin spoke on the Beren Campus of Yeshiva University in a talk entitled “Tolerance in a Polarized World.” Yeshiva University’s only openly transgender professor, Ladin said that she hoped to respond to Ben Shapiro’s speech in December in which he called all transgender people mentally ill.

“My goal is not just tolerating people who are different,” she said, “but it’s actually understanding them. And I think that’s an obligation we have as fellow citizens.”

Dr. Joy Ladin is the David and Ruth Gottesman Professor of English at Stern College for Women. She is the author of seven books of poetry and a memoir entitled *Through the Door of Life: A Jewish Journey Between Genders*.

Ladin discussed this idea of tolerance in relation to her own experience as a transgender woman. She explained how the gender binary (the idea that you can only be male or female), while useful for simple categorization, was impossible for her to fit into. She cited the Gemara’s mention of non-binary sexes (in regards to the *tum-tum* and *androgynous*) as a powerful precedent for the notion that human beings are not necessarily only created male or female. Before she transitioned, however, Ladin was “terrified” that someone would discover that she was pretending to be someone she was not.

When she was still living as a male, after she was hired as a teacher at Yeshiva University, she was told that she was hired because the department needed more testosterone.

“Another little bit of humor from God,” Ladin quipped.

At a certain point, Ladin could not bear pretending to be someone she knew she was not. “It’s very depressing to look in the mirror and not see somebody you recognize as you. It’s more than depressing. It’s really disturbing.” After she received tenure at Stern, Ladin decided to go through a gender transition.

“From my experience, Stern College for Women is about the safest place to be an openly transgender professor in New York City,” she said. “I have never been treated disrespectfully.” According to Ladin, Dean Karen Bacon assured her that she would have a job when she returned to school after her transition and was always

warm and understanding.

The YU College Democrats and the YU Feminists Club hosted this event in response to an event the YU Republicans held in December at which conservative pundit Ben Shapiro spoke. About 700 students came to hear the controversial political commentator in Lampton Auditorium.

During the event, Shapiro discussed his opinions regarding transgender people. “Transgender people are unfortunately suffering from a significant mental illness that is deeply harmful,” he said to applause from the audience. Shapiro’s vocalization of his opinions about transgender people led to a significant reaction from many administrators and students of Yeshiva University.

“The morning after his talk [a student] went into our class and I thought ‘Oh, do I have to start by explaining that I’m not mentally ill?’” said Ladin.

“Hearing viewpoints you agree with and, more importantly, those you disagree with is part of any real education,” explained President of the YU College Democrats on Campus Yossi Hoffman. “Students make informed decisions by understanding different aspects of an argument and being open to the views of others.”

Dr. Chaim Nissel, University Dean of Students, echoed this sentiment. “We want to embrace diverse opinions, which means we may not agree with some or all the views of a particular speaker. At the core, though, we must always have *Kvod Habriot*, respect for all people, and we want everyone to be respected and feel safe,” Nissel said. “We also hope to help foster a more informed and engaged student body.”

Although it may have taken five months for an event in response, the YU Democrats delivered in the last month of school. Tsippora Cohen, senior board member of the YU Democrats on Campus, explained, “The inspiration for me to propose, plan, and then advocate and fight for this event to take place was when Ben Shapiro was given a massive stage at the Wilf campus last semester and said incredibly offensive and untrue things about the trans community.”



Dr. Ladin acknowledged what Shapiro had said, but she did not denounce him outright. “I refuse to allow myself to see Ben Shapiro as someone who is utterly different from me, who is the opposite of me, who is the antimatter of me,” Ladin remarked, musing that their shared membership to the nation of Israel and love for G-d is a strong common ground for a mutual understanding of one another.

The turnout for the event was significantly less than the turnout for the Ben Shapiro talk. However, with over 55 people (who were not exclusively YU students) present, Cohen regarded the gathering as “irrefutable proof that there is a sizable audience for discussions like this amongst the YU student body and community.” Because of a mix-up involving the event request form, the event took place on the Beren Campus in a classroom meant for about 30 people.

Atara Huberfeld, Social Media Manager of the Democrats Club, said that the turnout was one of the largest the club has seen at any of its events this year, despite the venue. “Others involved expected that we would attract a lot of people, but honestly, I had thought that was wishful thinking,” she said. “I was pleasantly surprised, to say the least.”

Many believe that Yeshiva University is becoming more welcoming to members of the LGBTQ community as whole. Rivkie Reiter, an LGBTQ activist and student at Stern college, is hopeful about the improvement in the attitude towards LGBTQ students on campus. “There is a network of support for students, and we hope to one day move to make that official and improve queer visibility on campus in concrete ways.”

Dr. Ladin is also confident about the strides being made for transgender Jews. “Though many Jewish communities struggle with the complexities of transgender identity and questions about how traditions based on binary gender can accommodate Jews who are not simply male or female,” Ladin said, “slowly but surely transgender Jews are being acknowledged and included.”

## New Shabbat Minyan Builds Community at Beren

By Elliot Heller

For many students at Beren, Shabbat on campus left something to be desired. Despite a full schedule of programming, a large percentage of students spent the majority of their shabbatot off campus. That all changed at the beginning of this semester, with the launching of a new weekly minyan in the Beit Midrash on the Beren campus.

The initiative was a joint effort, spearheaded by TAC Vice President Jen van Amerongen (SCW ’17) and President of Shabbat Enhancement Committee Avital Habshush (SCW ’17). After working with faculty members Naomi Kohl, Rabbi Kenneth Brander, and Rabbi Daniel Lerner on logistics, and coordinating a successful trial run in the fall, van Amerongen and Habshush saw their vision become a reality this semester.

“The idea was one that had been brought up and thought about for a while but really was worked on by Jen and Avital this year,” said TAC President Hudy Rosenberg (SCW ’17). “It was part of our effort to help students feel that the Beren Campus was their home by avoiding student needing to go to the nearby shul and feeling like guests within their own community.”

Van Amerongen first thought of the idea to have a minyan on campus every Shabbat last semester. While many students walked to Adereth El, a local shul, for services, many others chose to stay on campus and pray in their rooms. She thought that making a minyan on campus would lead to a greater – and more spirited – turnout, and decided to do something about it.

“Shabbat is a day that is all about community and especially communal tefillah,” van Amerongen told the Observer last month. “Because we are a religious institution, it is imperative that we have a space for our

own tefillah; Avital and I thought that bringing a minyan to the Beren Campus would be the perfect way to unite Beren students as one religious community.”

The minyan’s inception has spurred a spike in Shabbat attendance at the downtown campus, and many students have said that it has enhanced their Shabbat experience.

“Davening is a central part of the Shabbat experience, and having a minyan on campus allows us to create a real sense of spiritual community,” said Rachel Schuraytz (SCW ’17). “It brings everyone together for more than just the meals and infuses the entire Shabbat with a special ruach and energy.”

### "THE MINYAN'S INCEPTION HAS SPURRED A SPIKE IN SHABBAT ATTENDANCE AT THE DOWNTOWN CAMPUS"

“Having a minyan on campus makes a tremendous difference to my Shabbos experience, added Rachel Fried (SCW ’19), “It is definitely a significant factor in my decision whether or not to stay in for Shabbos.”

The minyan usually consists of exactly ten male students, who are put up in a hotel and provided meals free of charge. The men eat the Sabbath meals separately from the women, a decision Rosenberg says was made in order to accommodate the most students possible, but which has garnered mixed reviews among students. Men are barred from attending Shabbat programming. Despite these restrictions, men are allowed to be in the lobby lounges of residence halls.

“I think it’s a great initiative in that it brings together the YU community and allows the women’s campus to host

complete tefilla services,” said Tzivya Beck (SCW ’17). “In some ways, however, it makes me feel as if men are being “imported” onto our campus in order to provide services for us. This notion is particularly noticed when the men who are leading our tefillot are sent downstairs to eat separately, thus not contributing to the community in any other way besides the services they provide. I would be much more comfortable with the minyan men if they were actually part of our community and were not just brought in to daven for us (which highlights my own inability as a woman to lead prayers).”

Aryeh Blanshay (Syms ’17) concurred. “I’m not a fan of the premise of separate meals. YU is a community made up of men and women, and while we study on separate campuses, the true combined community nature of the school is realized when both men and women participate together in activities.”

Others were more understanding of the policy. “While it would be nice to be able to eat with women at Beren that I know (especially my fiancée!), I understand the need to have the all-women’s Shabbat experience, and that many women at Beren would be uncomfortable having a co-ed meal,” said Ben Kean (YC ’18). “Just like the men have an all-men’s environment on campus for Shabbat, women are entitled to an all-women’s environment as well.”

“I get why there are girls who want it that way,” said Matthew Silkin (YC ’19). “It’s still officially a girls-only Shabbos, and even though they are hosting us on their campus and benefiting from the minyan, they do want to keep the girls-only atmosphere as much as possible, which includes separated meals. Whether I’m happy about it or not is irrelevant; it is what it is.”

SEE SHABBAT MINYAN CONTINUED ON  
PAGE 7



# Student Court Holds its First Trial of the Year, Decides Election Results Must Be Released

By Doron Levine

On Wednesday, May 10, the Wilf Campus Student Court heard the case of *Rubinstein v. Canvassing Committee*. On April 27, the day after the recent student council elections, YC Senior David Rubinstein asked the Canvassing Committee whether they intended to release the complete results of the elections. When the Committee demurred, Rubinstein sent an email to the justices of the Student Court and the Chair of the Canvassing Committee stating that he wished to sue for the complete results.

During the student council elections on April 26, the students voted to ratify an amendment to the Wilf Campus Student Constitution requiring the canvassing committee to publicize the details of the election results. The amendment states, “The Canvassing Committee shall publicize the winners of the elections as soon as possible. Within three days of the election, the Canvassing Committee will disclose the data of regarding numbers of voter turnout, the amount of votes cast per race as well as per candidate on the ballot.” In his suit, Rubinstein argued that this amendment should apply to the results of the election in which it was ratified. Student Court Justice Elie Lipnik announced the trial in an email sent to the student body on the day before the trial.

The trial began at 6pm in the presidential conference room in Belfer Hall (room 1214). Rubinstein represented himself, sitting at the opposite end of the table from the head of the Canvassing Committee and his representatives students Avi Lent and Daniel Geller. The five justices on the student court -- Elie Lipnik, Yair Strachman, Adam Kramer, Avi Rabinovitch, Justice Pro-Tempore Mason Wedgle, and Chief Justice Yossi Hoffman -- sat in a row on the opposite side of the table. More than twenty students sat around the periphery of the room to the observe the trial. Tami Adelson, the Program Director of YU's Office of Student Life, was present, as was Jonathan Schwab, the Wilf Campus Associate Director of University Housing and Residence Life.

The proceedings began with Rubinstein's opening statement. He argued that since the amendment has been ratified, it is now in full force and therefore obligates the canvassing committee to release the complete results of the recent elections. He claimed that the “respondent has trampled on the glory of the democratic process by withholding, suppressing, and concealing the results of the election. Our right as electors is being denied by the Canvassing Committee, the very governmental organ charged with stewarding our sacred democratic process.”

Counsel for the defense Avi Lent then delivered his opening remarks. Lent argued that applying this amendment to the recent elections would constitute applying it retroactively. Since the amendment was not in effect when the voting took place for the recent election, it does not apply to the results. “The precedent this court would set by allowing retroactive legislation to take effect would open up the door to all sorts of potential abuses of power in the future,” Lent later explained. “Therefore, let the court make an example today, that no legislation, passed by either the students or the administration, should even be imposed on anyone in this university ex-post-facto.” Moreover, he argued, the canvassing committee should not release the complete results since the candidates were not aware that they would be released and therefore might be embarrassed should the data indicate a landslide victory.

The plaintiff then called its witnesses. Rubinstein first summoned Manny Dahari, a YU student from Yemen who testified about the importance of transparency in student government based on his family's experience under the corrupt Yemeni government and his own experience in the more transparent student government of Loyola University. Student Ben Strachman testified next. After being established by the plaintiff as an expert in political science, he similarly spoke to the importance of transparency in government. Finally, the prosecution

called on Itamar Lustiger to testify. Lustiger ran for SOY President in last year's elections with the hopes of changing the religious orientation of SOY, but was defeated. As Lustiger approached the stand, student Doron Levine broke out in adulatory song; Rubinstein immediately asked permission to approach the bench and presented a motion to have Levine removed from the room since he was “obstructing justice.” His motion was declined. Lustiger then proceeded with his testimony, stating that, though he lost the SOY election, he would like for the results from last year's election to be released. He explained that he and his followers are interested to know how successful the Lustiger campaign was, as it would allow them to deduce whether similar campaigns might gain traction in future elections.

The defense then called its witnesses. First, Shua Brick, the current SOY President and writer of the amendment, testified that he intended for the amendment to take effect beginning next year's election. Then Syms Student Council President Akiva Koppel testified that, though there was no understanding among the Syms Student Council that this amendment would apply to the recent election, he believes that the complete results should be released since transparency in student government is critical.

Rabbi Josh Weisberg, the Wilf Campus Director of the Office of Student Life, was called to the stand next. His testimony quickly became testy, as he confirmed that the Office of Student Life, not the Canvassing Committee, holds the complete results of the student council elections. When asked whether he would follow the directive of the court should it rule that the results must be released, Weisberg equivocated. He stated that the Office of Student Life is not necessarily bound by the student constitution and explained that, for reasons unknown, the Canvassing Committee has historically allowed the Office of Student Life to run the elections. Thus the entire premise of the trial was brought into question, since the administration might very well choose to not release the results irrespective of the court's decision.

For its final witness, the defense called Rubinstein himself to the stand, handing him a printed copy of an opinion article that he recently wrote for *The Commentator*. In this article, Rubinstein claimed that the Wilf Campus Student Constitution is invalid. Counsel for the defense Avi Lent asked Rubinstein to read some selected quotes from the article. After Rubinstein read these quotes, Lent questioned whether the court should take Rubinstein's suit seriously given that he recently questioned the very legitimacy of the court. Rubinstein responded that though he stands by his argument in the article, he believes that the court will rule objectively and set aside any statements that are unconnected to the specifics of the case at hand.

One major point of contention during the trial was whether the candidates' feelings are relevant to this issue. The defense claimed that the complete results should not be released since the candidates who lost might be embarrassed should the results become public. In support of this claim, the defense submitted a document to the court with the results of a survey that was sent to the candidates, asking whether they would like for the complete results to be released. Though most of the candidates responded that they were comfortable with the results being released, three candidates responded that they would prefer for the results to remain secret. Rubinstein objected to the admission of this evidence, countering that since the Student Court is only authorized to rule on this legal issue based on the text of the constitution, the feelings of the candidates should play no role in the decision.

At around 7pm, the trial ended. Since it had stretched on for longer than expected, both parties agreed that closing statements would be submitted to the court in writing. And though the defense had stated in its opening statement that it intended to call student Doron Levine to testify, Levine's testimony was skipped over in the interest of time. Both counsels submitted their closing statements later that night and the court will deliver its decision by

Sunday, May 14.

Parliamentarian Betzalel Fischman was present at the trial. The Wilf Student Constitution (II.9) stipulates, “The Parliamentarian shall serve as an advisor to the General Assembly on Constitutional and parliamentary matters.” In an email sent to the court soon after the trial, Fischman urged the justices to properly understand their role, stating, “the court should consider carefully the difference between a judicial body and a legislative body. Seemingly many of the arguments of the case were treating the court as the latter.” He similarly expressed concern about the process leading up to the trial, questioning the court's decision to require students interested in attending the trial to request permission to attend through a google form. Since the court decided that this trial was to be an open trial, there should have been no justification required from students in order to attend.

Chief Justice Jonathan Hoffman was pleased with the proceedings of the case. “It was a great example of students defending their rights and taking advantage of the democratic processes offered,” he said.

On Sunday, May 14, the court ruled in favor of Rubinstein. In a decision released to *The Commentator*, the court stated, “the most simple and plain reading of the text implies that “the elections” refer to concurrent elections, meaning that the amendment should take effect immediately. There is no indication in the language that would indicate a delay until the following year's election for it to take effect.” The court also cited the Wilf Constitution's language, noting that “The Constitution of the Yeshiva University Undergraduate Student Government [for the Wilf Campus] makes clear that election results are implemented at the time of their vote.” Although the candidates did not know that the full results would be released, “The candidates, who volunteered their time and energy, placing themselves at the choosing of their peers, agreed to participate in an election with potential consequences of which they were unaware...it is clear that the myriad of benefits of transparency to the greater Student Body outweigh the candidates' potential concerns.”

In a striking few paragraphs, the court criticized a number of parties for failing to adhere to the duties placed on them by student constitution. “More than anything else, this trial highlights the failure of multiple parties to fulfill their duties regarding the election and amendment process,” the court stated. “First and foremost, the General Assembly (“GA”) and Amendment Committee failed to create a text whose meaning is clear and understandable for readers and voters—never mind the basic grammatical errors.”

The Canvassing Committee also acted with a certain degree of incompetence: “While the rules and requirements which stood at the time immediately preceding the election were posted publicly, it should have been well within their means to publicize the proposed amendments before the ballot was sent. Their subsequent inaction has caused much of the confusion surrounding this case.” Moreover, “the Canvassing Committee should not have outsourced their duty of running the election to the OSL, a branch of University administration. Consequently, the election results are not in their possession; and the Student Body is at the mercy of parties seemingly outside the bounds of our Constitution.” The court censured the Committee, stating “Regardless of this Court's ruling, the employees of the OSL are within their rights to withhold data and ignore the rightful will of the Student Body. As a result, the independence of our Student Body vis-a-vis the administration has been largely degraded and powers of this Honorable Court have been ridiculed.”

Nevertheless, the Court ruled in favor of Rubinstein. It remains to be seen whether the Office of Student life, which possesses the complete election results, will agree to release them.

## SHABBAT MINYAN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Meals notwithstanding, students of all types have been very pleased overall by the presence of the minyan.

“I have a great time going,” said Kean. “I often do it

with people I'm friends with. The zemiros at the men's seudah are usually very beautiful. The student leaders at Beren who are responsible for Shabbat programming, the rabbi, and the waitresses do an outstanding job making us feel comfortable and welcome, and I am very appreciative of them and the difficult job that they have.”

“The minyan on shabbat transforms the Beit Midrash into a *Beit Knesset*, uniting all students present as a *kehillah*,” said Liat Clark (SCW '19). “With the presence of the minyan, all members of the YU community can participate in the creation of a powerful tefillah betzibur experience on the downtown campus.”



## 13 Reasons Why: Season 1 Review

By Avigayil Adouth

Since the release of Netflix's first original show *House of Cards* in 2013, the website has consistently released hit series ranging from nostalgic comedies such as *Fuller House* to groundbreaking dramas like *Orange is the New Black*. On March 31st, Netflix plunged into the world of social activism and released *13 Reasons Why* - a 13 episode drama aimed at raising awareness of teen suicide and bullying.

The series is narrated by high school sophomore, Hannah Baker. Before her rather gruesome suicide, Hannah recorded and left behind 13 tapes directed at the 13 individuals who she felt played a key role in driving her to commit suicide. Each tape was aimed at hurting her peers and making them feel guilty for their purported crimes, focusing on how she felt each of these people played a role in her ultimate decision to end her own life.

The show has, in the wake of its release, received a lot of negative criticism. Viewers, myself included, feel that the series misrepresents suicide as a plausible and appropriate measure to be taken in the quest of enacting revenge on those who have allegedly wronged you. The show also seems to place the onus on others; leaving the suicide victim looking like a hero. The narrative shows complete disregard for mental illness - the one component that both medical professionals and religious authorities contend is a requisite for a one to follow through with the decision to take their own life.

Netflix though, deserves more credit than it is being given. It has launched an extremely successful anti-bullying campaign. The show confronts issues such as rape

and the effect that the constant sexualization of women has had on society as a whole, and more specifically on the self esteem of teenage girls. Netflix has effectively brought emotional fragility and people's concealed struggles to the forefront of our awareness. Using graphic imagery it transformed painful topics from being abstract, distant ideas into concrete realities.

**"THE IDEA THAT NETFLIX SHOULD HAVE GIVEN US A COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION ON A TOPIC WHICH SPANS YEARS OF RESEARCH IS INDICATIVE OF A WIDESPREAD FLAW IN MILLENNIAL CULTURE."**

For Netflix to be able to give us a complete education on the harsh realities of mental illness, the repercussions of bullying, and to clearly convey the idea that no one is liable for a suicide victim's death other than the suicide victim him/herself would be an impossible feat. For a 13 hour series which had to be tempered with enough humor to make it bearable, and just enough romantic undercurrents to to be a viable commercial product it did an impressive job.

Netflix has created a platform for open and honest conversation about topics which are ineffable and rather taboo in our society. Teachers and parents have expressed

the sentiment that the show has sparked a revolution among young students. Adolescents have been more likely than ever to be willing to discuss things like date rape, suicide, and mental health with their parents and have begun initiating sensitive conversations at unprecedented rates.

The idea that Netflix should have given us a comprehensive education on a topic which spans years of research is indicative of a widespread flaw in millennial culture. We are a group of people who like fast learning, and are addicted to short term gratification. We have to remember that Netflix is not responsible for our education and we shouldn't be holding them the same standard to which we would hold an established educational resource. Netflix created an arena for debate. Anyone watching the discussions on social media or on public forums sparked by the show should understand that the conversations alone are reason enough for the show to exist. The true value of the show comes not from its content but from what has come in its aftermath

So while the very real concerns with having such a raw, sensitive, and graphic show in the public sphere might be warranted, the issues it addressed were very real before the release of the show and have been begging to be discussed. Netflix has created a catalyst for conversation. With Netflix's confirmation that Season 2 is around the bend we can hope that it will elucidate the role of mental health in the story, but even if it doesn't we are certainly in store for some more uncomfortable but extremely necessary conversations.



## Happiness with Sensitivity

By Adam Kramer

A few months ago, we witnessed the sad story of some of the leadership of the Platinum Partners hedge fund getting investigated and ultimately charged with running a Ponzi scheme. My point in this piece isn't to rehash the Platinum Partners saga, give an update on any of the impending trials, or discuss *The Commentator's* decision to even publish an article in the first place, but rather to share a story—and hopefully a universal message for all of us—that occurred along the way.

When the news was first circulating about Platinum Partners, *The Commentator* WhatsApp group—generally a medium of constant discussion—quickly started humming with even more activity than usual. The element of excitement was clear in the group, where we debated whether to write a news brief on the topic, tried to decide who would write it, and how we could get the news out as fast as possible on our website. When the article ultimately was posted on the site, congratulatory messages were shared in the group, with staff members giving accolades to the writer, commenting on the expediency of the breaking news article, and generally feeling pleased with how we quickly rose to the occasion to get the article out. It wasn't just a few message or a few of us involved in sending the messages—rather, there was a real sense of joy and accomplishment that permeated the group that night.

In the following hours and days, our article was quoted by a number of online

news sites and publications, and even linked to on a few of those sites. With each new publication that quoted or linked to us, someone would proudly relay the news to our WhatsApp group, which prompted numerous excited responses.

I was a bit bothered by this. While I was certainly proud of the work that had been done, both as a group and specifically for the writer who wrote the article, I was also bothered by how we handled this situation. The entire saga with Platinum Partners resulted in people's lives being ruined. Irrevocable damage was done to people's families, reputations, and the broader Jewish community. And, these were families that many of us knew on a personal basis. I felt that there was no place for us to wish each other congratulations, for us to celebrate our newspaper's achievements, given that it came in light of a terrible tragedy.

I believe that this can serve as a powerful lesson to us as a newspaper staff—but also to the entire student body. The lesson is that people are entitled to, and undoubtedly should, be happy in the face of personal or group accomplishments—in this case someone had worked hard on an article and was entitled to be proud of the work they had put in, especially given that it was picked up by other major publications. But there's also a need to balance these feelings with a sensitivity to the situation as a whole and the various people involved, and to not use it as an opportunity for pride and compliments. In this case, the sense of accomplishment was probably better off being kept private, the messages of congratulations saved for another occasion.





# An Analysis of Intercampus Authorship in YU Student Newspapers

By Avi Hirsch and Yair Lichtman

For many years, the Beren and Wilf campuses of Yeshiva University have each published a student newspaper dedicated to informing the public discourse and providing a platform for students’ voices. *The Commentator* and *The Observer* have each naturally drawn writers from the population to which each caters. It is unusual, then, when a student chooses to break form and write for the publication of the other undergraduate campus. It is our goal to determine the scope of this phenomenon and its causes, in the hopes that we might learn more about the YU student body and the campus papers which, together with SHIELD News, serve as the primary student-run media available to YU students about YU.

To do so, we analyzed data gleaned from the websites, print issues, and editors of *The Commentator* and *The Observer* from the last five semesters, an amount of time that we felt would provide a snapshot of the current student body and the state of the newspapers in their recent histories. We also conducted a survey of the 46 students who have written an article for the newspaper of the other campus during this time. Of these students, 31 were Beren students who wrote for *The Commentator*, and 15 were Wilf students who wrote for *The Observer*. Of these, 15 Beren students and 9 Wilf students responded to our survey.

Before we review our results, it is important to reiterate that the number of people we surveyed was very small – only 24 people out of a total pool of 46. Had we received responses from more people, our results may have been different. Furthermore, due to the inherently limited sample size, it is unclear to what extent the opinions presented in this article are representative of the broader student body. Nevertheless, we feel that the data we collected is instructive.

Let us begin with a presentation of the hard data surrounding intercampus authorship. Since the beginning of the Spring 2015 semester, the percentage of women who have written for *The Commentator* has been more than double that of men who have written for *The Observer*. Out of the 589 articles that have been published by *The Observer*, 19 were written by men, or approximately 3.2%. Over the same period, 63 articles in *The Commentator* were written by women (excluding any articles in the issue that you currently hold in your hands) out of a total of 826 articles, or around 7.6%.

We found a similar split among the writers for each newspaper: 31 female writers have written for *The Commentator* since Spring 2015, while only 15 men have written for *The Observer* during this period. Of these, 10 women wrote more than one article for *The Commentator*; only 3 men wrote more than once for *The Observer*.

The total amount of intercampus authorship has grown in recent years. In Spring 2015, only 2 articles in *The Commentator* were written by women. This number has steadily increased, to 8 per semester in Fall 2015 and Spring 2016, to 22 in Fall 2016, to 23 in Spring 2017 (again, not including articles in this issue).

For *The Observer*, too, there has been an increase in intercampus authorship in recent semesters, though it has been less consistent and less dramatic. From only one article in Spring 2015, the number jumped to 5 in Fall 2015, but subsequently dropped to none in Spring 2016. This number rose again to 7 in Fall 2016, and 6 have been written to date in Spring 2017.

These writers have written quite broadly across each paper’s sections. For *The Observer*, 2 men wrote for News, 1 for Features, 4 for Opinions, 5 for Arts & Culture, and 4 for Science & Tech. For *The Commentator*, 8 women wrote for News, 12 for Features, 14 for Opinions, and none for Business (some writers have written for multiple sections).

Many students who have written for the other campus’s paper have also written for the paper of their own campus. Around 44% of Wilf students who responded to our survey reported that they had also written for *The Commentator*, whereas among Beren respondents, this number was significantly higher – 67% of them had written for *The Observer* as well.

For *The Commentator*, this increase in articles written by women correlates with an increase in female

participation in its writing and editorial staff. In Spring 2015, there were no female staff writers or editors for *The Commentator*. Since Fall 2015, Shira Feen has served as a Layout Editor for *The Commentator*. Kochava London joined *The Commentator*’s writing staff before the 4th issue of the 2015-2016 year. Shoshy Ciment joined before the 2nd issue of the 2016-2017 year as a staff writer, followed by Lilly Gelman by the 3rd issue. On March 22, 2017, Ciment was promoted to Junior News Editor for *The Commentator*. An editor of *The Commentator* pointed out to us that female editors have worked for the paper in years before 2015, but this is beyond the scope of our article.

In addition to analyzing data from past issues of *The Commentator* and *The Observer*, we surveyed students from the Beren and Wilf campuses who chose to publish articles in the newspaper of the other campus. We first asked respondents to briefly state the reasons they decided to write for the newspaper of the other campus, and then asked them to weigh, on a scale of 1 to 5, a series of possible motivating factors for their decision. We then asked them to elaborate on anything else they thought might be relevant to the survey, and concluded by asking if they have also written for their campus’s newspaper.

The first part of the survey asked students to briefly state the reasons they wrote for the other campus’s paper. We analyzed their responses to see if any notable patterns or differences between the campuses emerged, and found that most respondents from both campuses were motivated primarily by factors irrespective of the quality of the publications themselves. These reasons included wanting to respond to an article in that paper, writing for a section that only existed in that paper, or being asked specifically to write for that paper. These students did not mention valuing one paper over the other as a primary motivation.

However, a significant minority of Beren student respondents – 40% – were motivated to write for *The Commentator* because they found the quality of the publication to be superior. Some examples included finding *The Commentator*’s editorial process to be more constructive than *The Observer*’s, appreciating having more “freedom” in writing for *The Commentator*, or perceiving that articles in *The Commentator* are taken more seriously. These 6 women all valued writing for *The Commentator* above writing for *The Observer*, and this motivated them to write for Wilf’s student paper.

On the other hand, only 1 of the 9 Wilf student respondents, or 11%, mentioned valuing *The Observer* above *The Commentator* as a motivation. The vast majority of respondents instead cited some other factor, such as the existence of a Science & Tech section in *The Observer* or being asked to write specifically for that paper, as their main motivation.

The next part of the survey asked respondents to rate several possible motivating factors on a scale of 1 to 5; a 1 indicated that “it was not a factor at all,” and a 5 meant that “it was a primary motivation.” The factors ranged from, “I was asked to write for [this newspaper],” to, “I thought more people would read my article if it was in [this newspaper].”

In analyzing their responses, we decided to divide them into two groups: those who felt a factor was “significant,” which included all responses from 3 to 5, and those who felt a factor was “insignificant,” or less than a 3. This simplified the process of determining which factors played the largest role overall in motivating students from each campus to write for the other campus’s paper.

These were our results for each possible motivating factor: \*(chart appears to the right)\*

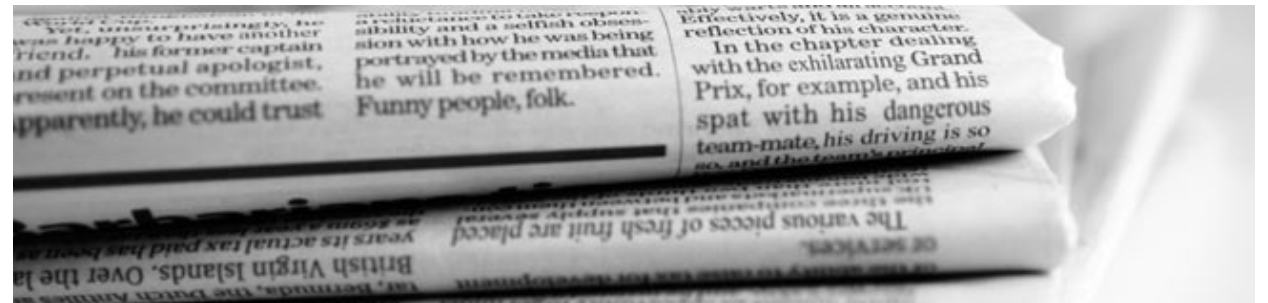
Factors	The Commentator	The Observer
I was asked to write for [this newspaper].	(9) Significant (6) Insignificant	(5) Significant (4) Insignificant
I preferred [this newspaper]’s editors and/or editorial practices.	(5) Significant (10) Insignificant	(3) Significant (6) Insignificant
My article was more relevant to [this newspaper]’s campus.	(2) Significant (13) Insignificant	(0) Significant (9) Insignificant
My article was a response to an article from [this newspaper].	(0) Significant (15) Insignificant	(2) Significant (7) Insignificant
I thought more people would read my article if it was in [this newspaper].	(9) Significant (6) Insignificant	(1) Significant (8) Insignificant
There was no suitable section in [the other campus’s newspaper] for this type of article.	(2) Significant (13) Insignificant	(3) Significant (6) Insignificant
The editors of [the other campus’s newspaper] declined to publish the article.	(3) Significant (12) Insignificant	(0) Significant (9) Insignificant

By far the most significant difference in motivation between the two campuses lies in the perception of how many people would read the article in each newspaper. While 60% of Beren respondents cited this factor as a significant motivation to write for *The Commentator*, only one Wilf respondent cited it as a significant factor to write for *The Observer* (this single respondent gave it a 3 on the scale, indicating that it was merely a “minor” motivation). It is worthwhile to note that whether or not this perception has any basis in reality is irrelevant for this analysis. For our purposes, it suffices to note that the results of this survey indicate that perceptions of *The Commentator*’s larger audience is a significant reason why Beren students have written for *The Commentator*.

In addition, it is worth noting that while a third of Wilf student respondents were significantly motivated to write for *The Observer* because of the lack of a suitable section for their article in *The Commentator*, the same factor only significantly motivated around 13% of Beren student respondents to write for *The Commentator*. Indeed, the only section that exists in *The Commentator* which is not also found in *The Observer* is the Business section, and none of the 31 Beren students who have written for *The Commentator* since Spring 2015 wrote for that section.

Finally, while 20% of the Beren respondents cited *The Observer*’s editors declining to publish their article as a significant motivation to write for *The Commentator*, none of the 9 Wilf respondents ranked this factor as a significant motivation in their decision to write for *The Observer*. Once again, our analysis only considered students’ perceptions and their stated motivations – whether or not *The Observer* has in fact declined to publish any articles is beyond the scope of this article.

*The Commentator* and *The Observer* provide crucial services to the YU community, keeping us up to date on institutional happenings and serving as forums through which students can develop their voices and express their opinions. The existence of two distinct publications provides student writers with the opportunity to decide which paper to write for, and these decisions shed light on the newspapers themselves.







# SUMMER SESSION 2017

**Classes in New York City  
and Online**

**REGISTER NOW ►**

Get closer to your degree.  
**[yu.edu/summer](http://yu.edu/summer)**



**Yeshiva University**



## From the President's Desk: YCSA – Thoughts on Immortality

By Tzvi Levitin

On the second day of freshman orientation back in August 2013, I walked into Belfer Hall for the first time. The whirlwind first 24 hours of my Yeshiva University experience had been a blur of new faces, informational sessions, and meet and greets, and I was beginning to wonder if all of this *stuff* was wholly necessary. The reason I thought I came to college – the promise of an education that would pave the path toward medical school or an engineering degree – had been buried under counseling center pamphlets, student life swag, and maps of Washington Heights.

The meeting in Belfer was a First Year Writing orientation for honors students. The writing professors sat scattered among the students, and Dr. Gabriel Cwilich, the director of the Honors Program, stood at the front of the room. He told us that several sections of the introductory writing course would be reading Rebecca Skloot's *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, a book I had never heard of, and, as it wasn't assigned for any of my science courses, had already decided I didn't care about. In my mind, I had already consigned my First Year Writing course to the collective of humanities classes I would tolerate, not enjoy.

Then Dr. Cwilich began his presentation. The book, it turned out, was about a black woman who died from cervical cancer in 1951, and whose biopsied cancer cells were the first human cells to survive immortally in culture. Her cell line has proven invaluable to countless scientific breakthroughs, including the polio vaccine,

cancer research, and AIDS medication. As Dr. Cwilich spoke, I realized that I had used Henrietta's cell line – HeLa cells – in research I did in an oncology lab mere weeks before arriving on campus. A book about biology that might be relevant to my career goals? I was hooked.

But as I discovered throughout the next few weeks, the story is not merely one of scientific achievements. Skloot takes pain to seek out Henrietta's family, who knew hardly anything about the extent of her cells' importance. Along the way, the author confronts religion, race relations, and the ethical dilemmas of science as she endeavors to give Henrietta the legacy she deserves.

*The Immortal Life* acted as a springboard from which I launched into my own personal trajectory through the liberal arts. It taught me about the imperatives of writing: lending voice to the voiceless, making sense of complex ideas, building bridges between communities ordinarily isolated from one another. It turned my attention to the crossroads between medicine and the humanities, an area that has since become one of my deepest passions. It ultimately led to my honors thesis, a screenplay about Rosalind Franklin, another woman whose contributions to the discovery of DNA's double helical structure went largely unnoticed.

Fundamentally, Henrietta Lacks' story is one of faith, dedication, and the search for justice. It is a story of empathy, which is to say, a story of humanity.

In a way, it's also a story of us, Yeshiva University students. We all know David Foster Wallace's spiel about the liberal arts: the value of viewing the world through a lens of compassion and complexity, the power of connecting with others and sharing ideas, etc. etc. But it's only now that I've walked out of my last undergraduate class that I realize the extent to which my experiences here have changed the way I see the world.

The thing about HeLa cells is that they only survive and grow under proper conditions. They need just the right amount of moisture, a constant temperature of a toasty 37 C, and a certain balance of the nutrients surrounding them. When everything is just right, they form a colony, a microcosm, a community.

As I reflect on my time at YU, I think about the extraordinary environment I'm leaving behind. I think about the spell that will break when I graduate next week. Because this place is magic, and I truly mean that; it's Narnia, it's Hogwarts, it's Alagaësia. It alters the very fabric of time and matter: you look up one day and realize the stranger borrowing your pencil has transformed into your best friend; your professors have charmed you into being passionate about things you could've sworn you didn't care about, gravity itself has shifted and the world

suddenly seems somehow larger and smaller at the same time. This place exists outside of the timeline of "what's next?", outside of the mainstream quid pro quo mentality, outside of the zero-sum game we'll face when we leave.

As I tend to do when all things come to an end, I find myself searching for circles. I'm desperate for signs of completion, perfection, and wholeness. I tell myself it's fitting that I'll eat at the same restaurant after graduation as I did when I came to New York almost six years ago to interview for YU. I tell myself how profound it is that the first book I read in college was about a woman whose impact on medicine goes unrecognized, and now four years later I'm writing a senior thesis about another

---

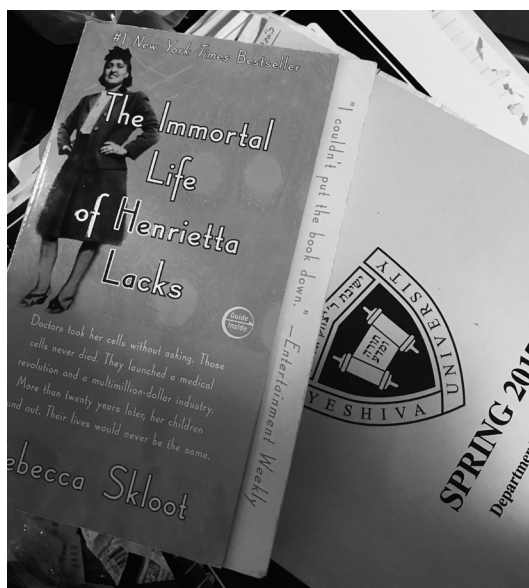
**"WITHIN THESE WALLS,  
THIS CHAOTIC PETRI DISH OF  
ACCOUNTANTS AND WRITERS,  
LAWYERS AND PROFESSORS,  
DOCTORS AND RABBIS, WE  
EXCHANGE THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.  
WITHIN THESE WALLS WE ARE  
IMMORTAL."**

---

woman who deserves a legacy for her contributions to science.

But then I realize that this isn't really about me. Henrietta Lacks' original cells no longer exist; the nucleotides and peptides and phosphates that made up her cells have long since been replaced by new molecules. But it's their genetic code, their continuity that stretches back to Henrietta's conception back in 1919, that gives HeLa cells their significance. My legacy does not lie in any contribution I've made as a student, a *Commentator* writer, or a student council president. The legacy lies in the very fabric of liberal arts college, and the more specific Jewish traditions of YU. Generations of individuals before me have left their marks on this place, and the impacts these people had continue to be felt today. This legacy has existed since long before I got here, and it will continue long after I'm gone. It's not a circle; there is nothing to seal, nothing to complete. I haven't finished yet, and neither has Yeshiva University.

Within these walls, this chaotic Petri dish of accountants and writers, lawyers and professors, doctors and rabbis, we exchange the elixir of life. Within these walls we are immortal.



## The Choice Is Yours: Using Proactivity To Live Effectively

By Josh Blicher

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

— Viktor E. Frankl

Can we actively create our ideal lives, or are we simply byproducts of biological phenomena and events out of our control? Do we have the ability to transcend our genetic profile and current socioeconomic standing?

Viktor Frankl, a psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor, originally believed in determinism, that socioeconomic and biological factors determine our entire destiny. His experience recovering from physical abuse and treating others for depressive symptoms in concentration camps in the Holocaust led him to conclude that we have the ability to actively choose our response to the stimuli in our lives, to live proactively, unlike animals who act primarily based on instinct and emotion. Understanding and applying this concept to our lives will enable us to effectively manage and grapple with our deepest challenges—from academic to emotional difficulties—accomplishing our most meaningful, fulfilling goals.

### Proactivity Defined

Proactivity underpins effective living. As a principle, it states that we can consciously make decisions from a place of control and reason, creating and living our ideal lives; proactivity implores us to "happen to life," not to "let life happen" to us. This principle differs from reactivity: passively responding to one's environment. More specifically, reactivity engenders a sense of helplessness, a victim mindset, which convinces one that she cannot effect change in her life.

However, reactivity does not coincide with one's psycho-behavioral ability, for we have the ability to choose the way in which we respond to the various events in our lives. In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Frankl describes the emotionally unsettling experience

he and his Jewish brethren had in concentration camps in Germany, where he studied and treated many of his fellow prisoners for depressive symptoms.

After suffering a beating from a prison guard in the shower, Frankl sat alone, unclothed on the floor. He initially felt helpless, for he suffered physical domination by the security guard and could not change his current circumstances. The Holocaust had taken almost everything away from him—from the brutal death of his wife to the

---

**"FRANKL POSITS THAT A GAP LIES BETWEEN A  
GIVEN STIMULUS AND OUR RESPONSE; WE HAVE  
THE CAPABILITY TO ACTIVELY DETERMINE OUR  
COURSE OF ACTION AFTER THE OCCURRENCE OF  
A GIVEN EVENT."**

---

confiscation of his research plans, his life's work.

But he then realized that he still had his free will, something that the Nazis, or anyone for that matter, could never take from him. Thus, Frankl posits that a gap lies between a given stimulus and our response; we have the capability to actively determine our course of action after the occurrence of a given event.

According to Frankl, we can use proactivity in many areas of our lives: Prior to choosing to drop out of a stressful university course or ending a relationship, we can consider ways to analyze the scenario instead of merely responding emotionally, which may wreak havoc on our social and emotional lives.

### Thinking Proactively: A Scenario

If I live in an apartment above a fast-food restaurant, I could react to the delicious

*SEE PROACTIVITY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 12*



# 100 Years Later: Remembering JFK in the Era of Trump

By Shoshy Ciment

While President Trump may be busy building a wall, 64 years ago, President John F. Kennedy spoke against the Berlin Wall as a representation of the Iron Curtain that separated Europe between Communism and democracy. On May 29, President John F. Kennedy would have been 100 years old. All across America, people are gearing up to celebrate the lasting legacy of our 35th president. The Smithsonian American Art Museum is opening a new exhibit in honor of the Centennial entitled *American Visionary: John F. Kennedy's Life and Times*, and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston MA is organizing a series of events in a yearlong celebration of the centennial.

JFK led with a vision. He reached for the stars (literally) and brought the country together with a common dream for greatness. As Stephen Kennedy Smith (JFK's nephew)



“For the eyes of the world now look into space, to the moon and to the planets beyond” he said, “and we have vowed that we shall not see it governed by a hostile flag of conquest, but by a banner of freedom and peace. We have vowed that we shall not see space filled with weapons of mass destruction, but with instruments of knowledge and understanding.”

Mr. Trump's recent budget plan proposes to cut funding to a variety of NASA programs, such as those relating to education and Earth science.

The difference between the two is also evident in the polls. According to the American

Presidency Project, during President Trump's first 100 days, he had a 41 percent approval rate and he signed an executive order that threatened the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which JFK was instrumental in launching.

JFK had an 83 percent approval rating in his first 100 days, during which he also signed an executive order: the establishment of the Peace Corps.

Coincidentally, the JFK Centennial coincides with Trump's awaited decision regarding the confidential files pertaining to JFK's assassination. The deadline for the president to decide to reveal the confidential files to the public, as per a law enacted in 1992, is six months away.

But the Centennial comes at a crucial time in American politics as well. In the midst of this fledgling administration that is the brunt of much skepticism, we are reminded that there is no limit to what we, as a nation, can achieve, especially in tense times. JFK's vision for greatness is perhaps even more relevant in his centennial year, and his message all the more imperative.

So this month, while we BBQ and raise our glasses in celebration of John F. Kennedy, let us not lose sight of his ever-relevant advice to “ask what you can do for your country.” He may have been onto something.

## “JFK'S VISION FOR GREATNESS IS PERHAPS EVEN MORE RELEVANT IN HIS CENTENNIAL YEAR, AND HIS MESSAGE ALL THE MORE IMPERATIVE”

said at a talk about JFK's legacy on May 1 at the 92nd Street Y, “Kennedy will be remembered for his poetic unifying of our country.”

But amidst all the exhibits, picnics, and concerts in memoriam of his legacy, it is almost impossible to ignore the very large and very Republican elephant in the room: Trump.

To be sure, time has polarized party lines and changed American politics as a whole. And President Trump's career is still too young to properly assess. Still, certain features of each presidency are worth comparing as the centennial looms near.

Perhaps most obviously, President John F. Kennedy, born on May 29, 1917, was the youngest president ever elected to office. President Trump, at 70 years old, is the oldest president to ever take office in the United States.

During their time in office, both JFK and Trump faced troubles abroad. In 1962, JFK averted nuclear

confrontation with Cuba after a 13-day standoff in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Although the president was only 45 years old at the time, he had the foresight to ignore his senior advisors on Capitol Hill and go forward with a naval blockade. This single decision is considered instrumental in preventing a nuclear exchange with Cuba.

Today, tensions with North Korea over its missile and nuclear weapons programs have many worried that tensions could lead to a military response from the United States. President Trump has already sent a submarine and an aircraft carrier to Korean waters and North Korea has already threatened to sink it.

“Well, there's a chance that we could end up having a major, major conflict with North Korea. Absolutely” said President Trump to Reuters when asked about the possibility of a war with North Korea.

According to a Public Policy Polling survey taken in April, 39% of voters think that President Trump will get the United States into World War III during his Presidency.

But matters of foreign policy are not the only elements of Mr. Trump's presidency that differ from his 100-year-old predecessor. JFK also championed science and innovation as a way to unify his country.

On September 12, 1962, JFK stood beside his country and united them in a common goal of reaching the moon.

## PROACTIVITY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

smells of unhealthy goods that waft into my home by purchasing and eating large quantities thereof. In this scenario, I am helpless; I cannot control my urges for fast food. The sumptuous smells of baked or fried goods overwhelm me; I give in, I react.

But a more proactive alternative course of action exists. According to Frankl, I can choose another response, such as learning to tolerate my desire to eat junk food without acting on it or finding healthier alternatives instead of following my natural tendencies.

Such tactics require rational thinking, which proves nearly impossible if our emotions are too high. When we are too anxious, the amygdala, the part of the brain that controls emotion, takes over the part of the brain that controls reason. So in a sense, we are literally physically helpless, at least in that state, according to many psychologists.

Instead of letting our emotions run our lives, we can lower our anxiety to help us think rationally by using mindfulness techniques such as recognizing our high emotions and lowering our anxiety through deep breathing.

As Stephen Covey states in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, our language can indicate whether our thoughts are primarily proactive or reactive: Reactive language usually indicates a perception of inability or incompetence; proactive language often indicates a recognition of one's ability to determine the direction of her life.

The list below compares the differences between commonly used reactive and proactive language. Each reactive phrase has a more proactive alternative below it. Using proactive language can help us mindfully work toward becoming more proactive, for we will indirectly sensitize ourselves to the importance of proactivity, which will affect the way that we see ourselves and the world in which we live.

### REACTIVE LANGUAGE:

- “I can't do this”
- “I give up”
- “It's inevitable”
- “I'm doomed”

### PROACTIVE LANGUAGE:

- “I am going to re-analyze my options”
- “I'm going to change my strategy”
- “I don't know the future; I can only affect what I can”
- “I am in control of my actions”



### The Benefits of Proactive Living

We will eventually expand the areas over which we have control in our lives as a result of practicing proactivity. If I have difficulty with math, for example, I will feel less discouraged when I realize that I have the ability to choose my course of action instead of reacting emotionally when I have difficulty solving a given equation. Instead of running away from my issues with math, I can choose a more beneficial response, such as spending more time trying to understand the concepts or meeting with the teacher or a friend to receive extra help. Like a muscle that gets progressively stronger throughout a weight-training program, our ability to behave proactively depends on how often we engage in such modes of thinking.

### Proactivity in Action: Three Exercises to Improve Your Proactivity Today

Try implementing one of the following three steps to help you live proactively in your life; and it will most definitely help you improve your ability to make more effective decisions and achieve your goals more efficiently.

1.) Identify three scenarios in your life where you usually behave reactively. Devise at least two proactive ways of looking at the scenario, and a plan to remind yourself to behave proactively. Try to think and behave proactively in these scenarios for three weeks.

2.) Check in with yourself and label your anxiety three times per day—before breakfast, lunch, and dinner for thirty days. At each check-in, ask yourself how you can behave more proactively.

3.) Choose one particular area of difficulty in your life and think of how adopting a more proactive view will help you succeed in that area in the near future.



## Lost and Found in Sing Sing: A True Story

By Benjamin Koslowe

The calendar may have suggested that spring was near, although the frothy rain clouds caressing the brown hilltops on the other side of the Hudson told a different story. It was a Wednesday, the first day of March, and we fifteen guys and girls from YU had just bussed up the river.

“Up the river.” As it turns out, we were standing in the place that inspired this expression. Sing Sing Correctional Facility – maximum security fences, watchtowers, and all – a gentle 45 minute drive north that hugged the east bank of the Hudson River, was our destination (I played music from *The Shawshank Redemption* to set the mood). The day was young but our short tour was already ticking away.

“Why did you come to visit prison?”

I was waiting for the group to finish being inspected for sharp items. The correct answer to the guard’s question would’ve been a full description of a close family connection that I have to the prison.

I had convinced the trip coordinator to give me a spot on the trip because of this connection. My great-grandfather, Rabbi Irving Koslowe (1920-2000), studied at Yeshiva University for almost a decade (YUHS ’36, YC ’40, Riets ’43, Revel ’43). Old *Commentator* archives from the 1930s document his talent as coach/captain of the Yeshiva College basketball team – headlines like “Koslovsky Stars” and “Koslovsky Scores” testify to his athletic abilities (and to his pre-Americanized surname). Soon after his rabbinical ordination he married Marly Schachter and moved to Mamaroneck, New York, where he took up a pulpit position at the Westchester Jewish Center. Though his main occupation for the next 44 years would be with the synagogue, the burden of supporting his young children plus a job opening led him to accept a chaplaincy role at Sing Sing in 1950.

Rabbi Koslowe gained national attention a few years into his career because of the Julius and Ethel Rosenberg trial. A Jewish couple convicted of espionage during the Cold War, the Rosenbergs were both sentenced to execution. My great-grandfather counseled them, recited *vidui* (confession) with them, and walked them to the death chamber. By the time that New York outlawed capital punishment in 1963, he had escorted 17 Jewish inmates to the electric chair.

But most of Rabbi Koslowe’s role was more focused on the enrichment of life, rather than the dignity at its end. His weekly visits consisted of helping the roughly 150 Jewish prisoners, including offering religious guidance, organizing meaningful prayer services, and ensuring kosher food for those who wanted. In 1959 he convinced the Sing Sing administration to let him convert a basement storage room into an independently Jewish place of worship. He named the chapel Beit Shalom V’Tikvah (the house of peace and hope) and furnished it with cheap red vinyl theater seats that were going to waste.

This attitude of restoring the seemingly unsalvageable defined Rabbi Koslowe’s career. In a 1992 interview with the New York Times, he described, “People ask me

what I’m doing, bringing matzoh ball soup to a bunch of killers. But maybe we can make some change. Maybe we can bring some good in their life. Some of the guards would say I’m crazy, but I do what I can do.” He added, “If I can have an inmate come into the chapel, put on a yarmulke and worship, I think that shows there’s a positive change in behavior, a real step forward.” In 1999 he told the Times that his is one of the few congregations that “doesn’t mind losing members.” To this day there are ex-convicts who credit their life’s successful reformation to Rabbi Koslowe.

When Rabbi Koslowe retired in 1999 there were fewer than 40 Jewish inmates in Sing Sing. What began as a job that he envisioned lasting for only a few years

---

### “I CAME TO SING SING HOPING TO WALK THROUGH THE SAME CEMENT HALLS AND CELL BLOCKS THAT MY GREAT- GRANDFATHER PACED FOR DECADES.”

---

had become a lifelong impactful career. He retired with 49 years under his belt, having served longer than any warden, guard, or prisoner to that time.

I was five years old when my great-grandfather passed away, so my few memories of him are hazy at best. I came to Sing Sing hoping to walk through the same cement halls and cell blocks that my great-grandfather paced for decades. Maybe one of the staffers would be able to share some recollections with me. Better, perhaps I could sneak a word with some long-time inmate who could tell me about his experiences studying Hebrew and Jewish tradition with Rabbi Koslowe.

But small questions deserve short answers, so all I responded to our guard and tour guide was, “I guess I want to see what prison is like.”

Looking back, I realize that my answer was not so far off from the truth of the matter. The prison tour was fascinating. We were guided upfront and close, walking through giant housing blocks with hundreds of filled prison cells that seemed to be stuck decades in the past, taken from some movie; seeing the shower facilities and exercise yards; standing outside the thick padded walls of solitary confinement quarters; hearing about gang violence against prisoners and guards. We witnessed what prison is like, gaining a valuable perspective on crime and punishment, the realities of domineering routine and institutionalism.

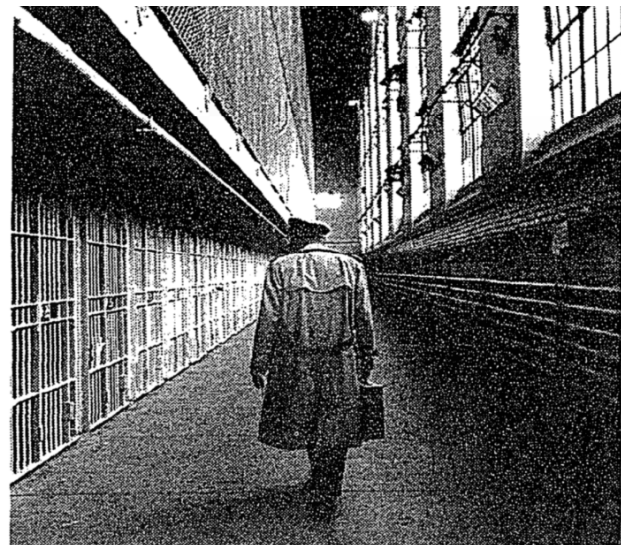
This would have been enough to warrant my skipping class for the tour. And then, before the tour concluded, we had extra time to visit the rooms of worship at the far end of the prison.

Chilly air drafted through the barred windows into the descending cramped basement staircase. After we organized single-file and turned a corner, I immediately noticed the chapel by its simple dedication placard:

“Rabbi I. Koslowe.” On one of the walls was an article from some local Mamaroneck newspaper about my great-grandfather’s retirement. The article included a picture of a chess set, which my family still has, that some of Rabbi Koslowe’s acolytes carved by hand and presented to him as a gift. I pointed out the picture to our tour guide, who has worked at Sing Sing for almost 20 years, and he said that he remembered him.

While the red seats that our group occupied matched the descriptions, I was taken aback by the unexpectedly small size of the room. We nearly filled up the space.

The new chaplain, who took over in 1999 when Rabbi Koslowe retired, happened to be around that afternoon, so he stopped in to say a few words to us. He shared some Torah thoughts and



Rabbi Koslowe walking through a Sing Sing housing block.  
(Photo Credit: Joyce Dopkeen/  
*The New York Times*.)

updated us on Jewish life in the prison today. They (un) fortunately don’t usually have a *minyan*, but there are still some religious Jewish prisoners who request kosher meals, Passover seders, etc.

Of course I asked the chaplain if he remembers Rabbi Irving Koslowe. He confirmed that he overlapped a bit with that “good Yid,” and related some of the most famous Rabbi Koslowe prison stories.

“If I remember correctly,” he then told, “some time ago an old *siddur* of his turned up. I’ve been meaning to return it to his family, but never got around to it.”

“I’m actually Rabbi Koslowe’s oldest great-grandchild.”

“Oh. Do you want it?” It was that quick.

The chaplain unfortunately was unable to locate the prayer book in his small paper-filled office, but he wrote down my address and phone number in the hopes that he’d find it soon enough.

Soon enough proved to arrive almost immediately. No sooner than when we were walking outside around the inner cement walls back to the prison entrance did the rabbi hurry to catch up to us. He had found the *siddur*. He asked our guard if I may take it out of the prison. The guard flipped through the book, established that it was not contraband, and gave me my great-grandfather’s Sing Sing *siddur* to take home.

\*\*\*

The end of the prison tour is a bit surreal in my mind. The group clapped when I was handed the *siddur*. I remember opening it up by the bus and flipping to recite psalm 23 – “*gam ki elech begei tzalmavet*,” “even as I walk down the valley in the shadow of death” – with the death row house and iconic “last mile” path in full sight.

In an email that I wrote on the bus to my family I described how the experience bridged generations, connecting me a bit more to my great-grandfather whom I never really knew. And yet, I found myself with writer’s block on this story. For several weeks I had difficulty organizing my thoughts.

As I was leaving YU for Pesach, I picked up the *siddur* for the first time since the trip. We were going to spend the holiday with our great-grandmother, Grandma Marly Koslowe (who is 96 and has 54 great-grandchildren, as well as an outstanding memory), and I figured that she would want to see the object for herself.

I showed her the *siddur* on *erev Yom Tov*, just a few hours before the first seder. The *siddur* is small, with dimensions about the size of a normal adult hand. My Grandma immediately noticed that the *siddur*’s binding was restored with band aids. She told me that this was typical of my great-grandfather, who apparently used to regularly mend old novels and checkbooks that would otherwise fall to disrepair. And she also estimated, based on the wear, tear, and printing date that this was probably his prison *siddur* from the beginning of his service in 1950. Likely he misplaced it at some point before his retirement; only now, 67 years later, was the *siddur* liberated from the realm of maximum security.





//////////////////////////////////// SPECIAL: PRESIDENTIAL SECTION //////////////////////////////////////

JOEL, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

equipped to learn and lead, how many teachers and administrators for the day school system have now been produced; we have services that continue a relationship not just with the klei kodesh, but with the lay kodesh. You go to the communities and people have a real awareness of the YU idea, whether it's through the Pesach To-Go, shabbatonim, and webcasts or guest speakers. And if there's one thing I regret, it's that we don't have enough of it.

Academically, you look at all of the schools and I think they're all in a better place. Part of this is the rise of Syms and its entrepreneurship. I think we have a sense of responsibility to the world because, of course, core to my beliefs is the fact that if we don't view ourselves as or lagoyim, then we are not doing what we're supposed to be doing. I also think that we are learning to play together better and to figure out how to negotiate the fact that this is a big tent with boundaries. Often you have people in the big tent who think they really should be here but other people in the big tent shouldn't be here; that happens on the left and on the right. I think we're better now at not blowing it up and at figuring out how to grow together.

**DL: If you could do anything differently during your presidency, what would it be?**

PJ: I'd like to say that I would've done more with Israel, but I can't tell you what it is. The reason that there's not more programming is because what we should be doing in Israel has eluded me. The accreditation program that we've done has been transformational, and the relationships that we have with the yeshivas is terrific. But everyone asks how could we have YU in Israel, and I haven't figured it out. I'm really confident that Rabbi Berman will look at this matter more than I did. But that's tangential.

I think in some personnel ways I would've been tougher. There are some jobs where it's not three strikes and you're out, it's one strike and you're out. And I think I might have been in some cases less corporate in terms of saying ad kan, till here. I think generally my colleagues really feel like they've been enriched by me, but I think that with some of them I should have had a shorter leash.

**DL: Can you give any specifics?**

PJ: Oh no. Look, anything for which there should be blame is on me. I'm the one responsible – some of my judgment, in some of my timing or trust, that's on me. I don't think that there was anyone here who didn't want to do their best. I really don't. I think that of all the people who I've been working with, nobody was coasting along cynically. During the first several years I really was COO and CEO. And then I backed away and empowered people, but kept control because I needed to know things. So you can ask, did I wait too long to do that more? I don't think so. I think we were beset by all the blessings of this decade economically, and by some issues that we faced that had to be dealt with. So I'm very proud that during the last couple of years I was the CEO but not the COO. Because when you have people of such quality as we've had as your senior partners in this enterprise, you're being criminal if you don't let them be all they can be. Of course I'm always out there, but I wasn't as focused on fundraising as the needs of a twenty-first century university now are, and I think we built the kind of place where my successor can run this and put his imprint on it but also be able to spend a lot of time on external relations.

**DL: You mentioned personal responsibility. Under your leadership YU experienced some deep operating deficits and saw its endowment shrink significantly.**

PJ: Can I stop you? You tend to do this. You make your questions into statements of facts that aren't fact. So can I just challenge you there?

**DL: Can I just finish the question, and then you can correct me if I'm wrong?**

PJ: Sure.

**DL: Under your leadership YU experienced some deep operating deficits and saw its endowment shrink significantly. In the past, you've blamed this on poor financial management. Do you take personal responsibility for the financial troubles that YU has experienced under your leadership?**

PJ: No, I'm not blaming anyone, I never said that, I said that I'm responsible. And there was not poor financial management the way you say it. So first of all let's understand. If you look at the university's endowment, after fourteen years, after what's happened to most universities in terms of the market after 2008, the non-Einstein part of Yeshiva's endowment is in the high 600's or maybe a little higher. Fourteen years ago, when we started, the non-Einstein part of the endowment was about the same or a little less. I don't want headlines on this one – look, a lot of the problems are that you say something and it goes all over. People take a little snippet of it and that becomes the headline, and I still have to have relations with Montefiore Hospital and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine since I'm awarding the degrees there.

But I have to tell you, with regards to the terrible loss of the endowment, don't read that guy Weiss's pieces because, I wouldn't say he was intentionally lying, but he put together different things and it came out wrong. The Einstein endowment went from \$1.1 billion to somewhere under \$400 million. And not because of financial mismanagement, but because of the fact that, as they were aspiring to be larger and larger in terms of their research capacity, with my blessings...first of all there was the sequester, and then there was the fact that fundraising for Einstein was not what they anticipated, it was less. And when you get more money from NIH, you have to raise 40 cents for every dollar of grant that you get, and if you don't do it then you end up having a deficit. Einstein also invested heavily in having a new facility, The Price Center.

And the decrease in the endowment, aside from some of the bumps that you speak

SEE JOEL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies



**Harry Fischel School for Higher Jewish Studies  
at Bernard Revel Graduate School  
of Jewish Studies**

**Summer Session 2017**

SCHEDULE OF COURSES

**Jewish History**

**Hasidim, Mitnagdim, Maskilim—  
Differences and Interactions**

**Professor Immanuel Etkes**

9 – 10:40 a.m.

**Bible**

**Genesis and Theology  
in Maimonides and Radak**

**Professor Yitzhak Berger**

11 a.m. – 12:40 p.m.

**Jewish Philosophy**

**The Early Modern Period:  
Spinoza and Mendelssohn**

**Professor Daniel Rynhold**

6 – 7:40 p.m.

**Jewish History**

**Second Temple Jewish Literature**

**Professor Joseph Angel**

7:50 – 9:30 p.m.

**Classes meet Mondays, Wednesdays  
and Thursdays**

**June 26 – July 27**

**For information, please contact  
Rona Steinerman, Revel Director of Admissions  
and Student Affairs, at [steinerm@yu.edu](mailto:steinerm@yu.edu).**



## SPECIAL: PRESIDENTIAL SECTION

## JOEL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

of, some of it was not mismanagement – some of it was skulduggery. The Madoff thing hit everybody. But that wasn't mismanagement – that was a sociopath. The vast majority of the “decline” was a decreasingly large Einstein endowment that Einstein knowingly had. And, by the way, the Einstein endowment was always the property of Einstein. It wasn't money that Yeshiva gave away. We couldn't spend it except on Einstein and how Einstein determined we should spend it.

Now, there were other losses, because of spending on things that we didn't have money to cover. When I talk about financial mismanagement, it's that, like many universities, the financial systems that we had were so antiquated that I don't know how anybody could know what we had or not. I am the beneficiary of what I inherited, litov, but Yeshiva University, to my knowledge, never did not have an annual operating deficit. And that's not a workable financial model. So that's why, in the second year, the trustees and I decided that we had to invest in a major management system so that the data was available. And I will tell you, it took eleven years to get it done. So it wasn't that you had scoundrels here who lied; it was that you couldn't get a handle on the data. I do know that now, if I need to know anything about what we're spending up to date, what our liquidity is, or anything like that, I'll know it within the day because it's mechanized and we have a premier fiscal team.

One last thing about this. With the approval of the board, I spent money. I spent money thinking we were spending into accumulated gains that we had the right to spend. Look, we hired 100 more faculty members, we beautified the campus, and we built the Glueck beis medrash, which was not fully paid for when we built it. We invested heavily in student life, the career center and student counseling, in mashgichim and madrichim and mashpiim. This required a lot of money, and maybe we spent too much. The systems were never good enough to know exactly what we were doing. But if I had it to do again, I'd do it again. Because I think Yeshiva, had it not invested in its quality, in the honors programs, and I can go down a whole track of things, I think it would've been in deep jeopardy. And now it's profoundly not.



**DL: You served for significantly less time than each of your predecessors. How long did you originally expect to serve for, and why did you decide to step down at this point if your contract ends in 2018?**

PJ: I planned to serve for ten years. At the ten-year mark, I, together with the trustees, decided that it would be damaging to Yeshiva University to make a change at that time. So at that time I agreed to another five years. And I made it clear to the Chairman that I would by all accounts not serve beyond another five years. When I thought Yeshiva was stable and in a good trajectory, I would ask him if I could step down. About two years ago, before the Einstein deal was consummated, I said that when we get this Einstein thing done it will be time to start looking. And that's why on September 9th, my birthday, at the board meeting, I announced that I would be stepping down upon selection of a successor. I gave them enough time that if worst came to worst, I would serve through 2018. I actually assumed it would be a little sooner than it has been.

Esther and I would do this again in a second. We just don't want to do it anymore. It's 24/7. It's a very public

hard job, and I'm not hard, I'm soft. So that's the answer. I think five years wouldn't have been enough, because I think I had to do some major things to make my four-point vision become real – just getting the attitudes with Israel correct was a lot. So I thought it needed more than five years, but I didn't want more than ten years. I think that vibrant institutions need new leadership. I think I'm good at this. I think I'm really a good president. And I think that I could stay on and it would be good. But I think that my leaving will make it better.

**DL: You're not a Rabbi, and your presidency was originally opposed by a number of the Roshei Yeshiva. How has your relationship been with the Yeshiva? Do you feel that you were eventually accepted by the Yeshiva community as the president of RIETS?**

PJ: Again you have me bragging. I think you should ask the Roshei Yeshiva, or the ones who were opposed to me. By the way, they weren't opposed to Richard Joel; they had a concept of a rabbi-president who would be a Rosh Yeshiva. They wouldn't have wanted just a pulpit rabbi coming in, they wanted a Rosh Yeshiva li-shita. I don't believe to this day that the manner in which they expressed themselves was appropriate. But they had felt marginalized so I never held that against them.

I believe that the Roshei yeshiva would tell you that this was a wonderful period for them, that they are very happy that I've been the president of RIETS, that they think they were treated with enormous respect, and that they learned that in fact it's ok and maybe right to have a lay president. There was not one time in fourteen years when I had Roshei Yeshiva coming to me saying, “you gotta do this, we paskin this way.” There's tremendous respect. I think part of it is that I'm a true ben yeshiva, or ben Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon. My philosophy is very much what most of them teach and all of them respect. And I think it was fine for them when I would say that every Rosh Yeshiva and faculty member is entitled to their views and to free speech but only the president speaks for yeshiva university. I think that gave them some comfort. And I think that's completely consistent with how a university should be.

So I think they celebrated my presidency. I think they're looking forward to the future, but I think that, as most of them have said to me, they're sorry to see me go. I was not cowed, not that they tried to cow me. In other words, I didn't come thinking “oh my God I can't do anything in Yeshiva, I'm gonna have to ask shaylos.” I said, “I have some expertise to offer here.” No Rosh Yeshiva was appointed without me being one of the two or three people who appointed them. And I think it was wonderful. I've come to appreciate them, each of them. We have an incredible gathering of incredible Ramim.

**DL: You oversaw the founding of first YU Global and then the Katz School. How does this move towards more online classes and vocational degrees affect YU's status as a university, and will this help to shrink our operating deficit?**

PJ: Number two, absolutely. And number one, the questions was, in these modern times, are you going to be less of a university or more? I believe that the mission of the university, which is undergraduate education and the yeshiva and serving the Jewish community, could never be of high quality and operate in the black. So as we were reaffirming that this is our purpose, we understood that the cost of that has to be a greater commitment to fundraising and developing quality programs that will be revenue generators. And we started first with YU global. After the first year and a half of that, we realized that what YU Global was had to be encapsulated in a school, like a school of continuing education, that would offer quality masters degrees or quality certificate degrees but that would be for a larger population and could make money. And that's how YU Global evolved into the Katz School. Over the next several years, Katz will have a reputation, and it will generate a serious amount of revenue for the university, permitting the core and our graduate schools to fly. I would also tell you that if there were in the area of “vocation” ways that we could be of service to our community, do it in quality, and not lose money, I wouldn't have been opposed to doing that. It's about taking the mission and the business, and saying how do

we have a model that can strengthen the business while strengthening the mission.

**DL: When you started as president, YU was ranked 40th by US News and World Report. Now we are ranked 66th. What is the reason for this fall?**

PJ: Various rating systems have their criteria that they base achievement on. As you know, we haven't pursued, necessarily, the same criteria. My only response to this will be that Yeshiva has the highest rates of success in placement, professional attainment and achievement than we have ever had. I think the education is unique. We are about as large as we have ever been. The satisfaction level I hear from students is very high. “Nowhere but here” is real, because what you get at Yeshiva University you don't get at Harvard; there are no measurements for that. We've created a model for an integrated life and, through Torah U'Maddah, an integrated approach to education where we have a faculty of excellence, and the Torah is nonpareil; and the students are wonderful.

**DL: You pride yourself on hosting students for Shabbos on a regular basis. Do you feel that you've built relationships with students during your presidency? Do you expect these relationships to continue going forward?**

PJ: I certainly feel that about 1,400 students have been home-fed for one Shabbos. But I will tell you that for Esther and me it has been one of the great joys of my presidency. There have already been students from 13 years ago with whom we have maintained wonderful relationships. I think it has been a meaningful experience, both for my family and the students, and for me, and I hope these relationships continue. As I take an expanded role teaching, I hope that I will be able to have terrific relationships with the students who will be in my classes.

**DL: Originally you were supposed to step down on July 1. Then it changed to June 5. What is the reason for this change?**

PJ: There was no set-in-stone date for me to transition, and Rabbi Berman and I decided that the most opportune time to be when he was ready, after the commencements. Commencements end May 25th, Shavuot is May 31st and June 1st, when I finish counting the Sefirah and I reach 50, I get to go on to “next.” That is June 5th, and Rabbi Berman is ready and prepared to move forward, and therefore I am happy to end at that time.

**DL: Do you have confidence in your successor? Do you have any wise words for Rabbi Berman as he takes over your position?**

PJ: Of course I have confidence in my successor. I have shared many words with Rabbi Berman, and it is for him to determine whether or not they are wise words. Every president is unique and distinct, and hopefully every President advanced the institution, and I am confident the same will be true with my successor. Needless to say I wish him every success in the world.

**DL: Broadly speaking, what do you want your legacy as president to look like? What would you like to be remembered for?**

PJ: Personally, I would like to be remembered for my children and grandchildren. But my legacy professionally, as that of my predecessors and successor, is that Yeshiva University continues to inform the world with values and purpose, and success. That it is a smile to our community and to the greater world. That we have enabled and ennobled our students and continue to do so with a healthy and great institution.

**DL: What is your plan for after YU? Will you miss being president?**

PJ: I have a one year sabbatical, and I remain the Bravmann family University Professor. During the sabbatical, Esther and I will get to breathe freely a little bit. We will spend time with our children and grandchildren. I will prepare courses for the following academic year and will hopefully start work on a book. And I look forward to spending lots of time smelling the flowers and praising the L-rd.



## SPECIAL: PRESIDENTIAL SECTION

## A Road Traveled

By Dr. Karen Bacon

In the Fall of 2003, surrounded by the colorful banners of the various Yeshiva University schools and affiliates, I sat on the stage of Lamport Auditorium along with my fellow Deans and other University administrators and faculty to pay tribute to the incoming President of Yeshiva University, the 4th in the University's distinguished history. Richard M. Joel is a talented speaker, and he put that talent to good use on that day by painting a vision of his presidency and his priorities. His rhetoric created a soaring picture of a great university destined for even further greatness. He also shared with us his inner emotional turmoil. "For me this is a moment of hope and joy, of fear and trembling." As I reflect back on almost fourteen years since that inaugural speech, the evidence is clear. There were moments and events that I am certain brought President Joel much joy and others that caused him to doubt and to wonder. The list is long, but I will choose only a few as illustrative examples.

One of the central duties of a President is to encourage supporters to come forward to invest in the University, its faculty and its students. Mr. Ronald Stanton, of blessed memory, responded early on to the President's call and made an historic pledge to the University. Announced as the Stanton Legacy, it would enable President Joel to jump start initiatives even before permanent funding could be developed. The possibilities of such a gift were enormous, the President's joy almost boundless. This commitment not only spoke to one donor's belief in our University, but it potentially foretold of others who would similarly invest. Unfortunately Mr. Stanton passed away. The President lost one of his strongest boosters and the hoped for others, who might have filled this void, did not come forward. Joy turned to doubt.

But President Joel never let doubt stop him from dreaming and from believing. The Glueck Family supported the construction of the first new building

on the Wilf Campus in decades. The Jacob and Dreizel Glueck Beit Midrash stands proudly on the place that was formerly a nondescript parking lot and quickly became the showpiece for the campus, followed by Nagel's Bagels and most recently the renovation of the Gottesman Library. Those were joyful times.

In the early years the investment in faculty was substantial. Academic departments expanded, curricular innovations were encouraged and supported, facilities

---

**"FOR PRESIDENT JOEL IT WAS INSUFFICIENT THAT THE FIVE NY BOROUGH'S KNOW ABOUT YESHIVA. HE WANTED THE WHOLE COUNTRY TO KNOW US, TO RESPECT US, TO SUPPORT US."**

---

were modernized, research was valued and recognized. We were a University on the move and President Joel's restless spirit was spearheading that movement. Stern College invested in the sciences. Yeshiva College took on the formidable task of revising its curriculum out of which emerged a new CORE Program and new faculty to deliver it. The Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish Studies recruited a substantial number of emerging young scholars in Bible, Jewish History and Jewish Philosophy. The Economics major took on new significance, The Albert Einstein College of Medicine moved into the exciting field of translational medicine and faculty in all divisions of the University were recognized for their excellence in concrete ways. President Joel relished every opportunity to talk about "his" faculty and to praise the academic leadership that partnered with him in this period of growth. But

just as the Biblical years of plenty were followed by the lean years, so too the University experienced a financial downturn and with it things started to tumble. Concerns and unhappiness spread as the President confronted both the substance of the problem and its fallout for faculty.

Yet despite the ups and downs, in the early years and until the very present, President Joel literally crisscrossed the United States to bring his vision of the University – a place that "values values", a place that "ennobles and enables" – to communities large and small. For President Joel it was insufficient that the five NY boroughs know about Yeshiva. He wanted the whole country to know us, to respect us, to support us. Go to any major city in the US and you are likely to meet dozens of people who remember his visit to their community and his inspirational presentations. In the words of one such individual, he always "hit a home run."

On campus his priority was to empower students to think big, to think about leadership, to feel connected to each other and to a larger mission. A man of action, he walked the campuses engaging with students, inviting them to his home, telling them to reach higher and further. And the students listened. Today campus clubs, activities, and student initiatives are at an all-time high. In the choices our students make – whether helping communities struck by natural disasters or tutoring public school students so they may aspire to go to college – we see reflections of President Joel's hopes.

These few reflections of mine are not just memories. I believe they are the foundation upon which President Joel built his presidency – the academic enterprise within, the community without, and the student body as the bridge between the two. This model feels right and will surely endure, even as conditions and challenges mandate course corrections, and lingering problems demand immediate attention and answers. We are not the same as we were in 2003. We are decidedly better. And for this I thank the 4th President of Yeshiva University, Richard M. Joel.





## SPECIAL: PRESIDENTIAL SECTION

*Only Yesterday*

By Rabbi Ozer Glickman

I have a favorite memory of the early months of President Joel's tenure. Yeshiva had organized a symposium in Jerusalem and YU faculty flew to Israel for a series of events. Towards the end of our week there, I traveled with President Joel and a handful of students to Ra'anana. The main event of the evening was a shiur I was privileged to deliver with many old and new friends of YU in attendance.

What I said that evening has faded entirely from memory, not only the audience's but mine as well. What I do remember vividly is the afterparty, stopping outside Ra'anana at an all-night burger joint with President Joel and the students. I'm not without teaching skills but I watched a master educator that evening. "Young faces aglow with admiration and enthusiasm, inspired to serve Am Yisrael" - that's what I wrote in my journal.

Over the next thirteen years, I saw it time and time again. This is the President Richard M. Joel I will miss: *moreh, madrich, meinia, mamritz* (part teacher, mentor, motivator, energizer). I hope we still have access to this Richard Joel for years and years to come.

When his administration began, many of us in the YU world had no idea how desperate the financial situation was. Remember that It would be another five years before Bernard Madoff was unmasked as a fraud. Almost every one of Yeshiva's most serious problems predated President Joel's arrival. I would never have imagined there would be allegations of sexual abuse at an affiliated institution. The best thing about Yeshiva then were its students, as they are now. I loved that the President sensed this as well, that he thrived in their company, and that he was visible in a way the presidents of other universities I had attended were not.



Those halcyon days have receded into memory. They seem more like a pleasant dream from which we were rudely awakened than a period of grace that eventually ended. What we then judged to be ambition and faith in the future later sometimes appeared to be naiveté.

When problems did emerge, some of which appeared to threaten the very existence of the University, President Joel never wavered in its defense. I wasn't always certain that I understood the decisions that he made. I was not privy to the Board's deliberations, the advice of Legal Counsel, or for that matter the inside story. Whenever I did question a policy, I always received a gracious answer. Usually I didn't have enough facts to disagree but when I did express dissenting opinions, President Joel always understood that I was exercising my duty as a member of the rabbinic faculty and I was never made to feel that

my input was unwelcome or inappropriate. President Joel has always been mindful of his responsibility to protect the future of the institution. If we disagreed, it was always about tactics; our fundamental values were always aligned.

I didn't always know the pressure under which he

**"IN THE DARKEST DAYS,  
WE NEEDED HIS OPTIMISM,  
HIS PURPOSEFULNESS, HIS  
DETERMINATION TO SEE WHAT  
SHOULD AND COULD BE DONE,  
AND OVER TIME HE SET US BACK  
ON COURSE."**

worked but there were times that I was concerned for President Joel as a friend and colleague. He has the extraordinary ability of strong leaders to withstand public pressure in the extreme. When things seemed to this outsider to reach a crescendo, I would sometimes just drop him a line or two of quiet encouragement. He would express gratitude while always comforting me in return. He had the emotional intelligence to discern that my words of encouragement were a sign of the depth of my own concern.

In the darkest days, we needed his optimism, his purposefulness, his determination to see what should and could be done, and over time he set us back on course. When I have the privilege to travel across the Modern Orthodox world to teach Torah, I am often pulled to the

seek guidance on living the Torah-centered life in the trading room, the boardroom, the operating room, the classroom, the family room. I'd say things are pretty wonderful at my YU.

There is widespread respect and affection for President Joel among the Roshei Yeshiva. The regard with which he is held was clear during our monthly meetings in the boardroom outside his office. The President always felt a responsibility to report to the senior rabbinic faculty his plans and policies for the broader institution. We understood both through his deeds and words that he believes RIETS is the crown jewel of our institution, as we all do. As the chief executive of the entire university, though, he was charged with balancing the needs of secular affiliates with their own requirements both contractual and regulatory. This is one of the special challenges of managing a Yeshiva University. President Joel understood that the very name of the institution reflects the challenge accepted by its founders. To some in the Orthodox world, Yeshiva University is an oxymoron just as Torah u'Mada is. President Joel strived to minimize the contradictions just as his predecessors did. Although he might not word it this way, President Joel always understood that thesis and antithesis can often be resolved but must ultimately remain perennially in apposition. Taking shots from the left and the right is a necessary function of a centrist institution which is by definition a synthesis. I think he always understood that this is the essence of our mission and will never be without some tension.

No retrospective on President Joel can omit his love of *tefilla*. He is an accomplished *baal tefilla* and I cherished the times I have been in the *kahal* when he led us. Sharing spiritual experiences with students is as important as teaching them texts. President Joel is a model of a believing Jew committed to the eternity of *Am Yisrael*, *Torat Yisrael*, and our connection to *Eretz Yisrael*. Some of the more notable Israel-oriented projects on our campus owe their existence to President Joel and his family. He has laid the groundwork for the greater recognition that the center of the Jewish world is not in New York City but in *Eretz Yisrael*. His successor has a good foundation on which to build the institution's involvement with the spiritual center of our Jewish world.

Every year, I have the bittersweet experience of sending talmidim to their new lives in the outside world. Although they and I promise to stay in touch, we all know that the intimacy of sitting together over text and singing together the song of Torah is ending. I have often heard the same story each May. Talmidim report that the outstanding experience of their Yeshiva years was spending Shabbat at the Joel home. Although I have never had that experience, I understand why that can inspire a young person. Our president is a Centrist Orthodox, Torah im-derech Eretz Jew, engaged with life and animated by our traditions. He is warm, loving, and sincere.

But being President of Yeshiva University is a public position. It can attract criticism by sincere people with their own sensibilities, albeit often with limited facts but important perspectives. During the years we have worked together and interacted, not as frequently as we would both have hoped, I have witnessed how the Presidency of YU can be a touchstone for a wide range of issues, some connected to the institution and some not. When a new crisis erupts in the broader Jewish community, we often wonder how the Anglo-Jewish press will find a way to lay it at the feet of our President. As our teacher President Lamm told me, "criticism goes with the territory. If you haven't been severely criticized by people who don't know you, you haven't done anything important."

I'm grateful that there are leaders like Rabbi Lamm and Richard M. Joel who are willing and able to navigate the rocky terrain of public life. It is something for which I am not suited and my admiration for them as nuanced, complex personalities with courage and resolve is undiminished by the challenges of life at this complex institution.

It has been my great honor to teach Torah to the wonderful students of Yeshiva University under the leadership of the President of RIETS and of Yeshiva University, President Richard M. Joel.



## SPECIAL: PRESIDENTIAL SECTION

### JOEL YEARS, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

a commitment to four “areas of concentration: nobility, excellence, Israel, and community.” He also called on the university to develop a “culture of caring” in which “every student counts,” a student-centered approach that has served as one hallmark of his presidency, reflected for instance in the dominance of student questions in his Town Hall Meetings over the years. Notably, buoyed by YU’s financial health, he called on everyone — students, faculty, administrators, and the community — to “dream” collectively of a better YU.

Under the “excellence” heading President Joel anticipated the interdisciplinary centers he soon began to institute, among which the Center for the Jewish Future, the Center for Israel Studies, and more recently the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought remain prominent. He pointed to a faculty “overburdened with high course loads and inadequate research support” and to “unmet curricular needs.” Institutional support for research has only recently improved, but the YC standard course load did drop to three rather than four courses a term — a major upgrade accompanied by higher expectations for research. In September of 2005, he appointed David Srolovitz Dean of Yeshiva College and called for the hiring of 100 new faculty members in the three undergraduate programs, a reduction in the number of adjunct professors, and a thousand new students, all within five to seven years. In turn Dean Srolovitz insisted on upgraded classrooms with multimedia capabilities, a new Dean’s Office complex, and better, more private faculty offices in Belfer and Furst that would facilitate collegial and student-faculty interaction and facilitate research. Within those early years, undergraduate enrollment did expand, and by 2007, 56 additional appointments had been made to the undergraduate faculties (from 147 to 203). Some departments, including Math, Jewish Studies, and Economics, are still benefitting from what we might remember as the Great Expansion. The Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program, which predated his presidency, greatly expanded and remained strong with his support. Honors programs within Torah Studies and SSSB were established. Both merit- and need-based financial aid became a focus for fund-raising. Many new appointments including a new vice-president for university life, new directors for the interdisciplinary centers, new university professors, a new chair for the English department, a new director for the YC Honors Program, and a new head of Torah Studies including RIETS, undoubtedly had a significant impact on YU, as did the continuing academic leadership of Provost Mort Lowengrub, whom President Lamm had appointed.

From 2002 through 2011 (!) YC undertook its first significant curriculum revision since its founding in 1928. The college invented the interdisciplinary Core Curriculum to replace the old distribution requirements under which students took rather standard introductions to various academic fields. Under Deans Norman Adler, David Srolovitz, and Barry Eichler, the YC faculty reviewed curricula in comparable institutions with the aim of preparing students for the current century by redefining a broad liberal arts education. At the same time, many majors grew stronger. President Joel did not direct these efforts from above, instead delegating them to the Provost and the Deans, but he supported them, and he welcomed the results. In retrospect, those early years look like an academic Golden Age.

Unfortunately, the increasing expenditures depended upon some questionable assumptions: more students, more tuition dollars, more support from donors, and continuing growth. About a year before the 2008 stock market “crash” on October 11, 2008, YU was already looking for ways to rein in spending by making some modest cuts and hitting the pause button. After the crash significantly reduced the value of university investments, YU began to experience the long and often painful years of budget cuts, constraints on spending, and tabling of further improvements: the Great Contraction. President Joel, Provost Lowengrub, and later Provost Selma Botman deserve credit for postponing and reducing the educational impact of budget cuts. Above all, faculty members continued to achieve tenure and promotions based on the merits; I know of only two exceptions, both quite recent. At first cuts in personnel

exclusively targeted non-academic staff positions, while other cuts targeted “other-than-personnel” (OTP) expenses, thereby protecting the jobs and educational contributions of current faculty members. But as of 2009-10 the university froze faculty, administrative, and staff hiring and salaries, and in January 2012 reduced the maximum university match for retirement funds from 7% to 2%. President Joel reduced his own salary by \$100,000. The salary freeze has now lasted eight years with three exceptions: continuing modest raises upon promotion, a one-time 2% raise to the base salaries, and a one-time \$2000 “bonus.” The pension matching fund reduction has now lasted over five years. Other universities suffered, of course, but most cut less deep and bounced back faster. Unlike some of my colleagues, I do not question the necessity of cuts in salaries. Personnel costs represent by far the dominant expense for any university. What I do question is the depth and longevity of the freezes and reductions, still with no end in sight.

Why does all this matter? Excellence in education depends on a superb, robust faculty as well as motivated, talented students. To attract and retain an excellent faculty, YU has to pay salaries competitive with those of comparable institutions. Falling behind translates to the erosion of competitiveness and of faculty morale; less willingness to volunteer “extra” time over and above absolute professional responsibilities like teaching, research, and service; and an exploration of options by faculty members, some of whom departed for greener or at least other pastures. Somewhat fewer courses are offered, average class sizes have grown somewhat larger, and on average students receive somewhat less individual attention. A few years ago YU offered retirement incentives to longer-serving faculty members, causing the faculties of the various programs to contract further. Because of the hiring freeze, the departing and retiring faculty members were replaced only if absolutely necessary. In a few cases such as Biology and Computer Science, the administration has approved replacement positions despite continuing deficits. By now at least one YC major and one YC minor have disappeared, and other majors and minors need attention. The contraction of departments, in some cases to the minimum possible for a program to continue to exist, reduces the variety of courses and viability of a major or minor. To ensure the educational strength and excellence of YC and to add new academic fields and subfields, the administration needs to begin approving more replacement and new positions, obviously with one eye to strategic planning and the other eye to the impact on the budget. The sooner the better. This major transition will probably depend on additional sources of income in the form of profitable programs and rising donations.

Why didn’t we bounce back faster? The infamous Bernie Madoff Ponzi scheme, which came to light in December 2008 soon after the crash, played a role thanks to inadequate conflict-of-interest policies, a major failing quickly remedied by the Board of Trustees. While many faculty members blame President Joel for the financial crisis because the tribulations occurred on his watch, I mainly blame the financially immature history of YU. Until the past few years, astonishingly, YU never had a proper budget, one which would have enabled administrators to track how much money had been spent of the money budgeted for a given year and to plan ahead for future years. For far too long, we didn’t take advantage of new software for budgeting, financial planning, and strategic planning. It took Toby Winer, an experienced financial administrator who came to YU with a fresh perspective, to discover in 2013 the extent of the annual deficit: over \$150 million. No wonder our endowment dropped so far below its peak around \$2.3 billion. After that, outside consultants and new administrators have helped us develop functional budgets for the various schools and programs and for YU as a whole. Recalling the crisis under President Revel, the university had to sell considerable real estate holdings in Washington Heights — fortunately for a profit — to re-establish a healthy cash flow. Most recently, the financial separation from Einstein reduced the deficit by around \$100 million annually while also reducing the endowment. In financial terms we know by now where we are and where we need to go. The deficits have fallen

toward manageability, bringing sustainability within view.

We have largely come through to the other side of the third worst financial crisis in YU history. Money worries almost certainly exacerbated President Revel’s heart problems, which led to his far too early death in 1940. Only much later did the college climb out of debt after selling off a sizable chunk of land. Early in President Lamm’s years, the university almost went bankrupt but was able to renegotiate its debt and work its way back to the solvency President Joel at first enjoyed. Now we’re once again “stable” according to Moody’s and, we hope, headed toward 100% sustainability.

President Joel, like his predecessors, has been a top-down administrator. Both in his early years and thereafter, policies deeply affecting faculty members were all too often announced from on high without prior consultation or input. Only in recent years has systematic and institutionalized faculty input begun to make a difference. Faculty representatives participated in the searches for Provost Selma Botman and, at one remove from the Board of Trustees, for our incoming president. The Faculty Council for the Manhattan Campuses successfully represents faculty points of view. Provost Botman and occasionally other top administrators attend our meetings and make presentations, and Provost Botman submits new and revised policies for comment, though she merely announces some significant changes. The Council sends non-voting representatives to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees and has asked to send representatives to the Financial Committee. It participated in the lengthy process that led to the new Strategic Plan, which calls for improvements at long last in faculty members’ lives. The President, Provost, other top administrators, and the Board of Trustees determined the final form of the plan; faculty members merely advised. Yet some of our points made it into the plan that wouldn’t have surfaced had our voices not been heard. Finally, led by President Joel and Provost Botman, Yeshiva University was at long last taken off the AAUP censure list on June 5, 2015, restoring us to full membership in the American Association of University Professors, the most important American organization representing faculty members.

It would be presumptuous of me to assess the legacy of Richard Joel’s presidency. Future historians will need to do that based on documents, interviews, archival research, and thoughtful analysis. What I can do is put some key questions on the table. When YU had to transition from expansion based on unsustainable spending, much of it for admirable goals, to contraction based on budget cuts, what aspects of the expansion survived? In recent years, what new initiatives to increase income and to give graduating students additional options such as Master’s Programs and Certificate Programs, will prove successful, promote sustainability, and enhance YU’s mission? Will President-elect Ari Berman, both a Ph. D. and a rabbi, mirroring the credentials of the first three presidents, maintain some or all of President Joel’s priorities?

While central to educational excellence in Yeshiva College, to the academic experiences of generations of students, and to the “Madda” portion of YU’s mission, faculty member sometimes feel undervalued and neglected compared to students, rabbis, deans, and higher administrators. In my view, any university exists mainly to foster interactions between faculty and students as well as to further knowledge; in our case, most students understandably value their interactions with rabbis even more highly than those with faculty members. Will Rabbi Dr. Berman help restore faculty confidence, ensure competitive salaries and pension benefits, and raise faculty morale to the heights it reached in President Joel’s early years? Certainly, like all his predecessors beginning with Revel, he deeply believes in the unique mission of YU. But will he retain the commitment to teaching and research in the liberal arts and sciences that have served from the beginning as a source of identity and strength for Yeshiva College?



## SPECIAL: PRESIDENTIAL SECTION

## Interview with Incoming President Rabbi Ari Berman

By Doron Levine

*For this year's final issue of The Commentator, we sat down (virtually) with incoming YU President Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman and asked him to share some of his personal background and vision for YU. Rabbi Berman will take over as president on June 5.*

**Doron Levine: Your connection to YU goes back at least as far as high school, when you attended MTA. How deep is your connection to YU, and when did it begin? How was your experience as an undergraduate student at YU?**

Rabbi Ari Berman: My connection to Yeshiva University began long before I attended any of the YU schools, as I was born and reared into a YU family. My mother was President of the Student Body at Stern College, my father held the same position at Yeshiva College and they met as student leaders of their schools. But more than just serving as a meeting ground, YU helped shape their lives and worldview. The house they built together was infused by the values and philosophy that they learned at Yeshiva University, and when it came time to select a high school and college it was only natural that I would become a student at MTA and then Yeshiva College.

During my years at Yeshiva, I was fortunate to form deep, remarkable relationships with my rabbis and teachers. For many years I learned in *rebbe u-mori* Rabbi Michael Rosensweig's *shiur*. Later during *semikhah* I studied in Rabbi Hershel Schachter's kollel and after *semikhah* in the *kollel elyon* under Rabbi Aharon Kahn. I also had the *zekhut* of spending four years learning from and developing a deep personal relationship with *rebbe u-mori* Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l, both through the YU Israel program in Yeshivat Har Etzion and in the Gruss Kollel in Jerusalem.

In many cases my first serious encounter with disciplines that would become the objects of lifelong intellectual commitments occurred at Yeshiva. While I had the pleasure of studying with great professors in a number of disciplines, the focus of my studies was on philosophy. I was a student of the incomparable Dr. Arthur Hyman ob"m, first as a philosophy major in Yeshiva College and then in the Bernard Revel Graduate school where I earned my MA in Medieval Jewish Philosophy. I also served as the co-president of the Philosophy Club (a highly sought after position, to be sure) and as one of the founders and editors of the first YU student journal of philosophy, *Shem ve-Yefet*.

In addition to the spiritual and intellectual elements of my experience here, Yeshiva University was also the source for so many of my lifelong friendships. These relationships - strengthened and developed in my years as a student - were central to my college experience. While I tended to spend most of my evening time in the *bet midrash*, my close friends were very active in extracurricular activities. My dear friends and roommates, Lawrence Burian and Ami Aharon were, respectively, the President of SOY and the founder of Morg Mart. And so entirely on account of their civic-minded merit I managed to live in one of the prestige rooms on the second floor of Morg (with private bathrooms) and had access to an endless supply of snacks.

While spending time with friends in the dorm was wonderful, I happily traded that in for married life at the end of my senior year. This most important, transformative relationship in my life was also due to my YU connections. I met my wife, Anita Ash, when I was a senior in MTA on the MTA-Central blind date. We continued seeing each other throughout college and married soon after graduation. We spent our first year of marriage on campus in the apartment building next door (now known as Rav Meir Goldwicht's building, although at the time it was known as Rav Dovid Lifshitz' building). Following that year, we moved to the Gruss campus for two years. These were enriching years of study for both us during which we developed great friendships with the other young couples on campus, both in New York and Jerusalem.

I could speak endlessly about the manifold ways in which Yeshiva University has molded my life. I have felt the profound personal impact of so many people - too many to name - who to this day are counted among the

leadership at YU. Ultimately, while the values that drove me here were those of my immediate, biological family, in coming I gained a spiritual and intellectual family as well.

**DL: Did you have any connection to Rabbi Lamm when you were at YU? What are some memories that you have of the YU president from when you were a student and then a rebbe at YU?**

RAB: As with my academic life, my professional life was launched by Yeshiva University. Following my years in the *kollel elyon*, I became an instructor at Yeshiva College in the Stone *Bet Midrash* Program and had been placed by YU as one of the rabbis at The Jewish Center in Manhattan. While at the Jewish Center I had the honor of serving for six years under a rabbi who would become a cherished mentor, *rebbe u-mori* Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter. As it happened, these years also placed me in close contact with Rabbi Lamm who was a regular congregant at the Center. I had already been a long-time student of Rabbi Lamm's teachings through reading his books and articles. At the Center, however, I was fortunate to develop a personal connection with him. Although he naturally had an extremely busy schedule, he regularly made time to meet with me to share his wisdom and counsel. In fact, in my early years we would meet after every major sermon or presentation that I delivered and he would offer pinpoint comments and constructive criticism in the interests of improving the content and delivery of future talks.

**DL: What were your long term career plans when you decided to move to Israel? How will your experience in Israel inform your presidency?**

RAB: My first priority after making aliyah was to pursue my PhD and further my intellectual journey. I completed my doctorate in the Philosophy of Halakhah at Hebrew University under the guidance of Dr. Moshe Halbertal. Together with Dr. Halbertal, I analyzed the works of the Geonim and Rishonim, piecing together the different ways in which the Jew/non-Jew distinction is theorized within halakhic literature. Moreover, in the hope of expanding my knowledge base and taking full advantage of the opportunities offered at Hebrew University, I audited as many courses as possible in addition to my core studies, whether in sociology, philosophy, anthropology, history, law, and more. During this period, I also spent a great deal of time, outside my studies, meeting the intellectual, political and religious leadership of the country. I aimed to better understand the opportunities and challenges facing contemporary Israel so that I could best use my skillset to contribute effectively to building the Jewish state.

Such an opportunity presented itself to me upon completion of my doctorate when I was offered to lead a joint venture between Hechal Shlomo and Herzog College. Hechal Shlomo, under new leadership, was beginning a process to become a next-generation center for Jewish life and learning, combining academic, religious, and leadership programming. I was appointed the head of Hechal Shlomo to lead that effort and a member of the Executive Council of Herzog College to assist in the running of the college. This position gave me the opportunity to think deeply about the future of education, as well as to teach courses in the college in my fields of expertise.

My family's years in Israel have been meaningful and joyful. Being in Israel and moving to Neve Daniel has given my family the opportunity to experience life in an entirely different Jewish context. The world looks and feels very different living in Israel than it does living in New York, and this experience has provided me with a broader perspective on the enormous opportunities presented by this moment in Jewish history. I have an abiding feeling that had I become president of YU without first making aliyah, I would not have the capacity to be nearly as effective. By first living in Israel and being exposed to its literature, personalities and diverse worldviews, I have the benefit of bringing a culturally fresh set of perspectives to the task of leading YU. Moreover, as Jewish demographics shift in unprecedented ways, a deep knowledge of the two major centers of Jewish life - Israel and America - will fundamentally enhance our planning for the YU of tomorrow.



**DL: What have you been doing over the past few months during the transition? What are your first impressions upon returning to YU? What has changed since your time here? What has stayed the same?**

RAB: I have worked over these past couple of months to understand YU from a multitude of vantage points. Since the beginning of March I have been living on campus. I must admit I never thought I would move back into the Morg Dorm after my senior year, but returning here and living among our students has been an eye opening and enjoyable experience. Once again I have the opportunity of learning in the *bet midrash*, hanging out in the library and going on midnight runs for late night dinner.

But more than just becoming reacquainted with the ebb and flow of student life, I have scheduled my time these past months to visit and meet with each of the constituencies that collectively form our YU family. While this work will continue long into my tenure, I have already visited each of our campuses, colleges and graduate schools, met with the senior staff, deans, directors, administrators, professional teams, rabbis, professors and students as well as lay leaders, friends and supporters. My interactions over the past number of weeks have provided me invaluable insight into the YU of today.

There have been a number of takeaways from these conversations. This is not the space for me to go into each of them in great depth, but I can mention in broad strokes a few of the lessons learned.

First, YU is already suffused with an incredible energy, activity and productivity. Perhaps the most striking difference between the undergraduate school experience in YU today and the days in which I was a student is the vibrancy of student life. While student life was always enjoyable, there is today a wider range of opportunities for students to participate in extracurricular activities, clubs and programs. Together with the fact that the Jewish learning component of the day has been reinforced and the academic quality of the afternoon program has been strengthened, the undergraduate student at YU is exposed to wonderful opportunities for social and educational growth. This is all a direct result of President Richard Joel's leadership and vision for Yeshiva University.

A second key lesson is the common denominators that link each of our schools and divisions. One small example is the way our students are developing their character and skillsets by contributing to the broader community. From Dr. Betsy Ginsberg's Civil Rights Clinic at Cardozo Law School, which provides quality legal representation to those whose rights have been abused and who might not otherwise have access to such resources, to the Parnes Clinic in Ferkauf Graduate School which provides excellent state-of-the-art mental health care for little to no expense to families from across the economic spectrum, to the undergraduate students at YU who volunteer to teach weekly in the local public school system in the START Science! program, our students are learning by doing. They are both contributing to society and growing from

SEE BERMAN, CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



## DISCLAIMER

By Shira Perton

Sitting at my computer trying to figure out what to write was not easy. It's difficult to just sit and try to think of something worth writing about. The editors tried to help, asking me if there was an issue at Stern or YU in general that I was passionate about; something about the school that bothered me that I wanted changed. I threw around ideas that ranged anywhere from the community feeling amongst the school to writing about my experience as a transfer student, but I was unsatisfied. However, taking a step back, I realized it was not dissatisfaction that I felt but fear; fear to write about anything and everything. Trying to pitch ideas that I thought would interest the student body, when, in reality, no matter what topic was chosen people would be dissatisfied, terrified me. I was afraid to write, not because I had no ideas or because writing is not easy for me, but because I'm scared of what happens after publication. The reality is that this school is scary: not the type of hanging off a cliff scary, but maybe more stuck in a cave of lions scary, with the student body playing the lion's role.

An opinion is created from a culmination of moments and experiences that we have witnessed in our short lifetimes, and they will always be evolving and changing as we continue to live. They generate from the homes and states we grow up in, the parents that raise us, the schools we went to, and the peers we surrounded ourselves with. They come from whether or not we spent a year(s) in Israel to what major we are currently studying towards. In this light, it seems perfectly reasonable that we would express different opinions. Things would be pretty boring if we all had the same views on everything.

Why do we have to write disclaimers on articles to let people know that "these are solely my thoughts and there's no intention to disrespect anyone else's opinion." Should that not be implied? It is scary to voice one's opinion in this school because it can feel like you will be eaten alive

for anything you say, whether it is voicing an interest in a small point a speaker made or sharing a Hillary event only to be bombarded with comments of "didn't realize people were still supporting her." Why should a person feel like they need to post in a Facebook page that election talk cannot happen there because of the amounts of people that were getting personally offended by others and their opinions? Statistics show that there are around 7.5 billion people in the world. That means there are 7.5 billion people that come from different backgrounds. Each of those individuals have different views and ideas when it comes to any topic under the sun. In fact, if we tried to create a book of each individual opinion we would never reach the editing process due to the overflow. The same can be said about our institution; with over 6,000 graduate and undergraduate students, it would only make sense that we each have our own opinions on topics from politics to the current tampon-less state of the bathrooms.

For many of us, Yeshiva University is going to be our home for the next few years. A home is where one should feel comfortable to share their views and opinions. Sure, at my house my family will make fun of me when I state my view on the Prime Minister or the current conflict in Israel. However, I feel comfortable throwing around ideas at my home because we all know that even though we may not always agree with each other, there is a respect present for each of our voices. There is a clear difference between healthy criticism and laughter vs. passive aggressive confrontation – ironically behind a computer screen. We should all feel comfortable enough to state our thoughts and ideas. No one should ever feel like their opinion does not matter, and that they cannot share their view without feeling as though they are about to go on trial when they press "send."

We have all heard the phrase "it's not what you say, it's how you say it." We all have views and we are all entitled to share those views. However, when we pick up that pen, keyboard, or typewriter (whatever you prefer) we need to be more mindful of how our words come across.

The words we choose and the way we string them into sentences can come across completely differently based off of the ones we use. No one should be reading an article

**"NO ONE SHOULD EVER FEEL LIKE THEIR OPINION DOES NOT MATTER, AND THAT THEY CANNOT SHARE THEIR VIEW WITHOUT FEELING AS THOUGH THEY ARE ABOUT TO GO ON TRIAL WHEN THEY PRESS 'SEND.'"**

and feel uncomfortable. And not the uncomfortable you feel from that itchy sweater you got for Chanukah, but the uncomfortable that you feel as though the writer is directing their point at you, as if to say "whatever you are doing, because you do not agree with me, you are doing something wrong."

I was excited to write when someone approached me about the opinion section of *The Commentator*. However, as the idea of writing began to sink in, excitement became filled with dread. I wondered if it was even worth it to write in the first place. Being afraid to share your voice is a scary thing because there are so many people that actually cannot share their views and ideas. We take it for granted that we can say whatever we like, and have forgotten that although something is published online, whether article or Facebook comment, it is still sending a message to the human being reading it on the other side. So before I hit send ... DISCLAIMER: these words are meant in all ways possible to get a constructive, respectful, and productive conversation flowing.



### BERMAN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

their interactions with society. This very Jewish notion - the interplay between *talmud* (study) and *ma'aseh* (action) - is one of the common characteristics that I have found throughout our university, and it is this holistic approach to education that we will work to develop further in the future.

Indeed, I believe that crucial to our future success will be our ability to successfully link the different parts of YU. We must leverage the myriad and prodigious talents among our wide-ranging community, expand the educational opportunities and experiences of our collective student body, and better contribute to the extended Jewish community and the broader society. For us to achieve this goal, the various elements that make up YU must see themselves as servicing a common mission. My task as YU's next leader will be to articulate and promote that mission, generating a strong sense of purpose across YU, within and between the different campuses, schools, alumni

and friends. In fact, just as important as our immediate educational outputs is the way in which we interact with each other; whether we work in silos or in unison; whether or not everyone who sets foot on a YU campus - from students to faculty, from staff to visitors - feels energized and empowered by YU's mission.

This leads to my final takeaway. There is no doubt that our core strength is the quality of our student body and the leadership skills that they learn at YU. Living on campus, I have had the opportunity of meeting our students in both small and large groups, dining with them, spending Shabbat with them and just sitting down with them for impromptu conversations. I have walked away from these encounters energized and inspired about the possibilities for the YU of tomorrow. But while we naturally focus inwards when thinking about YU, I have also found that there is a great deal of interest in our future on the part of the broader public. Over these past months, I have met with all different sorts of people for insights into

YU's future, both inside and outside the orthodox Jewish community. From well-known public officials to highly acclaimed thought leaders, to Nobel laureates, I have found an across-the-board interest in the future direction of YU. What is clear to all who are familiar with YU, both inside and outside our community, is that YU's future success is crucial. For we are not just a school of higher education that trains thousands of future leaders, but perhaps more importantly we stand at the epicenter of a movement that aspires to deep, profound influence on the Jewish community at large and broader society. This adds great weight and responsibility to our task ahead. Being back at YU has encouraged me that we are not only up to the task but, in fact, primed to build on our past success and take the next step forward. I look forward to continuing our conversation and working together to build the YU of tomorrow.



## Does the AHCA Mean the End of the Republican Congress?

By Yitzchak Fried

With some minor changes, the American Healthcare Act (AHCA) has passed on the House floor. Now it's up to the Senate to consider how much of the bill will become law—and what the repercussions will be for America, and for the Republican party. The law may be the death knell for the Republican majority in the House, as voters realize just how much they've been betrayed.

The current Republican majority was born in the midterm elections of 2010; back then, economics—healthcare's Siamese twin—was also the major issue, with opposition to Obama's stimulus package and ambivalence toward Obamacare catapulting Republicans into House seats. In the midst of an enduring economic slump, Americans felt, correctly or not, that Obama had made their lives harder.

If the 2016 House elections and the ballooning frustration of the American electorate leading up to Trump's election is any indication, that impression hasn't really gone away. So at first glance, it's not clear why the AHCA should be a game changer. Some parts of the AHCA might even seem popular at first, like revoking the citizen mandate to purchase health-insurance, and rolling back the taxes that funded Medicare's expansion. Others parts of the bill, like the fact that it allows states to impose work requirements for Medicaid beneficiaries, will most affect populations with little political clout. Ex-felons, for example, have an especially hard time finding work. But because they're disenfranchised, they'll suffer the consequences of revoked coverage without taking their grievance to the polls.



But other provisions of the AHCA will hit voters hard. And when they wake up, the Republicans will likely feel the heat. The Affordable Care Act (ACA, aka "Obamacare") required insurance companies to cover patients regardless of pre-existing conditions. The AHCA allows states to waive that requirement, so long as they establish monetary pools to help high risk patients get insurance. But those pools are of dubious use. Although 100 billion dollars were added for their funding to the "Patient and State Stability Fund," the Congressional Budget Office anticipated (in its analysis of the first round of the bill), that this would do little to ease costs of the 24 million slated to lose insurance. This, and the elimination of the ACA's restriction on charging the elderly more for care, means that seniors and the sick will be hit especially hard.

Low income families are also particularly hurt. The AHCA bars Medicaid funding from any clinics that provide abortion services, including Planned Parenthood—even though abortions make up a tiny fraction of Planned Parenthood's services, and even though Planned Parenthood is already barred from paying for abortions with federal cash. Defunding Planned Parenthood will result in less access for the poor to basic aspects of women's care: cancer screening, pregnancy testing, contraception and STD testing. Additionally, the AHCA removes the requirement that insurers provide a basic set of services, including contraceptives and maternity care, and rolls back the ACA's expanded Medicare by 2020. That coverage used to provide Medicare to families with income up to 138% the federal poverty level (or \$33,948 for a family of four). In states like Iowa, Texas, Idaho, Kansas, Nevada, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio (to name a few), whose median household income is lower than \$50,000—not to mention Arkansas, West Virginia, and Mississippi, whose median income is *below* \$40,000—that's a lot of affected voters.

But low income families aren't the only ones who are going to hurt. The AHCA also remodels the tax-credit that the ACA provided for paying insurance premiums. Instead of providing credits based on income and location, the AHCA provides credit based on age alone—which means that middle class Americans will have higher out of pocket

expenses for care.

With such a widely affected population, it seems likely that even voters who don't normally parse politics will wake up when they feel the impact to their wallets. Medical care is one issue that flared up at the tumultuous town hall meetings across the country. A woman in Arkansas declared that she and her family would be "dead and

---

**"...PROVISIONS OF THE AHCA  
WILL HIT VOTERS HARD. AND  
WHEN THEY WAKE UP, THE  
REPUBLICANS WILL LIKELY FEEL  
THE HEAT."**

---

homeless if it wasn't for ACA"; Buddy Carter of Georgia was attacked when he discussed the failures of Obamacare; and a woman in Tennessee attacked her representative for not letting "the healthy people pull up the sick people" and "fix[ing] what's wrong with Obamacare."

The question is whether Democrats will marshal support from their former voters in the 2008 election (the last Democratic House). But a Democratic victory isn't foregone, not least because the Dems must overcome the effects of Republican gerrymandering, and—in the words of Jonathan Tobin for the conservative *National Review*—"districts' coming into compliance with the Voting Rights Act," which has funneled black Democratic voters into minority-majority districts so as to diffuse their influence. But if Democratic politicians do what it takes to appeal to working and middle class voters, another House flip is on the horizon. Much of the AHCA—like the defunding of Medicare—won't come into effect until 2020, so we may have to wait until the midterms of 2022 to see voters' reactions. But when we do—if Democrats vigorously campaign in hurting Republican districts, if they blast their message of healthcare access funded by taxes on the 1%—we may see the end of the Republican House.

## Voter Fraud: Who's Really to Blame?

By Yitzchak Fried

In an era of "alternative facts," voter fraud seems to be one of those polarizing issues on which it's impossible to achieve consensus. On the one hand, Democrats allege that voter fraud is a myth, a pretext for voter ID laws that suppress minority votes. On the other, Republicans claim that voter fraud is a serious issue, and that voter ID laws are a justifiable measure to preserve the integrity of democracy. As recently as this past February, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said on MSNBC's *Morning Joe* that "the Democratic myth that voter fraud is a fiction, is not true."

The latest iteration of the voter fraud debate has played out in a federal district court. On April 10th, the court affirmed that the most recent Texas voter ID law, SB 14, was passed with intention to discriminate against minority voters. The court's decision marks the

conclusion of proceedings that have lasted since 2011, in which the state of Texas repeatedly appealed the federal

---

**"THE EASIEST WAY TO STAY IN  
OFFICE IS TO REMOVE VOTES  
FROM THE OPPOSITION. AND  
IF THOSE VOTES HAPPEN TO BE  
BLACK AND LATINO, SO BE IT."**

---

court's ruling, and was repeatedly rebuffed. After a final review, the court's decision found that voter fraud in Texas was insignificant; in the decade prior to the passing of SB 14, there were only two in-person voter fraud convictions out of twenty million cast votes. The weight of the evidence showed that the Texas legislature had used fraud as a pretext to pass a law to suppress minority voters who overwhelmingly vote Democratic.

If voter fraud is a problem, as Senator McConnell has insisted, it is not a problem of in-person fraud—the only issue that voter ID laws address. In his MSNBC interview, McConnell insisted that "we've had a series of significant cases [of fraud] in Kentucky over the years. There is voter fraud in the country." But, pressed by Wave 3 News—a Kentucky news outlet—for examples of what he meant, McConnell's office pointed to a voter fraud scheme that was exposed in Kentucky in August 2016. That incident is demonstrative because it had nothing to do with the voter fraud attributed to minority groups. As the *Lexington Herald Leader* reported in 2016, it was a voter-purchasing scheme, in which supporters of candidates in local elections conspired to buy people's votes. This sort of fraud has nothing to do with minorities or voter ID laws. If anything, it demonstrates that fraud by wealthy whites

is alive and well. One of the five people charged, Scott McCarthy, testified to having participated in voter fraud in "several elections." McCarthy admitted adding "60 votes to the total for a state representative candidate," while working as a precinct officer, "to corrupt elections from the inside."

McConnell may be right that voter fraud takes place in America, but it is not perpetrated by poor minorities. It is perpetrated by local politicians and their supporters—people with money to spend on purchasing votes, and a personal stake in the outcome. The numbers here are indicative; according to the *L-H Leader*, "McCarthy testified [that]... Hardin put in \$30,000 to buy votes in 2010, while Larry and Renee Shepherd put in \$10,000 and Risner contributed \$2,000." This is not the sort of fraud available to minorities, for whom registration fees and the purchase price of ID's are often deterrent enough not to vote in the first place.

McConnell's statement on MSNBC was contested by the Kentucky Secretary of State, Alison Grimes, who said that conflating buying votes with in-person fraud was "disingenuous." While it may have been disingenuous, it was also strategic. Even as McConnell refuted Trump's claim of rampant voter fraud in the Presidential election, he was careful to preserve the illusion that in-person fraud is, nonetheless, a significant issue. Voter ID laws, as SB 14 has shown, have become an important tool in the arsenal of Republican legislatures for consolidating power. Other tricks of the trade include gerrymandering districts and disenfranchising felons. The motive structure here is obvious. Republicans are not necessarily racists, but they are smart; they know that the easiest way to stay in office is to remove votes from the opposition. And if those votes happen to be black and Latino, so be it. The result, however, is a wildly skewed electorate, as key racial blocks are cut out of American democracy.





# Why Celebrities Make Me Not Want to Be a Feminist

By Alyssa Wruble

Celebrities today are more than a talent. It takes more to remain on the forefront of pop culture than the ability to simply sing or act. Today, even models must be more than just a pretty face and size two figure. Everyone must have their own brand. They have to sell themselves and their lives to keep up with their fame. They must make themselves into role models and superheroes. They have to be beautiful, but modest; inspiring, but relatable; perfect, but authentic. They have to showcase their exciting lives on Instagram, and their witty humor on Twitter. They must be smart, informed, and motivated to make a difference.

Celebrities have also long been known to take on political movements and in many cases, have even become the face most associated with these movements. For example, Elizabeth Taylor fought for increased funding for AIDS research, Michael J. Fox continues to advocate for stem cell research, and Ronald Reagan even made the leap from actor to President of the United States after spending years supporting the anti-Communism movement.

Feminism in particular has also been a popular cause among celebrities. Female celebrities such as Jodie Foster, Candice Bergen, and Meryl Streep have been advocating for women's rights for many decades now, but the trend has recently picked up in Hollywood as an increasing number of female celebrities brand themselves "feminists" and champions of the cause. Celebrities such as Beyonce, Taylor Swift, and Lena Dunham have taken a stand on what it means to be a feminist, and while it's true that some do it better than others, this decades-old tradition of celebrity feminism is more detrimental than beneficial. As celebrities use feminism to promote their own brand, they cause many young girls to believe in a warped version of feminism, others to want to dissociate themselves completely, and are standing in the way of real progression for women.

One of the biggest issues with many celebrities' support of feminism is that they do not backup their claims of feminist views with feminist actions. They often stress female empowerment and positive body image, while acting in a way that suggests that a woman's body is the source of her worth.

For example, Gigi Hadid, one of the highest paid supermodels in the US, told *Daily Mail Australia* that "You don't have to go with the cookie-cutter version of what people tell you you're supposed to be."

And if one were to only listen to what she had to say, one would applaud her inspirational words. Unfortunately, however, like most other celebrities, her actions contradict her platitudes. Only a few months after Hadid's interview, she starred in the annual Victoria's Secret Fashion Show in which ten tall, skinny models are chosen to prance around a runway wearing jewel-encrusted lingerie. Even Taylor Swift, who identifies as a feminist, has performed at the show and has publicly praised her friends for modeling in the show.

It would be one thing if everyone, models included, viewed this show to be purely about money—if the models accepted that they were selling themselves in order to sell clothes for Victoria's Secret. Strangely enough, this is not the case as the models in this show, known as angels, are actually proud of this lofty accomplishment of being chosen to walk, scantily clad, down the runway for the world to see.

When Hadid's sister was chosen to also appear as an "Angel" in the show, she told reporters that she had watched the show every year as a kid and was so proud of her sister and excited that she would be joining her at the show. Even their mother thanked her daughters on social media for letting her witness "this special moment in time." After the show, Gigi Hadid's sister, Bella, exclaimed on social media that she was honored to have walked "next to some of the most inspiring and incredible women in the world!"

It's hard to ignore the glaring contradictions that make up this infamous spectacle. Not only is this show not the feminist, empowering performance that it is made

out to be; it is, in fact, quite the opposite: it promotes the objectification of women. This show perpetuates the trending belief that a healthy body image is synonymous with a woman feeling comfortable exposing her body on a daily basis. Lena Dunham, one of the most outspoken "feminist" celebrities, often posts half-naked pictures of herself online to promote a "healthy body image" since she believes that to feel comfortable with your body, you must also feel comfortable sharing pictures of your body with the world.

Another current "feminist" icon, Beyonce, has famously said that "the most alluring thing a woman can have is confidence." If confidence truly is the most alluring thing, though, then why does Beyonce insist on only wearing short, skin-tight, revealing clothing? One could argue that Beyonce's way of expressing her confidence is through her dress, or even that her confidence is the motivating factor in choosing to dress as she does. But if equality is the goal, then society should be moving in a direction where confidence is no longer associated with physical appearance. Confidence alone should be used as a way to gain respect. And while feminism has made significant strides in the past few decades, women are not nearly done fighting the battle to gain the respect of their male counterparts. Female celebrities should certainly be allowed to dress as they wish while performing; however, their promiscuous outfits promote the very objectification of women that they claim to reject.

Just a few months ago, Ariana Grande, pop superstar, wrote a letter about an incident in which she felt objectified. Grande wrote that she "is not a piece of meat that a man gets to utilize for his pleasure." She is absolutely right. A culture in which objectification of women is prevalent is abhorrent and unacceptable; however, Grande's history makes it hard to take her seriously. She often performs in glorified lingerie, sings about sex (her last song implied she could not walk straight after all the sex she had), and acts seductively in her music videos. She seems perfectly fine promoting her sex symbol image, which is understandable for a performer, but it makes her the wrong spokesperson for anti-objectification of women.

If women want to earn respect and show the world



how powerful and intelligent they can be, then it starts with ensuring that they are viewed as smart, competent individuals—not as objects. It is a harsh reality, and women certainly should not be held responsible for men's thoughts, but if women want to be respected in this day and age then they should not dress in a way that encourages objectification. While it may be empowering to defy conventional rules of society and show off more skin, it only hurts women in the long run as women are objectified and not taken seriously.

It has been scientifically proven that men view

---

**“FEMINISTS SHOULD BE EMPOWERING WOMEN TO MAKE SMART, INFORMED CHOICES, NOT JUST CHOOSE FOR THE SAKE OF CHOOSING.”**

---

skimpily dressed women as tools, and furthermore, that this type of objectification has detrimental physical and mental effects on women. If celebrities want to speak up for women's rights, then they should be doing all they can to support women. Their decisions to dress provocatively only hurts women, especially young girls, as they feel encouraged to follow the lead of their celebrity role models and "exude confidence" in similar clothing, or lack thereof, and end up being objectified for it.

Beyond the superficial feminism that many celebrities promote, there lies a deeper problem: those whom are not encouraged and turned off by it. Many young girls find celebrity feminism inspiring, but those who do not are being turned off to feminism completely. They do not trust the authenticity, or identify with the actions, of these celebrities and are instead running the other way. After the presidential election that saw Hillary Clinton lose to Donald Trump, research was conducted that found that the endorsements of many female celebrities did not help Clinton clinch the "feminist" victory, but rather may have hurt both her cause and the movement as a whole.

According to the results, only about 20% of the women surveyed care more about gender equality as a result of celebrities' endorsements of feminism and 30% of the women actually care less about women's rights as a result of Taylor Swift's involvement in the movement. As people begin to see celebrity feminism for what it really is, a marketing tool that celebrities use to further their brands, maintain their status, and increase their earnings, the less they view legitimate feminism as a significant movement whose goal is to work toward equality in all sectors of life. Many women look at the media and see celebrities who they have little respect for as ambassadors of the feminist movement and because of this, disassociate themselves from the movement entirely, saying they are not feminists at all.

Celebrity Feminism has also been condemned for giving rise to "choice feminism." This is the phenomenon that ascribes significance to the ability to make the choice, but not to the choice itself. This explains why the Hadids and Dunham can promote wearing little clothing and then posting half-naked selfies online. While they may not be good choices that are beneficial to anyone, that is not the point. The point is that they have the power to make the choice, even if it is completely counter-productive. Feminists should be empowering women to make smart, informed choices, not just choose for the sake of choosing.

There is a way to take back feminism from the celebrities who are abusing the cause for their own selfish needs. While we cannot stop celebrities from using movements like feminism to build their brands, we can work to ensure that the more authentic role models, the ones who are making concrete progress on women's rights are the ones in the limelight. Women like former CEO and Republican presidential candidate Carly Fiorina and Indian-born Pepsi CEO Indra Nooyi are proving women can rise to power in business no matter where they come from or where they intend to go. Fiorina might have been intimidated by the largely male Republican party and Nooyi could have shied away from making something of herself in a new country, but both succeeded regardless. There are women leading countries like Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, and women representing their country as Ambassador to the UN like Nikki Haley. There is no shortage of female role models, so why settle for Taylor Swift?



# Down and Out in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: A Socio-Economic Critique of Israeli Society from the Perspective of an Ole Hadash

By Aryeh Schonbrun

A little over two months ago, I fulfilled a longstanding desire of mine to return to my ancient homeland and to the Jewish nation that dwells in Zion. After much deliberation, and to the surprise of some of my friends, I set out on a journey that, easy as it was (it took just around eleven hours), took much contemplation and commitment. I did so fully acknowledging the gravity of such a decision and in anticipation of the immense challenges that lay in store for me in my new, old homeland.

To be fair, my return to Israel has been like a dream. I have longed to see again the majesty of her beauty and for the companionship of my people. Far too long I breathed the air of the diaspora, living as an individual, and I have felt the pain of estrangement from my true home. God has blessed me and my generation with the opportunity to travel to the holiest of places with relative ease and comfort. I have reconnected with teachers and friends from years past, family I have not seen for some time, and with the land itself, the geography, demography and beauty.

However, Israel today is not the Israel of my dreams. I awake from my pleasant reverie to the stark realities of the present. Israel constantly feels the restraints of the diaspora, imposed upon us by the tyrannical powers of anti-Semitism, terror, and cold politics. In addition to the strictly external factors, Israel wallows in her own mess of domestic politics and societal ills. The impact of such civil discord, of the baseless hate and fear that pervades our lives, cannot escape the eye of even the most lenient critic, and strikes me as quite dangerous. Whereas in America one can simply live in their preferred bubble, accustomed to their own religious, economic and political leanings, either unaware of or unconcerned by the state of the country at large, the act of becoming Israeli signifies the willingness of oneself to enter into a society rife with disparity, debate, and cultural dissent.

Israel, by nature, confers a sense of commonality and collectivity on a level unlike that experienced by the population of any other developed country. The army, as inefficient as it may be, provides a cultural middle ground for vast swaths of society to get together, bond in trust, and form a common Israeli identity. Nevertheless, you can still feel the segmentation of society. Many Israelis don't socialize with people outside their comfort zone, disagree greatly on political and religious matters, and, to put it nicely, fear each other. A Tel Aviv irreligious Jew might fear the implications of state-mandated Sabbath observance (most stores and public transport do not operate on Saturdays) and the rabbinic monopoly on the marriage registry, while a member of the ultra-Orthodox Hareidi circles might fear for his, or his children's, religious lifestyle, aware of the risks associated with state-mandated army service and secular education. These very real concerns contribute to a highly volatile political atmosphere, and work to reinforce the barriers that prevent us from unifying.

As a relative newcomer, I cannot profess an understanding of *all* of Israeli society. I have had the opportunity, through family, friends, and personal experience to get a taste of many different strata and segments of Israel, but I do not think that I can speak for them all. Naturally, owing to my Modern-Orthodox upbringing, I have had more to do with the Religious-Zionist community. Though an incredibly complex section of society, the general parallels between the Modern Orthodox and the Religious-Zionist speak for themselves. We do not fear (sometimes foolishly so) exposure to outside society as much as, let's say, the Hareidim, nor do we assimilate as do the less religious and reformed parts of Judaism. The Religious-Zionists, as well as the Modern Orthodox, attempt to tow the line, communicating with the external world, while not sacrificing the critical components of religious life. This worldview, as we all know, does not always succeed, and on account of the vast societal pressures as described, it demands a high level of maintenance and attention.

Accordingly, it becomes increasingly important that those who lead the community bear responsibility not

only for the community itself, but for the country as a whole. While the Hareidim do, in fact, complain about how the society behaves, most of their complaints do not reach the ears of those outside their communities. On the other hand, when Religious-Zionist leaders make statements that do not coincide with the government's societal agenda, it takes a fire-and-brimstone response by those in command to manage the situation. I witnessed this a week after arriving here. The army has tried for years to foist a leftist agenda upon the Israeli population, and so far has reaped rewards. Qaraqal, a mixed infantry division, has earned public support, and women are encouraged to seek promotions and officer training. However, recently the army has decided to push the envelope and introduced mixed tank battalions, among other adjustments. Naturally, the religious parties involved, i.e. Religious-Zionists, could not contain their disdain for such a move. A certain Rabbi Yigal Levinstein spoke out against it and subsequently found himself the subject of ridicule of a very concerned political elite. He, as a leader of one of the key military academies of the Religious-Zionists, provoked a response from the top since he represents to them the education of many soon-to-be soldiers, officers, etc (soldiers hailing from Religious-Zionist communities comprise a large percentage of all officers). While I do not intend to focus on the actual case, the whole story illustrates the significance of a relatively small segment of the population.

Additionally, the community provides for the spiritual upkeep of the state. The Hareidim, surely, do their part in stymying the progression of the irreligious left, but, as a student of the Religious-Zionist yeshivot, I can attest to the relative importance, again, of the thousands of Religious-Zionist youth who spend years learning torah, teaching, and spreading religious life throughout the country. The Religious-Zionists, with their feet straddling the two worlds, have the potential to make the biggest impact. They speak the language of both the educated elites and the ultra-religious, and profess their love of Zionist ideals and their loyalty to the principles of Torah. As I noted above, this comes at a cost, but, without the mediating factors of the Religious-Zionist community, I seriously doubt that the Israeli society would long withstand the onslaught of disunity. This gives the community large significance within Israeli society and therefore charges its leaders with highly significant leadership roles.

Which makes it all the more disappointing when our leaders, politicians, rabbis, and army personnel, who represent our communities in the outside world, among Israelis and gentiles alike, fail to demonstrate to our compatriots how a just society should act. I do not wish to say that these gifted individuals lack in altruistic drive to improve our situation. I don't judge them personally. They serve their communities diligently and surely take part in the holy task of maintaining the Jewish people's connection to their ancestral tradition. However, considering their relative influence and power, I expect, and demand more.

To be more concise, I would like to see a more realistic and natural outgrowth of the wonderful stores of Torah knowledge that the community possesses reach the realms of politics and culture. When I encounter rabbis, talmidei chachamim, and leaders who claim strict adherence to the Torah, dedication to the welfare of society, and who embody the holiness of the Torah's teachings, I discover to my dismay their failure to translate such characteristics into a workable, practical ideology.

I refer to the apparent lack of a coherent ideological opposition to the expanding neo-liberal capitalist malevolence that manifests itself as part of American culture, and slowly but surely has made inroads into this holy land. This form of capitalism does not, in and of itself, pose a new threat, but rather has expanded over



the years and now appears to have won over even the very best and most righteous minds of our generation. The effects of it can be felt in many aspects of Israeli society and even within the Torah world of many yeshivot. While many aspects of society continue to operate based upon socialist ideals, e.g. the government still provides for universal healthcare, increasing income inequality and high levels of poverty have led to more social tension, and the egotistical elements of an acquisitive, consumerist culture such as America's threatens to slowly transform Israeli culture from a Jewish state committed to the perpetuation of the Jewish people into a consumerist haven, devoid of significance, both secular and post-Zionist.

But this kind of apathetic capitalism also rejects basic tenets of our religious belief. Camaraderie, as commanded by the Torah, necessarily dictates a willingness to share one's own wealth and possessions, to aid those in need, and to cover the costs of the less-fortunate members of society. In his introduction to his book of halakhic responsa "Gevurot Eliyahu," Rabbi Eliyahu Henkin z"l, one of the great American Rabbis of the 20th century, takes on the subject and determines that while Soviet style dictatorships cannot supply us with the answer for our troubles - they efface the humanity of their subjects and, as we have witnessed, have killed many millions of innocents- the adoption of a purely acquisitive capitalistic mindset, in which the poorest and the least fortunate suffer at the hands of those with plenty, what he terms a society of "Men of Sodom," cannot suffice.

We find ourselves in the midst of the traditional period of mourning for the 24,000 students of Rabbi Akiva, of which the Talmud recounts perished during this period since they "did not act respectfully one to another." (Yevamot, 62) We can learn from the deaths of those students that even as they learned and accumulated enormous amounts of Torah knowledge, they did not act appropriately and their Torah did not protect them. I cautiously urge those who express their wonderment at the world of Torah and rejoice in the miracle that is the current yeshiva world to reconsider the societal implications of what I have observed as tacit approval of immoral economics. If our leaders, influential as they are, don't stand up for what is right, who will?



## A Forgotten Shoemaker: A Pragmatic Solution to Women's Torah Learning at YU

By Noah Marlowe

A celebrated story in "the yeshivas" tells of a young Netziv (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin). Young Naftali, like others his age, didn't take Torah too seriously. However, that changed one evening when Naftali overheard his parents discussing his educational progress. They had decided, following Eastern European style parent-teacher conferences, that Naftali's lack of intelligence and/or effort showed him unfit to continue learning in yeshiva. Instead, Naftali would be trained as a shoemaker. When Naftali overheard this gloomy conversation about his future, he broke into tears, burst down the stairs, and begged his parents for one more chance. What did they do? They conceded to the distraught child, and the rest is history. The Netziv is the archetypical story of how a once hopeless child joined the chain of Jewish intellectual history. Unlike Rabbi Hayyim Soloveitchik, the Netziv's co-*rosh yeshiva* in Volozhin, the Netziv wasn't known for his analytic acuity but for his work ethic. His story occupies a warm spot in my heart; it's a story about the intersection of opportunity and hard work in religious excellence.

### Semantic Confusion

Recently, a Stern student penned an article detailing the struggle of female students at YU to connect to the "Yeshiva." That article's frustration, I believe, is based on the premise that the women of Yeshiva are part of the "Yeshiva." The truth, sad as it may be, is that they're not. Let me explain. The term "the Yeshiva," as colloquially used on the Wilf campus, refers to the male yeshiva, RIETS. The semantic confusion can be summed up as "Yeshiva" versus ישיבה. While the former is a shorthand of Yeshiva University (which includes both male and female students), the latter is a more narrow term referring to Yeshivat Rabbeinu Yitzchak Elchannan (known as RIETS), an affiliate of Yeshiva University limited to men. Yet, even this distinction does not do full justice to clarifying the mix-up. Some refer to the *semikha* program as RIETS, further adding to the confusion. The distinction, albeit artificially semantic, reveals an acute tension at Yeshiva University. Undergraduate men maintain membership in a yeshiva, in addition to their college courses, whereas undergraduate women are restricted to Jewish studies classes and *Batei Midrash*. RIETS, the (male) yeshiva branch of YU, is an aggregate of undergraduates, rabbinical students, and *post-semikha* fellows.

As far as the male Yeshiva is concerned, YU offers a developed program. The RIETS staff includes eight *mashgichim* (spiritual guides) for MYP/BMP/IBC, a *mashpia* (Rav Moshe Weinberger), and many *roshei yeshiva* and *magedei shiur*. In addition, eight night *chaburot* and six day *chaburot*—according to the "Guide to the Yeshiva" brochure—are available for students throughout the day, to keep the proverbial flame alive. *Ashreinu ma tov chelkeinu*, how fortunate are we for these remarkable opportunities and resources!

Some belittle or denigrate RIETS offerings and resources. Personally, I enjoy *shmoozing* with

*mashgichim*, meeting with *roshei yeshiva* to discuss personal and communal challenges, and attending the myriad of *shiurim*. What's more, the occasional *Rosh Chodesh farbrengen* with the *Mashpia* or the heart-to-heart series of *shiurim* on contemporary religious struggles brings me back to my yeshiva-in-Israel experience.

### Torah Learning and Spiritual Opportunities on the Beren Campus

But while the multitude of resources available on the Wilf campus is impressive, the parallel resources and opportunities on the Beren campus are egregiously insufficient. Let's begin with Beren's religious staff. There is Mrs. Rachel Ciment, Director of Spiritual Guidance, who arranges *shiurim* with RIETS *roshei yeshiva* and *mashgichim*, runs the seminary *madrichot* program, and meets one-on-one with students (among other things). In addition to Mrs. Ciment, Rabbi Yosef Blau, senior *mashgiach ruchani* at RIETS, and Rabbi Shlomo Hochberg are the campus *mashgichim*. Although Rabbi Blau spends most of his time on the Wilf campus, he travels twice a week to be with students at Beren. These three positions along with Rabbi Daniel Lerner, campus rabbi, who gives *shiurim* and facilitates a meaningful *Shabbat* experience, comprise the *entire* religious staff on the Beren campus. The disparity in religious staff on the two campuses is shocking, especially since they are similar in size. There is one more key religious figure on Beren campus who I neglected to include, but this is due to the complex nature of his position. Rabbi Ephraim Kanarfogel, chair of the Beren Jewish Studies department, is also intimately involved in Torah learning on campus. However, while YU embraces the interface of academia and Torah, it must be recognized nonetheless that a proper religious environment requires religious personalities and the opportunity to interact with them in the *beit midrash* and at religious events. A department head—even one responsible for tremendous positive change on the Beren campus—is not a *rosh yeshiva* or a *rosh beit midrash*. Ideological leaders and personalities with whom the students identify are necessary for religious growth.

The lack of leadership and religious staff at Beren only becomes more striking when viewed together with its lesser educational opportunities. In terms of non-course, learning opportunities: each week different *roshei yeshiva* and *rabbeim* from Uptown offer *shiurim* on the Beren campus. Even so, these *shiurim* do not maintain the same constancy as *chaburot* on the Wilf campus. The *shiurim* are topical rather than sequential. In a spectacular occurrence this past *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, there was both a *tefilla chagigat* and *yom iyun* on the Beren campus. Yet, many students bemoaned the lack of spiritual staff and leadership at the aforementioned programming. Nevertheless, both events represent tremendous breakthroughs for the female undergraduate population and are worthy of recognition.

### A Beit Midrash Institution for Women on the Beren Campus

It seems that YU needs a new institution on the Beren Campus, parallel to the "Yeshiva." First, let me clarify what I *do not* mean and then what I actually envision. (In this article, I am *not* calling to reform the Jewish studies curriculum on the Beren campus, although further discussion on the matter is imperative. It should be noted that many women on the Beren campus have taken interest in a YP-like morning program. This is beyond the scope of this article, but should remain part of the conversation.) I am *not* calling for an equivalent of the RIETS *semikha* program on the Beren campus. It must be acknowledged, however, that the creation of GPATS (the Graduate Program for Women in Advanced Talmudic Study)



is a wonderful accomplishment, allowing women to continue to learn and connect to Torah on an advanced level and to prepare (much needed) leaders and educators for the Jewish community. Now, for the institution I do envision. I believe the new *Beit Midrash* institution should have a female *rosh beit midrash*. It is crucial to have an ideological leader, guide, and role-model at the center of the Torah institution; in addition, the *rosh beit midrash* must not only be charismatic but a genuine *talmidat hakhamim*. Moreover, as one prominent Jewish educator noted, women in the Jewish community lack close access to and relationships with *roshei yeshiva* and community leaders and, therefore, struggle to relate to rabbinic authority. Having an erudite Torah personality at the top of this new institution would aid this tumultuous problem. Furthermore, other rising stars in the Modern Orthodox community should be brought in, both as teachers and as *mashgichim* and *mashgichot*, similar to the ones on the Wilf campus. Just as the Wilf campus faculty is devoted to the Uptown community, the Beren faculty should be dedicated exclusively to the Beren community. This faculty should be involved on campus during *chagim* and other religious events, allowing women to connect to their teachers beyond the classroom or *beit midrash*—as holistic Torah personalities. Just as Yeshivat Har Etzion and Migdal Oz are separate *batei midrash*, yet exist under a larger umbrella institution and share common values, I believe RIETS and the Beren Beit Midrash should be two independent entities within the larger YU community. Each should have their own religious staff, learning programs, and facilities. We should see ourselves as one community, but recognize that we have separate needs. Lastly, parallel to the MYP on Wilf campus, I believe GPATS should be included in the new Beit Midrash, to foster a more holistic Torah-learning community and to set up role-models and aids for younger students. This article is meant to advocate practical change. I refer the readers to Adin Rayman's April article for the reasons why these changes are necessary.

\*\*\*

The story of the Netziv contains one additional layer. When the Netziv had completed his commentary on the *Shi'iltot*, dubbed the *Ha'emek She'ayla*, he had invited friends and students to a party in celebration. At this party, the Netziv recalled the aforementioned childhood story. The Netziv concluded the story with the following thought: What if he had become a shoemaker (perhaps a good one)? What would he say at the Heavenly tribunal when they asked him for his work the *Ha'emek She'ayla* or his commentary on the Torah, *Ha'emek Davar*, or his commentary on the Talmud, *Meromei Sade*? He would reply, 'I am but a shoemaker, unable to read, let alone write, any of those works.' It was then the Netziv realized his calling, that he wouldn't be just a shoemaker. Nevertheless, the Netziv only achieved spiritual connection and religious greatness because of an opportunity. Let's give our women an opportunity, too.





## How the Left Ruined Entertainment: The Sequel

By Elliot Fuchs

The last time I published an article with a similar title, I discussed how the Left has extended their tentacles into our film and television, and have ruined those forms of entertainment. This time around, they have decided to impose their infinite wisdom into the realm of sports and we are all suffering as a result.

In late April, approximately 100 members of the ESPN staff were laid off. This included analysts and anchors some of which have been with the sports news network for close to twenty years.

In an article published in *Politico* titled “Did Too Much Caitlyn Jenner Doom ESPN?” Ben Strauss wrote that the layoffs were due to a “lack of cash flow to pay those bills.” According to the article, “ESPN’s politics,” is to blame for their loss of “millions of viewers.”

Sports journalist Clay Travis wrote “[The] collapse has been aided by ESPN’s absurd decision to turn into MSESPN, a left-wing sports network.”

Similarly, Linda Cohen – an ESPN anchor herself – said that ESPN’s political talk is “definitely a percentage” of why ESPN continues to lose viewership and money.

But ESPN doesn’t seem to be ashamed by their failing ratings and their clear political agenda--they’re *proud* of it.. This is made clear by the fact that on *ESPN.com* you can find an article titled “New ESPN guidelines recognize connection between sports, politics.”

Just like the film industry, it seems that this left-wing organization doesn’t care that their fan base isn’t looking for political analysis when they are *just* trying to watch the baseball game. They are far more interested in promoting what suits them, at the expense of one hundred now jobless former employees and doing their job, namely, entertaining us. The day before these reporters were fired *ESPN.com* published an article about poetry and feminism. In other news – the word of the day is juxtaposition.

How are the American people supposed to escape the tyranny of the Left if we can’t even watch SportsCenter without them spewing their idiocy? What does one say about a sports network that fires famous, capable and experienced reporters like Ed Werder and Trent Dilfer,

### “WHAT DOES ONE SAY ABOUT A SPORTS NETWORK THAT FIRES FAMOUS, CAPABLE AND EXPERIENCED REPORTERS LIKE ED WERDER AND TRENT DILFER, BUT KEEPS JEMELE HILL AND MAX KELLERMAN, WHO WOULD RATHER TALK ABOUT THE PRESIDENT THAN A FOOTBALL GAME?”

but keeps Jemele Hill and Max Kellerman, who would rather talk about the President than a football game?

But the truth is that we should have seen this coming. ESPN has been censoring the Right and promulgating the Left for quite some time.

Let’s think back, not too long ago, when the news cycle was filled with quarterback Colin Kaepernick and his political opinions. Mainstream media – read this and understand something – the American people don’t have a reason to care about Kaepernick’s opinion on anything other than how to throw a football.

But, let’s pretend for a moment viewers do want a daily dose of politics to go with their sports entertainment. Why then, was Curt Schilling fired for voicing a conservative opinion on transgenderism? He certainly fits the requirement of being famous from his athletic career. I am a fan of the Yankees, yet, even I will admit that few people have ever thrown the ball as well as Schilling. And he is definitely a better sportsman than Kaepernick, whose career has been on a steep decline, since his brief success in 2014. It is with this double standard that people are getting fed up. It is this double standard that led people to stop watching ESPN. And, it is also this double standard that got Donald Trump elected last November.

In a March 3rd poll, *YouGov* – a polling and marketing firm – stated that “Republican sentiment toward ESPN declined.” The wishful thinker hopes that they will learn from their mistakes and begin reporting sports as we, the viewers, want them too.

Unfortunately, given the trend of current events, it seems that Liberals are more interested in pursuing their

own agenda than catering to the desires of the American people.

With the quality of sports and entertainment diminishing all over the country from this depressing state of events, it makes one wonder where (if anywhere) the American people will be able to escape if they ever just want to take a step away from politics.

Last march, John Nolte of the *Dailywire*, published an interesting article titled “How to Destroy CNN, Survive Without Cable TV, And save lots of \$\$\$.” After the whole ESPN episode, he doubled down on his message by basically replacing CNN with ESPN. He makes the point that these Democratic news networks make money through our cable subscriptions and that it may be time for us to cancel them as a result.

Yes, the time may have come where it is worthwhile to disconnect ourselves from the oppression of Leftist news. Essentially, in the short term, we can “cut the cord.” But the bigger problem here is that wherever we move for our sources of entertainment, it seems as though the Left will follow us and corrupt it for their own political agenda.

With the Left’s crusade against guns, movies, theatre, and sports, we are at risk of becoming fun-less political robots. Here’s to hoping that they don’t go after horseback riding next.

## Opinion of the Court: Rubinstein v. Canvassing Committee

By Student Court of YU (Wilf Campus)

RUBINSTEIN v. CANVASSING COMMITTEE  
No. 1. Argued May 10, 2017—Decided May 14, 2017

The majority vote of the Court favors the Petitioner; the Canvassing Committee is hereby ordered to release the election results.

On April 26, 2017, the undergraduate male students of Yeshiva University voted in the student government election run by the Canvassing Committee to ratify the following amendment: “The Canvassing Committee shall publicize the winners of the elections as soon as possible. Within three days of the election, the Canvassing Committee will disclose the data of regarding numbers of voter turnout, the amount of votes cast per race as well as per candidate on the ballot.”

The amendment in question does not explicitly specify to which election it is referring—and the source of the ambiguity is clear. However, the most simple and plain reading of the text implies that “the elections” refer to concurrent elections, meaning that the amendment should take effect immediately. There is no indication in the language that would indicate a delay until the following year’s election for it to take effect.

The Constitution of the Yeshiva University Undergraduate Student Government [for the Wilf Campus] makes clear that election results are implemented at the time of their vote. Article 1.1.5 states that “Ratification of amendments shall be by three-fifths of votes cast by the Student Body during the Amendment Vote, excluding blanks.” The same is true in all other areas of the election—elected officers assume responsibilities on the date of their election, not the following academic year, as stated in Article 3.6.2, “Official duties of the incoming officers shall be assumed upon graduation day of the outgoing senior class, but incoming officers may begin work from the date of their election.” Thus, the amendment’s application takes effect concurrently, not ex post facto.

Supporting this interpretation, the new amendment allows three days for the Canvassing Committee to release election results. The directive creates a post-election time period long enough for the amendment to take effect. Even without taking effect at the time of the election, it should certainly apply in the days following its ratification.

Moreover, candidates did not know the text or consequences of the amendment in question prior to the election. The candidates, who volunteered their time and energy, placing themselves at the choosing of their peers, agreed to participate in an election with potential consequences of which they were unaware. Importantly, though, the amendment does not overturn any Constitutional law, rule or requirement, to conceal the results; withholding them was merely longstanding practice. With the amendment’s ratification, non-contradictory additions were made that challenged their assumptions. To some, it may seem that releasing the detailed results could cause undue emotional

harm and be unfair given that, perhaps, some candidates might not have run had they known about the amendment. However, only four of nineteen candidates who signed affidavits (three chose not to sign) actually “object to and protest” the release of the results. And, after consulting with those four students and the Office of Student Life (“OSL”), it is clear that the myriad of benefits of transparency to the greater Student Body outweigh the candidate’s potential concerns.

This trial, however, highlights the irresponsibility of multiple parties regarding the election and amendment process. Constitutional statutes were largely ignored, leading to legal ambiguity, embarrassment, and contention in our University. First and foremost, the Amendment Committee and General Assembly (“GA”) did not create a text whose meaning is clear and understandable for readers and voters—never mind the basic grammatical errors. Post-election testimonial claims that the writer’s intentions were clear at the time of writing are irrelevant. Confidence in Student Government and its Constitution has surely suffered as a result.

Still, the case at hand could have been avoided had the Canvassing Committee publicized the proposed amendments at a reasonable time prior to the election—as opposed to its first publication being on the ballot itself. Article 3.1.6 reads that “The Canvassing Committee shall be responsible for posting a public notification of all election rules and requirements at least two weeks prior to elections.” Additionally, the GA is mandated to “vote upon final proposals for amendments at least one week prior to the General Student Body Amendment Vote” (Article 8.1.3). While the rules and requirements which stood at the time immediately preceding the election were posted publicly, it should have been well within their means to publicize the proposed amendments before the ballot was sent. Their subsequent inaction has caused much of the confusion surrounding this case.

Furthermore, the Canvassing Committee should not have outsourced their duty of running the election to the OSL, a branch of University administration. Consequently, the election results are not in their possession; and the Student Body is at the mercy of parties seemingly outside the bounds of our Constitution. Regardless of this Court’s ruling, the employees of the OSL are within their rights to withhold data and ignore the rightful will of the Student Body. As a result, the independence of our Student Body vis-a-vis the administration has been largely degraded and powers of this Honorable Court have been ridiculed.

The Preamble states that “We, the undergraduate male students of Yeshiva University, in order to further the interests and provide for the general welfare of the Student Body...do hereby establish this Student Government Constitution.” **In keeping with our Constitutionally bounding and sacred responsibilities to the Student Body, the Court rules in favor of the Petitioner and orders the release of the election results.**



## Update on YU's Finances

By *Commentator* Staff

Earlier this, year, YU released its financial statements from fiscal year 2016. The following article highlights a few issues that are raised in the financial statements, and a few points where 2016 differed from 2015, but is by no means meant to serve as a comprehensive analysis of the statements.

It should come as no secret to the reader that YU unfortunately was involved in Bernie Madoff's ponzi scheme, and lost money as a result. However, most people assume that the university lost money and that was that, not realizing that there was actually more to this unfortunate financial situation. The financial statements give a lot more color to the specifics of the situation with Madoff, and what exactly has transpired since the initial news came out. In terms of recovering money that was lost, in August 2014, YU received a settlement payment from the New York State Attorney General as compensation for having lost money with Madoff. Additionally, YU has filed a claim with the Madoff Victims Fund of the U.S. Attorney General, but the financial statements caution that there can be "no assurance that the University will receive any recoveries from that fund." Interestingly, the trustee who was appointed to handle matters pertaining to the Madoff scandal sued YU, seeking to recover approximately \$1,000,000 that Madoff contributed to the University across a six-year period prior to 2008. "During fiscal 2014, the University and the Madoff Trustee resolved the suit by settlement without trial, under confidential terms. The negotiated settlement amount was substantially less than the initial claim, and is not deemed material by the University," the statement says.

Another older piece of news that those in the YU community certainly heard about a few years back was the abuse lawsuit brought against YU for the actions of former MTA teachers. According to the financial statements, "The litigation alleged abuse during the 1970s and 1980s by former High Schools employees and sought damages of over \$680 million." When this claim was dismissed, the plaintiffs appealed but subsequently lost their appeal before the Second Circuit Court of Appeals, and tried a few other avenues of appeals and litigation. In January 2014, YU (and its high schools) was granted a motion to dismiss the case based on the fact that the statute of limitations had run, along with other reasons. "Following the end of the fiscal year, the University was advised by counsel that

the Plaintiffs' counsel is not pursuing any further appeals or proceedings."

In terms of YU's operations, the financial statements caution that the school suffered significant operating losses in the past two years. In fiscal year 2015 that number was \$84,560,000, and in fiscal year 2016 it was \$52,449,000, a 38% reduction from the previous year. According to the financial statements, the reasons for the recurring operating deficits include "reduced research grants funding, investments in faculty to enhance undergraduate education and medical research, and investments in updated technologies." The school listed five ways that it plans to address these operating deficits. The first is the completed agreement to transfer financial and operational control of Einstein to a separate entity. Second is a review of "real estate holdings, including developing and implementing a strategy for the monetization of selected assets, in conjunction with the proposed strategic plan for the University." Third is implementing other initiatives to reduce costs, specifically costs pertaining to personnel. Fourth is to develop "new academic offerings and alternative delivery models to ensure productivity and continued relevance in the delivery of academic programs." Lastly, the university intends on "reviewing administrative services to maximize efficiencies and reduce expenses."

YU's endowment, and its unfortunate reduction over the last few years, has been another hot topic of conversation. The following is a brief look at how YU currently allocates its endowment investments, and how some of the numbers have changed from fiscal 2015 to 2016. Year over year comparisons between various line items in the financial statements is rendered difficult by the fact that YU's accountants only made a single deduction for Einstein after adding together all 2015 line items, and didn't deduct line by line.

The school's total investment amount, adjusting for everything related to the Einstein deal, decreased from \$528,436,000 in 2015 to \$461,261,000 in 2016. About half the invested money, including Einstein's pools of money, are invested in long-only equities, long-short equities, and in a category termed "multi-strategy/event-driven" which is an investment strategy that seeks to take advantage of pricing inefficiencies that may occur at the time of an event such as an earnings call, bankruptcy, merger, acquisition, or spinoff. Among the other areas that YU has invested in are bonds, including U.S. Government bonds, mutual funds consisting of bonds, and State Israel

bonds; equities including corporate stocks, mutual funds consisting of equities, private equity, venture capital; and real assets, which means YU has some level of ownership over tangible assets like rail cars, ships, aircraft, forestry or traded commodities; and real estate.

In terms of major differences in how YU invested in 2016 versus 2015, they kept far fewer assets as cash than they did in 2015. Cash includes cash on hand, other liquid investments that mature in less than three months, and investments in money market funds. In other words, investments are less easily accessible now than they used to be, and are invested in longer-term funds and investments. Also, the investment category "investment receivables" decreased significantly from 2015 to 2016, from \$109,584,000 in 2015 to \$8,228,000 in 2016.

Of the \$461,261,000 in YU's endowment as of the end of fiscal 2016, the vast majority of the money (\$372,647,000) was permanently restricted per the donors' specifications. According to the financial documents, permanently restricted is defined as "net assets subject to donor-imposed restrictions stipulating that the asset be maintained permanently by the University." However, the donors of these assets generally permit YU to use the interest earned on the investments as YU desires, which gives YU much more leeway.

Lastly, in fiscal 2016, the Board of Trustees authorized the sale of two properties. One was the Alabama Residence a student housing building on the Brookdale campus near Cardozo's campus, for approximately \$58,000,000 to Collegium Capital, a real estate firm specializing in student housing, as previously reported by *The Commentator*. The second building was located on the Beren Campus and was sold for approximately \$9,000,000. The total approximate gains related to the sale of these two properties were \$60,000,000.

Obviously, the picture that was painted by these financial statements--and by extension in this article, is a little less than rosy. That being said, the school is taking concrete steps such as selling buildings that will immediately help the school generate money. In addition, reducing the deficit by over 35% is a step in the right direction. As opposed to just reallocating funds from one investment vehicle to another, or choosing riskier investments at the expense of safer ones, these actions seem like a prudent way to turn things around, and will hopefully usher in an lengthy era of financial security and broader success for the school.

## Lessons Learned from A Random Walk Down Wall Street

By Daniel Ferber

Prior to reading Burton Malkiel's book, *A Random Walk Down Wall Street*, I naively granted credibility to various methodologies claiming to have formulas to predict future stock price movements. Through my reading, my views on many of these methodologies have shifted, believing them

**"FOR THOSE THAT HAVE AN INTEREST OF GOING INTO A FIELD THAT HAS A NICE BALANCE BETWEEN THE BUSINESS WORLD AND THE LAW WORLD, CORPORATE LAW IS THE PERFECT SYNERGY OF THE TWO."**

to be more a form of speculation than prudent investing. Although there are those that have, and continue, to profit greatly from speculation, nevertheless, Professor Malkiel provides evidence supporting a more passive approach to investing.

*A Random Walk Down Wall Street* is essentially a supporting case study for the efficient market hypothesis (EMH). The brainchild of Professor Eugene Fama of the University of Chicago, the EMH, states that the stock market accurately reflects all available information in current prices such that no individual investor can consistently earn extraordinary returns. Malkiel takes this hypothesis a step further in popularizing the

theory of a random walk, a theory proposed in late 19th century France. The theory claims that in the market all price movement are entirely random. Through this understanding, investors should look at low-cost index funds rather than choosing individual stocks through different "strategies".

As an economics professor at Princeton, Malkiel performed a test to support the bold claim that the "past history of stock prices cannot be used to predict the future in any meaningful way." He gave each of his students a theoretical stock, worth fifty dollars. Each day, his students would flip a coin, heads meant the stock went up a point, while tails would bring the stock down a point. After a certain period of time, Malkiel brought the fictitious stock charts to chartists, people who predict the future of stocks from its past performance, who gave firm advice on whether to buy or sell each stock. Being that these stocks had no genuine trend, Malkiel believed that this could serve as evidence that the trends in the stock market are randomized as well.

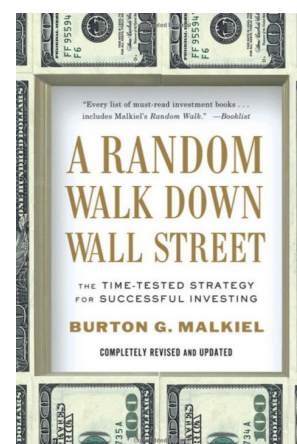
Additionally, there have been numerous statistical studies suggesting active investing to be a losing game. This is represented by the fact that approximately eighty percent of active mutual fund managers fail to beat the S&P 500 Index. Even more surprisingly, a study conducted at UC Berkeley concluded that one percent of overall active traders beat the market. Concurrently, between 2008 and 2016, the S&P 500 advanced 85.4 percent. In his book, Malkiel presents his own comparison between the passive index and an actively managed fund. A ten thousand dollar initial investment in the S&P 500 index fund and the average actively-managed mutual fund from 1969 to 1998 would have left the former investor with \$311,000 and the

latter with \$171,950.

On average, index funds clearly offer lower expense ratios and often stronger returns, providing the individual investor a clear solution. Yet, the majority of mutual funds are actively managed. Malkiel claims that there is a psychological reason for this. He proposes that humans struggle to cope with a lack of order, thus imposing their order onto this randomized system.

Malkiel believes that fund managers understand this reality and utilize it to profit off their clients, ensuring them that their expertise lends them the ability to earn superior returns than a broad market index.

Although Malkiel provides compelling support for passive investment strategies, this is only one side of one of the biggest debates in the investment management business. Many of the world's prominent investors have made fortunes off active investing and have succeeded in beating the market time and time again. While I believe that individual investors, as opposed to professional investors, would benefit most greatly from Malkiel's advice, the more experienced investor, too, could utilize Malkiel to challenge and strengthen their own techniques. This book is a guide for passive investors and a testament to the efficiencies of the stock market.





## C-Imagine The Possibilities

By Benjamin Zirman

In its first venture into Israel, the company behind the wildly popular Snapchat app, Snap Inc., has agreed to buy the Israeli augmented reality company Cimagine Media for what sources estimated was \$40 million. This acquisition will provide Snap with a development center in the Middle East, one that will house Cimagine Media's 20 current employees.

### **"THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT SNAP INC.'S POWER AND POTENTIAL, AND CIMAGINE MEDIA COULDN'T HAVE BEEN ACQUIRED BY A BETTER COMPANY."**

Snapchat went public when it filed for an initial public offering (IPO) this March that valued the company between \$20 billion and \$25 billion. This was the largest IPO since Chinese e-commerce company Alibaba's IPO in 2014. According to Snapchat, 158 million people use the service each day and create 2.5 billion "snaps" between them. The average user is between 18-24 years old and spends about 30 minutes a day on the service. Growth has slowed recently to "just" 48% year-over-year, and while revenues have grown from \$58.7m in 2015 to \$404.5m in 2016, losses also mounted to \$514m in 2016 from almost \$373m a year earlier. Snap employs about 1,500 people across the world. Each office—located in places including China, Seattle, San Francisco, Toronto, and New York City—tends to be anchored around a unique project. There is no question about Snap Inc.'s power and potential, and Cimagine Media couldn't have been acquired by a better company.

Founded four years ago, Cimagine specializes in computer vision, real-time image processing, mobile development, and international marketing. Cimagine provides retailers and brands with an intuitive experience using their true markerless augmented reality (AR) platform. Cimagine has developed software that uses the camera in smartphones or other devices to recognize objects in a room and add virtual objects to the scene on the screen. That lets users, say prospective furniture buyers, visualize what couches might look like in their living room with a few taps on a smartphone app. Cimagine already has partnerships with Shop Direct, John Lewis, and Coca-Cola, and it's aiming to help more retailers tap into the potential of augmented reality. Cimagine charges such businesses a monthly fee. Cimagine has already launched the world's largest implementation of AR in retail to date with Shop Direct, the largest global brand AR deployment with TCCC and the world's first augmented showroom. Chosen by Microsoft, Coca-Cola, and Inc.com as one of Israel's most promising startups, and by Forbes as one of the Israeli companies you should watch for in 2017, there is much potential waiting to be uncovered.

How does Cimagine work? Cimagine brings Augmented Reality to commerce and to enterprise through a markerless solution that is launched at the click of a button. Unlike other solutions, Cimagine's augmented reality engine does not require the user to print and place a reference marker in order to identify surfaces and estimate scale. By combining information from a mobile device's internal sensors with deep image processing and applying unique computer vision algorithms, Cimagine embeds 3D objects realistically into live video scenes, anchoring them to their position. Virtual products do not drift while the user moves around a room, thereby allowing users to view items from all angles and distances to make informed buying decisions. Cimagine's proprietary rendering engine supports a high poly-count of 3D assets with textures that are ten times higher than the industry standard. This allows customers to experience life-like 3D product representations that are rendered in real-time at 30 frames per second, the industry's highest live video rate. Products appear life-like and to scale, so customers can simply and easily see if items fit their homes and offices from different angles and

perspectives. Cimagine is cloud-based and their service is delivered as a SaaS solution. Their cloud servers store all product, customer content, and business data to ensure that users have a seamless experience that augments every retailer and brand's digital catalog. The viewer can be integrated into e-commerce, m-commerce sites, and apps within hours. One embedded line of code can add a customizable 'visualization' button to any product page. In-store, a simple scan of the product links it to a digital catalogue which then allows customers to experience it in their homes and share it on social media.

Cimagine, based in Kfar Yehoshua, was founded in 2012 by veteran technologists and product managers from telecommunications companies. The three co-founders are CEO Yoni Nevo, vice president for product development Nir Daube, and Ozi Egri, the vice president for R&D; all of them are entrepreneurs and engineers with a background in computerized vision. Nevo was an intelligence officer in the army for five years before attending Tel-Aviv University, where he received a BA in Computer Science and Management, followed by an MBA in Marketing and Finance. He worked for nine years at ECI Telecom, serving in a few roles while working his way up to Head of Solutions Business Development. Daube went to Ben Gurion University of the Negev, where he earned a degree in Electrical & Computer Engineering. He worked for Telco Systems for almost eight years, with his last position being VP of Product Management. Egri has over ten years of experience in image processing algorithms, and system and R&D management at Rafael and BATM. Since then, the startup has raised about \$3 million from the technology incubator Explore, where it operated its first two years. It won financing from Plus Ventures, a venture capital arms affiliated with Explore, from 2B Angels, and the crowdfunding platform OurCrowd.

The Cimagine solution is built for retailers, brands, and manufacturers that want to provide their customers with

Coca-Cola made the decision to augment its traditional sales using Cimagine's unique visualization platform, and since then, has reported a massive 20% increase in sales of coolers and fridges, and a decrease in sales visits from 3 to 1. They now boast 92 percent conversion rates on all sales using Cimagine software.

Cimagine's augmented retail provides a visualization platform that personalizes a customer's shopping experience and accompanies them throughout their journey, dramatically increasing their confidence and allowing companies to increase sales both online and in store. Shop Direct, the UK's 4th largest online retailer, faced a common digital retail challenge: finding innovative solutions to create a differentiated digital shopping experience that brings value to customers. Overcoming this challenge led to increased customer engagement, enhanced conversion rates, and increased online sales. Shop Direct rolled out the Cimagine viewer across the Littlewoods brand in the UK. Using their technology, shoppers can now easily view thousands of Littlewoods items, such as furniture in their homes and offices. Jonathan Wall, ECommerce Director at Shop Direct, said "Cimagine is Shop Direct's biggest find so far... it makes it much easier for customers to visualize what they are purchasing, which leads to increased purchases, a differentiated shopping experience, that eliminates a major barrier in ecommerce sales".

Lastly, Cimagine adds an endless augmented showroom to a store and allows shoppers to instantly view products in any design or color onsite. Limited store space means that customers often find that the product they want is unavailable. Cimagine solves this problem by easily guiding customers to an unlimited virtual showroom, providing them with a unique augmented reality experience. Sales representatives can even email products to customers or to their friends and family so that items can be easily visualized in a home or office



a differentiated shopping experience and to increase sales. Their technology is built to help address big challenges, such as increasing conversion rates, personalizing shopping experiences, attracting and retaining customers, and reducing the rate of product and equipment returns. Thousands of products are already augmented using Cimagine's solution with a growing base of leading UK, US, and Australian brands and retailers. Most recently, interactive multichannel retailer HSN partnered with Cimagine to launch an augmented reality design app across two of its home and lifestyle brands within the Company's Cornerstone portfolio: Frontgate and Ballard Designs.

Cimagine's solutions can be broken down into three pieces, an augmented sales tool, an augmented retail experience, and augmented showrooms. Their augmented sales tool is a visualization platform that will ultimately improve sales efficiency. It adds another element to a sales pitch by allowing customers to visualize the products in their spaces. Cimagine hopes it will increase sales and avoid repeated customer visits. Coca-Cola frequently sends teams to customer premises to sell vending machine, fridges, stands and signs, verbally and sometimes with the aid of photographs. However, this form of sales requires repeat visits, lengthy pitches and wordy descriptions. Cimagine started their collaboration with Coca-Cola when Cimagine joined The Bridge by Coca-Cola, a commercialization program for innovative start-ups.

environment. Cimagine partnered with John Lewis, the largest department store chain in the UK, and launched the world's first augmented reality showroom in the John Lewis flagship store on Oxford Street.

So what will Snap Inc. do with Cimagine? Presumably, Snap Inc. will use the tech to further enhance campaigns like we've seen in the past. For example, last summer Starbucks launched a Snapchat chilled summer drinks campaign, giving Starbucks drinkers the ability to superimpose a lens over a picture of their icy Frappuccino beverage and send it to their friends. Or perhaps Cimagine's team will support Snap in laying objects over photos and videos captured through Snapchat. This also looks like a talent grab, with Cimagine's four co-founders each being a specialist in the fields of computer vision and image processing. Lastly, it allows Snap Inc. to tap into the Israeli talent that is known for its prowess and innovation in technology. Ori Inbar, who now runs investment firm Super Ventures, said that in his opinion Snap could keep Cimagine's service operating. "As much as augmented reality is hot, it's still a grind to convince customers and investors to jump in," he said. "Snap will allow Cimagine to grow fast and expand its reach dramatically." No matter what the reason, this is clearly a very important acquisition for Snap Inc., as it continues to grow into one of the most valuable social media companies in the world, and for Cimagine as a leader in Augmented Reality technology.





**Magen David**  
Y E S H I V A H

# NOW HIRING

Transportation may be  
available from certain  
locations in Manhattan

## **MAGENDAVIDYESHIVAH.ORG/CAREERS**

*INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR TEAM?*

Submit your resume & cover letter to  
[HRresumes@mdyschool.org](mailto:HRresumes@mdyschool.org)



### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Teachers/Associates for Judaic Studies ■ Science  
■ Hebrew ■ Grade 5 ■ ELA 6 ■ Math 5/6 ■ Special  
Education/Learning Center ■ Hebrew ■ STEM 6-8



### EARLY CHILDHOOD

Teachers/Associates for Playgroup, Nursery,  
Pre-K, K

### HIGH SCHOOL

Science ■ Math ■ History ■ STEM ■ Computer  
Science ■ Education/Psychology ■ Accounting ■  
Business ■ Hospitality Business Management

### SENIOR MANAGEMENT

Dean of Student Affairs (HS) ■ Scholars  
Director (HS) ■ Educational Technology  
Director (HS) ■ Science Department Chair (HS)  
■ Educational Program Director (EC) ■  
Development Manager

\*BA or recognized teaching certificates & appropriate experience required.

\*Hebrew teachers must be comfortable teaching Ivrit b'Ivrit.