



Honoring Rav Schachter's 50 Years as a Rosh Yeshiva: More Than Good Enough

By Rabbi Moshe Rosenberg

Rabbi Moshe Rosenberg serves as Rav of Congregation Etz Chaim of Kew Gardens Hills and teaches Judaic Studies at the SAR Academy, where he also serves as JudeoTech Integrator. His latest book is The Unofficial Hogwarts Haggadah. He writes this piece in honor of Rav Hershel Schachter's 50 years as YU Rosh Yeshiva.

I write these lines with trepidation, not merely because of the difficulty in capturing Rabbi Hershel Schachter on paper but because I tried once before, thirty years ago, and still have not learned my lesson. When Rabbi Noach Goldstein, z'l, editor of Chavrusa Magazine, asked me to profile my Rebbi, I was somewhat lavish in his praise. Then I had the bright idea of showing the piece to Rav Schachter before submitting it. His two word response: "Nice Hespel!" So let me paraphrase Mark Antony at the outset: I come to praise Rav Schachter, not to bury him.

During the early 1980's, I spent five years in Rav Schachter's *shiur*, as well as two summers learning from him in Tannersville, NY. I also was privileged to travel with him to various other speaking engagements and even spend time at a program in Israel for which he spoke. What follow are snapshots from my experiences.

The Audience Matters

...A member of the audience in a Manhattan *shiur* asks a question totally lacking in any logic or redeeming quality. Without skipping a beat, Rav Schachter reframes, "Oh, you must be referring to the *kashya* of the *Ketzos Ha-Choshen...*," and proceeds to answer the question, conveniently eliding over the fact that the gentleman and the *Ketzos* are about as acquainted with each other as Richard Simmons and Hershey Bars. The scene repeats itself countless times, in different venues, with "*klutz kashyas*" instantly transformed into strokes of genius.

...On a program in Israel for Modern Orthodox families, Rav Schachter delivers a masterful *shiur*



Rav Schachter dancing at Wednesday's Siyum HaShas in honor of his 50 years of service to YU. Rav Yehuda Willig stands to his right. To Rav Schachter's left are President Elect Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman and his son Rabbi Shay Schachter.

SEE SCHACHTER, CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Floors 5 and 5A of Gottesman Library to be Renovated over the Upcoming Summer

By Eitan Lipsky

The wait is almost over for those "fifth-floor studiers" who might have felt short-changed by the recent renovations to floors 2 through 4 of the Wilf Campus library. According to Dr. Paul Glassman, Director of University Libraries, thanks to the generous donation of David and Ruth Gottesman, floors 5 and 5A of the Gottesman library will undergo a major renovation that will begin at the conclusion of the spring semester and is scheduled to be completed before the upcoming academic year.

Construction of the Gottesman Library Building on Amsterdam Avenue, including

SEE LIBRARY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Moody's Changes YU's Financial Outlook on Eve of Rabbi Berman's Transition into YU Presidency

By Doron Levine and David Rubinstein

In a credit rating released February 28, Moody's Investors Service affirmed the B3 junk rating on YU's bonds, but changed YU's outlook from "negative" to "stable" for the first time since 2009. The report cited "material increase in unrestricted cash and investments" that have "significantly improved the university's liquidity position."

Moody's noted that recent improvements to YU's finances should allow its financial management team to "execute its plans and reach financially sustainable

SEE MOODY'S, CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

The EDITORIAL

Don't Protest the Westboro Baptist Church

By Doron Levine

On February 27, The Westboro Baptist Church announced its intention to stage a protest at Yeshiva University. In response, a number of students plan to stage a counter-protest to broadcast their unequivocal opposition to the Church's positions. I do not wish malign the organizers of this retaliatory demonstration or interrogate their motivations. Doubtless they mean well (who doesn't?). But I submit that they are making a costly, even if innocent, mistake.

Based in Topeka, Kansas, the Westboro Baptist Church has achieved notoriety over the years for its aggressively anti-homosexual positions. With dogged tenacity and zealous fervor that Modern Orthodoxy could only dream of, the Church's delegations are constantly on the prowl, protesting organizations and events they deem guilty of assorted depravities and basking in their status as celebrity scoundrels. Categorized as a "hate group" (whatever that means) by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Church publicizes its travel schedule on its website called "godhatesfags.com," a startling domain name that straightforwardly delineates the group's overarching philosophy. The Church maintains that homosexuality is the primary sin of American society and that its normalization in mainstream American culture has incited countless acts of divine retribution including the 9/11 terror attacks and the deaths of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

When the Church announced via its Twitter page that it would visit YU, a Facebook event materialized in the Yeshiva Facebook sphere inviting hundreds of people to "Join us in welcoming the Westboro Baptist Church to The Heights!!!" Scheduled for the morning of the protest, the event urges participants to "Bring your gay, lesbian, trans, and all of the above loving Jew selves over to say a hearty howdy do to our visitors from the great state of Kansas."

This counter-protest violates the primary principle of dealing with agitators: attention confers legitimacy. The Westboro Baptist Church thrives off of the obsessive denunciation it receives from organizations and media outlets much larger and more influential than it. Normally tiny organizations with outlandish ideologies remain safely hidden from the public eye. But, like a fly biting the heel of an elephant, the Westboro Baptist Church has successfully pestered its way into the public eye, purchasing disproportionate recognition and visibility. By denouncing the Church, critics imply that its message is significant and compelling enough to deserve a response. Those who plan to counter-protest at YU will similarly bring undue attention to the Church by making its visit into a much bigger scene than it needs to be.

If nobody protests, here's what will happen: seven-odd church members will traipse down Amsterdam one morning and gather on the sidewalk outside of Morg brandishing their typical signs. Amused students will take pictures en route to their morning programs as security keeps a watchful eye to ensure things stay civil. After two hours, the group will go on its merry way to the University of Phoenix, its next scheduled protest location, where it will protest under the slogan, "Final Four is pagan idolatry." Will anyone at YU find this protest compelling? Of course not. Signs reading "GOD HATES JEWS" and "PLANES CRASH GOD LAUGHS," if they move us at all, will only move us to laugh. The message is alien to our culture, and it has no purchase whatsoever on members of our religious community. So why must we respond? By drowning out the Church's protest with an event of our own, we would shower them with undeserved attention and contribute to their public image as a group to be reckoned with.

Not only is the counter-protest itself a mistake, but the way it has been framed in the Facebook event is dangerous, threatening to oversimplify our community's ideological

and cultural diversity with a false dichotomy.

The Westboro Baptist Church is virulently anti-Jewish, blaming Jews for the killing of Jesus and accusing Jews of rejecting God's word in favor of "worshipping themselves as a people." More specifically, the Church believes that the American Jewish community, YU Modern Orthodoxy apparently included, "was the earliest and most forceful group to spread the soul damning lie of "It's ok to be gay.""

For people familiar with the YU community, this claim rings befuddling. But setting aside its veracity and pertinence, it can and perhaps should inspire a brief moment of communal introspection. There are a number of possible positions that members of our community stake out in contrast (even if not in direct response) to the Church's position on homosexuality. Some within YU believe that it is not our place to tell people whom to love, and therefore Orthodox Judaism should embrace the standard progressive approach to homosexuality. But YU is also home to a sizable right-wing contingent composed of many who believe variants of the following: while biblical and Rabbinic law prohibit homosexual acts, it does not follow that "God hates fags." The culture of open homosexuality and the ethos of gay pride are inconsistent with the spirit and even the letter of Jewish law, but individual LGBT members of our community deserve compassion and respect even as we stand by the normativity of Jewish legal precedent traditionally understood. There are many who believe this.

Members of this second group, which I suspect includes many of our religious leaders, though I hesitate to speak on their behalf, find themselves in a unique position with respect to the arrival of the Westboro Baptist Church. The Church's protest requires them to respond, if at all, with a uniquely nuanced stance that sets them apart from both the Church and the Facebook event. I am quite sure that many of them will be uncomfortable attending a protest that encourages participants to bring "your gay, lesbian, trans, and all of the above loving Jew selves" along with "your funniest, dankest signs, flags, and t shirts." At risk of stereotyping, it seems abundantly clear that this type of demonstration is inconsistent with the culture and ideology of the YU right; because of the way the event has been framed, we can reasonably expect that many will not only decline to attend, but will also feel uncomfortable with its very occurrence on their campus. Thus on the day of the protest, many students will find themselves in the awkward position of being condemned to Hell by a group of Jew-haters but being unable to fight back without betraying their religious convictions. By commandeering our studentry's public response to the Church in a way that excludes a sizable contingent of students, this event will further accentuate fault lines within our community instead of uniting us against a common enemy.

I understand the motivation. This sort of demonstration provides an exciting opportunity to interrupt the dreary monotony of college life. Protest has exciting appeal – rarely do sheltered New York collegiates get to experience the thrill of combating an ideological enemy, and rarely do opportunities to cement our credentials as LGBT allies show up on our doorstep.

In this case, though, we must resist the urge. Tempting as it is to escalate, to weave this event into a poetic narrative and imagine the upcoming protest as an epic showdown between good and evil, this truly is not a significant moment for YU. The ideology of the Westboro Baptist Church has no influence on any elements of modern Orthodox Jewry. Their message bears no substantive relevance to discussions happening in our community (or the larger American community, for that matter) and requires no coordinated response from us. Their arrival will be a mere blip on the radar, and they deserve nothing more than a cold shoulder.

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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.



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1 Snowflakes

Much to Ben Shapiro's chagrin, there have been two snow days and lots of flurries. He has officially failed to destroy all snowflakes on campus.



2 Outrageous March Madness Prize

UHRL has promised that anyone who gets a perfect bracket will win free housing. Before getting excited, though, you might want to know that the housing will be on the top floor of Muss, and your roommate will be a sweaty, thirty-something semicha student who hasn't figured out his life direction, or how to flush the toilet.



3 Chag HaSemikhah

YU's ultimate diversity showcase: One hundred *musmachim*, and three different types of black hats. It's the 21st century alright!



4 Professor Robert E. Kelly

Has his BBC interview interrupted by some "hippity-hoppity kids," makes his way around the internet as a meme for a week, before proceeding to be forgotten about forever.



5 Admissions Office Desk

No joke, this desk in Furst Hall is constantly loaded with delicious Laffy Taffy's and Twizzlers. Clearly this is an attempt to lure eager high school students. Heck, I know that's why I gave up my Harvard acceptance.



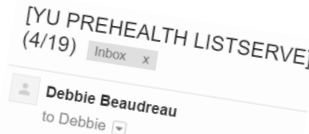
6 SCWSC

I finally looked them up, and it turns out that the Salmon Creek Watershed Council is pretty legit. The only thing I don't get is why this Washington State-based environmental society sends so many ystuds.



7 Debbie Beaudreau

She is ever so mysterious and her ystuds are ever so eloquent that she *must* be the smartest, most beautiful, most powerful woman in YU. All hail Queen Debbie!



7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN



1 The Scope

After *The Scope* foolishly started a libel campaign against *The Commentator* this past Purim, we have decided to reveal some very incriminating information about them. Let's just say we have some photos that will send a certain someone whose name rhymes with Shmaacov Shmonstein to prison for a long time. It's gonna be juicy!

2 Kimu V'Kiblu Kollel

For some weird reason, *bochrim* who participated in this *geshmak zach* were instructed to wear white robes and extra-pointy hats. I wonder why...



3 Oscars La La Land Moment

And the award for the most cringeworthy spectacle in recent TV memory goes to... Steve Harvey!! ... Um, sorry, there's been a horrible mistake. The award actually goes to the 89th Oscars!



4 Morg Floor 8

No joke, this floor is completely unoccupied, completely lights-off, and completely inaccessible by elevator or by stairwell. I assure you that when you wake up in a zombie apocalypse you will be in one of these rooms. Boo!



5 Really Thin Paper Towels

In the spirit of YU cutting back, the school has commissioned the Chemistry department to produce the thinnest, least absorbent paper physically possible.

6 Crowded Belfer Elevators at 4:15

If you think your walk through hell is over after the Wind Tunnel of Winterfell, you are sorely mistaken. Get ready to play Twister as your elevator stops on every single floor, but somehow remains just as packed and sweaty the whole way up.



7 Women's History Month

Throughout March, we'll be posting mini-bios of trailblazing *Observer* editors to celebrate.

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor,

I was shocked to read *Where are the Pitchforks?* Being an Openly Gay Student at Yeshiva University (*The Commentator*, Feb 12, '17). While it is one thing to profess that gay people undergo an incredible struggle, which must be addressed with great sensitivity, it is another thing to advertise and publicly validate at Yeshiva a lifestyle which the Torah prohibits. The fact that the above article appeared without any apparent pushback, neither in the comments nor elsewhere, is extremely troubling.

Avrohom Gordimer
CSL '95
RIETS '93
YC '89

MTA Student Attacked and Robbed in Washington Heights

By Shoshy Ciment

On Monday, February 27, 2017, two assailants attacked and robbed a 15-year old MTA student as he was leaving school.

The two attackers, reported to have been "dark skinned" teens, punched student Yaakov Weisberger in the face. They ran off with his phone, leaving him "completely stunned" and in need of stitches for his wounds.

According to a YU Security Advisory that was sent out on Feb 28, 2017, the attack occurred at approximately 6:00 on the evening of February 27, 2017 on W. 187th Street and Amsterdam Avenue.

The advisory also mentioned that "the New York City Police Department responded to the scene and the 34th Precinct Detective Squad is now investigating" and claimed that the YU Security in the area has "increased patrols," especially during MTA dismissal times.

MTA and the NYPD have not responded to requests for comment at this time.

Weisberger explained that he was fortunate that the attack occurred so close to MTA because students immediately came to help him. Although he described the period of time between the attack and arriving at the hospital as a "vague memory," Weisberger was confident all the while that he "was in good hands."

Describing his recovery as "speedy", Weisberger expected to be back to school on today, March 1, but those plans were frustrated due to a sudden cancellation of classes at the YU High School for Boys due to a bussing mixup. Weisberger is thankful for everyone who helped him recover.

"It's a crazy world out there," mused Weisberger. "It's even harder to believe that the craziness can reach you, but it certainly can. This incident is proof to that."

YU Security is advising that students take extra measures of caution during this time, especially during the afternoon and evening hours.



Formerly Banned Restaurants Reinstated in Caf, Nagel, and Available for YU Events

By Samuel Gelman (Houston, TX)

On March 6 at around 10pm, in a post to YU Marketplace, Chop Chop's manager Matthew Chan announced that Chop Chop will once again be served in the YU Cafeteria. "Just really Baruch HaShem!!" said Matthew. "We want to thank YU, OU and all the Rabbis from Vaad Of Riverdale and all the support from the YU Rabbis, and especially all the students for the support." Chan said that Chop Chop will be serving Chinese food and sushi at YU events and in the cafeteria.

Food from Carlos and Gabby's, which was also banned, has been reinstated as well. "I am pleased to announce that Chop Chop and Carlos and Gabby's are again available on campus and for student events," wrote Chaim Nissel, University Dean of Students in a March 8 email.

The controversy began on February 12 with a post on YU Marketplace from Chan. In the post, Chan announced that "starting today Chop Chop Restaurant 'No Longer' to supply Kosher Chinese Food or Sushi to any YU Cafeteria including Nagel Bagel or any YU Event because Chop Chop is under Vaad of Riverdale not an OU restaurant."

The manager of Carlos and Gabby's rebuffed several requests for comment on the matter.

The move came as an apparent reinforcement of the OU's kashrut policy with Yeshiva University. Since Yeshiva University cafeterias and events are under the supervision of the OU, any food not certified by the OU cannot be served on campus. Chop Chop is certified by the Va'ad of Riverdale, the kashrut organization overseen by YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Mordechai Willig.

"Given that Yeshiva University food programs are OU-certified, everything that is sold in cafeterias in the Yeshiva University system must meet OU standards," said Rabbi Elefant, COO of the Orthodox Union's Kashrut

Department, in an interview with The Commentator. "Therefore, we take our responsibility very seriously and need to be sure that standards are the same as OU supervision." When asked why this was happening now

**"I FEEL BLESSED FROM
HASHEM. BARUCH HASHEM."
- CHOP CHOP MANAGER
MATTHEW CHAN**

and why Chop Chop had previously been allowed to sell their food in the YU cafeterias, Rabbi Elefant responded, "We became aware that the students at YU [were] interested in their school selling the products in the food service system of YU, but YU recognized that they needed OU approval. Perhaps things fell through the cracks, perhaps."

While this policy made sense on the surface, YU does sell snacks and other food items that are certified by kashrut organizations other than the OU. "The OU does not insist that the factories that we certify only use OU ingredients," Rabbi Elefant responded. "We insist that they use ingredients that meet OU hashgacha and that is the same policy we have for YU. If the supervision is up to standards, we have no problem allowing YU to use it." When asked whether this meant that the Va'ad of Riverdale was not up to OU standards, Rabbi Elefant said, "I did not say that."

The OU offered no timetable as to how long it would take to ensure that Chop Chop's kashrut is up to standards. However, Rabbi Elefant did talk about how they were approaching the matter, saying that "some of our people are visiting those restaurants under the Va'ad of Riverdale to ensure that the standards used in their certification programs are consistent with standards that

SEE CHOP-CHOP, CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



LIBRARY, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

floors 2 through 5A that make up the Pollack and Gottesman libraries, began in 1968 and concluded in 1969. After many years of the original library serving its function as the academic hub of the Wilf Campus, work began in early 2015 towards modernizing the look of the Pollack Library (floors 2, 2A, 3, and 3A) as well as the lowest floor of the Gottesman Library (floor 4), and turning them into more effective studying spaces.



That project was also generously sponsored by David and Ruth Gottesman, and was completed in November 2015. Although at that point only part of the library underwent renovations, the administration knew that they would get back to the remaining library floors soon.

Earlier this year, a project team consisting of Dr. Glassman, Head Librarian of Hebraica-Judaica Leah Adler, Director of Administrative Services Joseph Cook; and architects Ran Oron and James Driscoll of the architecture design firm ROART (the same firm that headed the 2015 renovations) met to begin planning how to go about improving the fifth floor. After several weeks of discussion, the team proposed a diagram of how the layout of the floors will look. This diagram has been altered numerous times since it was originally proposed; as of press time, no conclusion has been reached on exactly what the renovations will look like. (*The Commentator* is in touch with the project team, and hopes to publicize the floor plan for our readers to see as soon as it is finalized.)

Part of the reason that coming up with the exact plan for the new design of floors 5 and 5A is taking some time is the nature of the Gottesman Library. "We feel that the Gottesman Library is the Hebraica/Judaica library of record in the Northeast, if not the entire United States," said Dr. Glassman, "and we believe that it contains a comprehensive account of Jewish scholarship." As such, the team commissioned studies from two outside consultants to guide them in how to manage the collections in light of the renovations and how to create the optimal research library. Whereas in the previous renovation project of the library's lower floors many of the bookshelves were cleared out and many of the books were either removed entirely or relocated to the library's basement to create more study spaces, this renovation has a different set of goals; to preserve the integrity and prestige of the Gottesman library, most of the collections will not be moved from their current locations. One set of the Gottesman collection that will be relocated is the periodicals, which will be moved up to the 6th floor of the library. While the library's 6th floor cannot be accessed by elevator, it can be reached

by the stairs and will be used as storage space for any books that are moved in order to keep them close to where they might be needed.

While not all of the details of the new-look library are known, some of the planned changes have already been agreed upon. A row of windows much like those on floors 2 and 4 will replace some of the harsh brick wall that currently faces Amsterdam Avenue on floor 5, which will provide additional natural light to the room. New couches will be placed on the floor and the current tables will be refinished and reoriented to give the furniture on the floor a new look, and new carpeting will be added for the whole floor. Additionally, efforts will be made to create more visual communication between floors 5 and 5A. At least two group study rooms as well as one seminar room will appear on the floors. The restrooms will be upgraded and a women's restroom will be added. Updated LED lighting will bring much brightness to the floor that has a reputation of having a gloomy aura due to its poor lighting. The printer stations will be consolidated and will appear in one designated area on floor 5. New copiers will be added, all integrated with the new Pharos software.

Unfortunately, one problem that exists on these floors that the renovations will not be able to solve is the tendency of the floors to be rather sultry. As Dr. Glassman keenly explained, "Heat rises. If you would like to be cool, go to a lower floor. There is no way for us to get around that problem".

While the team is committed to working diligently over the summer and to sticking to a strict timetable to have the library ready for the beginning of the fall semester, Dr. Glassman acknowledged that there is always a chance of things getting delayed in the process. "With architectural projects, we have to allow for unforeseen conditions that might alter the timetable of the project," he said, "especially when we are working on an existing building." Nevertheless, Dr. Glassman said that he would make sure to keep the student body updated if the completion date of the project were to change.

Stu Halpern and Ari Lamm Join Rabbi Berman's Presidential Transition Team

By Doron Levine

President-Elect Rabbi Ari Berman has recruited personnel to facilitate his transition into the YU presidency. As of March 1, Dr. Stu Halpern has been



Stu Halpern

serving as Rabbi Berman's Transition Chief of Staff, responsible for coordinating the Office of the President-Elect. He oversees Rabbi Berman's schedule, and will arrange a wide range of meetings with the university's various stakeholders over the next few months.

Dr. Halpern holds a Masters

in Psychology in Education from Columbia Teachers College, a Masters in Bible from Revel, an MBA in Nonprofit Management from Touro, and an EdD from Azrieli. Prior to becoming Transition Chief of Staff, Dr. Halpern held a number of positions within YU. He served as Assistant Director of YU's Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, the Assistant Director of Community Outreach and Student Activities of the Bernard Revel Graduate School, and the Deputy Managing Editor of YU Press. Halpern told The Commentator that he "put those positions on pause" when he assumed his current role.

Also beginning March 1, Ari Lamm has been serving as Advisor to the President-Elect for Research and Strategy. A graduate of YU, Lamm received a Fulbright Scholarship to complete a Masters in Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College London. He completed his semicha at RIETS and pursuing a PhD in the religions of Mediterranean antiquity at Princeton University. He also currently serves as Resident Scholar at the Jewish Center of Manhattan's Upper West Side, the synagogue that previously saw President-Elect Rabbi Berman serve as its Rabbi. According to Transition Chief of Staff Halpern, Lamm "is assisting Rabbi Berman on a number of fronts, includ-

ing exploring new initiatives."

Rabbi Berman officially began his transition into the YU Presidency on March 1. He is currently living on the Wilf Campus, though his family remains in Neve Daniel for now while his children finish their respective school years. Though Rabbi Berman was originally slated to take over the presidency on July 1, President Joel sent out an email on March 1 announcing that Rabbi Berman will actually become president on June 5.



Ari Lamm

YU Roller Hockey Team Advances to National Championship

By Ben Strachman

The YU Roller Hockey team has advanced to the national championships, the National Collegiate Roller Hockey Association announced on Monday, March 6.

"From day one our goal was to make it to the national tournament," said Yoseph Robin, who plays goalie for the team. "To get the recognition we know we deserve means so much and it's an unbelievable feeling to get to this point. It's been a long road to get here and our next step is to win the whole thing."

The team finished the regular season with a 15-2 record, tying for second place in the Division 2 Eastern league with Northeastern University, which was not invited to the championships. The team will compete against nineteen other teams in Fort Myers, Florida from April 5 through 9.

"We know we didn't exactly show up during the regionals championship weekend but we're excited that the league is giving us another chance to prove to everyone why we were one of the best teams all season long," said team forward Etan Bardash.

The invitation to the championship is the latest episode in the team's meteoric rise since its founding last season. After being placed in Division 4 and winning the division championship last season, the team rose this year to Division 2. The team's unexpected success was featured last month in a New York Times article outlining the challenge and motivation that religious life offers the team.

"We are so excited to be able to continue making a *kiddush Hashem* as well as bring pride to the school and community," team captain Amir Gavarin said. "We have around a month to really bear down and work hard in preparation for the national tournament, where we will have to play elite teams from across the country. It won't be easy but we plan on making our mark."



CHOP-CHOP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

the OU has in its programs."

Yeshiva University was quiet on the matter. Joseph Cook, the YU Director of Administrative Services, stated that "this is currently being worked out between our certification company, the OU, and Chop Chop. We hope to see it resolved very soon." Neither the staff of Chop nor the Va'ad of Riverdale could be reached for comment at the time.

YU students, however, were more outspoken. Many of the comments on the initial Facebook post expressed sympathy for Chop Chop and confusion as to why this

had happened at all.

Furthermore, with the lack of communication from YU and from Chop Chop, many students believe that this entire situation had more to do with profits than with "standards." Zev Behar, a senior in YC, expressed sympathy for Chop Chop and its owner, saying that "from the outside, it seems like YU is trying to strongarm Chop Chop into switching to the OU, which would cost significantly more than what they pay to be certified by the Va'ad of Riverdale and they are holding their meal plans as ransom, which for Chop Chop I think is nearly 40% of their income." Aaron Kirshtein echoed this feeling: "As a YU student, it upsets me that YU seems to

be penny-pinching other kashrut organizations. I feel the Va'ad of Riverdale is a legitimate kashrut [organization]."

Rabbi Elephant, however, stressed that this situation was simply about kashrut standards. "We need to make sure that everything sold at YU meets YU standards... We don't have a crisis on our hands here. It's kosher food."

But now it appears that the crisis is over. When asked for a final comment about this ordeal, Chan simply responded, with his characteristic piety, "I feel blessed from Hashem. Baruch Hashem."

Completion of 185th Street Plaza Renovation, Years In The Making, Delayed

By Ben Strachman

Completion of the construction on West 185th Street is being delayed due to energy company Con Edison, a spokesperson for the project said.

Shavone Williams, Public Information Officer for the NYC Department of Design and Construction, stated that while the renovations were originally expected to be completed by the summer, the finish date has been pushed off to the fall. She said that although the underground construction was an expected part of the renovations, working around energy company Con Edison's work schedule has delayed the project.

"We expected that there was going to be [gas pipe and electrical conduit replacement] anyway, it's just that that type of work has to be taken off by Con Edison. It could have just been one of those things where their schedule towards [the expected completion date] prohibits them from starting the work at a certain time or finishing by a certain time. We have to work around them, and we can't start our part until they're finished. We're hoping, weather permitting, that they will finish their portion this month."

After Con Edison completes their work, students will begin to see improvements on the street, most of which will be finished by the summer. According to Joseph Cook, Executive Director for University Operations, "It'll all be done by summer of 2017, except for the planting. They've gotten so far behind that they're going to miss the spring planting, so the actual planting of all the shrubs, flowers, [and other plants] will be done in summer 2017."

Ms. Williams noted that the complexity of the project arose from the intersection of separate plans that

ultimately combined into the current construction on 185th. The NYC Department of Transportation requested years ago that the underground water mains on the street be replaced. When the plans to create a plaza on

"IT'LL ALL BE DONE BY SUMMER OF 2017, EXCEPT FOR THE PLANTING. THEY'VE GOTTEN SO FAR BEHIND THAT THEY'RE GOING TO MISS THE SPRING PLANTING."

-JOSEPH COOK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR UNIVERSITY OPERATIONS

185th began, the Department of Design and Construction included that work in the current project, and Triumph Construction won the contract to renovate the plaza and replace the water mains. Before any plaza or water work could take place, however, Con Edison needed to move and replace gas and electric lines.

After construction workers began replacing pipes on 185th Street and the project remained relatively inactive over the winter, the lack of information has left many YU students confused.

"I don't know much about the current state of the

construction other than what I've seen on the signs and posters with the picture-perfect depiction of the future plaza, which are up around YU," said Avi Hirsch, a Yeshiva College Sophomore. "While I've heard people mention that the underground work involves fixing the pipes, I haven't been informed of the details."

According to Mr. Cook, the completion of the plaza represents the culmination of a project planned for years.

"The plaza renovations were started by Jeffrey Rosengarten, the Vice President for Support Services, probably 20 years ago. Over time, [185th Street] was slowly closed, restricted, and at the same time they went into a fund raising mode, so the university in effect reached out to all different government agencies, and found funding in the city [government]. They found some funding to slowly do this, and this was a very long process."

After Mr. Rosengarten's application to have 185th street included in the city's pedestrian plaza project was rejected in 2008, the university tried again in 2011, this time willing to contribute money to the project. In the end, according to Ms. Williams, part of the funding for the \$3.6 million project "came from Council member Rodriguez, Comptroller Scott Stringer while he was still Manhattan Borough President, and the Department of Transportation." Mr. Cook confirmed that YU did not pay for the current round of renovations at all.

When asked whether there are currently any plans to block off more of Amsterdam Avenue, Mr. Cook stated that while the city doesn't allow avenues to be closed off to traffic entirely, the part of the street that is currently blocked off will also be renovated and resurfaced as part of the current renovations.



MOODY'S, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

operations.” The rating service explained that this change also reflects their “expectation that continued operational improvements will reduce the pace at which the university uses liquid reserves to fund structural cash deficits.”

The news was not all positive, though, as an affirmation of YU’s B3 rating reflects continued high credit risk. A B3 junk rating on a bond means that the bond is non-investment, speculative grade. This rating significantly affects Yeshiva’s ability to borrow more money.

The reaffirmed B3 rating, according to Moody’s, is based on YU’s “very weak fiscal and operational condition.” Though the outlook is now stable, negative but improving cash flow is expected to continue as YU “continues to adjust its business model and right size operations.” Moody’s also referenced challenges specific to YU’s mission, explaining that the B3 rating “also reflects challenges associated with growing revenue in a highly competitive market with a narrow undergraduate student focus.”

The decline in YU’s bonds began in April 2009 when Moody’s downgraded YU bonds from Aa2 to Aa3, assigning them a negative outlook. The slide continued over the next few years until, on March 5, 2014, Moody’s downgraded YU’s bond rating from B1 to B3 and reaffirmed the negative outlook, attributing

the downgrade to “extremely thin and unstable unrestricted liquidity, with significant reliance on external facilities.” Cash and liquid investments were scarce at the time – according to Moody’s, as of fiscal year-end 2013, unrestricted cash and investments that could be liquidated within one month covered only ninety-one days of expenses. YU’s endowment

“THE NOW SUFFICIENT LEVEL OF UNRESTRICTED LIQUIDITY IS A STABILIZING FACTOR DURING A HIGHLY TRANSITIONAL PERIOD, WITH A NEW PRESIDENT SCHEDULED TO JOIN THE UNIVERSITY PRIOR TO THE START OF ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-2018.”

-MOODY’S

was therefore in danger, with increasingly severe operating deficits requiring YU to draw heavily from its endowment in order to cover daily expenses.

More recently, on February 9, 2016, Moody’s reaffirmed YU’s B3 rating and negative outlook,

citing factors that could lead to an upgrade, such as “substantial improvement in unrestricted liquidity” and “progress towards balanced operating performance.”

This upgrade from “negative” to “stable” comes shortly after the departure of three of Yeshiva’s senior fundraisers: Seth Moskowitz, Alan Secter, and Howard Charish. Fundraising is one of YU’s principal means of increasing available cash.

On December 12th, Seth Moskowitz, the chief administrator of YU’s fundraising office, abruptly vacated his position of Vice President of Institutional Advancement. His departure came the morning after the Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation, YU’s biggest annual fundraising event. Secter and Charish have also recently departed -- the former to work at another nonprofit organization, and the latter to retirement. The university has yet to replace any of these fundraisers; for the time being, President Richard Joel is personally overseeing Institutional Advancement until he steps down on June 5.

The credit rating update also came the day before President-Elect Rabbi Ari Berman began his transition into the YU presidency. On Wednesday, March 1, Rabbi Berman assumed a temporary residence in Washington Heights and officially joined YU’s payroll. In their report, Moody’s directly referenced this transition in leadership, pointing out that “the now sufficient level of unrestricted liquidity is a stabilizing factor during a highly transitional period, with a new president scheduled to join the university prior to the start of academic year 2017-2018.”

President-Elect Rabbi Berman’s background is not in financial management, leading many to note that, judging by his history and background, he looks to be a different sort of presidential figure from Current President Richard Joel. Rabbi Berman is an ordained rabbi with a doctorate in Jewish thought and little experience with financial management, while President Joel is a layman who, before he became president of YU, served as Associate Dean of Cardozo School of Law and President of Hillel. In an interview with *The Commentator*, Rabbi Berman affirmed the importance of strengthening YU’s financial situation, but noted that finances and values are inextricably linked at YU. “If we don’t have clarity,” he explained, “if we don’t explain how our Torah is translated into the world around us, we’re not going to get the means either. We need to explain the value of YU today if we want increase enrollment and if we want to broaden our donor base.”



President-Elect Berman Begins Transition into Presidency

By Lilly Gelman

President-Elect Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman officially began his transition into the YU presidency on Wednesday, March 1. Since that date, Rabbi Berman has been residing in the Morgenstern Residence Hall on the Wilf Campus in Washington Heights. He occupies a recently-vacated office in Belfer Hall and has been placed on Yeshiva University’s payroll.

Rabbi Berman was voted in as the fifth president of YU by the Board of Trustees on November 15, 2016. In a recent article, *The Commentator* reported that “Rabbi Berman will take over on July 1 and President Joel will be in charge until then. In the interim, Rabbi Berman will be traveling back and forth between Israel and America, but as time goes on he will become increasingly more of a presence on campus.”

This transition looks to be similar to President Richard Joel’s transition. After his election in December 2002, President Joel spent two or three days a week on the YU campuses, using the rest of his time to finish up his duties as president of Hillel International in Washington, DC. The length and frequency of Rabbi Berman’s visits during the next few months are still unclear.

Though Rabbi Berman was originally slated to take over the presidency on July 1, President Joel sent out an email on March 1 announcing that Rabbi Berman will actually become president on June 5. When he becomes President of YU, Rabbi Berman will leave his current teaching position at Machon Herzog, a teachers college

in Alon Shvut, and will step down as head of the Jewish Heritage Center in Jerusalem.

In an interview with *The Commentator*, Rabbi Berman discussed the importance of clarifying YU’s values along with strengthening its financial situation: “If we

don’t have clarity, if we don’t explain how our Torah is translated into the world around us, we’re not going to get the means either. We need to explain the value of YU today if we want increase enrollment and if we want to broaden our donor base.”



Westboro Baptist Church to Protest Yeshiva University

By Judah Stiefel

After protesting recently at Shalhevet High School in LA, The Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) set its sights on YU. In a press release, the church announced that the "God Hates Your Idols Preaching Tour" will stop at Yeshiva University "in religious protest and warning" on the morning of March 27. The small group, based in Topeka, Kansas, is infamous for its inflammatory protests and spiteful beliefs.

Westboro's beef with YU seems to be on two different counts: killing Jesus Christ and spreading the "soul damning" (sic) lie of "It's okay to be gay." Westboro chose to picket YU in particular because the latter "encapsulates the perverse state of both modern Judaism and the american university system" (sic), the press release said.

On the accusation of killing Jesus, a spokesperson for Westboro said the church seeks a statement from YU administrators including a confession that "our ancestors killed the Lord Jesus Christ and His blood is on our hands, we mourn for Him whom we have pierced, we repent, and we believe in Jesus Christ as our Messiah." Short of that, the spokesperson said, "I'm not really interested in the [YU administrators'] response."

Westboro does not see its protest as anti-semitic. "You're not beyond rebuke just because you're a Jew, and just because someone rebukes you doesn't make him an anti-Semite," a spokesperson for the church said. "If it did, then Jesus Christ (a Jew) and Paul (a Jew) would both be anti-Semites."

Westboro was unphased that some of Yeshiva's leaders have been criticized for voicing conservative opinions on homosexuality. "What difference does it make if 'some' of the leaders of the university oppose homosexuality?" a spokesperson for the church asked a Commentator journalist rhetorically. "The zeitgeist among the student body is to support [homosexuality]."

In a March 10 tweet, WBC showed a developing nuance in the theology of their protest slogans. "We AREN'T bringing our 'God Hates Jews' sign on March 27th," the

tweet said. A video attached to the tweet showed a WBC member flaunting a sign with a more qualified text: "God hates Christ-rejecting apostate Jews."

Westboro said it expects "probably 10 at most" from the church to protest YU, including "one or more" church elders. A spokesperson said the church may also protest at the Beren Campus, but initially chose the Wilf campus due to minor logistical considerations.

Various response strategies have emerged from Yeshiva University. An email signed by Senior Vice President Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph and Vice President for University and Community Life Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander stated that the administration is aware of the protest by WBC. "As both a Yeshiva and a University committed to the nobility of people, YU firmly rejects the group's vile message of intolerance and hatred," the message read. The email further stated that the group will not be allowed onto YU property and that campus security will be working with the NYPD to ensure public safety. The email emphasizes that students should not engage WBC during its visit.

In what might be seen as opposition to the administration's request to not engage the protestors, Asher Lovy and YU student James Alavosus, are organizing a student response in which counter-protesters are encouraged to bring their "funniest, dankest signs, flags, and t shirts, and just have a good time." They expect 20 to 30 students, possibly more, to attend. A Facebook event page has 61 people listed as "going" and over 200 as "interested." Alavosus said he wants to send a message to the group that, "being accepting of LGBT+ people isn't a novel concept." He would like the WBC to understand that everyone should be treated equally and with decency. The message of the student response is not intended solely for the Westboro Baptist Church but for the greater YU community: to proclaim that acceptance for all will continue to be defended.

Asher Lovy points out that though the Westboro Baptist Church is simply a fringe group, "there will be people who see it and will be hurt by the message... when the WBC shows up they should see the hate countered with love and

levity." Lovy also points out that it will still be the month of Adar, and this is an excellent excuse to have a good time.

"Part of me really wants to get into the face of these bigots, part of me doesn't want to be anywhere near them, part of me wants to make sure I don't stoop down to anywhere near their level, and the last part of me wants to be in morning seder," Lovy said. One student joked about calling the Na-Nach Breslov headquarters to inform them of the upcoming WBC protest and request that a Na-Nach van be sent to YU the day of the protest to blast Jewish music and lead some dancing.

The WBC is known first and foremost for its anti-gay protests. Founded in 1955 by pastor Fred Phelps, the self-proclaimed Christian church consists of family lawyers who profit from suing the groups they provoke. The group is monitored constantly by the Anti-Defamation league and has been branded a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Phelps, who died in 2014, was disbarred from practicing law in Kansas in 1979 for what the Kansas Supreme Court called "a lack of ethics."

The membership of the church includes nine of Phelps's thirteen children, his grandchildren, and a handful of other families. Nearly the entirety of the church's 100-person membership is related to Phelps. In 1993-1994, a number of Phelps' estranged children claimed that their father no longer maintained his religious beliefs, and that the WBC "serves rather to sate Phelps' addiction to hatred."

The WBC's current "preaching tour" includes stops at a Miranda Lambert concert in Wichita, KS on March 10, an Ariana Grande concert in Kansas City on March 18th, and a trio of Baptist, Methodist, and Catholic Churches on the 19th. They then plan to stop at the White House on the 25th and, "warn Donald Trump that it unlawful for him to have Melania when he has Marla, his first and only wife." A Church spokesman explained to *The Commentator* that the group expects not to change anyone's minds through its protests, but rather "to preach, and let the Holy Spirit change hearts if He will."



Wilf and Beren Student Council Budgets, By the Numbers

By Avi Strauss

Student councils are responsible for a wide range of campus activities throughout the year, aimed at appealing to the sizeable and broad undergraduate student population at Yeshiva University. However, with seven different councils on two campuses, the process of allocating and utilizing student council funds is more complex than simply dipping into a supply of money and spending it on club requests and programming.

Student council money is used to sponsor and fund a variety of campus activities, including large scale events like Chanukafest, Yom Hazikaron commemorations and Yom Ha'atzmaut festivities, several Chagigas, and the Syms dinner, as well as day-to-day club affairs and other smaller events.

Each council, primarily the president, determines based on the size and significance of any given event, as well as the event's relevance to that specific council, how much money should be allotted for its programming.

Councils work closely with the Office of Student Life (OSL) to navigate the spending process, since student council leaders do not always have the benefit of being involved in the budgeting process from year to year.

Stern Student Council President Lizzi Peled reflected: "Throughout the year, the OSL helps us ensure that we budget money for the various large events we run. They show us how much was spent on the events last year, and use feedback from how they went to help determine what we should invest in this year."

Funds for the councils are provided directly by the \$150 "activity fee" (\$75 per semester) matriculated students are charged at the beginning of the year. Activity fees paid by students at the Wilf campus go to the pool of money for the Wilf student councils (YSU, SOY, YCSA, SYMS) and activity fees paid by students at the Beren campus go to the Beren student councils (SCWSC, TAC, SYMS). This ensures that funding between campuses is equally and fairly distributed.

The entirety of this money is channelled into the student council budgets, with funding for Office of Student Life salaries, and non-student council events and activities coming from separate university funds.

On the Beren campus, funding for the three student councils are divided as follows: SCWSC receives 52%, TAC receives 38% and Syms-Beren, 10%. In the Fall of 2015, the most recent year in which student populations are available, this amounted to \$74,412 for SCWSC, \$54,378 for TAC and \$14,310 for Syms-Beren, for a total of \$143,100.

According to the Office of Student Life at Beren, these percentages are based on an outline in the Beren student constitution, and were determined back in 1995. The Commentator was unable to retrieve a copy of a Beren constitution with such a clause as of printing.

These percentages have not changed since then, despite some minor fluctuations in student enrollment in either undergraduate college on the Beren campus. Based on available data, from Fall 2012 to Fall 2015, Syms-Beren saw an increase of 47 students (an increase of about 50%) to 138, while Stern College decreased to 816 students, from 968.

The budgeting on Wilf is slightly more complicated, with some allotments changing from semester to semester based on student enrollment in Yeshiva College and Syms-Wilf.

According to Director of Student Life on the Wilf Campus Rabbi Josh Weisberg and OSL Director of Events Ms. Linda Stone, this is based on a contract, signed by the Wilf Student Council presidents in the year 2012-2013, whereby the council presidencies were consolidated to four, from seven. A copy of this contract was presented to The Commentator as part of this investigation.

When asked about the origins of the agreement, newly-minted musmach and 2012-2013 SOY President Gabi Weinberg (YC '13 Revel '15 RIETS '17) explained: "The document was created after an effort was made by student leaders to get a clear breakdown of how the student activities fee was disbursed among the student councils. We hoped this would lay the groundwork for clearer communication of the budget of different councils for the future."

Additionally, this agreement restructured the morning programs' representation, giving each morning program

its own vice president (as opposed to its own president) in a greater morning program council with a singular SOY president and vice president, which, as per the student constitution, come from the most highly populated morning program. From then until now, the Mazer Yeshiva Program has been the most populous.

According to Rabbi Weisberg, the Wilf campus presidents have yet to insist on reorganizing the breakdown created in 2012.

In Fall 2015, with 1,205 students on the Wilf campus, there was \$180,750 in total Wilf student council funds via the activity fee. Yeshiva college enrollees totalled 654, while 551 students were registered for Syms-Wilf. These numbers have approached parity this year, with a five year, semester-over-semester increase in Syms-Wilf students. In 2012, Syms-Wilf had just 334 students compared to Yeshiva College's 800.

As per the Wilf council contract, thirty percent of the Wilf student council funds are allotted for YC and Syms-Wilf, and they are split based on student population in each school at the beginning of each semester. Of that designated percentage, 54.27% went to YCSA (or 16.28% of the total) and 45.73% go to Syms-Wilf (13.72% of total). In the Fall of 2015, this amounted to \$29,426 and \$24,799, respectively.

This breakdown likely altered slightly at the turn of the semester mid-year, with students graduating in January and first-time students beginning their undergraduate study in either school in the spring. The current percentage breakdown between the two men's undergraduate programs is 51.35% for YCSA and 48.65% for Syms-Wilf.

In reference to this method for dividing funds, YCSA President Tzvi Levitin said "It makes sense that our budgets are split by student breakdown because our budgets are for mutually exclusive groups of students." He continued to say "nonetheless, Akiva (Syms-Wilf president) and I coordinate on funding and planning larger events and contribute what we think is appropriate on a case by case basis."

The remaining 70% of Wilf funds are divided on an annual basis, with 42% going to YSU (\$75,915) and 28% going to SOY (\$50,610).

Although councils may not exceed their budget for any given semester, there are a variety of other means in which councils (and individual clubs) secure funding for large and important events. Both the Office of Student Life and the Dean of Student Life, Dean Nissel, have departmental discretionary funds that they can allocate to events that are broad and aimed at the undergraduate student body as a whole.

According to Nissel, it is in the interest of these various offices on campus to "create a robust campus experience" and ensure a wide variety of large and small-scale events for a diverse student body.

Other offices on campus, like Vice President Rabbi Brander's department for University and Communal life and the Office of the Provost, can kick in funds as well for events related to those departments' missions. For instance, The Office of the Provost contributed some of the funds necessary for the first ever TEDx event last Fall.

Any funds not used by the individual councils by the end of the academic year roll over into the accounts of that specific council for the following year. Although he didn't go into further detail, Rabbi Weisberg stated that all 7 councils began the year with anywhere from several hundred to several thousand dollars, respectively, in roll-over funds, which they were free to use at their discretion.

When looking at the varying percentage allotments,

it is important to consider the considerable coordination that takes place between the councils, which co-sponsor nearly all large scale events and work together when planning them. In this regard, the presidents and the Office of Student Life work together to ensure every council contributes in an appropriate and responsible way.

Some of the differences between intra-campus and intercampus funding, however, can be parsed based on the responsibilities and constituencies of each individual student council.

For instance, SCWSC, TAC, YSU and SOY all represent the entirety of their respective campuses' populations, necessitating more funding for larger programming and a higher volume of clubs, while YCSA and the two Syms student councils represent only select portions of the student body.

The fact that SOY benefits at times from the presence of RIETS and coordinates programming with the rabbinical seminary could explain why it is allotted a smaller share of its campus pie than TAC is at Beren.

When analyzing the numbers in this way, there is only one particularly glaring discrepancy--namely that the Syms-Beren student council is allotted nearly two and a half times as much money as the Syms-Wilf council on a per capita basis. Based on Fall 2015 enrollment numbers and the current Syms-Wilf percentage split of the total Wilf budget, Syms-Beren council represents around 150 students, while Syms-Wilf council represents around 580 students.

However, even this discrepancy doesn't tell the whole story. Of all the councils, the Syms student councils coordinate the most closely, investing a large share of



their resources in the Syms dinner, which is a joint event open to men and women. Similarly, out of all the councils, the two Syms councils share nearly all over their clubs--a higher percentage of sharing than any other two councils.

When asked why the Syms-Beren budget didn't more accurately reflect the breakdown of student enrollment on the Beren campus, Beren Program Director Tami Adelson stressed that every council needs a minimum amount of money to effectively sustain quality programming throughout the year. In this regard, she noted, the percentage floor set for the Syms-Beren council ensures they have sufficient funds to contribute to joint student council programming, and provide essential business oriented clubs for future Beren students that may be interested.

As far as the question of whether or not the current allotment system is working effectively, according to a recent survey conducted by the Office of Student Life, 70% of student respondents believe the number of events on campus is "just right." Just 17% answered that there were "too many" events, while the remaining 13% responded that there were "too few."

Dean Nissel was more than satisfied by that overwhelming response, although he stressed there is always room for improvement in bringing new and innovative events to an ever-changing student body.

Joint Meeting Convened between Deans of YC, Syms to Discuss Solutions to Troubling State of Academic Integrity in YU

By Judah Stiefel

Last semester, several reports were filed to professors in which Yeshiva College students alleged witnessing their fellow students cheat on midterms.

Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate Arts and Sciences, said, "steps are being taken to rework the university's policy towards cheating." These steps have so far involved a meeting between the deans of YC and Syms and the creation of a student-run academic integrity committee. "We are looking for changes to be student-initiated," commented Dean Bacon.



Following multiple reports of cheating on midterms in the Fall 2016 semester, Associate Dean of Yeshiva College Dr. Fred Sugarman, as well as Dr. Sumanta Goswami, chair of the Biology Department, spoke in many of the science classes about the importance of academic integrity and the university's intolerance for cheating. The administration felt that this was necessary following a semester in which, in the biology department alone, cheating was reported in Biology Principles, Cell Biology, and even, ironically, in a Bioethics course.

Dovid Simpser, Vice Chair of the Syms Academic Integrity Committee, reported that in a recent survey taken by the committee that surveyed more than 200 students, many students claimed that they "feel the need to cheat," and also admitted that most cheating happens before the test. This problem evidently spans the different colleges on the Wilf Campus.

Mr. Simpser outlined the root causes for cheating in YU. He referred to the university's historically laissez-faire attitude towards violators of the academic integrity policies, as well as a lack of sufficient safeguards in the nature of testing environments and test formats to deter borderline offenders from deciding to cheat. Tzvi Levitin, a member of the newly formed student academic integrity committee, suggested, "[For many students,] sciences are

about getting a degree, checking off boxes, and moving on. If students valued their education more they are more likely to learn and not to cheat."

Dean Sugarman maintains that no teacher has reported cheating to him in years. An anonymous student commented, "It has become rather common knowledge to students that test banks and copies of old tests exist for many classes, and there seem to be many reports of good old-fashioned answer copying on exams as well." While students who use test banks might think that they have found a loophole which guarantees their academic success, it is in fact the consensus of the deans that the use of test banks, without the professor's knowledge of their existence, is a violation of trust. It is extremely difficult for students to refrain from using test banks when they believe that it is a pathway to good grades and many of their classmates may be using them as well.

Dean Bacon said that professors are responsible to update their tests each year. Dean Jacobson pointed out that, while this is the official policy of the university, and the policy is periodically reminded to professors, policing tenured professors on this issue is extremely difficult. "Many of the older professors don't even use e-mail," Dean Jacobson said. "How can the administration manage to force them to change their tests?"

At the joint deans meeting, a motion was made to find practical solutions to these problems of academic dishonesty. According to Dean Sugarman, several attractive suggestions were considered at the meeting, including changing midterm settings to resemble the more rigorous finals atmosphere. The difficulty of supervising tests in a lecture hall setting make midterms a breeding ground for academic dishonesty. The deans also discussed implementing new software programs to scramble test questions and answers.

Beyond these changes to testing conditions, it was also suggested at the meeting that an overhaul of the academic integrity code may be needed to set less severe consequences for cheating so that offenses, including cheating on quizzes, do not go unpunished. The administration has assembled a delegation of student leaders to provide perspectives and possible solutions to the current atmosphere of non-integrity. A meeting between these students and the deans is pending.

Harsher punishments for cheating might correlate with fewer reports of cheating. "[President Joel] came to a meeting and said that plagiarism should equal expulsion. Since then, guess how many cheatings have been reported," said Dean Jacobson rhetorically, implying that the answer was zero. Dean Jacobson and Dean Bacon both advocated for a "two strike" system which they suggest will encourage professors and students to report cheating due to the fact that the punishment is less severe. Yeshiva College Dean Karen Bacon suggested that a possible cause for this pseudo-honor code among

students is due to the fact that a student or teacher might react to witnessing an act of cheating by placing themselves in the shoes of the cheating student and decide that the consequences are too harsh for them to report the student. The compassionate witness may realize that the cheating student may have a problem, and also that reporting the student may help them; however, their empathy for the student may stand in the way of their following the protocols for academic integrity.

Dean Bacon said that beyond the moral implications, there are reputational considerations which are relevant when discussing cheating. Undergraduate programs are judged by graduate schools and employers based on the

"THE ADMINISTRATION HAS ASSEMBLED A DELEGATION OF STUDENT LEADERS TO PROVIDE PERSPECTIVES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO THE CURRENT ATMOSPHERE OF NON-INTEGRITY."

success of past alumni. Should students of YU learn to cut corners rather than earn their grades, they will not necessarily be up for the challenges of graduate school or employment. Turning out flawed students hurts the reputation of future graduates of the university. Dean Bacon added to this that "students should be looking to do what they are good at. If they are so stressed that they feel the need to cheat to get by, it shouldn't be the field for them." Eventually, when cheating is no longer possible, a student may discover that they have waded into water too deep and they are not able to swim.

Dean Bacon emphasized that there is a difference between mastery and performance. The goal of students should not be to simply acquire a strong grade in a course but rather to acquire the material. This important notion is now being passed on to the students. After speeches from Dean Sugarman and Professor Goswami, Biology Professor Somdeb Mitra emphasized to his class that "grades do not equal success. The purpose of test-taking is to improve one's critical thinking skills." Professor Mitra later emphasized that class settings are more effective in a collaborative style rather than a competitive style. Along these lines, Dean Bacon suggested that the best approach to these issues might just be fostering an atmosphere where integrity and mutual respect is the norm.

Howard Charish Retires as Third Institutional Advancement Officer Departs YU

By David Rubinstein

Howard Charish retired from his position as YU's senior philanthropic advisor on February 28. Mr. Charish is the third member of the Office of Institutional Advancement to leave YU in the recent months.

Mr. Charish, who has worked as a Jewish community professional for over 40 years, joined Yeshiva University in March 2016 after serving as chief development officer at

"MR. CHARISH IS THE THIRD MEMBER OF THE OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT TO LEAVE YU IN THE RECENT MONTHS."

American Friends of Bar-Ilan University.

"It has been a privilege to be associated with Yeshiva University and to have interacted with numerous individuals of talent, commitment and goodness," Mr. Charish said. "I have been blessed to have spent my entire career working in the Jewish community."

When Mr. Charish joined Yeshiva, then-Vice President of Institutional Advancement Seth Moskowitz said that Mr. Charish, "is a gifted fundraiser, and his tenure in all his positions was marked by strong campaign and community growth."

With Mr. Charish's departure, YU will lose yet another critical leader of its fundraising team. On December 12th, Mr. Moskowitz, the chief administrator of YU's fundraising office, abruptly vacated his position. His departure came the morning after the Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation, YU's biggest annual fundraising event. Alan Seter, Executive Director of Annual Giving and Major Gifts, stepped down on February 24. He joined OHEL Children's Home and Family Services as their Chief Development Officer.

The university has yet to replace Mr. Moskowitz; for the time being, President Richard Joel is personally overseeing Institutional Advancement until he steps down on June 5.



From the President's Desk: SCWSC – What's In a Name?

By Lizzi Peled

“Are you coming to YU tonight?”
 “I’m at Stern so yes....”
 “No, I mean the Heights. YU.”

I understand why students call the Wilf Campus “YU.” The campus holds Yeshiva College, Sy Syms Wilf, a majority of the administration, the main university library, the Roshei Yeshiva, and a few of YU’s graduate schools. But the language becomes a problem when people start referring to the two campuses as “YU and Stern.” First of all, it excludes Syms Beren, a smaller but equally important part of the Beren community. But doing so also marginalizes the Beren Campus as a whole and contributes to the sentiment on campus that the men of Yeshiva University are more important than the women of Yeshiva University.

As President of the Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC), I have seen the frustration among

“IT’S SOMETHING SO MINUTE THAT MOST PEOPLE, STUDENTS AND NON-STUDENTS, DON’T EVEN REALIZE ITS IMPLICATION.”

students who feel as if they are second-class citizens at YU. Most coed events are held uptown, the offices of the YU President, deans, and administrators exist primarily on the Wilf campus, and the resources for school-wide promotions such as “I Am YU” are skewed heavily toward Wilf. These and related complaints are valid, but it is also true that these realities are often a part of Yeshiva University for sensible reasons. Many clubs like to hold events at Wilf so they don’t have to worry about losing men attendees due to the male students’ late schedules and because Wilf has larger event spaces. Food prices are less expensive uptown as well, so it does sometimes make sense to prefer Wilf as a host site. Additionally, while I would love to see more administrators downtown, I understand that a university functions more effectively when the administration works in one area. As Wilf holds most

of the schools within Yeshiva University, I can come to terms with traveling uptown if I want to speak to the university President, a privilege I recognize I might not have at all at a different university.

Many of these factors of Stern’s disconnectedness are inherent, no one’s fault, per se. But these factors do exist, and they make the seemingly trivial matter of referring to the two campuses as “YU and Stern” so important. Beren students already deal with reduced access to YU administrators, shuttling uptown to use the library with more extensive resources, and getting sidewise glances from men who seem surprised when they see Beren students using the Wilf facilities. And for the most part, we’ve learned to cope with these inconveniences and have decided that attending Yeshiva University is worth it. But calling uptown “YU” makes it seem like the Beren campus is an afterthought. That Wilf is the true Yeshiva University, and all undergraduate women are separate from the YU community. It’s something so minute that most people, students and non-students, don’t even realize its implication. I don’t think anyone intentionally refers to Wilf as YU and to Beren as Stern to indicate that Beren is second-class. No one intends to separate Stern from Yeshiva University, but in those few

words, he or she has removed Stern from the Yeshiva University umbrella.

I’ve noticed students use this word usage even when they are not attempting to differentiate between campuses. While purely my own experience, I have found that when asked where they go to school, men tend to respond “Yeshiva University” while women answer either “Stern” or “Syms.” I am not advocating one answer over the other. Still, I think the difference speaks to the fact that Beren students feel less like members of Yeshiva University than do Wilf students.

This past year, SCWSC has attempted to foster a stronger sense of community on campus, particularly for the Beren students. Part of our goal was not only to strengthen community on the downtown campus, but also to encourage students to think of the Wilf campus as their home as well. In my opinion, we still have a long way to go. A small step in the right direction would be to stop referring to Wilf and Beren as YU and Stern, respectively. Perhaps if we refer to all three undergraduate institutions at Yeshiva University as “Yeshiva University” and find a different way to distinguish between campuses (Beren and Wilf is an option), we can at least promote equality in a way that keeps inconveniences to a minimum.



Greek Life at a Jewish College?

By Elana Luban

According to Michael Lenett, a senior at YU and the current President of AEPi, the answer is yes. Not only is there nothing contradictory about being in Yeshiva University and being a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi, but in fact the two go hand in hand. “Our slogan is that AEPi breeds Jewish gentlemen -- that’s the most important part of all,” Lenett says.

AEPi is not like any other fraternity -- from the moment it was founded by Charles C. Moskowitz in 1913, its goal was to give young Jewish college men a sense of brotherhood and connection. What drove Moskowitz to change history by creating this fraternity was his experience with a New York University fraternity’s blatant anti-semitism; the frat rushed (for those who don’t know much about frats in general, “rushing” is a process which involves the interested student visiting various fraternities, meeting current members, and being interviewed) him because of his athletic success, but when he proposed that the fraternity consider some of his other Jewish friends, the brothers of the frat flatly refused.

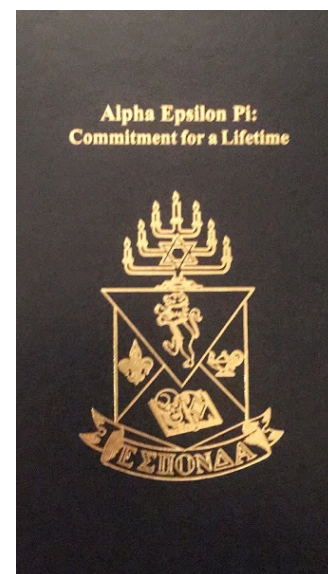
AEPi began with less than ten men, including Moskowitz and several friends, who organized the first meetings in the basement of a local eatery. The official website of Alpha Epsilon Pi, aepi.org, asks concerning Moskowitz’s endeavor, “Could this non-affluent group of young students, busy with their daytime jobs and nighttime studies, successfully launch a new fraternity when there were already seven well established groups at the School of Commerce, three of them nationals?” It could, and it did -- the young men had a point to prove and a heritage to stand up for.

Since then, AEPi has grown and spread unbelievably. Today, branches exist across the U.S. as well as in Canada, the UK, France, and Israel, and countless inspiring individuals have had the honor to say they were members -- among them Gene Wilder, Paul Simon, Mark Zuckerberg, and our current YU President Richard Joel.

Any brother at Yeshiva University’s AEPi, or at any branch for that matter, would be able to provide all of AEPi’s historical information plus countless other details with ease. Much about the Pledge and Brotherhood periods remains confidential, but knowing the roots of, and reasons for, Alpha Epsilon Pi’s establishment is an integral part of becoming a brother.

And if you thought that AEPi was *only* about hospitality and making connections with other brothers or other students at YU, you’re wrong. Alpha Epsilon Pi’s mission is to breed leaders who contribute to whichever community they find themselves in, even long after their college days are over. Even during their time as undergraduates, AEPi members are concerned with creating Jewish programming, and donating to Jewish organizations (resulting in a yearly total of more than \$1,000,000 in donations), all with the goal of creating a sense of community. One of the most striking examples is an event called “We Walk to Remember,” an AEPi tradition in which brothers meet at their chapter house and walk through the campus in a yearly march commemorating those who perished in the Holocaust.

But if you’re not a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi, don’t worry -- its doors are open and its members welcoming to everyone. Ezra Weinberger, who only found out about Alpha Epsilon Pi in his senior year at YU and is himself not a brother, says “AEPi is one of the best things that I’ve discovered since coming to YU.” When describing his experience with the fraternity, he jokes “this place is our treehouse” -- it’s a chilled-out, close-knit, home-like environment, where the connections made are real and long-lasting. AEPi President Lenett and all of AEPi invite you, whether as a member or just a student at Yeshiva University, to experience what this unique fraternity has to offer.



The cover of Yeshiva University’s copy of the Alpha Epsilon Pi Ritual Book.

SCHACHTER, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

on the laws of *berakhot*. Some of the participants react, "But we were expecting something more 'relevant...'" Instead of commenting on the religious observance of someone for whom *berakhot* are not relevant, Rav Schachter simply shifts the rest of his curriculum. The topic of the next *shiur* is the feasibility of building a *Beit Ha-Mikdash* today and offering *korbanot*.

...At a conference for the journal *Torah She-Be'Al Peh*, a speaker who was supposed to introduce for five minutes, instead speaks for nearly a half hour. In the ensuing schedule shuffle, all of the speakers are asked to curtail their remarks. None do...except Rav Schachter. He speaks for five minutes so that the audience will not be overburdened. Those, like me, who want to hear his presentation, will have to wait for the printed proceedings.

Adventures in Israel

...I accompany Rav Schachter to Mahane Yehuda in Jerusalem to purchase an *esrog* for *Sukkos*, looking forward to learning exactly how one examines *Arba Minim* to assure their *Kashrut*. Will Rav Schachter use a magnifying glass? Will he distinguish dust specks from blemishes with a tweezer? We stop at a vendor's table. Rav Schachter picks up an *esrog*: "This is a beautiful *esrog*," he exclaims. He picks up a second *esrog*: "This is also a beautiful *esrog*!" He bought the second; I bought the first.

...We are staying in the Eshkolot Hevron Hotel and Rav Schachter is asked to deliver a guest *shiur* at the local Hesder Yeshiva, Yeshivat Nir Kiryat Arba. That *shiur* turns into a series of *shiurim* on the beginning of *Bava Kamma*, which the Yeshiva is learning. I marvel at the time, as I would many times in the future, that Rav Schachter doesn't deliver a talk on a general topic related to the *masechta* being studied by his listeners. He speaks instead on exactly the *daf* and the *sugya* that his listeners are currently learning because he is comfortable with every *sugya*. This time I also discover that he can deliver a *shiur* in fluent Hebrew.

...Rav Schachter tells a story about a *niggun* for *Haven Yakir Li Ephraim*. He liked the melody so much that he had the band play it as he walked down to his *Chupa*. His friend, Rav Binyamin Tabory, a *Ram* for many years at Yeshivat Har Etzion, heard it at the wedding and liked it so much that he had it played at his *Chupa*, as well. On our last morning in Kiryat Arba, I accost Rav Schachter with a tape recorder. "Sing!" He records the melody onto my cassette tape. I treasure that tape, and learn the *niggun*. Five years later, I have the opportunity to play it at my *Chupa*, under which Rav

Schachter stands, as *mesader kiddushin*. I don't know where the tape is now, but here (http://youtu.be/MiPiHbc_C2A?hd=1) is my more feeble attempt at that melody.

Tannersville

...After spending a couple of years in the *shiur*, I hear that some students actually travel to Tannersville, NY, better known for its proximity to camping and skiing venues, to learn from Rav Schachter, who rents a house there each summer. How do you get permission to join that group, I wonder. "Jackie" (Yaakov) Blinder tells me, "You just ask him." "You mean," I ask, "That he'll either say yes or no?" "Oh, no," Jackie says. "He'll say yes. You just have to listen to see if he says yes with enthusiasm or not." I hear enthusiasm in Rav Schachter's voice, whether it is there or not.

...In Tannersville there are three *sedarim*, morning and afternoon on the lawn and evening in the Schachter home. This schedule does not take away from the time Rav Schachter spends learning with his children (at the time there are six, ranging from 12 to a baby). Rav Schachter reads and explains. People ask questions; he answers. We are learning *Yoma* and *Chullin* and so the *Gevuros Ari* and *Lev Aryeh* join us at the table. There is no such thing as simply reading and translating. As if osmotically, *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* enter the conversation. It is a *shiur* that masquerades as a *chavrusa*. I cannot imagine any place I would rather be. When I say the words of *modim*, thanking God for his kindnesses *erev va-voker v'tzaharayim* (evening, morning, and afternoon), I consciously think of the three learning sessions I am able to attend daily.

That doesn't mean that I can always stay awake. Even as the *Tosfos Yeshanim* accompany us through the pages of *Yoma*, a *tosefes yesheinim* is noticeable around the table at certain points in our learning. As much as I want to learn, I am not immune to tiredness. But I plot my defense against the *Satan* of slumber. One night Rav Schachter's ten-year-old daughter enters the house to find me standing as the learning goes on. "Moshe, why are you standing," she asks innocently. "I was a bad boy and they are making me stand in the corner," I reply, oh, so cleverly. "C'mon Moshe, why are you standing?" she presses on, undeterred. A voice comes from the head of the table: "He's standing so that he shouldn't fall asleep." Had the earth opened up at that moment, I would gladly have joined Korach and his henchmen. And that is nothing compared to a four



hour afternoon *sefer*, when I am sometimes the only other person and most of the time is spent on one of the mammoth *Tosafos* that seem to grow in that *masechta*. After a while, it is hard to remember how the *Tosafos* ever related to the tractate. Rav Schachter never lets on that he is aware of my sleeping through the private *chavrusa*.

B'chol Yom Tamid

What is it like to attend a *shiur* of Rav Schachter? It feels like the Rebbi is having a personal conversation with you, peppering the dialogue with jokes, stories, and bibliographic tidbits. You are on even footing, but for the minor detail that one of you is conversant with all of *Shas* and the other isn't. You know that Rav Schachter is repeating what he may have said numerous times during the term, but he never betrays impatience at the audience for reacting as if hearing it for the first time. The speed may vary, from the deceptively leisurely pace of an evening *shiur* to *balebatim*, to the brisker (no pun intended) rhythm of the daily *shiur* in Yeshiva, to the telescoped topics encompassed in a half-hour *Kollel chaburah*. But each variety contains a staggering amount of information that sneaks up on you. And it's all presented as if there were no *chidush* involved at all: *Al pi pashtus*...Whose *pashtus*, one wonders. In *shiur* there will be running routines. RHS: So what's the *Halakha*? David Arbesfeld: *Mahlokes!* RHS: *Mahlokes* who and whom? David Arbesfeld: ...

It all seems so easy. The more perceptive of the *talmidim* know how misleading that appearance is and how much labor lurks behind each *shiur*. In my day, Jeff Geizals is the student that pries apart the "Schachterized" product after *shiur*, looking up all the sources and trying to see how it was constructed. Then he goes back to the Rebbi and asks for clarifications. The rest of us are satisfied basking in the glow. I am proud that my note-taking ability makes it possible for the *shiur* to flow from Rav Schachter's lips to my ear, down my arm and onto paper. But I am not bright enough to pierce the "easy" facade. When interviewing me, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein asked what I found so compelling about Rav Schachter's *shiurim*. I answered, "He makes it all seem so easy." He replied, "That is perhaps the *hisaron* of his *ma'alos*."

Good Enough

When he concludes a daily *shiur* at Yeshiva, Rav Schachter often remarks, "Good enough." To me these words have always meant that that the work is not done, nor will it ever be done. After all, *kol ha-Torah kula inyan ehad*, the whole Torah is interconnected and no one segment can substitute for the whole. But at the same time, there is a recognition that there is "good" even in the incomplete state. We have a right to be proud, even as we need to resolve to make our Torah even more complete tomorrow.

What can one say of fifty years of day in and day out "Good Enough?"

More than good enough.
V'hinei tov me'od.



At the *Siyum HaShas*. Behind Rav Schachter stand (L-R): Rabbi Yosef Blau, President Richard Joel, President Elect Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, Rabbi Menachem Penner, and Rabbi Shay Schachter.

Music Review: “Lev Tahor 5” (LTV)

By Arthur Schoen

In Shabbos 21b, the Talmud introduces the idea that there is something special about *girsu diyankusa*, the things we learn when we are young. Commenting on that passage, Rashi explains that *girsu diyankusa* lasts better than the things we learn when we are older. The typical understanding of that Talmudic passage follows that implied line of thinking: for whatever reason, we remember the things we learn in our youth

“THE NEW ALBUM IS EXCITING, IT FEATURES A DIVERSE RANGE OF SONGS, AND IT’S A GOOD, MANAGEABLE SIZE. THEIR VOICES SOUND AS GOOD AS EVER AND IT’S A PLEASURE TO HEAR THEM SINGING TOGETHER AGAIN.”

better than information we acquire later in life.

Rav Kook takes a broader approach in expounding this idea. He writes about the important role that our younger years play in the formation of our personalities. For Rav Kook, the years of our youth are the years we should spend absorbing experiences and knowledge that we can synthesize and use to develop into the people we become as we get older. Generally, children are more open and imaginative than adults, and as such, the things we encounter when we are young powerfully impact who we are as adults.

If you’re the age of an average YU undergrad and you grew up listening to Jewish music, there’s a good chance that Lev Tahor was a big part of your childhood. Their albums came out when we were in elementary school and stayed popular through our high school years (and even later). Lev Tahor was the perfect mix of exciting and spiritually elevating; they captivated us and we became super-fans. Their original songs and acapella arrangements dominated our *kumzitzes* and jam sessions and we spent hours trying to outdo each other with our best “Schwebel voices.”

The best Jewish music should uplift us, as the singers and the listeners join together, their hearts unified in praising and calling out to their Creator. For many of us, Lev Tahor was an important part of the earliest years we spent forming our religious personalities. The way that we relate to spirituality, to song, and to prayer bears the indelible touch of the music of Lev Tahor.

Lev Tahor took the Jewish world by storm in 2001 with its first album, a collection of acapella renditions of Jewish classics that remains popular to this day. The acapella arrangements featured on albums 1 and 3 have become staples of any yeshiva or camp *kumzitz*. Their second album produced a distinctive Lev Tahor sound and a number of original songs that further solidified their popularity. By 2006, they had released four albums.

Lev Tahor’s three core members are Gadi Fuchs, Eli Schwebel, and Ari Cukier. Promotional materials for their new album announce that these lifelong best friends have been singing together for more than 30 years (since they were five-year old buddies in Brooklyn’s Torah Temimah). As detailed in feature articles through the years, when the friends went to learn in Israel, their *zemiros* skills made them popular Shabbos guests (I imagine it was like experiencing their song “Shabbos in Gilo” in real life), and the albums seem to have grown out of that.

The group has been mostly inactive since the release of *Lev Tahor 4*. Eli Schwebel kept singing in the interim, releasing a solo album in 2014 whose sound was very different from Lev Tahor’s music, but we haven’t heard much from the others. Understandably, then, when Lev Tahor announced that they’d be releasing a new album, their legions of fans were filled with excited anticipation.

The album was finally released in late February (in honor of Adar) after the group spent two years putting it together. In advance of the release, Lev Tahor promoted the album heavily on social media, made some rare concert appearances, and revamped their website (levtahor.com), which is back up and running after a few years off the web.

The new *Lev Tahor 5* – which is available in stores, on mostlymusic.com, and on iTunes (on iTunes, be sure to search for “LTV” – otherwise you won’t find it) – has been an instant success. The distributor had to order a new batch of physical CDs just days after the release, and the album spent a good bit of time in the #1 spot on the “World” charts on iTunes.

There is good reason for *LTV*’s success. The new album is exciting, it features a diverse range of songs, and it’s a good, manageable size (12 tracks running just 46 minutes). Their voices sound as good as ever and it’s a pleasure to hear them singing together again. In recent interviews, the trio have gushed about how much fun they had making the album, boasting that they didn’t have a single fight during those two years. And the fun comes out in the music.

Longtime fans should be forewarned, however, that this is not quite the Lev Tahor they’re used to. The singers are now adults with careers, not the yeshiva guys they were when they first got started; this is readily apparent in the sound on this album, their recent interviews and appearances, their new website, and their social media profiles. Don’t expect to hear any covers of old-time Jewish classics or to discover future *kumzitz/kaddish* staples à la “Im Eshkachech” (from *LT2*). Some might object to this album for sounding less “Jewish” than the group’s previous work. My personal advice? Give it a few listens and it’ll grow on you. (I’m on about 30 and I’m loving it.)

When listening to *LTV*, it becomes apparent that the group members have vastly broadened their musical horizons in their decade away from recording. There are three particular songs on the album that are unlike anything we’ve ever heard from Lev Tahor or Eli Schwebel.

One of these is the album’s very first song. *LTV* opens with one of its finest numbers: “Halellu,” a catchy tune that will have you up out of your seat dancing along. “Halellu” started as a cover of “Holiday Road,” a 1983 song by Lindsey Buckingham. Buckingham’s song had a Beach Boys sound that is preserved in “Halellu”’s chorus, and Eli Schwebel updated it, fusing a unique blend of sounds and styles. First, he adds music (instrumentals and verses) that is reminiscent of Lou Bega’s “Mambo No. 5.” Then, we get a bridge – provided (according to Lev Tahor’s social media) by “the Sephardic Boys Choir led by Jack Braha” – that evokes the choral chants used in Disney songs that draw on non-Western music (think the soundtracks of *The Lion King*, *Moana*, or *Lilo & Stitch*).

“Simchas Beis Hashoeva” features Lipa, and it’s a classic Lipa party song. “Shoovi L’yerushalayim” is a nicely arranged tune, half of which is in the style of old American Jewish folk songs and half of which is a beautiful harmonic rendition of the classic tune for one of the best-known *kinos* in the Tisha B’av liturgy.

A number of Jewish publications have profiled Eli Schwebel in recent years, especially around the time of the release of his solo album, *Hearts Mind*. Those profiles focused heavily on Eli’s spiritual journey of self-discovery, a journey that has taken many years and which permeated all of his work on *Hearts Mind*.

On *LTV*, Eli is back with his buddies, and just like on the earlier Lev Tahor albums, all three members are essential and contribute significantly to the group’s sound. And as always, this album showcases the trio’s remarkable knack for sensing which of the guys would sound best singing which parts of the songs. Notwithstanding all that, however, Eli Schwebel has always stood out somewhat in the group’s music.

This is certainly true with respect to his voice. *Five Towns Jewish Times* editor-publisher Larry Gordon captured the thoughts of many when, in a piece on Eli Schwebel, he referred to Eli’s voice as something like “a magical musical instrument.”

By the way – Schwebel fans get a special treat on this album, as Eli’s father Rivie makes a long-overdue appearance. Eli’s voice is certainly distinctive, but it’s not unique – it is strikingly similar to the voice of his father Rivie, who was a member of Dveykus, one of the foundational modern Jewish music groups. Rivie guest-stars on the vaguely Sephardic “Dror Yikra,” and his vocals steal the show.

Eli’s impact on Lev Tahor goes far beyond the sound, however. A major creative force involved in every stage of the music from composition through production, his solo work in *Hearts Mind* leaves its stamp on *LTV* in the form of three songs, two of which are actually re-worked versions of songs from his solo album.

The catchy “Yagga,” which was arguably the best-known song on *Hearts Mind* (it was originally released as a free single and it has an official music video), receives the Lev Tahor acapella treatment with the kind of typically excellent arrangement that was the hallmark of so much of their earlier work. *LTV* also features a heartfelt and hopeful remix of “Don’t Stop Giving” that sounds like it belongs on Phil Collins’s *Tarzan* soundtrack and features a synthesized beat



that could have come right out of a ’90s pop song.

The album’s third track, “Gam Zu L’tova,” is an original tune in the theme and style of Eli’s journey as expressed in *Hearts Mind*. Anyone bothered on a religious level by the perception that “Yagga” shifts the emphasis too far away from Torah study can take comfort in “Gam Zu L’tova,” whose tune beautifully captures the spirit of the Talmudic expression from which it takes its name (Eli Schwebel and Ari Cukier described this in a recent interview with Nachum Segal). The song traces the experience of someone going through a rough time who utilizes the power of positive thinking to lift him out of his sadness; the song’s spirit picks up as this person’s mood improves. When we hit the first chorus, which proclaims that “this too will be for the best,” the slow guitar that conveyed the doldrums in the first verse is replaced by synthesized instruments and a choral background accompaniment. The music in the second verse is more upbeat, and that trend continues through the rest of the song, as the second chorus features choral background singing that’s even more exuberant, followed by a pumping beat.

Longtime Lev Tahor enthusiasts need not despair after hearing about all these new and unfamiliar sounds – *LTV* also features four songs in the mold of the group’s greatest hits. Fans love discussing which original song is their favorite – “Aneini” vs. “Refaeinu” is a classic debate – and these four are sure to find their way into those conversations. It can’t be a coincidence that Gadi Fuchs – the most musically conservative of the group, according to Ari and Eli – composed all four of these songs: “Lecha Dodi,” “Birchas Hachodesh,” “Avdecha,” and “Meheira” (Eli Schwebel was a co-composer of “Avdecha”). Each of these stirring songs

SEE *LTV*, CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Game of Thrones and the Death Effect

By Sam Gelman (Houston, TX)

Warning: Spoilers for Game of Thrones Seasons 1-6 and Books 1-5

The world of *Game of Thrones* (GOT) has many religions, and with those religions come many gods. There are the Old Gods of the Children of the forest, the Seven Who Are One, and the Lord of Light himself, R'hllor. Yet, after reading five books and watching six seasons I cannot help but think that perhaps the late Syrio Forel was right. Perhaps, in the world of GOT "there is only one god, and His name is Death."

From the way the show treats its characters, it truly seems that death rules this world. From the start of the show, the writers make it clear that death will play a massive role in the show and be an overarching theme throughout the series. The first two scenes alone are surrounded by it, with several members of the Night's Watch being killed by White Walkers in the first few minutes followed by Eddard Stark executing a deserter of that same organization. One could even argue that it is the main character of the entire series, and that everyone

"AS THE SHOW PROGRESSES, THE WRITERS SEEM MORE CONCERNED WITH THE SHORT TERM SHOCK FACTOR THAN WITH THE LONG TERM EMOTIONAL FACTOR, AND THAT IN TURN IS HURTING THE SHOW."

from Tyrion to Daenerys is hopelessly trying to outrun it before it inevitably catches up with them.

These types of scenes, however, do not fully capture the role death plays in GOT. There are plenty of violent shows out there that kill off countless of redshirts (unimportant characters that die simply to move the plot along). *Sons of Anarchy*, *The Walking Dead*, *Daredevil*, *The Wire*; death is prominent in these shows as well.

Rather, what makes death in GOT so special is that it does not just come for the redshirts but for everyone. Unlike most TV shows, GOT is not afraid to kill off their major characters. Look at who was killed in the first season alone: King Robert Baratheon, Viserys Targaryen, Khal Drogo. These were all major characters that played massive roles in the first season's story and death came for them all.

Yet, perhaps the defining moment for the show came in episode nine of season one when the show executed Lord Eddard Stark in front of his two daughters. It was a truly shocking and unprecedented move. The main character, the one we invested the most time in, the one who represented all that was good and just in the world of GOT, the one who was not supposed to die, was decapitated before the first season even ended. The risks were huge from both a story and business standpoint. Would fans be able to handle a world where none of their favorite characters were truly safe? Would they be willing to invest their time in new characters now that the most important one was gone? Could the show survive financially without its biggest name actor and the constant turnover that comes with so much death?

Just mention the words "*Game of Thrones*" in a conversation and you will see that the answer to all these questions is a resounding yes. The fans loved it.

The idea that anyone could die in a TV show was unprecedented. Normally, big character deaths were saved for season or series finales, and even in those only a few major characters would be killed. On GOT, no one was safe. With the death of Lord Stark, the show raised the stakes of their story to the highest level, creating an obsessive amount of interest among fans.

And so, for the last six years GOT has yielded its fans with some of the most shocking, heartbreaking, and satisfying deaths of any TV show: Renly Baratheon was stabbed in the heart by shadow demon, Tywin Lannister was shot by a crossbow by his son while sitting on the toilet, Joffrey Baratheon was poisoned at his own wedding. And then, of course, there was the Red Wedding, an event so drastic and infamous that it became part of the global pop culture canon the second it aired.

However, too much of a good thing can turn out to be quite harmful, and that is what I believe is happening to GOT. With the show killing off so many of its major characters so frequently, it is creating what I call the death effect. The theory of the death effect is that with the constant stream of deaths occurring on the show, they lose their emotional impact and essentially become meaningless.

In order to fully understand this we have to realize the purpose of the death of a character on a TV show. When we watch a character on TV, we are watching their personal journey. We are given a person with specific traits and we watch to see if that person will change or stay the same. Will Oliver Queen conquer his demons or remain a killer (*Arrow*)? Will Don Draper become the man in the Kodiak commercial or continue his fake life (*Mad Men*)? Can Jack finally let go of his past or will he carry it as his penance forever (*Lost*)?

When a character dies, it is the end of that journey. It is a culmination of all their choices and actions into one final act. It is the moment when we, the audience, finally get to see if the character has truly changed or if they failed in their quest, whatever that may be. It should feel natural and inevitable, as if all their past choices could have only led them to this one moment. It also must be done by the right character at the right time, allowing the full emotional weight to be felt.

In the beginning of GOT, the writers did exactly that. Eddard Stark had to die. The world he lived in had no place for honor and goodness. His actions of trying to restore the true king to the throne and his constant trust of those that did not deserve it could not be greeted by anything except death. Another excellent example is the death of Tywin. His constant mistreatment of his son Tyrion and his refusal to give him an ounce of legitimacy made their final conversation all the more dramatic. Had Tywin given the respect and love his son had always craved, he may still be alive. That, however, would not have been true Tywin. He would rather die than help his son and so it was. All his previous actions and choices led to that moment and it was perfect.

In the last two years, however, the show has had



less success creating these moments. Perhaps the most shocking death of the last two years comes from the season six finale, when Margery (along with Loras and Kevan) are killed by Cersei. This was a beautifully crafted scene with excellent writing, acting, and music (Light of the Seven still gives me chills). However, when it comes to emotional impact, it left me feeling rather empty. Margery's choices and actions did not naturally lead her there. It did not feel inevitable, but rather like she was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Although her feud with Cersei technically led to her death, there was no closure in the two's relationship. There was no final conversation, no major realization about their characters. The only thing it did was confirm that Cersei is still a terrible human being. It was a redshirt death, something a character like Margery did not deserve.

The same can be said of the death of Barristan Selmy in the middle of season five. His death at the hands of the faceless Sons of the Harpy says nothing about his character, a knight looking for redemption after failing to save the two kings he swore to protect. His choices did not lead him to that moment. It was not natural or inevitable. Like Margery, he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time and deserved better.

I could go on and on with this list: Rickon Stark, Ramsay Bolton, Roose Bolton, Myrcella Baratheon, Doran Martell, Jojen Reed, and the Three Eyed Crow all had poorly executed deaths and deserved better. These are all deaths that, while they moved the plot along, they lacked any emotional death. They were redshirts, and for central characters like these, a redshirt death in unacceptable. That is not to say that every death in the last two seasons was poorly done. The death of Stannis Baratheon was handled perfectly as was Hodor's.

As the show progresses, the writers seem more concerned with the short term shock factor than with the long term emotional factor, and that in turn is hurting the show. More and more it seems like GOT is focusing on the pageantry of the slaughter (a giant fire bomb in a temple, death by dogs, having a head exploded) than the emotions and meanings surrounding it. This must come to an end, especially as we approach the end of the series and the inevitable death of Tyrion, Cersei, Jon, or Daenerys. It would be a shame and absolutely unacceptable to see one those characters die a redshirt death. So, yes, while it is true that all men must die, that does not mean that they should not die well.

Valar Morghulis.

LTV, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

epitomizes the classic Lev Tahor sound exemplified by the hits from the second album. I can't wait for "Meheira" – which even features a Shalshelles-style opening – to become a hit at weddings. I suspect that many listeners will find that the hauntingly beautiful "Avdecha" is their favorite track on the album; I know I can't stop listening to it.

Those who particularly enjoyed the English songs

on the earlier Lev Tahor albums (which were often covers of old Abie Rottenberg/Journeys songs) might be drawn to "Mr. Tanner," a cover of a 1974 Harry Chapin song by that name that Schwebel explicitly re-worked to give it more of the Abie/Journeys feel. Be prepared, though – the song is emotionally moving, but it's not a dramatic, high-stakes number like "Watch Over Me" or "Deaf Man in the Shteeble" and it's no more "Jewish" than Chapin's original.

It's great to have Lev Tahor back in our lives

giving us some new work to enjoy. This album may be different from what we're used to, but it's a pleasure to hear their voices again. *LTV* represents a new step in the trio's musical maturation and a worthy addition to their audio library. Newcomers and Lev Tahor lifers alike can look forward to many hours of enjoyment from this wonderful new album. Here's hoping that this time, we won't have to wait eleven more years to hear what the group is up to.

The Pesach Hotel

By Benjamin Koslowe

The hotel parking lot right now is ordinary, even boring. But in just a few Monday afternoons, minivans will pull up in droves from the Five Towns, Bergen County, Brooklyn, and even from areas farther down the I-95 corridor and the Midwest. As the vernal sun slowly descends, families will unload suitcases and shift their weight as they wait for bellhops to become available. Program directors will sit behind folding desks handing out Shabbos keys. Kids holding board games will argue over who gets to keep which key when. An older couple who has attended the program for decades will take a welcome basket and flip through the scholars-in-residence packet.

The lobby area on the main floor will empty out for the remainder of Pesach after the first *Maariv*, but the lounge directly upstairs will be a scene. On the first morning of *Yom Tov* a few women will read quietly in armchairs, sipping coffee that they just made and slowly working their way through *chametz*-free wafers from one of the mini dinette areas nearby. There are billiards tables here, but the teenagers who will congregate by them will still be sleeping off the late seder, if not rushing to catch most of *davening*.

To the north and south of this lobby area are stairwells, leading up to five or six floors of guest rooms. Housekeepers will knock on doors to see if they are ready for cleaning. Most will be -- in others, someone will call out groggily to please come back in an hour. The carpeted hallways will be mostly empty, but for some desk chairs that guests pulled outside of their rooms so that they could read by the light. There will be used dining utensils with remnants of one mom's *shulchan orech*. She will have brought up her meal well before the end of the night so that she could tuck in her young kids. As much as they attempted to stay up all night, their eye rubbing and ear pulling suggested otherwise.

Past the second-floor gaming lounge, a long hallway runs to connect the hotel's two main buildings. By noon of the First Day *davening* will have concluded. Guests of all ages will vie for the most comfortable chairs in this window-filled hallway that have the best views of the outdoor lake and promenade. If it is a late Pesach, the trees might be in early bloom.

A right turn off the long hallway leads downstairs to one of the hotel's larger dining areas. On Pesach, this will be designated as a Tea Room. On *Yom Tov* afternoon, right in between lunch and dinner, waiters will fill tables with kosher-for-Pesach snacks, chips, sodas, fruit platters, chocolate, ices, and much more. In one corner of the room a man will lead Bingo for excitable retirement-aged women, as well as for some less-than-excitable grandchildren of said women. At another table will sit six children ranging in age from nine to twenty. They are siblings and first cousins who for hours will battle to the death in a game of Risk. This will be the first game of the holiday, but it will certainly not be the last.

At the end of the long hallway is a carpeted foyer with large doors that lead to many different rooms. One conference room will be set up with tables. This will serve as a dining room for relatives of the program directors and caterers. Another conference room has rows of swiveling chairs and a podium, which lecturers will use, as well as a projector and screen. A recent Oscar-winning

film will play here on the first *motzei Yom Tov*. Those hard of hearing will be wheeled by their personal aids to sit closer to the screen.

Down a grand staircase is the hotel's biggest dining area. This room, which can seat over one thousand, will be set with central buffet stations and hundreds of scattered tables all around. On the first morning of *chol hamoed* the room will not fill up, but by lunch the lines at the omelet station will stretch nearly out the door. Most of the tables seat five or six, but a significant number are much larger, arranged to sit as many as thirty members of extended families. At one of these tables a third-grader will wait for her mom to walk away before she asks her waiter for her second cup of chocolate milk. Her grandparents sitting at the head of the table will labor over the day's printed schedule, deciding which lectures to attend and when they will take their afternoon walk outside (weather-permitting). Her aunt and uncle who have five children will take their time at lunch, enjoying their few hours when the kids are with their counselors in groups for the day. If they are lucky, Sofia will finally decide on this fourth day at the hotel that it is cool to stay with the bunk until 4 pm.

The area immediately outside the main dining room leads to tennis courts, a basketball court, and a swimming pool. The latter will still be closed in April, so guests on weekdays will instead use the indoor facilities. Different hours of the day will be regulated for men-only, women-only, or family swim time. There is an indoor racquetball court, where a forty-something doctor and his father will whip out the gear and tie their seldom-used sneakers for a good old throwback. The father will take a break to catch his breath. He'll assure himself and his son that he would've crushed twenty years ago.

On the last day of *chol hamoed*, the tennis courts, patios, and parking lot will transform into a makeshift carnival. A mediocre but energetic singer will play on his keyboard as children moon bounce, ask their parents if they can have cotton candy, and feed the goats and horses in the petting zoo imported for the occasion. Counselors will run around with cameras to capture the scene. Before the end of *chol hamoed*, these pictures will go up on one of the walls for everyone to see.

Right above the large dining area, a bit farther down the hallway, oak doors lead to an auditorium with stadium seating. This will be the *shul*, but will also serve as the theater for a magic show and a music concert on *chol hamoed* nights. Tables will be arranged right outside the auditorium for candle lighting by the time the Second Days come around. As the *chazzan* calls out *barchu* in the classic *Yuntiv* tune, men (and a few women in the upstairs balcony) will sit mostly where they've sat until that point, but new faces as well who just joined the program will look for their own seats. Folks will recognize each other after nearly a week together, but they will still congregate with their families and friends from back home. Someone will announce *davening* times for the next day, as well as the charity organization designated as recipient for the auctioned-off *aliyah* bids. As people leave some will murmur, wondering if the ad hoc 8:00 speedy *minyan* will take place as it did during the First Days. A suave fellow with gelled-back hair will nod confidently, guaranteeing one clique that he'll take charge as *gabbai*.

The open area outside of the auditorium will be arranged for a post-*Shacharit kiddush* the next morning.

Larry and Frank will reminisce over potato *kugel* about their years in YU in the 1960s. "Remember how Dave used to fall asleep every day in Rabbi Lifshitz's *shiur*?" Larry will ask. "You bet I do," Frank will lie. They'll both chortle. Frank has recently retired. Larry still works as a lawyer, but at the *kiddush* he will be preoccupied by a grandchild tugging at his pants asking him to join for an umpteenth game of war. Larry will join. By the schnitzel station, an elderly woman with a doily will sit in a wheelchair. A granddaughter will yell over the crowd asking her if she wants anything to eat. The elderly woman won't hear, but she'll still smile and say thank you.

Directly upstairs is another conference room which will be made into the Children's Dining Room. Little kids will be dragged here for 6 pm early dinner on the second-to-last night. Toddlers will eat a few bites of chicken nuggets, while moms and babysitters will spoonfeed younger ones in strollers. Later that night, on the same floor, older children will attend night groups. Different rooms will be arranged for different ages.

On the last full day, these children will nervously go over their dance numbers and routines for the end-of-Pesach talent show. Their parents and grandparents will fill the auditorium to laugh as adorable three-year-olds sing "Pharaoh in pajamas," and to cringe as not-so-adorable middle school boys crack awkward jokes as their performance. Some of these boys will head to the Tea Room after the show as a posse for a last round of snacks (only drab potato chips will be left) and soda (only off-brand Coke will be left). They'll discreetly look-without-looking at a group of girls sitting at one of the tables. One of the girls will notice and they'll giggle. The boys will try to gather the courage to walk over. They probably won't.

Back in the main dining room, a spontaneous "*L'Shana Haba'ah*" will break out during the last dinner as hundreds dance shoulder-to-shoulder between the tables. Some of the waiters will join in. They'll more-or-less pronounce the words correctly. At one small table, a middle-aged couple there by themselves will clap along while staying in their seats. At another, a family will sing with the crowd and then continue the music with some of their own *niggunim* that they sang at the seder.

Some families will run out of the hotel immediately after *Havdalah*. Waiters and groups counselors will hang out by the hotel lobby, hoping for tips. Most will be very pleased by the guests' generosity. The main dining room will be cleared already the next morning, but the Tea Room will be set with some bagels and real cereal for the few guests who didn't leave yet. One of the boys from the middle school posse will fight back tears as he leaves the hotel and wheels out his mini suitcase to the parking lot.

But right now that boy is counting down the days until Pesach. The hotel currently looks like any northeastern Hilton or Crowne Plaza, but in his mind he sees the cozy guest room and his cot. He sees the ping pong tables, the long hallway where he'll sit and talk with his grandmother, and the couches in the Tea Room where he'll play Settlers of Catan with his cousins. He sees the dining room where he'll take eggs and ice cream for lunch, and order chicken and ices for dinner. He has been going to the hotel his entire childhood, and he is sure that this Pesach will again be one of the best weeks of the year.



One-Punch Man: Saving the Superhero Genre

By Matthew Silkin

In 2017 alone there are seven major superhero movies - four from Marvel and three from DC - that have either already been released or are on schedule to be released. Add that to all the previous superhero films, the many more that are on schedule in the coming years, and the myriad superhero television shows, and one could point to a new superhero renaissance. While many fans of the original comics are not complaining - movies in the Marvel Cinematic Universe continue to have impressive Rotten Tomatoes scores for a franchise that is nearly ten years old - there are people who are growing bored of the tried-and-true superhero formula. Where are the fresh, original stories? Why is every superhero movie starting to feel the same?

Enter *One-Punch Man*, started in 2009 as a crude webcomic by the anonymous author ONE, adapted into a manga in 2012 by artist Yusuke Murata and anime by Madhouse Inc. in 2015 with a second season coming out later this year. The titular character, Saitama, is a superhero - for fun, he often comments - who is so strong that he can defeat any enemy with one punch. His power has rendered him bored with his place in life, and much of the story revolves around him finding a proper fight where he would actually have to put in effort.

A story about a guy who can punch things really hard, while amusing, sounds like it would grow stale about three chapters in... and that's where it gets you. While Saitama absolutely destroys his opponents in fight scenes - which, mind you, are entertaining as anything to read - ONE instead focuses the story on Saitama's struggles off the battlefield. His interactions with his fellow heroes and the

hapless citizens of the city are Saitama's greatest challenge - he gets no recognition for his previous victories, and everyone thinks he's a fraud. After a particularly grueling fight against the Deep Sea King, who at this point has taken out several high ranking heroes, Saitama comes in and wallops him - and the people boo Saitama, calling him a weakling coming to steal the other heroes' credit! We root for Saitama, not because he's going to win the fight - we know he'll win the fight - but because we want someone to say, "Hey, that guy is actually pretty awesome," even though Saitama himself states that he wants no recognition for his actions.

Luckily for Saitama, he has one person who's on his side from the start - Genos, a cyborg out for revenge against the mysterious being that killed his family, who discovers Saitama and forces himself in as Saitama's disciple. Normally, Genos would be the type of character who would be the focus of the story. He endured tragedy that forced him to become a hero; Spider-Man and Batman, to name two characters, both went through the same ordeal. Instead, Genos is relegated to being a deuteragonist, forced to take the hits until Saitama shows up to save the day. He seems fine with it though; in fact, he follows Saitama with almost a religious devotion, moving with Saitama and absorbing everything he says or does. In this respect, Genos exists not just as plot fodder, but as a window for the reader to enter the world of *One-Punch Man*. We, like Genos, are there with Saitama every panel, learning more secrets about his amazing powers. Again, if this were a classic superhero story, Genos would be the model main character and we would have another less powerful character to latch on to as we read. But this isn't your everyday superhero story.

Ultimately, *One-Punch Man's* charm lies in its subversion of the superhero genre expectations. The strongest person in the world is an ordinary man who decided he wanted to be a hero one day for the fun of it. Instead of being bitten by a radioactive spider or enduring exposure to

gamma radiation, Saitama's secret to his power is a simple (though exaggerated) training regiment of 100 push-ups, 100 sit-ups, 100 squats, and a 10km run every day (none of the other characters believe Saitama's naturally-accrued powers). Though he is the strongest man in the world, he is largely unknown in society, often derided by fellow heroes and even civilians as a hack who shows up at the end of fights to take the credit. Speaking of the fellow heroes, many of them are in the business for fame and to turn a profit; altruistic heroes like Genos are few and far between.

Genre subversion is nothing new; Alan Moore tried his hand at it with the fantastic series *Watchmen* in the late '80s, and one could argue that *Deadpool* as he exists today is a subversion. But what sets *One-Punch Man* apart is the heart that ONE pours into the series. When I said that the original was a crude webcomic, I wasn't kidding. ONE's drawings are but scribbles in comparison to Murata's years of experience on other series such as *Eyeshield 21*, but that hasn't stopped him from making his dream of being a true manga artist (or mangaka) a reality - besides for *One-Punch Man*, he has authored five other manga, including the just-as-popular *Mob Psycho 100*. *One-Punch Man* is not just a humorous take on superheroes - it is a sort of commentary on ONE's own career as a mangaka, trudging through the criticism and lack of recognition in order to get his story out to the world.

Speaking of "humorous," another of *One-Punch Man's* strengths lies in its comedic timing. Unlike *Watchmen's* gritty, brooding take on superheroes, *One-Punch Man* revels in the lighthearted aspect of its story. Sure, there are dramatic moments - the fight against the Deep Sea King I mentioned earlier is up there - but the comedy is uproariously funny. From the bizarre nature of the heroes - including a muscly gay convict named Puri-Puri-Prisoner, a martial artist in a snake-pattern suit named Snek, and a bicyclist with no powers named License-less Rider - to the monsters who try their might against Saitama and fail miserably, there is no shortage of great jokes in the series.

If you're not feeling the superhero fatigue yet, by all means continue to enjoy the myriad superhero movies for the next few years, or until Marvel and DC forget how to print money with their movies. But if you need a palette cleanser from the classic superhero story, or if you're just looking for someone to give you the most epic fist bump ever, I would suggest *One-Punch Man*.



The Women of the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society

By Chaviva Freedman

It's a Monday evening. I am standing on the corner of 34th and Park, waiting to get on the 6:45PM shuttle to the Heights. The corner is packed with Stern students discussing their plans for the evening. The majority of the women before me are going to study in the library. Some are meeting up with their significant others for their weekly date night. Some just want to make the trek uptown for a better dinner than what the 245 caf is offering that night. As for me? I am going up for a play rehearsal with the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society (YCDS).

This semester, I am taking on the position as stage manager for the YCDS spring production, *Biloxi Blues*. I'm familiar and pretty comfortable with such a position. I've been involved with the society for three semesters, where I play a silent role. I've sat in on board meetings, discussing ideas for the spring play. I've helped organize events for a group of boys who wouldn't know where to start. It's a hard job, but rewarding nonetheless.

In the years since I started Stern College, girls have slowly been creeping behind the scenes of YCDS. I say slowly, because it takes a while to get to the position that I hold. There are days where I think about how odd it is that more and more women want to get involved with the guys' productions. Maybe it's the fact that the director for the guys is a woman. Maybe someone wanted to expand her horizons and get out of the nucleus that is the Beren Campus. I have my personal reasons for why I joined YCDS. But the fact is that the numbers keep growing and every play has more and more women in the credits.

The women of YCDS span different departments. We're not allowed to act onstage - something most of us wouldn't want to do anyway. There are women in the Props department, who help assemble anything and everything that the actors need throughout the show. It's a pretty big job, as the actors always seem to remember something that they need at the last second. There are women in the graphics department, working on the playbill, making sure that everything written is correct and that the photos used are up to the standards of both the actors and the broader populace. It's a time-sensitive job, and the girls have taken to it amazingly. There are women in the Lighting department, assuring that all the lighting for the stage is in top shape and that nothing will unexpectedly malfunction. Each job is integral for the formation of this show and the Drama Society.

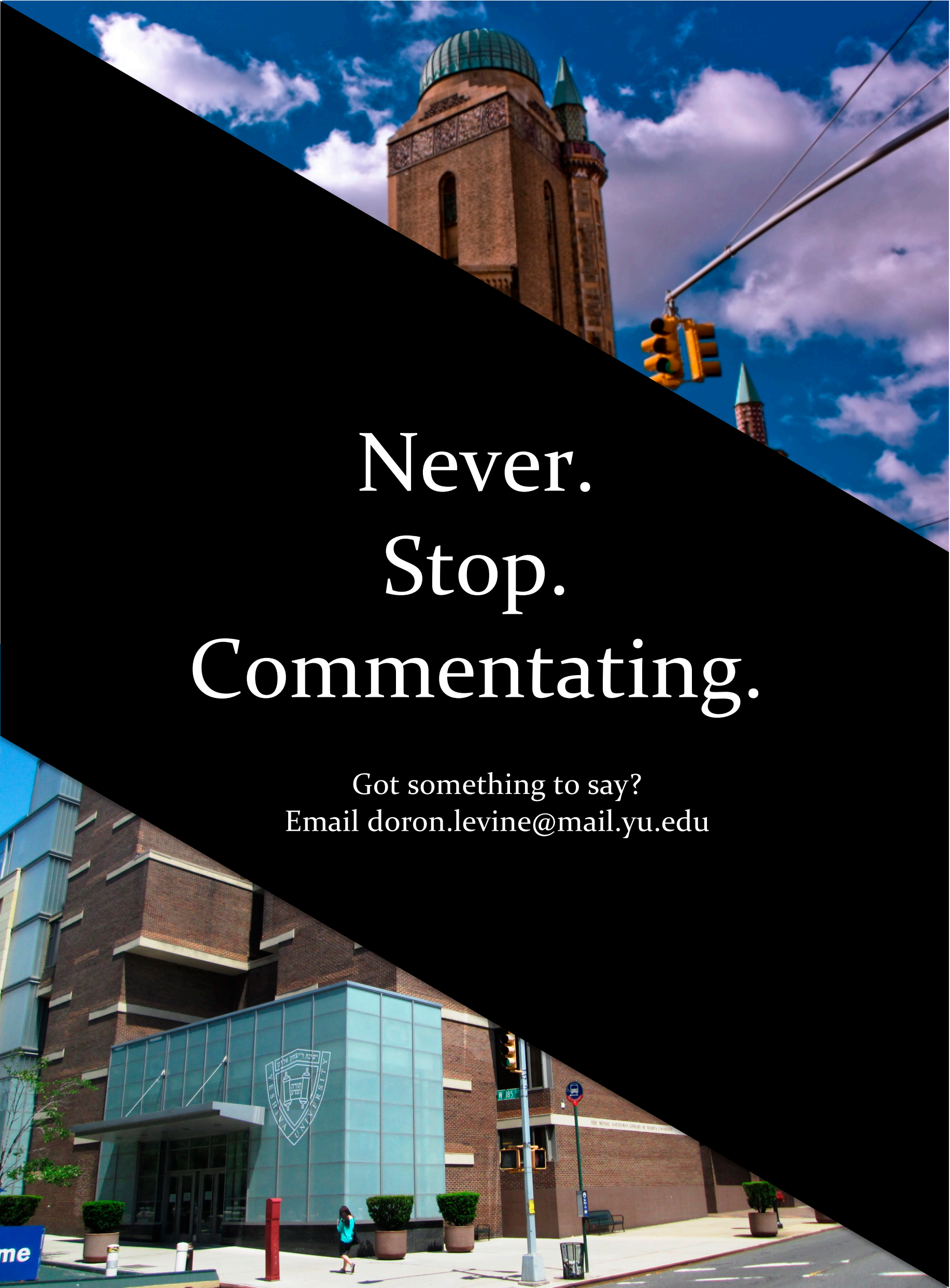
And then there's me - the Stage Manager. At least, that's my official title. I handle anything and everything that deals with the backstage elements. I make sure that the costumes and

props are in order so that I don't hear the actors say they don't have something. I deal with the lighting and sound, assuring that all the ideas that the director has will properly come to fruition. I constantly handle emails from the director - either with some new idea she has to enhance the production or anything else that pertains with backstage.

My biggest job as stage manager? I deal with the actors in the show. I know about anything that they possibly need before they even have to say it. I am aware of every person's schedule in case he can't make a rehearsal. I call the times for every rehearsal and send actors daily reminders - you should see the amount of emails... it's a lot. I act as a friend to them, because they truly have become some of my closest friends. I've become the actors' personal therapist - whenever there is an issue, play-related or not, I seem to be the first person they contact since I seem to always have the solution they are looking for. I created the cast Whatsapp group so that they know what is happening behind the scenes, up to the minute. I can truly say that each of the actors is a special person. It shows through their acting abilities. It's amazing to see how they've grown - not just as characters, but as people. Each time they rehearse, they get better and better, and it makes me remember why I deal with all the chaos in the first place. I feel a sense of protection towards them. At the end of the day, I know they feel the same towards me.

You might ask, *what's the point in being involved?* It might just be me being prideful of the fact that we are the select few who get to be in something bigger than us. Maybe I like the fact that YCDS was willing to give us women the jobs that we would've had to fight for in other drama societies. Maybe it looks good on the resume that you participated in something that forced you out of your comfort zone. No matter what the reason is, we are all involved and, despite its occasional hiccups, we wouldn't want it any other way.





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BDS: Drop the 'D'

By Rachel Zakharov and Rebecca Shiner

The Boycott Divestment Sanctions Movement defines itself as a “Palestinian led movement for freedom, justice and equality... [u]phold[ing] the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity.” If this definition were true, then surely the movement would take issue with human rights violations worldwide, like the Black Lives Matter movement has. Israel is, after all, a democracy, with robust freedom of speech, religion and expression, and as much of a human rights violator as any other Western nation -- including the United States. There seems no reason to focus on Israel to the exclusion of known human rights violators, like China and Saudi Arabia.

Some facts can help put this contention in a clearer light. On February 27th, *The New York Times* reported that China “expel[led] monks and nuns from major religious enclaves in a Tibetan region” as part of China’s continued oppression of Tibet. Tibet is a Buddhist state, whose religious leader, the Dalai Lama, declared independence from China in 1913. But Communist China, which considers Tibet to be a province in rebellion, invaded Tibet in 1950 for the region’s wealth of natural resources. The Chinese have been restricting Tibetan culture, religion and freedom ever since.

On January 3, 2016, *The Independent* published a list of Saudi Arabia’s 10 most egregious human rights violations. Among them: the incarceration of those who criticize the government, the arrest of women drivers and the deportation of migrants. The June 16, 2016 edition of *The Washington Post* also listed Saudi Arabia as a country where homosexuality is punishable by death. Has BDS ever concerned itself with any of this? No. And not just no -- a resounding “NO.”

BDS’s vehement singling out of Israel for its human rights violations toward Palestinians is hypocrisy at best and anti-Semitism at worst. In fact, both sides of the aisle--and the green line--agree that the BDS movement amounts to the acronym created by the first and last initials of its name: B.S. In its party platform, updated as part of this past summer’s Republican National Convention, the Republican Party officially took the position that “We reject the false notion that Israel is an occupier, and specifically recognize that the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement (“BDS”) is anti-Semitic in nature and seeks to destroy Israel.” The Democratic Party in its party platform, also updated this past summer as part of the Democratic National Convention, took a similar stance: “A strong and secure Israel is vital to the United States because we share overarching strategic interests and the common values of democracy, equality, tolerance, and pluralism. That is why we will always support Israel’s right to defend itself, including by retaining its qualitative military edge, and oppose any effort to delegitimize Israel, including at the United Nations or

through the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement.”

Do these positions, with their judgement of the BDS movement, match the movement’s own definition where it claims to stand for “freedom, justice and equality?” No. On the contrary, both sides of the aisle agree that BDS stands for anti-Semitism.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu uses harsh language to describe the reality of what it is that BDS truly stands for, as implied by both the Republican and Democratic parties: “B for bigotry, D for dishonesty, and S for shame.” Does that constitute anti-Semitism? At its worst, absolutely. And is anti-Semitism, which is quite literally hatred, contrary to BDS’s claim that it stands for “freedom, justice and equality” and “the same rights as the rest of humanity?” At its best, yes.

Even Palestinian activist Bassem Eid, whose agenda is to promote a Palestinian, nationalist agenda, agrees that BDS is hypocritical, which is why he argues that the movement is counter-productive: “I’m opposed to the boycott because it only ends up harming the Palestinians themselves.” Take the SodaStream case, for example. In

“THE VEHEMENT SINGLING OUT OF ISRAEL BY BDS FOR ITS HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS TOWARD PALESTINIANS IS HYPOCRISY AT BEST AND ANTI-SEMITISM AT WORST.”

what was considered a victory for the BDS movement, SodaStream moved its factory from Mishor Adumim, which is in the West Bank, to Lehavim, which is in Israel proper, in 2014. The result was that over 500 hundred Palestinians lost their jobs, because they were denied permits to work in Israel proper. Did BDS really do those 500 Palestinians “justice?” No. Did this help the Palestinian cause? No.

Contrary to its self-definition that BDS is a “movement for freedom, justice and equality...[u]phold[ing] the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity,” the movement has become a cover for and normalizing agent of anti-Semitism. As Republican Representative Ted Cruz said in response to David Friedman’s nomination as the US ambassador to Israel: “biased resolutions at the United Nations and the discriminatory Boycott, Divestment, and Sanction (BDS) movement,” are an impediment to a strong Israel, whose alliance with America is critical as the Middle East grows increasingly unstable, and an impediment to peace.

Community of Learners

By Lilly Gelman

At his speech at the Beren Campus orientation, President Richard Joel repeatedly encouraged us to utilize the newly renovated library uptown, while simultaneously informing us of the need to protect the “tradition” concealed within the Beit Midrash next door. The ambiguity of his statement has left me curious, and, passing by the Glueck building on my way to the library, I often wonder what purpose the Beit Midrash serves and the meaning of the tradition to which I am not privy. I do not want to complain about my desire to enter the uptown Beit Midrash or lament the fact that the building has a women’s section that is used by men more often than women. I am going to talk about the significance of a campus Beit Midrash, something that I hope many YU students, male and female, can relate to.

President Joel informed us first-year female students that the Beit Midrash uptown guards the foundation of Torah on which Yeshiva University is based. While it may serve such a purpose, it also acts as a modern center -- a cornucopia of Torah learning, one of the two pillars upon which Yeshiva University was built. The Beit Midrash is where the Roshei Yeshiva, the religious leaders of our university, reside, answering theological questions and assisting students in the constant endeavour of limud Torah (study of Torah). Inside that room is where RIETS, YC and Syms students study Mesechet Kiddushin together during the day and further their Torah learning at night. The single text creates a bond between the students by building a common ground on which they all can stand. While not every YC or Syms student is in a YP or BMP *shiur*, and not every YP or BMP *shiur* is learning the same perek, by virtue of their shared learning experience, the students utilizing the Beit Midrash are a community by default -- a community of learners.

A friend of mine at a different university brought that phrase to my attention: community of learners. It

came up in a conversation about what she feels YU has and wishes her school would develop.

A community of learners is much more than the Jewish community provided by a Hillel on campus. It goes beyond a shared religious identity and common holiday experiences. What my friend described is a unified group of people who engage in Torah study as a way of connecting to Judaism, using it as a point of reflection for religious experiences and a means to spiritual connection. This is the type of environment created by many Yeshivot and Midrashot in Israel; a life centered around the Beit Midrash and an existence focused on learning with the goal of advancing Torah study. The Yeshiva University Beit Midrash does, well, at least on the Wilf Campus, foster a comparable atmosphere of unity. For men at YC and Syms, the option to continue strengthening that connection is both available and encouraged.

Granted it is different, as is expected, when one leaves a life consumed by Torah study and enters a more academic environment. The presence of the Beit Midrash, however, allows YC and male Syms students



to return to that feeling of community.

Stern is a different story. We have a beautiful Beit Midrash, brightly lit, with floor to ceiling windows that look out onto the city, and lined with bookshelves filled with sefarim (Jewish books). But when I walk in, I do not feel that feeling. I do not feel that buzz and the sense that the people learning around me had the same thought when they walked into the room -- “I came here to learn.”

The Beit Midrash at Stern, tucked away on the seventh floor, does not serve the same purpose as the Glueck Beit Midrash. We have no seder and *shiur*, making it difficult for the Beit Midrash to act as the focal point for Torah study on campus. There is no organized time during which a large portion of the undergraduate women's student body can convene to participate in the mission of limud torah. I take Judaic classes when they fit into my schedule and prepare for them when I find an hour to spare. Although at Stern one is able to continue high-level Torah learning, it becomes an isolating experience. The relationships rooted in learning (aside from with my chavruta) become long distance, loosely based on infrequent run-ins with classmates in the hallway or terse conversations in the elevator. Our learning is independent of each other, preventing a community from forming, from growing, and from strengthening.

I would love if the community of learners uptown was open to me. I would love if I could join the tradition which President Joel hinted lies within the uptown Beit Midrash. But what I want most of all is to be able to create this culture in Stern. I’m not saying it cannot happen, and I am not saying it will not happen, but right now it is not happening. So I will register for Advanced Talmud II, schedule chavruta time in between labs, and do my best to foster the type of learning that could begin to unify the religious experience at Stern.

Hate Speech: What's to Hate?

By Avigayil Adouth

Freedom of speech is one of the principles upon which our nation was founded. Recently, however some people have become decreasingly concerned with the fundamental idea of free speech, and increasingly concerned with how the content of said speech affects our culture. Most would maintain that it is a privilege to live in a country and attend a university where they are granted the freedom to express their beliefs as they please. Yet as soon as, in the spirit of open discourse, someone expresses an idea which undermines another's own agenda or offends a specific group of people, many are quick to return the affront by villainizing them, accusing them of breaching the code of social ethics and committing the heinous crime of propagating hate speech.

Unfortunately, "hate speech" has become an accusation that can be casually flung at people and their actions both in the political sphere as well as on our campus. What is important to note is that hate speech, so long as its purpose is not to incite violence, is included in our constitutional right to free speech.

The Constitution does not state that Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech *unless it's mean*--it states that Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech. This alone should delegitimize the contemporary tendency to criminalize those guilty of promulgating their racist, sexist, homophobic, antisemitic, and Islamophobic ideas. As immoral and hurtful as the expression of those views may seem, they are not only legal, but are an exercising of our constitutional right.

Yeshiva University is a private institution; it can make its own rules and has the right to enforce speech regulations. YU, however, has no speech codes. This gives unbridled power to the university, allowing it to judge potential offenses on a case-by-case basis. So, while hate speech is not officially banned by the university, the administration reserves the right to arbitrarily decide what it deems inappropriate. This is in essence an enactment of censorship in its most extreme form. By not telling students what they are and are not allowed to say, they both entice outspoken

students to push the envelope of acceptability and discourage the voices of those too scared that their opinions will fall outside of the mysterious bounds of "appropriateness" which the administration has set.

The recent trend to use the Nagel Wall as an instrument for protest, and the reaction to the establishment of the YU Feminists Club, lie at the center of the free speech conversation on campus. Both the tearing down of said protests by fellow students and the hurtful comments made on YU Marketplace in response to the founding of The YU Feminists Club have been likened to "hate speech," which allegedly only seeks to silence the minority voice. In both instances, the original initiatives were valiant attempts by student activists to defend the human rights and fight for social justice of a particular group. The fundamental issue with calling these counter-protests hate speech is that the assumption is that anything which doesn't agree with, or prioritize, fighting for human rights or equality as determined by the *speaker* discriminates *against* the minority group being spoken for, and therefore means to insult them.

Even if we were to accept this flawed reasoning as legitimate and assume that removing a mural or commenting hurtful things on a Facebook page constituted hate speech, it would *still* be important to acknowledge the danger in silencing such actions. The notion that the only way to express a dissenting opinion is to be forced to engage directly with those whose stances you wish to dispute, on their terms, is absurd. Tearing down the mural, albeit cowardly and unimpressive, is as much an expression of disapproval as the construction of one's own mural would be.

The expression of hate speech creates a scenario that allows those who disagree to speak up; it does not delegitimize the positions of those who feel targeted just because it hurts their feelings. Freedom of speech is not some curtain racists and bigots hide behind; racism and bigotry, while revolting and immoral, are both direct expressions of freedom of speech. The lack of speech censorship serves a dual purpose and meets the needs of self expression for all parties. By allowing hate to speak, we protect freedom of speech and self expression. Those who find such speech appalling

remain free to utilize their free speech to challenge the hate, but not to suppress it.

In an attempt to decry the expression of these unpleasant opinions, students call on YU to reprimand the offenders on the grounds that they are students at a Torah institution. Unaware of the fact that YU has no official speech codes, students assert, rightfully so, that the expression of these hurtful views are antithetical to Torah Judaism and ask YU to use that claim as a basis on which to condemn these reprehensible deeds.

As Editor-in-Chief of *The Commentator*, Doron Levine, expressed earlier this year in his editorial, "Not a Theocracy", although YU is guided by Jewish values on an institutional level, it has not historically held its individual students to *halachik* standards. While it is true that hateful remarks are at odds with the decency and common morality that Torah demands of us, and that the university can and should speak out when the views of their students are not in line with the institution's views, the expression of said views does not ask of the university to punish those who espouse them. Asking the university to cast a wide net when it comes to censorship on campus plays directly into their hands. If they, as an administration, have maintained a policy of enforcing speech codes without a codified set of rules, then asking them to censor more than they already have is limiting ourselves in terms of speech that will be deemed acceptable in the future. Narrowing the field of discourse to something much smaller than it should be.

While I do not stand in solidarity with those who hold or express sexist, racist, homophobic, Islamophobic, or even anti-semitic opinions, I respect the rights of individuals to express those opinions. By allowing for, and being receptive to, the voices of others, no matter how extreme or distasteful they may be, we can create a dialogue which allows for people to comfortably express themselves and to develop their own opinions. These extremes, both the offensive and the hypersensitive, are what allow for the very existence of the elusive Maimonidean acme of balance, and give people the ability to cultivate their individualized and nuanced stances.



Jury Duty: Our Civic Duty

By Brian Snow

When I received my summons to jury duty, back in late August, my initial reaction was to attempt to postpone the date when I would need to serve for as long as possible. Luckily, as a student, I had

“A RANDOMLY SELECTED JURY OF REGULAR PEOPLE ENSURES THAT, AT THE VERY LEAST, EVERYONE GETS A FAIR HEARING IN COURT.”

a ready made excuse. I proceeded to happily push off jury duty until the January intersession break. Unfortunately, when January rolled around, I was out of excuses. Now that I was home with no work to do, there was no way that I was going to be able to continue postponing jury duty. I couldn't push it off indefinitely.

When my day of service finally arrived, in mid-January, I proceeded with a groan to the Superior Court of Middlesex County. It didn't help that I was required to arrive extremely early in the morning. As one would expect, the mood at the court was not a happy one. Almost none of the two hundred potential jurors had a smile on their face. It seems that everybody else felt the same way that I did: we were depressed, even frightened, at the thought that we might actually end up on a case. The sense of trepidation in the room was almost palpable. In the background, I could hear people discussing tricks,

techniques, and excuses that would guarantee that they wouldn't get put on a case.

To kick-off the morning, I and the two hundred other potential jurors watched a ten minute video describing the jury process. The video made sure to note how lucky we were to be able to perform our civic duty. Of course, many people paid no attention to the video. About a third of the people in the room had headphones in their ears and were totally tuned out. The rest of us, who were watching, rolled our eyes when we heard the video describe us as “lucky” to perform our “civic duty.”

The worst part of the day was when I was almost selected for the jury of an actual trial. Luckily, before my turn came to be questioned by the judge, the eight needed jurors had already been selected, and I was good to go. As I travelled back home from the court, I pondered whether jury duty actually is a civic duty. The courts extol the importance of being judged by a jury of one's peers. After a day at the Superior Court of Middlesex County, I can attest to why that is and to the tremendous importance of jury duty.

The case I was *almost* placed on was that of a single mother who was suing her insurance company after a small fire broke out in her home. This woman was a regular person, just like the rest of us. One of us could easily have been in her shoes. A jury of one's peers, while not a perfect system, is meant to help ensure that a verdict won't be rigged in favor of one party. In this case, in which a woman was

single handedly taking on a major corporation, one could have been particularly concerned that the decision would be rigged from the start. Absent a jury, what is the likelihood that this woman would actually have been awarded any money? A randomly selected jury of regular people ensures that, at the very least, everyone gets a fair hearing in court.

While I found my day spent at the court relatively boring, and while I will still not be extremely excited when I get my next jury summons, I have developed a greater appreciation for why we are summoned for jury duty. After all, jury duty is not just a day where we are forced to miss work. It is, in fact, our civic duty.



God, Israel, and The Constitution: How to Protect Ourselves

By Elliot Fuchs

Over the past few weeks, the Jewish people have been under assault by anti-semitic threats across the nation. Both our youth, in local Jewish Community Centers, and our deceased, in Jewish cemeteries, have faced hatred as bomb threats and vandalism have been keeping the entire community on its toes.

With President Trump doing little to rectify the situation other than offering not-so-harsh words of rebuke, and with little indication of what, if anything, it will take to protect the Jewish people, it is incumbent upon all Jews to remember how to fight back. Here is how we protect ourselves in a society structured like this one when facing persecution.

It is no secret that, right now, Jews are politically polarized. 70% of Jews across the country vote Democrat, which is comprised of mostly ethnic Jews and ultra-Orthodox Jews. But a large chunk of the Modern Orthodox community is conservative. A Pew Research study noted that 57% of “modern orthodox” Jews lean to the right in 2013. While groups like J-Street and AIPAC offer contrasting views for the American-Israeli partnership and cause Jews to fight politically on a regular basis, we are now presented with an opportunity, albeit an unfortunate one, where Jews can all agree that oppression against our people is (obviously) a bad thing.

Thus far, this moment has transcended partisan politics and we must use this newfound unity to reach out to politicians and force them to take action. We need to continue to make our voices heard and explain that the Jewish community will not stand for this.

We must then also keep the second amendment very close to our hearts and fight to the death for its preservation. We cannot forget that in the days of Nazi Germany, gun control was very strict for all the disfavored minority groups. I am not trying to suggest that modern America is anything like Nazi Germany. But as Ben Shapiro explained, in his infamous gun control debate with Piers Morgan, if our Jewish ancestors were better armed it is likely that 6 million people would not have been slaughtered. In the event these perpetrators end up being some type of racist or anti-religious group like the KKK, we must be ready to fight back.

Perhaps most importantly, we can never cease in our fight for the State of Israel and her continued growth and survival. As proven by the “Raid on Entebbe” in 1976, the State of Israel will come to the aid of her people no matter how dangerous the mission may be. Jews around America can rest assured that they will be safe as long as Israel has a state, an army, and a flourishing economy. This is why Jews everywhere need to fight unapologetically for continued improved relations between America and Israel.

It is incumbent, upon all of us at this scary point in time, to make a very large Kiddush Hashem whenever the opportunity arises. In the event, the rise of anti-Semitism continues to grow in America, we will need all of the allies we can get. Additionally, keeping God happy in difficult times, is probably a good idea.

The theme of much of what is outlined here is smart foreign policy and effectively utilizes the rights granted to us by the Constitution. Luckily, the Constitution, as



currently structured and understood, is designed to protect all people. And if the laws of the constitution are kept intact the way it was originally designed; to protect all people, we Jews will have a place where we can live in freedom. It is when the word of our founding document becomes malleable that we must be concerned that those perverting its essence may try to do us harm.

The (Sometimes) Uncomfortable Truth

By Emily Firestone

Students at Yeshiva University are not generally attacked for their pro-Israel views and often feel comfortable discussing them publicly. But how about when out and about in the city? When visiting a friend on a secular college campus? In the office of an internship or a job? The discomfort tends to increase as one gets farther and farther away from a comfort zone.

What if you find yourself in a discussion out of your comfort zone and someone asks you if you support the building settlements in the West Bank (or Judea and Samaria)? Would you yield to what you think the person wants to hear? Would you even have an answer?

It has come to my attention that there is a sense of uncertainty, hesitation, and tension around the topic of showcasing one's pro-Israel stances in the urban setting of New York City. Some express concerns for their safety. Strong and sometimes scary political opinions have endured from the recent Presidential election. Especially in New York City, with a diverse population of approximately eight and a half million people, one can never feel too confident and safe expressing a pro-Israel viewpoint. I say this because it

is not uncommon to hear of acts of intolerance against pro-Israel advocates. But there is a deeper root. As Jewish college students, we hear about attacks against fellow students across the world on various campuses. But psychologically, people don't really think they will be victimized. So what is it that's holding these Israel supporters back from expressing themselves?

I think that students feel uneasy to showcase or even openly discuss their pro-Israel views because of a lack of confidence in the information--the cold facts. In a world full of attacks against Israel and loads of controversy all over the news, students can be easily intimidated by all the details. The truth is, however, that this is exactly the reason why it is crucial to stand up and speak out in support of Israel. By attributing these feelings of uncertainty, hesitation, and tension to the topic of Israel, it further strengthens the belief that Israel should not be supported.

Of course, it is crucial to get educated and read up about the very complex issues surrounding Israel and the Middle East, but this information is not required in order to outwardly support Israel. Everyone has the right to express their views. Most students are not majoring in political science or Middle Eastern studies. There should not be an expectation of sophisticated

understanding of all the history and laws when it comes to supporting Israel. It is perfectly valid to say "I don't know" if someone responds to your pro-Israel stance with something you are unfamiliar with.

If you are seeking information to bolster your pro-Israel knowledge, there are many opportunities both on and off campus. In addition to the many easily accessible websites and YouTube videos, the YU Israel Club constantly hosts speakers and events to help broaden our awareness of the topic.

There is a well known saying that "people respect people who respect themselves". This is very fitting in this context. We must not bend and just say what others want to hear. If we truly support Israel, we must stand up and not hide our views. We must not allow the conversation of Israel to continue with negative connotations. It is up to us to set the tone.

I am not advising stirring up controversy. There truly are situations that are uncomfortable that don't require confrontation. There are times when a liberal is found in a room full of conservatives and times when a conservative is found in a room full of liberals. In that case, which I have personally experienced, it is of no use to begin to forcefully insert your opinion. There is much tension between the left and right wings when

it comes to political associations, but it is absolutely crucial to remember that Israel is a bipartisan issue. Israel is an ally of the United States of America, and there is no use to arguing on this point. The successful way of advocacy is to become associated with spreading truth, not furthering your agenda or feeling the need to get your own personal thoughts out there. This does not have to be a formal debate, we are talking about slowly shifting public opinion. And students play a big role in this.

Average Americans hear about Israel primarily when it is at the forefront of the news. There are terrible inaccuracies about Israel in the media and they determine how Israel is portrayed in the public sphere. Unfortunately, sometimes people that are pro-Israel and know that lies are being spread about Israel are unable to shake the feelings, mentioned above, that are connected with these lies. The way to move past this is by clarifying the point of misunderstanding. Then, there can be an "agree to disagree" conclusion to a discussion. One thing you can do to take action against false reporting is by working with CAMERA which is the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America. This organization works to correct mistakes in media. If you find an inaccuracy you can and should report it. This is taking action.

Only a small percentage of people (about 10%) will be strongly pro-Israel and another small percentage of people (about 10%) will be strongly anti-Israel. The truth is that the majority of people do not have a strong opinion! There is not so much use in trying to influence the opinions of people who are already starkly opposed to supporting Israel, but it is valuable to influence people who hold no opinion.

Many students at Yeshiva University feel pro-Israel and overlook the responsibilities of speaking out their support. It is so crucial to be confident and unapologetic through the city we find ourselves in and the various people around us. Students can make a real difference and change the perception of Israel but to do this, the uncertainty, hesitation, and tension has got to go.



Verizon Brings Back the Unlimited Plan

By Isaac Greenberg

This past week, Verizon began offering an Unlimited data plan for the first time since July 2011, despite Verizon's CFO saying a year ago that the unlimited model does not work. Verizon reestablished this plan as a response to the "price war" between cell phone service companies. David Eger, a senior equity analyst with Edwards Jones, commented that "Verizon was sitting out here as the only one that didn't have an offering," since AT&T, Sprint, and T-Mobile all offer unlimited plans, and Verizon realized it needed a similar plan to remain competitive. A main driver behind Verizon's specific decision to bring back unlimited data, as well as their general competitive strategy, is that last quarter T-Mobile added 857,000 and Sprint added 347,000 customers, while Verizon lost 36,000. Verizon hopes that their new plan will significantly change these numbers in the upcoming quarter.

Verizon's new plan costs \$80 for one line and \$180 for four lines, which is expensive compared to Sprint and T-Mobile who offers the single line for \$60 and \$70 and the 4 lines for \$160. Rounding out the competition is AT&T, which has an astronomical single line price of \$100, though they have the same \$180 price as Verizon for four lines.

Investors see many benefits, along with some negatives, in the new plan. For example, there has been a lot of excitement about the new plan, which is leading to new



customers. Though the plan has only been around for a very short time, Verizon's President of Operations John Stratton said at a Deutsche Bank conference earlier this month that "we've seen a pretty huge rush to unlimited." In the past few years, the hot topic of conversation when it comes to cell phone carriers is no longer about which carrier provides the most data. Instead, it is about which carrier provides the fastest and most reliable service. This is where Verizon shines, and they have been getting a lot more attention from customers, investors, and the media.

There are two significant drawbacks for Verizon with this new unlimited plan. The first is that although they will be getting significantly more customers, their top paying customers' bills will go down significantly. In other words, those customers that were using a ton of data—and frequently paying penalties when they exceeded their data allowance—will now be able to pay a flat fee for the unlimited data and avoid all penalties. A second drawback is that Verizon will now have to spend a lot of money on maintaining their super fast network. It is estimated that they will be spending \$11.3 billion in the upcoming months to maintain the high speed network. That is a sizable sum

compared to the \$5.1 billion T-Mobile will spend.

The Verizon unlimited plan costs slightly more than T-Mobile, but that is fully justified because of the superiority of the Verizon network. In terms of how the plan will affect the other carriers, before debuting their unlimited plan, T-Mobile had 3 times as many new subscribers as Verizon. Since then, that number has dropped to as low as .8 times Verizon's new subscribers. Given that they can no longer compete with Verizon by having an unlimited plan, T-Mobile is now trying to compete by reducing the number of customers that are leaving to other carriers, a metric commonly known as churn. From 2013 to 2016, churn fell from 1.69% to 1.3%, and if T-Mobile can maintain this, it is their best way to try to compete with Verizon.

I believe that now that Verizon has come out with an unlimited plan, customers from all other carriers will be flocking to Verizon. This is because not only is Verizon known to have the best coverage, but now they also have all the data you want. Increasing revenue due to an influx of customers should be extremely beneficial for investors in Verizon too. In 2016, 10 trillion megabytes of data were used—and this is more than double the usage in 2014. This growth is expected to continue to grow with a growing appetite to watch YouTube videos, go on Facebook, and send Snapchats. At a time when data usage is on the rise, adding an unlimited data plan is inherently risky, but it's a move that Verizon had to make to remain competitive.

Is a Trade Deficit Bad?

By Mendel Harlig

People point to it in horror. Many politicians claim it manifests the decline of the United States as an economic superpower. Our current president states it is here because of our horrible trade deals. It is our nation's trade deficit, and it has been the source of much attention and controversy in recent months.

A trade deficit is created when a country has a negative balance of payments. A balance of payments is, simply, the difference in value between payments into and out of a country. It consists of two accounts, a current account and a financial account. The current account records the exports and imports of goods and services, investment income received or sent abroad, and secondary income (current transfers, such as works' pensions) received or sent abroad. Exports, as well as investment income and secondary income received from abroad, are called credit transactions. Imports, as well as investment income and secondary income paid to foreign residents, are called debit transactions. Therefore, if the credit amount exceeds the debit amount in the current account, there is a current account surplus. On the other hand, if the debit amount exceeds the credit account, the current account is in a deficit.

The financial account records the buying and selling of financial assets such as stocks, bonds, and real estate. Net borrowing is when residents of a country have sold more financial assets than it bought. Net lending is when residents of a country have bought more financial assets than sold. For instance, if foreign residents purchased \$50,000 of financial assets in the United States, while residents from the United States only purchased \$30,000 of financial assets, the United States would have a financial account deficit. The term deficit is used because selling a financial asset guarantees a liability in the future, whether it is dividends or paying the principal amount invested with interest.

The current account must equal the financial account, just like the assets must equal the liabilities plus the owner's equity in accounting. For example, if there is a \$10,000 deficit in the capital account, there must be a \$10,000 deficit in the financial account. The reason why there must be parity is because no one will trade something if they're going to receive something less or nothing in return. If person A gives person B 5 cars and person B can only pay for 2 cars, person A will not do the trade unless there is something else person A will receive for the remaining 3 cars. But if person A sells an asset to person B, then person A will have the money to purchase the remaining three

cars. However, person A will be bound to the liabilities of the asset sold whether it is a bond or stock etc. Another example is a company that needs money to help grow their business. They thus want to trade for people's money. However, no person will trade his/her money for nothing in return—the company does not have any commodity to give in exchange. The company therefore issues bonds or stock in exchange for money. There is sometimes a discrepancy between the current account and capital account due to large amount of transactions occurring daily between residents of a country and foreign residents, as opposed to accounting where you are solely recording the transactions of one company.

The ability to borrow from abroad allows a country's total investment to exceed its total savings. In a closed economy, savings must equal investment. Savings is defined as the supply and investment is defined as the demand because the savings satisfies the need for money from borrowers. In economic terms, savings is the same thing as investing, i.e. where an individual is taking their extra money and investing it in stocks, bonds, or other assets, and investment is borrowing—for instance, a company issues stock in order to obtain cash to grow the company. If investment exceed savings, the interest rate increases and puts downward pressure on investment leading to a decrease in investment. But in an open economy, investment can exceed savings because residents can borrow from abroad. Additionally, if savings exceeds investment in a country and residents don't want to obtain a low interest rate, residents can invest abroad and obtain a higher interest rate. Therefore, a country that invests more than it saves will import savings from abroad; a country that saves more than it invests will export its savings to other countries.

The trade balance is largely determined by the financial account. Exchanges of financial assets occur more often and quicker than the exchanges in the goods market—the current account—due to electronics and technology. Thus, transactions pertaining to the financial account dictate the exchange rate of a country, which itself is determined by supply and demand. When a country increases its exports of goods or foreign residents purchase financial assets in the country, the demand for the currency goes up, causing the country's currency to appreciate because foreign residents need the country's currency to purchase exports or financial assets. When a country increases its imports of goods or the residents purchase financial assets, the demand for the currency goes down because the country needs to exchange some of its currency for foreign currency to buy imports and

foreign countries' financial assets. The balance of the financial account largely determines the movement of the exchange rate because it happens more often and quicker. Therefore, if the United States is investing more than it is saving, it will have a net borrowing in its financial account—the dollar will appreciate due to the many different countries purchasing financial assets in the United States. A stronger dollar makes exports more expensive for foreign countries to purchase and it makes imports cheaper for domestic consumers because they can purchase more with their dollar. This leads to an imbalance in the current account as well.

A trade deficit is not necessarily a bad thing and a trade surplus is not necessarily a good thing. The deficit is mainly determined through macroeconomic policy, an imbalance of savings and investment. Generally, when an economy is expanding, it incurs a trade deficit in order to increase growth. This occurs in business as well—when a company takes on debt, it doesn't mean that the company is necessarily in trouble. Instead, taking on debt is simply a way for the company to raise money to fund future operations and growth. A country is just the aggregate of all of its residents' investment plus the government's budget. If the government is unable to balance the budget with taxes, it must import savings from abroad. When the government contributes to the trade deficit it is more likely to have negative consequences because many times the money is not directly used for growth, as opposed to individual companies which mainly borrow to increase revenue.

If a country's growth is greater than the liabilities it's owed due to a deficit, than it can be argued that the increase of investment over savings is a good thing. On the flipside, if the country's growth is less than the liabilities owed, it can be a problem. However, many times the deficit is fixed automatically. In the case where the growth is less than the liabilities incurred through investment, the foreign residents that put their saving in the country will get a lower return which will lead to less foreign residents willing to put their savings in the country. If there is less savings available, investment must decrease which will lower the deficit. This is why a recession is one of the quickest ways to lower the deficit because all savings flood out of the country because people are worried they might lose all their savings. Before you panic when you see a trade deficit and be content when you see a trade surplus, it is critical to look at the underlying macroeconomic policy and GDP growth of the particular country.

The Essentials of Workplace Culture

By Daniel Ferber

In our generation, more than ever before, a strong workplace culture is an essential quality for a company's success. However, what exactly is "workplace culture"? In simple terms, workplace culture is the environment that a company provides for its employees. Ideally, each individual employee should have values that are consistent with those manifested throughout the overall company. Workplace culture is the formula that guides the team, motivates the employees, and attracts additional talent to the company.

The necessity of workplace culture is a recent phenomenon. According to the Bureau of Labor statistics, for the first time in history, millennials represent the largest generation in the United States labor force. Another study, done by the Deloitte University Press claimed that the number one challenge in today's workplace landscape is culture and engagement. Being that the millennial employee averages a tenure of two years, it becomes apparent that they directly contribute to the dilemma in today's workplace, a lack of loyalty and stability. As a result, it's clear that in order to attract, retain, and engage the modern workforce, companies must intensify their focus on improving company culture.

Companies need to be asking themselves what they can do to build and improve upon their culture. One of the most important qualities people want to see in a potential employer is flexibility. A recent study from PwC has shown that eighty-six percent of large-company workers would strongly prefer a more flexible overall experience. This flexibility primarily entails a greater control over their schedule. A Bentley University study indicated that seventy-seven percent of millennials believe that a flexible schedule will improve their overall productivity. Another vital detail that prospective employees take into account while searching for a job is a certain relationship with their potential co-workers. This relationship consists of shared passions, shared interests, and, most importantly, a strong group dynamic. With approximately eight out of ten employees preferring group work to independent

work, companies must share this millennial passion for a group dynamic. This can be examined further than simply doing group projects; a strong group dynamic requires an overall sense of unity within the firm. This unity can be defined by a shared vision and is created in an open, engaging workplace.

The Amazon subsidiary, Zappos, has become the paradigm of a company that has mastered its group dynamic and overall enjoyable workplace culture. Tony Hsieh, the CEO of Zappos, claims that "[Zappos'] number one priority is company culture," so he formalized ten core values and aligned his company around them. The employees receive free breakfast and lunch, a 40% discount on merchandise, access to nap rooms, and have monthly team outings. These are some of the reasons that explain why, annually, only 13% of employees leave Zappos on a voluntary basis, whereas 7% are let go on an involuntary basis for various reasons. Concurrently, there are approximately 300 new Zappos employees hired on an annual basis, and amazingly, there are over 30,000 resumes submitted each year to Zappos' recruitment department for those 300 job openings. The direct correlation between Zappos' workplace culture and the dedication of their employees is clear. Companies must emulate Zappos' approach to workplace culture in order



"IN ORDER TO ATTRACT, RETAIN, AND ENGAGE THE MODERN WORKFORCE, COMPANIES MUST INTENSIFY THEIR FOCUS ON IMPROVING COMPANY CULTURE."

to keep the modern workforce engaged and motivated.

Depending on the country, the vision of the ideal workplace culture varies. One factor that causes this contrast is any given country's relationship with power and authority. The culture in Israel is the quintessential example of a unique approach to authority. Although a hierarchy of power does exist there, it is often overlooked for increased participation from top management to the bottom, where everyone has a say. The extent of this disregard for localized power is evidenced by Israel's ranking on the Power Distance Index, a measurement of how much a country's population accepts unequal power distribution within its culture. Israel ranks second from the bottom of countries that do not accept unequal power distribution. In other words, Israelis heavily disregard the power of "higher-ups" and want to have a say. Another detail deeply ingrained into the Israeli culture is direct confrontation. While in other countries there is a tendency to communicate virtually or through a messenger, Israelis believe open, blunt verbal communication to be the most effective. Reflecting on the shared values of direct communication and an informal environment in the Israeli workplace, companies should incorporate these methods into their core operations if they want to arouse interest in potential employees. No matter the country, a strong workplace culture is, and is increasingly becoming the driving force in a company's future success.

The Real Estate Club: Education and Preparation

By Noam Zolty and Evan Axelrod

For any student with an interest in the real estate industry, there is no better place to start than the Real Estate Club of Yeshiva University. In short, the goal of the club is to introduce the YU student body to a broad range of topics regarding real estate and to provide club members with unique social, career-oriented, and professional networking opportunities with real estate professionals. This is an ideal opportunity for any student who wishes to be equipped with the knowledge, network, and resources to pursue a successful career in real estate. Founded in 2005, this club has grown to over 100 students, and with three or more events a semester has become one of the most visible and active clubs on campus. The club hopes to attract students with any inclination towards real estate, whether they already have advanced knowledge of the business or if they are curious novices ready to take on the industry.

One of the highlights of the club is the newsletter, which is published by the club leadership twice a month. It is comprised of several different sections, each of which gives the reader crucial information on the current state of the industry. The top of the newsletter includes a brief summary of the recent trends within the sector. Becoming familiar with trends in real estate is important for anyone with plans of having conversations with professionals in the near future. In addition, there is a section titled the Real Estate Executive of the Week, which gives a brief biography of a successful individual within the world of real estate. Right below that is a section called the Book of the Week. This is particularly intriguing, as professionals within real estate profess to how crucial it is to have a deep understanding of how investing in real estate works. The best way to

acquire the necessary knowledge is to read the books that explain many of the intricacies of the trade and detail famous real estate magnates and firms. Other highlights of the newsletter include a Real Estate Term of the Week, different charts and figures that offer insights on different metrics and indexes within the industry, and a list of interesting articles that familiarize readers with new developments. The main highlight of the newsletter is the interview with a selected real estate professional. In the most recent issue, the Real Estate Club interviewed Benjamin Blumenthal, a Yeshiva University alumnus, and currently a managing director at Norman Bobrow, a

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real estate firm based in New York City. The questions posed to Mr. Blumenthal focused on why he chose real estate as a profession, the aspects that were particularly attractive to him, and the challenges that he faces. He also shared key advice for those who wish to enter the field and described the qualities that are necessary to have in order to succeed in real estate.

As previously noted, the club organizes many events during the course of the academic year. These include guest speakers, many of whom have been extremely successful in their careers. The club

recently hosted David Robinov, an Investment Sales Director at Ackman-Ziff. Mr. Robinov has thirty years of experience in the retail area of real estate, which includes regional and strip malls. At the event, he shared some valuable insights on what brings value and success in the real estate market from the perspectives of an owner, retailer, and broker. The club is also planning on organizing a real estate fair, which will offer the opportunity to interact with an array of real estate professionals, from various fields within the industry. This event is sure to generate much interest from the student body.

Despite the Real Estate Club already becoming a great success on campus, the leaders of the Club have great aspirations to take it even further. They plan on creating a network of Yeshiva University Alumni as well as other Jewish Real Estate professionals and have them mentor and offer advice to students who wish to take the next step into the professional world of real estate. The club hopes to be able to help set up their members with the knowledge and expertise they will need to succeed in real estate from their first day on the job. In addition to the external network it hopes to develop, the club has goals for an internal network of Yeshiva University students as well, as it plans to team up with the Hospitality Management Club for future events. Matthew Stadtmauer, the president of the club, summarized the purpose of the club: "The idea of the club is to educate individuals to the point where they are knowledgeable and can keep up a conversation about real estate. Ultimately, we hope that this knowledge will help students procure good jobs and give Yeshiva University a prestigious name in the industry." By making these goals a reality, the club aspires to make Yeshiva University one of the premier destinations for students who have ambitions to succeed in the real estate industry.

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Present

Preparing for Pesach

A MORNING OF LEARNING & RECONNECTING

Sunday, April 2 / 6 Nisan

8:45AM SHACHARIS

FOLLOWED BY LIGHT BREAKFAST

YOUNG ISREL OF QUEENS VALLEY: 141-55 77 AVE. FLUSHING, NY



9:45AM

RAV SHMUEL MARCUS

MARA D'ASRA & MAGGID SHIUR,
LANDER COLLEGE BEIS MEDRASH

10:15AM

RAV YEHUDA WILLIG

MAGGID SHIUR, YU & RABBI OF CAMP HASC



10:45AM

RAV JUDAH MISCHHEL

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAMP HASC

RSVP for Babysitting: events@CampHASC.org

www.CampHASC.org