

The COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva College, Sy Syms School of Business, and Yeshiva University



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Issue 9

Yeshiva University Celebrates the Ordination of the Classes of 5775–5777 at its Chag HaSemikhah



President-Elect Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman addresses a capacity crowd in Lamport Auditorium at the recent Chag HaSemikhah. On the left-hand side of the stage in the front row, from left to right, sit President Emeritus Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, current President Richard Joel, YU Board Member (and uncle of President-Elect Berman) Rabbi Julius Berman, and Chairman of the Board of RIETS Rabbi Joel Schreiber.

Sy Syms Student Population Overtakes Yeshiva College, Beren Enrollment Down Nearly 200 Since 2013

By Avi Strauss

According to the latest data revealed by YU's Office of Institutional Research, the Wilf Sy Syms student population has surpassed Yeshiva College's for the first time ever, becoming the larger of the two undergraduate programs on the men's campus. This follows a five year trend of the Sy Syms student body increasing in size.

As per the report, there are 525 undergraduate men in Sy Syms and 500 in YC. The numbers in the data set indicated diverged slightly from the numbers released by the Office of Student Life for student council elections, to be held later this week. Candidates are required to collect signatures from a third of the student body they seek to represent.

The report also indicated total enrollment at the Beren campus is currently 885, down from 1,092 in 2013.

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Why the Student Constitution Is Invalid

By David Rubinstein

This year's student election ballots will ask you to ratify an amendment to the constitution. As you cast your vote, keep in mind that the constitution, and as a result, any amendment to it, is invalid.

The student constitution of the Wilf Campus is invalid for three reasons.

First, we have no official record of its ratification. A constitution is valid only if it is accepted by the people it's supposed to bind. Did a majority of the student body vote to accept the constitution? There's no way to know.

As far as we know, it could be that some years ago, three assorted student council buffs seeking to pad their pre-law resumes and parcel out political power to their favorite rising seniors sat down in the old basement lounge of Morgenstern and concocted the document that is supposed to be binding on all male undergraduate students of Yeshiva University for all of posterity. After they saved their work as a PDF, they may have laughed about how they pulled the wool over their schoolmates' eyes

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Syms to Launch New Master's in Taxation this Fall

The EDITORIAL

Defending Rav Schachter From His Defenders

By Doron Levine

Passion carries greater risk than apathy. An indifferent stoic may find himself guilty of callous insensitivity, but passivity has limited destructive potential. A riled zealot, on the other hand, if he fails to think through the implications of his ire, is a roaming hazard, not only to the objects of his wrath but to the very ideology he professes to champion. By jealously defending his views with an ardor not governed by wisdom and prudence, he does his own religion a disservice.

I'm speaking of individuals who leveled a certain sort of criticism against *The Commentator* for its coverage of Rav Schachter's actions concerning Rabbi Klapper's appearance at YU. Under the pretense of defending the honor of an outstanding *talmid chacham*, some eagerly excoriated *The Commentator* for publishing Rav Schachter's opinion in a pair of news articles.

In so doing, these people ignored the words of Rav Schachter himself. When I approached Rav Schachter on behalf of *The Commentator* to inquire about his taking down a sign for Rabbi Klapper's shiur, he agreed to be interviewed for the newspaper, willingly offered a comment, and even stated, "you can quote me on that if you want." The claim that *The Commentator* disrespected Rav Schachter by performing an action that Rav Schachter explicitly permitted is outrageous.

You cannot criticize *The Commentator* for quoting Rav Schachter without disputing Rav Schachter's attendant permission to publish his statement. So unless you neglected to think through your righteous anger to its proper conclusion, your indignation at *The Commentator* is perhaps more insulting to Rav Schachter than it is respectful. Does a *talmid chacham* need to be defended from his own opinions? Can't he express them without his very *talmidim* denouncing their publication? This attempt to defend Rav Schachter is doubtless motivated by an admirable impulse to guard the Torah's honor by defending one of its preeminent expositors against the perceived perennial scourge of journalistic treachery. But even if skirmishes between journalism and traditional authority do occasionally erupt, in this particular instance any conflict is wholly imagined.

In a speech to the Glueck Beit Midrash about this controversy, Dean of RIETS Rabbi Menachem Penner seemed to absolve all relevant parties of responsibility other than the newspaper itself. According to Rabbi Penner, Rabbi Klapper "was set up for failure" since he was probably invited to lecture on this controversial topic; the organizers of the shiur presumably had pure motivations (Rabbi Penner clarified this in a brief second speech to the Beit Midrash); and Rav Schachter, provoked by the presence of the signs on the doors to the Beit Midrash, "said nothing publicly—*The Commentator* did."

I cannot emphasize enough that Rabbi Penner's evaluation of Rav Schachter's statement is mistaken – if telling a newspaper reporter that he may quote you does not make your statement public, I lose any grasp I thought I had on the parameters of that classification. By erroneously claiming that Rav Schachter's statement was not made publicly, Rabbi Penner shifted the responsibility for this controversy away from the parties directly involved and onto the shoulders of the newspaper that simply published the facts.

Rabbi Penner then urged the Beit Midrash crowd, "Let's not talk by reading *The Commentator* Why don't we actually talk about the issues?" This statement alone is odd. Granted, reading and conversing are two independent activities, but often what we read provides ripe material for fruitful conversation. In this case, discussions about this matter would most probably not have transpired if not for *The Commentator*'s coverage. So Rabbi Penner's call to discuss these issues but avoid reading *The Commentator* is as counterintuitive as it is alarming.

More to the point, though, Rabbi Penner's exhortation to "not talk by reading *The Commentator*" further fueled the perception of some that the newspaper was somehow the antihero of this drama. If we must play the blame game (though honestly I'd prefer to sit this round out), it seems to me that indicting only the newspaper for causing this kerfuffle

is, considering the evidence, unjust and untenable. While it is true that Rav Schachter might not have offered his statement had *The Commentator* not approached him, it is also true that Rav Schachter would not have offered his statement had Rabbi Klapper not come to speak at YU. And it is also true that Rav Schachter would not have offered his statement had Rav Schachter not offered his statement. *The Commentator* made the decision to publish an article about these events, but there would have been nothing to write about had the events not occurred.

This situation touches on fundamental questions about our religious leadership. Why are many Rav Schachter *talmidim* upset with *The Commentator*, and why did Rabbi Penner feel the need to address this situation at all? There seems to be a widespread perception that something bad has happened here, something problematic. But what is so concerning about our religious leader expressing his opinion?

To the extent that theological issues are at play here, I am no theologian; and to the extent that halachic issues are at play here, I am no halachist. But it is clear even to us laymen that Rav Schachter meant what he said; he unequivocally and unabashedly expressed an opinion which, if we took it seriously, would have practical relevance to university policy. So unless you think that what Rav Schachter said is wrong, what exactly is the problem here? Every ideological community has its boundaries, and Rav Schachter stated where he thinks ours should be. It seems incongruous to turn to our rabbeim for matters of serious halachic import but then to fall into disoriented turmoil when they offer pertinent socio-religious assessments. People with respect for Rav Schachter's religious leadership should be pleased rather than bothered when his opinions become public knowledge.

One segment of Rabbi Penner's speech touched on this matter. He asked, "Can you have alternative views and still be a part of the YU community? And can you even perhaps speak on campus if you have a different view?" He answered, "The answer has been, and remains: yes." He qualified, "Roshei Yeshiva do not insist that you agree with them. But if you ask them what they think of something, they might just answer you. If you ask them for their opinion, then you may have to deal with whatever that opinion is if that's what you asked for."

In apparent disagreement with Rav Schachter's position that Rabbi Klapper should not be allowed to speak at YU, Rabbi Penner maintained that even "if you have a different view" you can still "speak on campus." His subsequent qualification, that if you ask for a Rosh Yeshiva's opinion "then you may have to deal with whatever that opinion is if that's what you asked for," raises myriad questions. Does it imply that we should "deal with" Rav Schachter's opinion in this instance, given that I asked for it? Does dealing with an opinion entail accepting and complying with its directives? Can dealing with the opinion of a Rosh Yeshiva involve *rejecting* it? And why shouldn't we eagerly approach our religious leaders to ask for their advice on *all* matters of spiritual import instead of grudgingly moving to "deal with whatever [their] opinion is" on a *post facto* basis?

Rabbi Penner explained that he is "often in the uncomfortable position of being the boss of the people who are the Roshei Yeshiva." His discomfort is quite understandable since our university doubles as a religious community with an ancient tradition of viewing its premier Torah scholars as authorities on matters of communal policy. So what exactly is the relationship between the authority of the administrators and the authority of the Roshei Yeshiva? Does the boss of the Roshei Yeshiva just serve as a point person, directing questions about YU's religious policies to their rightful arbiters? To what degree can and should administrators use their personal judgment to determine which policy questions are brought to the Roshei Yeshiva in the first place? Is there room for administrators to exercise unilateral authority once the Roshei Yeshiva have made their relevant opinions clear?

These meta-policy questions seem to touch on matters of religious outlook, if not strict religious law. Should we address them to the Roshei Yeshiva?

The COMMENTATOR

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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 Birkat Hachama
Remember when we had that on Erev Pesach like 8 years ago? No? Okay.



2 TAC Presidential Race
No one is running for Stern's Torah Activities Council seat (but actually). So here are our recommendations for write-in candidates: Mickey Mouse; Cabey (the guy who grills up a mean burger in the Wilf Caf); Debbie Beaudreau; Akiva Marder; Rabbi Aryeh Klapper; and Dean Chaim Nissel.



3 #NotMyProblem
Listen, President Joel, whether you like it or not, nothing tops the foreboding #PJ'sLastShabbat.



4 Recent Canvas Notifications
These dope emails consistently arrive in our inboxes every day between 6:00-6:15 PM. I went through some serious withdrawal over Pesach without this daily fix.



5 Gary Feder
Shoutout to the world's greatest gabbai. This tzaddik always ensures that our tired and weary 8:30 Minyan Morg-ers get from Birchot HaShachar to Shema to Morning Seder safely and without any trouble.



6 Post-Pesach Bochrin
Okay, we all know how funny it is to offer them wrong directions or bad registration advice, but give these guys a break. They just got back from learning in Netiv for two and a half years.



7 Pink Flowers in Front of Rubín
Much like your expectations on your first day at YU, they're bright and beautiful, but wither away and die within two weeks

7 UP 7 DOWN



1 United Airlines Scandal
And the award for the biggest public policy disaster this year so far goes to... those guys who dragged a bleeding man off a plane! Way to go, United.



2 Starting Tachanun Again
It's gonna be tough, but, luckily, we have Gary Feder to help us through these difficult times.



3 Construction on 185th
We've had this as a 7down twice already, but we'd like to propose a new theory for this absurdly long project: Right under the noses of the Roshei Yeshiva, YU is building a tunnel leading directly to Stern. You heard it here first.



4 Westboro Baptist Church
Comes to YU (except six blocks away) and chants some anti-Semitic nonsense during heavy rain, before proceeding to be forgotten about forever.



5 Fidget Spinners
Judging by the amount of Syms students using them, there's no way that these toys are helping anyone focus in class.



6 Really Complicated Wi-Fi Passwords
It's actually just one universal password, and here it is:
f934jflaFwGWD!&jfo(kumqUat4Ffk@2j4



7 Huge Pile of Snow in Front of Rubín
Much like your expectations on your first day at YU, it started out kind of interesting, but quickly became a pile of gross annoyance that took forever to melt away, and, even when it did, left a sight that isn't all that pretty.

No Date for Expected 16 Handles Opening

By Nathan Feifel

Anticipation has grown in the recent past about the prospect of a 16 Handles branch opening in the Washington Heights area. The store will be the latest addition to the list of kosher eateries in Washington Heights. Currently, the closest 16 Handles to YU's Wilf Campus is located on the Upper West Side.

According to the frozen yogurt company's website, the new store is going to be located at 400 Audobon Avenue, NY 10033. However, when asked about the status of the upcoming store and its expected opening date, 16 Handles' Community Manager Sean Gunner stated, "At this point, we don't have any new information to share."

Jack Ganchrow, a Syms junior majoring in Marketing, expressed his eagerness for the new location to open. "When I heard 16 Handles was coming to the YU area, I got so excited. It will definitely be a popular spot for friends to hang out. I guess I will have to remain ... patient."

Gunner added that he would reach out when new information was confirmed, but that at the moment, there is no update on the anticipated store.

Yeshiva College Core Updated Again with Expanded Exemptions for NAWO and EXQM

By Avi Strauss

The Yeshiva College Core Curriculum received another update on March 29, with changes made to the Natural World (NAWO) and Experimental and Quantitative Methods (EXQM) requirements. The change was made after a YC faculty vote, and means students will be able to fulfill those requirements with a broader range of courses.

For NAWO, this means students can satisfy their requirement with either a specific NAWO course-offering or a college-level natural science course. Students will be able to fulfill their EXQM requirement in a similar fashion, either with an EXQM offering or one designated college-level course in experimental and quantitative methods.

"I was pleasantly surprised to hear that they lifted the NAWO requirement for science-majors," commented YC Junior Akiva Schiff. "Although, in general, I have enjoyed the Core courses, most science majors seem to have considered this one as an unnecessary burden given their strong background in the subject. With one less requirement, I plan to take an elective course which, otherwise, I would have been unable to take."

Both NAWO and EXQM are the more science-heavy interdisciplinary requirements of the seven-course secular studies Core, which also includes requirements in areas like contemporary world cultures, the creative arts, and social institutions, all of which sit at the intersection of multiple fields of study.

This update is just the latest fine-tuning to take place in regards to YC's Core. Last spring, several changes were made, including updates to the Bible requirements and the substitution of the First Year Seminar requirement in favor of a writing-intensive course within a student's chosen major.

While the news was welcome among students yet to take NAWO or EXQM but now in position to gain exemptions from those requirements, other students felt the decision came too late for them.

One YC Senior, majoring in Biology, explained, "It's great for future students who won't have to expend extra credits on a redundant class. I only wish this happened sooner so I could have taken an additional advanced science elective."

From the time of the Core Curriculum's inception, many science majors felt that the NAWO course was redundant and merely a simplified version of their other courses. Conversely, non-science majors complained that the science majors, many of whom had already mastered these science concepts at much more advanced levels, made the caliber of the courses too demanding and exceedingly difficult by driving up the grading curve. This attitude has persisted, so the recent NAWO policy update will surely soothe these common complaints about the course.

To combat this problem while it still existed, several semesters ago NAWO course-offerings were split -- one section for non-science majors and one for science majors. This change, however, proved short-lived in light of the latest revision to the Core.

During the current semester, there was only one NAWO course offering. According to MYU, that section is at capacity with ninety students.

The Commentator will provide updates on this story as information surrounding these changes becomes clearer.

President Joel Addresses Community in Final Town Hall Meeting of Presidency

By Etan Vann

On the evening of March 29, President Richard Joel held the last town hall meeting of his presidency. The town hall meetings have been a forum that President Joel established to allow for more communications between the YU community and its president about goings-on in the university.

As is typically the case, the meeting began with the president relaying over university news, followed by his taking questions from students in attendance. In this final meeting, President Joel also gave some closing remarks of his feelings towards the university and its students in light of his waning presidency.

The President began with an update on the construction of the 185th Street pedestrian plaza. He announced that while the work on the gas lines is done, the construction will block entrance to Glueck from the 185th Street door and require entry from Amsterdam Avenue instead. He said the project is scheduled to be finished by the fall.

President Joel said he will be stepping down from office on May 30 and Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman will assume the presidency on June 4.

He also mentioned that as per a recent article published in US News, Yeshiva University's Cardozo Law School is now ranked 67th in the country.

President Joel announced a variety of new degree tracks, including the Associate's in Management and a joint BS and MSW 4-year track, which are set to be launched in September. He spoke of an Arabic class being reintroduced through Revel in the fall and expressed his condolences over the loss of longtime Professor Louis Feldman.

After the updates, the floor was opened for questions. The first questioner asked the President about his fondest memories of YU. The President eloquently answered that he is driven by his memories of YU's students, who show the world why we are here and what we are doing.

The next student asked about the perception that Beren Campus students often feel second class to their uptown counterparts. President Joel responded that he believes that this is a false sentiment, and that both campuses have their own advantages and disadvantages. He particularly

highlighted the differences to be the separate Judaic and secular tracks which exist uptown whereas downtown has a mixed schedule. In addition, he noted that Beren does not have the same presence of Mashgichim and other Torah personalities as does Wilf. President Joel also stated that he wished that night *sefer* would grow on the Beren campus.

Following that discussion, a student asked if the President who would uphold the promises that he had set forth after he leaves office, including the Stern College Dramatics Society's being able to use the Schottenstein Theatre. President Joel replied that he was confident that these changes would take place, as all other senior administrative staff asides for himself were staying in their current positions.

President Joel interrupted the next inquirer mid-sentence, denying he ever said it was important for an incoming president to "clear house." The student insisted, saying "several sources" reported that President Joel expressed that it was important to clear house when he took office over a decade ago. The president denied the veracity of those sources.

Another student asked about the apparent recent rise in violence in Washington Heights against YU students, and what the administration feels should be done about it. The president responded that the crime rate is actually quite low, and that they don't feel that they have to implement anything new. He did assure the students that YU is in touch with local law enforcement, and that the campus perimeter is heavily monitored to avoid any issues.

A student then asked about the university's approach to LGBTQ students in light of the Westboro Baptist Church's protest near YU. President Joel responded that the WBC is a hate group and the University strives to make all Jews feel accepted on campus. He declined to comment further.

The next question asked was how hopeful President Joel is for the future of YU under its new president. President Joel went on to discuss how he felt Rabbi Berman would lead YU towards a great future.

Following this, the question was posed regarding the decision process by which certain outside speakers are allowed to speak at YU while others are not. President Joel informed the room that 99% of speakers are vetted



through the University.

As a related point, a student asked about what the President felt about Rav Schachter's removal of signs for Rabbi Aryeh Klapper's *shiur*, to which the President responded that he didn't know enough information on the subject, that Rabbi Klapper was a musmach of RIETS, and that in all these discussions, we should be civil and moral to set an example for the world to see.

Towards the conclusion of the question session, Rabbi Dr. Herbert Dobrinsky, Vice President for University Affairs, gave a heartfelt praise of the president's term in office and the impacts he made on the Jewish community not just of YU but of Hillel and other Jewish organizations as well. Following one more question, President Joel ended his last town hall meeting quoting each of his three predecessors (Drs. Revel, Belkin, and Lamm) on a different statement which he felt made an impact on his life, and added his own lesson as well to finish with four rules for YU students; be a Jewish role model, make a difference, see as God sees, and do as God does.

After the meeting, President Joel said he felt that students at the meeting were "real and respectful", and that controversial questions are supposed to be asked in a university. When asked if he knew whether Rabbi Berman would want to continue the town hall meetings, the President responded that he did not know, but that he knows that Rabbi Berman will be committed to the students.

Midnight Run Helps Clothe, Feed Homeless

By Judah Stiefel

YU students took to the streets on Monday, February 27 to deliver clothing to the homeless of New York City. The event was organized through Midnight Run, an organization which works to provide clothing, supplies, food, and social interaction to New York residents living on the streets.

Linda Stone, Director of Student Events on the Wilf Campus said of the run, "Events like Midnight Run have a special meaning to me; they highlight the best of what YU students embody— the acknowledgement that we are our brother's keeper and that every gesture of compassion to another person, no matter how big or small, has meaning." Ms. Stone was extremely instrumental in arranging each and every aspect of the event.

By distributing the clothing directly to the homeless, the students were given a platform to actually interact with each individual in need. Senior Yosie Friedman, head of the Tzedek Society, wrote: "We want to give in the material sense: we want to provide individuals with clothing and food that would help make their day to day experience a little more manageable. We also wanted to give in the emotional sense: in personally coming out to distribute the items that we collected, we hoped to show our neighbors on the street that we care about them."

The clothing was raised by the YU Tzedek Society along with Stern's iGive. Over one thousand items of men's and women's clothing were gathered and more than one hundred meals were prepared for distribution. A majority of the homeless who showed up were extremely grateful for the peanut butter, jelly, and fluff sandwiches given out, though a number of them seemed to be expecting ham and cheese.

One thing that was rather surprising to many of the student volunteers was the selectiveness displayed by many of the homeless who needed clothes. Sophomore Yoni Schwartz said, "It was interesting and eye opening to watch a person turn down a large sweater or a shirt because it wasn't their style. It makes you realize that these really are people just like us who have found themselves in difficult situations."

At seven o'clock, the clothing was loaded onto a large school bus by the Wilf volunteers. The bus then drove down to the Beren Campus to pick up the Beren Campus volunteers, a representative from Midnight Run who guided the trip, and the meals that were prepared. The bus made three stops. Crowds of homeless people waited eagerly at each one. Volunteers noted that one of the most striking elements of the run was the fact that each of the stops were in the chiquest parts of downtown Manhattan. At one stop on 46th street, a sparkling glass windowed Rolex store was directly across the street. It

seemed to symbolize for the students the striking disparity of wealth that exists within society. At another stop, Madison Square Garden was lit up for the Knicks game. One volunteer said, "It made me think about the fact that there are homeless people everywhere in New York, and you just have to look to see them."

In many ways, this is exactly what Midnight Run is meant to accomplish. Yosie Friedman, president of the Tzedek Society, remarked, "we hoped to deepen our personal sense of the hardships and struggles that homeless individuals face. For me, interacting with the individuals that we met changed the way that I relate to homelessness. Now, the term 'homelessness' does not only evoke a picture of human beings living on the street. Now, the term also stirs up a more visceral, emotional response. It recalls that sense of yearning and anxiety that I sensed in the individuals who we served."

A large portion of the clothing donated was made up of suits, dress pants, and dress shirts. While volunteers organized and labeled clothing for the run, many speculated that the homeless recipients of the clothing would be happy with the high quality of the available selection. However, to the surprise of the volunteers, a majority of those that came to receive clothing were much more interested in t-shirts and sweatpants. Sophomore Daniel Jerome Schwarz said, "I guess we shouldn't be surprised that warm and practical is more important than sharp and fashionable when you need to stay warm on a cold winter night."

The items that were donated and distributed included socks, undergarments, t-shirts, sweatpants, jeans, sweatshirts, bedding, sleeping bags, winter hats, scarves, men's and women's shoes, belts, skirts, dresses, and toiletries. For next year, the volunteers learned that the most crucial items were socks, undergarments, toiletries, jeans, sweatshirts, and sweatpants. While the run happened on a rather warm night, the weather app predicted snowfall a week later. The clothing will hopefully prove useful for many of the homeless who may find themselves sleeping at night in the cold wet snow. The run was an extreme success, and students are excited to expand and improve the program for the coming year.



Bnei Akiva Club Gives Back on International Good Deeds Day

By Ilana Kisilinsky

On April 2, Yeshiva University's Bnei Akiva club participated in Good Deeds Day, an international day of volunteering. The group spent the day volunteering and giving back to the Murray Hill community.

This is the second year that the Bnei Akiva club has joined in on Good Deeds Day. This year 30 students from both Stern College and Yeshiva College volunteered for the organization DOROT, whose mission statement explains that "DOROT alleviates social isolation among the elderly and provides services to help them live independently as valued members of the community."

The students delivered Passover food packages and visited the homebound elderly of the Murray Hill area. The group met at the Central Synagogue on the Upper East Side for an orientation run by the DOROT staff. They watched a video and then the volunteers split into groups of twos and threes and were assigned to a senior to visit. The volunteers then picked up their packages and were on their way.

Many of the students came back from the event feeling happy and fulfilled with the day's work. "We went to visit

an old lady in her home and before we went in we were slightly nervous it would be awkward," said Ilana Leggiere, a junior at Stern College. "But when we got there she was the most outgoing and interesting woman we had ever met. We spoke about family and politics and it was amazing how much we had in common," she continued.

"THE STUDENTS WERE ABLE TO SEE THE DIRECT EFFECT THEY WERE HAVING ON THEIR BENEFICIARIES."

The students were able to see the direct effect they were having on their beneficiaries. "Good Deeds Day was a great experience," said Eli Goldberg, a senior at Yeshiva College. "I brought food for Pesach to a beautiful elderly man and spent some time talking to him. He told me he loves Pesach and he was super happy that we brought him food, because he would not have been able to do it himself. And when we asked for a picture he even suggested we take a selfie, it was a great moment," he said.

Not all students, however, were so successful. Some seniors were not expecting them or did not want a visit. "I wasn't sure what to expect from our visit to our senior," said Shira Krinsky, a junior at Stern College. "And I was a little bit nervous but also excited to talk to someone who could probably teach me a lot. When we showed up, however, she took the package from us but did not invite us in, as she only had a small apartment. I'm glad we still got to deliver a package for Pesach to her so I hope she appreciated that," she continued.

Ilana Sherizen, one of the coordinators of the event said, "the event was fantastic. The event had a great turnout, the volunteers were amazing, and tons of *chesed* was given. Not only were the participants able to take part in the global movement of Good Deeds Day and be a part of something much greater, we were able to make an impact within our own community. Our volunteers spent time interacting, bringing joy, and learning from amazing Jewish senior citizens that have seen and experienced so much throughout their lives."

Good Deeds Day was started in 2007 by Israeli businesswoman and philanthropist Shari Arison. Its goal is to bring people together from around the world to volunteer and give back to their community.

Bnei Akiva is a worldwide organization that teaches leadership, Zionism, and the idea of *Torah V'Avodah* (Torah and labor). "Bnei Akiva of the US & Canada provides high quality religious Zionist education and programs for North American Jewish youth along with their families and communities. Basing ourselves on the principles of *Torah v'Avodah*, we encourage aliyah, love of the Jewish people, and love of Israel," says the mission statement on Bnei Akiva US and Canada's website.

The Bnei Akiva club looks to emulate that mission in every event that they organize. "Bnei Akiva focuses on fostering a love of Torah, Israel and the Jewish people, and included in that framework is the responsibility to do *chesed*," said Maia Wiesenfeld, president of the Bnei Akiva club at YU. "We thought that Good Deeds Day, which was started in Israel and has now expanded to become a global movement, would be a great opportunity to help those in need. It was meaningful to see the difference we made even in just a few hours!"



Rabbi Hershel Schachter: Inviting Rabbi Aryeh Klapper to Speak at YU is "like inviting a Reform rabbi"

By Doron Levine

Editors' note: This article was published online on March 29 as events related to this story unfolded. It has been slightly modified from the online version.

On the morning of March 29, YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Hershel Schachter took down posters announcing a shiur that Rabbi Aryeh Klapper would deliver that night in YU's Ruben Shul. Titled "*Lo Ra'inu Eino Ra'aya*: The inference from 'hasn't been' to 'ought not to be' in Halakhah," the shiur is scheduled for 10:20 PM tonight and is sponsored by SOY.

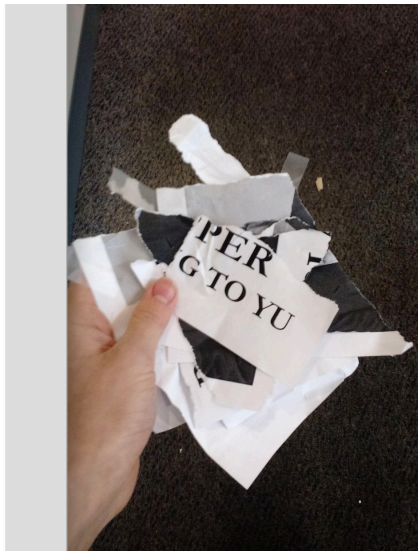


Please join us as Rabbi Aryeh Klapper, Dean of the Center for Modern Torah Leadership, gives a shi'ur entitled:

לא ראינו אינו ראיה:
The inference from "hasn't been" to "ought not to be" in Halakhah.

The shi'ur will be at 10:20PM on Wednesday, March 29 in Ruben Shul. Light refreshments will be served, courtesy of SOY. All are welcome to attend.

**RABBI ARYEH
KLAPPER
IS COMING TO YU**



On the night prior, a student hung signs for the event on the doors of the Glueck beit midrash. Posters for events sponsored by RIETS or SOY are commonly posted on these doors. But on March 29, at around 11:00 AM, at least two students witnessed Rabbi Schachter take down the signs on the left-hand door to the Glueck beit midrash. He then crumpled the posters into a ball and tossed them into a nearby garbage can.

When asked why he removed these signs, Rabbi Schachter responded, "*Chutzpah*, the guy's a *meshugana*. He's going to attack all the rebbes in YU. It's like inviting a Reform rabbi to speak in YU." Rabbi Schachter continued, "The guy's an *apikores*. He shouldn't be invited here.

You can quote me on that if you want. He doesn't belong here at all." Rabbi Klapper declined to comment about Rabbi Schachter's words.

The student who had put the signs up then attempted to repost them. But at around 11:30, a Syms junior in Rabbi Rosensweig's shiur permanently took down the signs from both doors of the beit midrash and tore them up, explaining to the student who had hung them that he was doing this because he saw Rabbi Schachter take them down. He said, "I found it to be disrespectful for a person to hang up a sign in Rav Schachter's beis medrash after that person saw Rav Schachter

respectfully and inconspicuously take down the sign."

The student who hung these signs on the door of the beit midrash also put up a number of signs in the Muss dormitory, in the Glueck stairwell, and on bulletin boards in Klein Hall and Zysman Hall. These signs were also removed either on the night prior or on the morning of March 29, though it is not clear who removed them.

A similar incident occurred when this same student put up signs advertising Rabbi Klapper's Summer Beit Midrash Program. Some weeks ago, he hung fliers on bulletin boards in Muss and on the door of the Glueck beit midrash to promote Rabbi Klapper's program, and these signs were similarly removed within a day.

At a *seuda shelishit* in the YU cafeteria earlier this year, Dean of RIETS Rabbi Menachem Penner delivered a speech in which he rebuked the attitude that leads students to deface signs. Rabbi Penner explained that he noticed that a flyer for an event that would be happening on Shabbat had been graffitied with a large X. When asked to comment about Rabbi Schachter's removal of the sign for Rabbi Klapper's speech, Rabbi Penner wrote, "I believe there is a difference between defacing signs (childish) and removing them and between students acting out and long-time Roshei Yeshiva taking action."

Rabbi Klapper holds an MA in Bible from the Bernard Revel Graduate School and received his ordination from RIETS in 1994. He is currently the Dean of the Center for Modern Torah Leadership and a member of the Boston Beit Din. He previously served as Associate Director for Education at Harvard Hillel and Talmud Curriculum Chair at Maimonides High School. He has published articles in *Tradition*, *Meorot*, *Dinei Yisrael*, and *Beis Yitzchak*.

Rabbi Aryeh Klapper Speaks at YU: Community Reacts to Rabbi Hershel Schachter's Harsh Criticism

By Benjamin Koslowe

Editors' note: This article was published online on March 30 as the second of two articles covering the unfolding events related to this story. It has been slightly modified from the online version.

On the night of March 29, Rabbi Aryeh Klapper delivered a shiur in Wilf campus's Rubin shul. The shiur was titled "*Lo Ra'inu Eino Ra'aya*: The inference from 'hasn't been' to 'ought not to be' in Halakhah." It ran from roughly 10:30 PM until after midnight and attracted an audience of 40-50 men and women from YU. Joshua Skootsky, a YC senior, said, "Rabbi Klapper gave a shiur based on *Rishonim*, *Achronim*, and *Shulchan Aruch*. The core of the shiur revolved around reading two *teshuvot* of the *Maharik* (170 and 171). The shiur was well-attended and well-received."

The event gained much attention when, in advance of the shiur, *The Commentator* publicized that Rabbi Hershel Schachter had torn down promotional posters for the shiur from the doors of the Glueck beit midrash, and that he had referred to Rabbi Klapper as "a *meshugana*" and "an *apikores*," explaining that inviting him is "like inviting a Reform rabbi to speak in YU" and that Rabbi Klapper "shouldn't be invited here" and "doesn't belong here at all." Dean of RIETS Rabbi Menachem Penner wrote to *The Commentator* at the time that "I believe there is a difference between defacing signs (childish) and removing them and between students acting out and long-time Roshei Yeshiva taking action."

Rabbi Klapper's shiur sparked much discussion on Facebook and around YU about issues of censorship, the role of Roshei Yeshiva, and journalistic ethics. On the morning of March 30, Rabbi Penner took to the *bimah* in the Glueck beit midrash at around 10:15 AM. Speaking to the crowded room of Yeshiva Program students, Rabbi Penner addressed the controversy directly for around six minutes. He said that "there are lessons to be learned about what I believe didn't have to happen in any way yesterday." Rabbi Penner added, "I actually feel very bad for Rabbi Klapper, because unless he insisted that he come to YU ... and I have no reason to believe that he did, and insisted that he speak only about a topic of paskening halakhah, and that he'd come to YU and only speak about a topic of paskening halakhah that has to do very much with the women's rabbi issues at a time when many of the Roshei Yeshiva here just wrote a *tshuvah* about those issues ... I actually feel bad for him. Because I believe that he was set up for failure. And I believe that the story here is not about Rabbi Klapper or Rabbi Schachter, but it's about signs that are put up a day before for a lecture that's going to obviously be controversial and wasn't discussed with anybody."

Rabbi Penner continued to explain how it is not his place to discuss what a Rosh Yeshiva can and cannot do. He described how he is "often in the uncomfortable position of being the boss of the people who are the Roshei Yeshiva." He told that "taking down signs is a provocative act. But putting up signs is also a provocative act. There is perhaps a lack of respect in taking down the signs, but it can also be a lack of respect putting up a sign."

Rabbi Penner insisted that YU is a place that welcomes alternative views within its community. "Roshei Yeshiva do not insist that you agree with them," Rabbi Penner explained. "But if you ask them what they think of something, they might just answer you. If you ask them for their opinion, then you may have to deal with whatever that opinion is if that's what you asked for. Will you be blasted publicly if you take a stance that's different from the Roshei Yeshiva? It may very well depend on how and where you voice that opinion."

"I'm not up to defend Rabbi Schachter," Rabbi Penner asserted. "I'm nobody compared with both of these individuals, to be honest. I'm not putting Rabbi Schachter and Rabbi Klapper on the same level and they would both agree with that." Rabbi Penner continued, "Something needs to be clear here ... Rabbi Schachter did not blast anyone publicly ... Rabbi Schachter said nothing publicly. *The Commentator* did." *The Commentator* reporter who

approached Rabbi Schachter on March 29 to ask why he had removed signs for Rabbi Klapper's event explicitly asked Rabbi Schachter for permission to interview him on behalf of *The Commentator*. After agreeing to be interviewed and then commenting harshly about Rabbi Klapper, Rabbi Schachter told the reporter, "you can quote me on that if you want."

Rabbi Penner proceeded to call for a forum where parties sit down and talk. He suggested that it would be preferable for Rabbi Klapper to speak with Roshei Yeshiva rather than to converse directly with students about controversial topics. He emphasized that "I don't blame [Rabbi Klapper] for any of this."

Rabbi Penner concluded with a call to talk as a community. "Let's not talk by reading *The Commentator*," Rabbi Penner requested. He suggested that we avoid talking about semantics and fliers, and ended his speech with these words: "Why don't we actually talk about the issues? Why don't we talk to each other rather than at each other? ... Let's drive forward, let's push. Let's sit down and talk. You might be shocked to find out that if you sit and talk, you can talk to Rabbi Schachter."

Around 30 minutes later, Rabbi Penner took to the *bimah* again for around 20 seconds and apologized for impugning the motives of the organizers of the shiur in his previous speech to the beit midrash.

"I didn't hear Rabbi Penner's *sicha*," wrote Rabbi Yosef Blau, senior Mashgiach Ruchani at YU. "It isn't clear yet what Rabbi Klapper said or wrote that motivated Rabbi Schachter's reaction. It will take time to calm the situation and reduce tensions. There are people I trust working on it. The latest developments in social media move too quickly for those of us who are trying to lower the heat of conflict."

Rabbi Aryeh Klapper (YC '89, Revel, RIETS '94) is a well-known Modern Orthodox rabbi who is currently the Dean of the Center for Modern Torah Leadership. He taught at the Maimonides School in Brookline, Massachusetts from 1994-2003, and has been involved as a Talmud Curriculum Chair since then. He has been a member of the Boston Beit Din since 2001. Since 1997, he has been Rosh Beit Midrash of The Summer Beit Midrash, which operates for several weeks every summer at the Young Israel of Sharon in Sharon, Massachusetts. He has published in *Tradition*, *Meorot*, *Dinei Yisrael*, and *Beis Yitzchak*.



Rabbi Klapper garnered significant attention early in his career when he published an article titled "Ha-Zaken ha-Mamre keGibbor ha-Masoret" in *Beis Yitzchak* 26 (1994), a YU student Torah journal which has been published since 1952. In this Hebrew article with classic *lomdus* style, Rabbi Klapper describes a scenario in which a member of the Beis Din finds himself stuck between disobeying his colleagues and being a *Zaken Mamre* (rebellious elder), versus obeying them and violating something which, according to his view, is an *aveirah* which is *yeihareig ve'al ya'avur* (the halakhic requirement of "let him be killed rather than transgress"). The article resulted in some strong disagreement at the time, largely because of its suggestion that a *Zaken Mamre*, who is typically understood to be an evil person trying to undermine the halakhic system, might be a champion of *tradition*.

In March 2008, Rabbi Klapper and Rabbi Yitzchak Blau, Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshivat Orayta in Jerusalem, co-

**"TAKING DOWN SIGNS IS
A PROVOCATIVE ACT. BUT
PUTTING UP SIGNS IS ALSO A
PROVOCATIVE ACT!"
-RABBI MENACHEM PENNER**

authored a letter to the Jewish Week criticizing Rabbi Schachter's speech to a group of post-high school students at Yeshivat HaKotel in Jerusalem. Rabbi Schachter told these students that "if the army is going to give away *Yerushalayim*, then I would tell everyone to resign from the army — I'd tell them to shoot the *rosh hamemshalah* [prime minister]."

In a recent article on the Center for Modern Torah Leadership blog, to which Rabbi Klapper regularly contributes, he writes, "My goal in this essay, the first of an intended series, is to begin tracing the history of a phrase that lies on the fault line between halakhic radicals and halakhic conservatives." The article, which is titled "Does 'It's Never Been Done' Imply 'It Should Never Be Done'?" — the same title as his recent YU shiur — deals with "the attempt to prove halakhah via negative evidence. It's never been done that way, so it must be wrong to do it that way." He asks, "Does that argument have force in Halakhah?"

Later in the article, Rabbi Klapper writes: "It should be clear that properly answering this question has significant implications for contemporary conversations about women and Orthodoxy, and I expect to draw those morals explicitly in the course of this series." Later he explains that "Whether Modern Orthodoxy is a safe haven for halakhic radicalism, then, should depend on whether our community is halakhically sophisticated. I think that by historical standards it surely is."

Many were wondering why Rabbi Schachter took issue with Rabbi Klapper to warrant his tearing down the fliers. When asked on March 30 if he thinks that Rabbi Klapper is an *apikores*, Rabbi Schachter explained, "I don't think he's an *apikores*."

Rabbi Schachter continued, "I don't have to be insulted in my own institution. I have *rabbanim* in New Jersey who are always attacking me, always attacking all the faculty here in the Yeshiva. So it's bad enough that they attack us in New Jersey, in the newspapers, and so on. We have to invite them into the Yeshiva to be *mevazeh* all the rebbes? They give an opinion that none of us know anything, they know better than all of us — I think that's a *chutzpah*. Congress wouldn't invite a communist to speak in Congress to explain communism. We're not interested in communism. So we shouldn't invite Avi Weiss to speak over here either. So we don't need Klapper either. He represents a different *shittah*, a total insult to all the rebbes in Yeshiva."

SEE CRITICISM, CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Westboro Baptist Church Protests Near YU, Community Responds with Counter-Protest and Charity Campaign

By Doron Levine

On March 27, the Westboro Baptist Church held a brief protest near Yeshiva University. From 9:30 AM until around 10:08, five members of the church stood in the rain between metal police barriers on Amsterdam Avenue between Laurel Hill Terrace and 181st Street. A number of NYPD officers were present securing the scene.

Based in Topeka, Kansas, the Westboro Baptist Church has achieved notoriety over the years for its aggressively anti-homosexual positions. Categorized as a "hate group" by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Church publicizes its travel schedule on its website called "godhatesfags.com." 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.

The church announced via Twitter on February 27 that it would protest at YU in order to denounce the university's acceptance of homosexuality. In its press release, the church asserted 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.'" Westboro chose to picket YU in particular because YU "encapsulates the perverse state of both modern Judaism and the American university system," the press release said.

Despite inclement weather--a steady rain fell during the entire protest--five church protesters showed up on Amsterdam Avenue on March 27 for the scheduled demonstration. The protest itself seemed less focused on homosexuality and more focused on the church's belief that the Jews are responsible for killing Jesus. Each member of the church held one or two colorful signs with messages such as "GOD HATES CHRIST REJECTING APOSTATE JEWS," "GOD HATES SIN ENABLERS," and "JEWS WILL MOURN FOR CHRIST, WHOM THEY PIERCED." One church member wore a sweatshirt with the words "God Hates America" on the back.

Though no church elders were present (elders are male and the five protesters were all female), the group's de facto leader appeared to be Shirley Phelps-Roper. The daughter of Fred Phelps, the church's founding minister who died in 2014, Phelps-Roper is a practicing lawyer and is known as one of the church's most outspoken members. When asked why the protest was staged a block away from YU's Wilf Campus instead of in a location more visible to students, Phelps-Roper explained that they wanted to demonstrate in a busy intersection where they would be noticed by passing cars and pedestrians, and insisted that the group was still within sight of YU's indoor parking lot.

Explaining the purpose of the protest, Phelps-Roper elaborated on the sinful nature of America. "Any soldier fighting today is fighting for same sex marriage and for the right to be a filthy pervert," she said. "The best that this country has to offer, including us, is like a used menstruous cloth." She also expressed her disdain for Orthodox Jews, stomping on an Israeli flag that she initially wore around her waist while referring to it as "the star of Remphan." She explained that rabbinic Judaism is "rebellion" as she condemned specific rabbinic practices such as the celebration of Hanukkah and the wearing of a



kippa, urging one YU student to "get rid of the beanie." At various points during the protest, church members sang songs condemning Jews set to the tunes of various Jewish songs such as Hatikvah, Hava Nagila, and Sabbath Prayer from Fiddler on the Roof.

Other church protesters were not members of the Phelps family. Two young protesters from Phoenix described how they discovered the church on YouTube two years ago, explaining that the message of the church "pierced our hearts." They insisted that the church's message is one of love. "People today don't know what love is," one young protester said. "Love is telling people what path they're going down. I don't want you to go to Hell." At the same time, she qualified, "We're not out here to save people." When asked if protests sometimes require members to miss church services, she explained that protesters do sometimes miss Sunday services but they just read the sermon online.

In response to this protest, a number of people organized a counter-protest to denounce the Westboro Baptist Church's anti-homosexual message. When the Church announced via its Twitter page that it would visit YU, a



Facebook event called "Yeshiva University Welcoming Committee for the Westboro Baptist Church" was created, 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 urged 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."

Though the rain might have discouraged some from attending this counter-protest, the event still garnered a significant showing. Around thirty-five counter-protesters showed on the opposite corner of Amsterdam Avenue and Laurel Hill Terrace, including approximately ten YU students and at least one YU faculty member. The counter-protesters arrived with signs of their own displaying messages such as "Hate is NOT a Yeshiva Value," "LGBTQ Students are Welcome in Yeshiva U.," and "Chosen People Choose Love over Hate."

Asher Lovy, organizer of the protest and one of the hosts of the Facebook event, attended the counter-protest. He explained that the purpose of the event was "to make sure that the LGBTQ students of Yeshiva University wouldn't walk out and see a message of hate that wasn't countered by a message of love. The Westboro Baptist Church is a crazy fringe group, but there are plenty of people in the Jewish community and in the country in general who also hate LGBTQ people and are more than happy to spread a message of hate not connected to the Westboro Baptist Church."

Despite the rain, Lovy was still happy with the turnout. "We were expecting a couple more people," he said, "but given the weather this was about a good a turnout as we could expect. And we definitely had more attendants than the Westboro Baptist Church did. So we're very happy about this." When asked if he had any reservations about

the counter-protest giving the church more attention than it deserves, Lovy said, "It's not just about the Westboro Baptist Church. It's about countering the message that's espoused by more than just the Westboro Baptist Church. If we get to use the Westboro Baptist Church as a springboard, great."

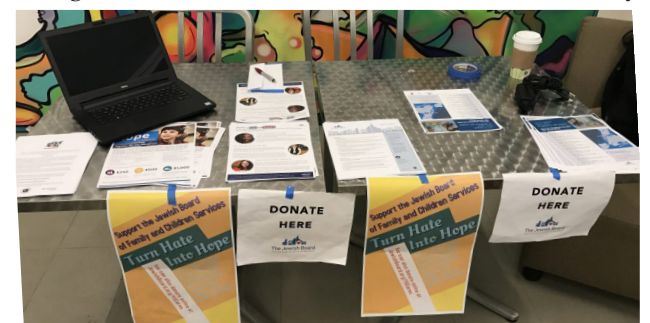
On the other side of the street, Westboro Baptist Church member Shirley Phelps-Roper had mixed feelings about the attendance at the counter-protest. "I'm happy," she said, "because the only way they'll see the words is if they come out here and look. I'm thrilled that they're here." On the other hand, she said, "I'm so sad to see the awfulness of these children of Israel," explaining that "The rest of you Jews will die with hearts of stone."

In an announcement sent to students via email and posted on its Facebook page, Yeshiva University denounced the church protest: "We want to state in the strongest terms that Yeshiva University rejects and condemns the targeting of Jews and any human being based on religion, political affiliation or sexual orientation."

The university also discouraged its students from engaging the protesters. "We urge you not to engage with

the WBC; their success depends on the media spectacle created through counter protests, as well as lawsuits against those who interfere with WBC members. For your safety and to deny the WBC what they seek, we should shun them with silence and peace," the statement read.

Students wishing to comply with the university's wishes but also wishing to counter the protest's message decided to organize a fundraiser for the Jewish Board of Family and Child Welfare.



Services. Volunteers sat at stations around campus where students could make donations and a link was set up specifically for this response to the church. The decision to respond to the Westboro Baptist Church with a fundraiser was made at a meeting held on Monday, March 20 which was open to all students and led by YCSA President Tzvi Levitin along with Executive Director of the Office of Communications and Public Affairs Dr. Paul Oestreicher. Other charities suggested at the event were the Wounded Warriors Project and Jewish Queer Youth.

Zvi Teitelbaum, who spearheaded the fundraising efforts, said that the students behind the initiative "wanted

SEE WESTBORO BAPTIST, CONTINUED ON
PAGE 8

Academic Integrity Dialogue Opened Between Deans and Students

By Avi Strauss

On April 5, YU's new academic integrity initiative was launched by the Dean's office in concert with student leaders to discuss cheating on campus and methods to prevent it in the future. Oscillating between conversations about the definition of cheating, the types of cheating that exist, and practical solutions to prevent it going forward, the meeting was intended to be the first of several in an open and honest discussion to curtail the issue on the uptown campus.

The hour-long midday meeting featured all five deans responsible for academics uptown, as well as Dean of RIETS and Undergraduate Torah Studies Rabbi Menachem Penner, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, the majority of the academic advisors and a select group of students from a cross-section of the Wilf undergraduate population. Professors were intentionally not invited to the meeting so that students would be encouraged to speak freely.

The forum opened with a brief introduction by Associate Dean of Operations and Student Affairs Fred Sugarman, who thanked students for reaching out to him about ongoing issues. He stressed that "academic integrity here should be beyond reproach", as we are in a yeshiva.

Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon echoed Dean Sugarman's sentiments, emphasizing an "ethical high-road" in which "people should be honest in all of their dealings," including academics. She also bemoaned the deterioration in the relationship between students and professors that occurs when cheating is an issue.

Lastly, before the forum shifted to an open floor for student remarks, Rabbi Penner framed the context of the conversation, saying cheating "makes people question what our mission is." After listing several biblical prohibitions involved in the act of cheating, he called for creating "a culture where we show we are serious about these issues."

Rabbi Penner continued, declaring, "the university has responsibility to prevent people from cheating" and that we must be concerned with the long-term consequences that cheating might have for people in the workplace. Starting to cheat while in college, he said, only makes the proposition of cheating in business more likely.

Yeshiva College Student Association President Tzvi Levitin then led the transition to the open forum part of the meeting, mentioning the "cognitive dissonance" students may experience in recognizing that the act of cheating itself may be wrong while rationalizing the act in specific instances.

The students who were present contributed by relaying their experiences of witnessing cheating in their classrooms, expounding on the thought processes of students who engage in these acts, and by suggesting possible solutions to the problems that they've witnessed.

Syms Student Council Vice President Binyamin Zirman

highlighted the immense pressure on students to perform well on tests, specifically in classes where grades may be entirely based on two examinations. "You can miss every class, not participate or pay attention when you do show

**"ACADEMIC INTEGRITY HERE
SHOULD BE BEYOND REPROACH"
-DEAN FRED SUGARMAN**

up--it's just creating an environment where the pressures and temptations to perform well are concentrated on a few moments a semester," he said.

Other students, like YC Junior Akiva Schiff, mentioned that cheating was not simply confined to the classroom on test day. He divided cheating into two categories: that which happens in the preparatory stage before a test or paper is due, and the in-classroom instances of cheating.

Various types of in-class cheating were detailed by students, including sharing answers when professors were attending to questions from other students and texting images and questions to accomplices. One student even mentioned students turning in "decoy phones" to skirt cell phone collection rules.

Other students mentioned the issue of test banks and studying from old tests, triggering a discussion about the definition of cheating itself. Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Joanne Jacobson cleared the air, saying accessing information that is readily available online, like test banks, is not cheating, while reminding everyone that "cheating is lying and stealing" and gives the perpetrator an unfair advantage over other students.

The deans responded to the various statements and concerns of students as the meeting progressed. Many comments referenced the campus "culture" that provides for such things to occur.

As a matter of culture, outgoing Dean of the Sy Syms School of Business Moses Pava stated that he didn't think cheating was more rampant at YU than at any other university, whereas Syms Associate Dean Michael Strauss remarked that an undergraduate at Princeton University told him that students don't even let their eyes wander during examination at the Ivy League university, out of fear of expulsion.

In response to this, Syms Academic Advisor Debbie Pine stressed, "we might not have more cheating than other colleges. But we need to remember, we aren't other colleges" -- a point that appeared to gain universal acceptance from all corners of the forum.

At times however, discussion was more tense, with some implicitly blaming the students for not being more active in combating cheating as it occurred during tests. However, Academic Advisor Sara Schwartz emphatically pushed back against this notion. "It's not the students' job to maintain academic integrity. It's not their job to police each other in the middle of an exam," Schwartz

said, arguing that students are under enough pressures in a testing environment as it is.

At one point, Pre-Health Advisor Lolita Wood-Hill framed the discussion in terms of the consequences that the university's reputation of cheating has on graduate admissions. Citing discussions she's had with admissions officers at medical schools, she explained that when admissions panels believe Yeshiva students' grades are inflated due to cheating, they look more critically at all Yeshiva applicants' GPA's when considering admissions. This long-term consequence of cheating makes it all the more important for the issue to be dealt with in the present.

At one point during the session, Dean of Students Chaim Nissel pushed to shift the conversation to practical solutions that can be enacted to prevent some of the instances of cheating.

A flurry of suggestions targeted at different types of cheating were offered. Many students agreed that more proctors and a midterm system that mimicked the finals process would go a long way towards suppressing instances of classroom cheating. One student noted a marked difference between his first and second semester science lecture in this regard, with extra proctors added for test days and dividers placed between students during laboratory examinations.

Others called for greater awareness about the short and long term consequences of cheating, with one suggesting the implementation of a program similar to the "Alcohol-Wise" educational seminar, a mandatory online course for all YU students which informs students about the consequences of alcohol consumption.

One student, referring back to the "culture" issue discussed at several points during the meeting, called for "disrupting" that culture by informing the student body when disciplinary action is taken against any student for an act of cheating. Earlier in the meeting, when Rabbi Penner questioned if any disciplinary action had been taken against cheaters in the past five years, Dean Sugarman confirmed that no students had been expelled from Yeshiva College for cheating, while Dean Pava cited an instance from last year where a Syms undergraduate was expelled.

While the deans voiced approval for the notion of actively disrupting the culture of cheating, the conversation shifted to the proposition of placing cameras in classrooms. This would serve as a proactive measure to discourage students from cheating, while providing a recourse for review when students report instances of cheating after exams. Dean Pava predicted that this will become a reality on a number of universities in the next five years.

As the clock approached 1:00, the deans thanked everyone for coming and Dean Sugarman concluded the session, emphasizing that it was only the beginning of the discussion and making clear that the issues brought up would be taken seriously.

WESTBORO BAPTIST, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

to respond to the Westboro Baptist Church hate group in a constructive way. Instead of protesting, which would just give them the attention they wanted, we decided to run a fundraiser to support a group they disapprove of."

In an email to Yeshiva undergraduates, Mr. Teitelbaum wrote, "all proceeds from this fundraiser will go to the Jewish Board of Family and Children Services, an incredible Jewish organization that provides programs and services that aim to promote well-being, resilience, and self-sufficiency for individuals and families from diverse cultures, ethnicities, religions, genders, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic backgrounds."

As of press time, nearly \$300 cash had been donated, online donations notwithstanding.

Mordechai Levovitz, an openly gay graduate of Yeshiva University and the Executive Director of Jewish Queer Youth (JQY), an organization that helps supports LGBTQ youth and young adults in the Orthodox community, was one of the leaders of the protest, standing at the front of the group holding an Israeli flag emblazoned with rainbow-colored stripes. "Our cause is always 'viahavta lireiacha kamocho,'" Levovitz said, "and not letting hateful messages be unanswered. It is our duty, especially when individuals and minorities are being targeted within our community, not to be silent in the face of those messages." When asked if, when he attended YU, he found that YU was a place where it was comfortable to be gay, Levovitz said, "It's hard to answer these things black and white. I had a great experience, but to a certain extent it wasn't as safe as I'd like it to be. Many of my friends who were gay had a very hard time. When I was at YU there was a boy who killed himself who was gay. That was pretty scary." He continued, "I also came

out for the first time at YU because friends loved me and friends supported me. Even in darkness there were moments of light."

Levovitz organized and spoke at the widely-attended panel in 2009 titled "Being Gay in the Modern Orthodox world." Moderated by Mashgiach Ruchani Rabbi Yosef Blau, the event drew an estimated 600 to 800 people and stirred up considerable controversy, with President Richard Joel and certain Roshei Yeshiva releasing statements distancing themselves from the event. Levovitz reflected on his experience organizing the panel, expressing his belief that, though a certain donor put pressure on the administration and Roshei Yeshiva to denounce the panel, "The truth is that organizing the panel was not very difficult from an upper administrative point of view. The rebbeim were not difficult, and most of them even knew about it." However, Levovitz said, "The counseling center was difficult throughout, and I find they still suffer from an immense lack of cultural competence when it comes to dealing with LGBT people."

Levovitz believes that YU is improving in terms of its acceptance of LGBTQ students. "Now it's almost ten years later, and you have multiple YU students who are out, people who are writing articles," he said. "So yes, the negative still exists, but it's also important to feel excited about all this positivity." Asked how he believes the YU community can become more accepting of LGBTQ students, Levovitz said, "It's going to be pushed by the students. I think that the administration will follow the feeling of the campus." Levovitz believes that this counter-protest was a step in the right direction. "We completely outnumbered the protesters," he said. "I think it was a real kiddush Hashem."

SEE POPULATION, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

The male undergraduate population is down 50 students between Fall 2016 and Spring 2017, to 1025. However, this change exhibits what appears to be a natural fluctuation for the Wilf campus between semester to semester numbers when compared to data sets for the past 5 years.

“As with all enrollment numbers at any college, we see trends, and the job of the Admissions professionals is to make sense of them by rethinking recruiting strategies to appeal to the widest spectrum of students whose goals, both social and academic are most closely matched to our mission,” noted Director of Undergraduate Admissions Geri Mansdorf. “Many small private colleges are struggling nationally, and YU is fortunate to be in the unique position of offering what no other university or undergraduate program can offer the Orthodox student who is committed to the best secular education in a Torah true environment.”

Similarly, Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon observed, “People make individual decisions, but those decisions reflect group behavior.” She stressed that trends in decision making are often the result of a series of different factors and that just as they’ve changed over the past few years, they can shift again in the next few.

Dean Bacon continued: “People are perceiving more options [in education] than they ever have in the past” and that “there has been a sociological shift in what people see as appropriate preparation for a successful life.” Nonetheless, said she believes the “strength of Jewish community is in quality education with a Torah component.”

Sy Syms was founded in 1987 after a \$22 million dollar donation from philanthropists and businessman Sy Syms, along with other businesspeople. Since 2012, the Sy Syms Wilf population has risen from 309 full-time students to the 525 students enrolled today. During that same period, Yeshiva College’s population has declined from 739 to 500 full-time students.

Although it is unclear what specific factors have caused this swing in favor of the business undergraduate program, it is likely a combination of interest, job prospects and skill acquisition, and the addition of the Sy Syms honors program and the Business Intelligence and Market Analytics major.

In a meeting with The Commentator, Sy Syms Dean Moses Pava and Dean Michael Strauss detailed a variety of societal and institutional factors responsible for the increasing Sy Syms enrollment.

They noted two major goals they accomplished at the outset of their tenures six years ago: creating a Sy Syms honors program and obtaining accreditation

from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (or AACSB International), often regarded as the standard for business school quality, although the association itself has since lost its accreditation from the United States Department of Education. According to the AACSB website, only 786 business schools have their accreditation out of thousands of business schools across the world.

“Students are looking at the bottom line. Going to a business school immediately gives students the tools for work, improving their job prospects,” said Pava. He proceeded to note the high rate of job placement or full-time enrollment in graduate programs (95%) that alumni report 6 months after graduating.

The deans directly credited the Advising Center and the Career Center for producing results that current

“STUDENTS ARE LOOKING AT THE BOTTOM LINE. GOING TO A BUSINESS SCHOOL IMMEDIATELY GIVES STUDENTS THE TOOLS FOR WORK, IMPROVING THEIR JOB PROSPECTS”

-DEAN MOSES PAVA

undergraduates are noticing and responding to with their academic choices.

Both Pava and Strauss made sure to note the societal shift that yielded the trend towards business school. Applications to undergraduate business programs are in fact up across the country. According to Fortune Magazine, applications to undergraduate business programs rose 14% from the 2008-2009 academic year to 2012-2013, paralleling the shift in enrollment on the Wilf campus, indicating this isn’t simply a YU-specific phenomenon.

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics notes that in 2013-2014, the number of undergraduate degrees conferred in business was 359,000, more than any other field, and far exceeding the runner-up, health professions and related programs, in which 199,000 degrees conferred that same year.

The increasing Sy Syms student population and changes made to the program seems to have born fruit. Currently there are 100 students in the Sy Syms Honors program, and Sy Syms was recently ranked 16th for best bachelor’s programs in accounting by accounting.com.

Further, the larger student body has driven up the average composite SAT score for Sy Syms undergrads

nearly 100 points, to 1206 from 1111 in 2011.

Both deans also noted developments in the way information is communicated in the technological age and the ways they’ve responded, creating the Business Intelligence and Marketing Analytics major, as well as revamping the finance faculty.

Dean Bacon noted both liberal arts colleges are making strides in this area as well, referencing the work of professor Judah Diament, whom The Commentator interviewed last year, in developing new, comprehensive computer science programming for the computer science major itself, and for data analytics in the humanities and social sciences. In these areas, Bacon said students pursuing degrees in liberal arts could serve as communication “bridges” in the workplace, between those with the technical skills to collect data and those to whom the information is most relevant.

Crafting information “narratives” will also be an important skill for students in the workplace, and she said the undergraduate colleges are adapting to make sure students are equipped to do so.

She concluded that such interpretive and deliberative skills are necessary for individual growth: “I think a requirement for a full life is to value education, education that includes reading, writing, researching and debating ideas in all their richness.”

The drop in enrollment at the Beren campus is entirely reflected in enrollment at Stern College for women, which has declined to 728, from 936 since 2013. Sy Syms enrollment at the Beren campus has ticked upwards over that time, although at a far slower rate than on the men’s campus, increasing 20 students between 2013 and 2017, to 157 business undergraduates.

Commenting on the recent downward trend in Beren enrollment, Ms. Mansdorf pointed towards developments in the decisions made by women post-high school. “we are seeing an uptick in women who either choose to spend additional time learning in Israel as well as an increase in those choosing to attend college and do *Sherut Le’Umi* there” she said. Often, women who elect to stay in Israel for *Sherut Le’Umi* (national service) rescind their enrollment and admissions has been contacted by students explaining their decisions to do so.

She also pointed out that admissions could be looking at a new upward trend in enrollment: “Our application numbers are up significantly this year, but of course, given that 80% of our students will spend at least one or two years of study in Israel, we will only see the positive outcome of all this effort when they return to the States to study at YU.”

Undergraduate Admissions is hoping to make that turnaround a reality in the coming years.



This year’s Jewish Job Fair attracted crowds of employers and potential employees. Professional placement after graduation may be one factor behind Syms’s growth.

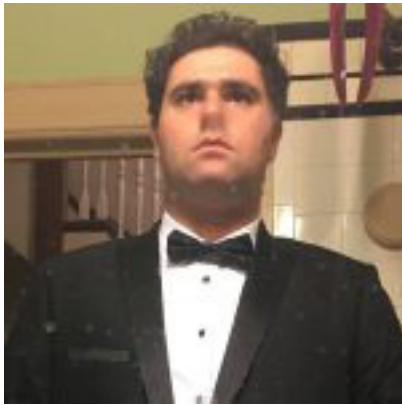
Here's Who's Running for Student Council President

Traditionally, student council presidential candidates introduce themselves to the electorate in The Commentator at the beginning of the campaigning period. Below, each contender writes about his background and the goals he has for his desired position.

The introductions are arranged by council first (YSU, SOY, YCSA, SYMSSC) and alphabetically second.

Yeshiva Student Union (YSU)

ARYEH MINSKY



Hey, readers!

My name is Aryeh Minsky, and I am hoping to be your Yeshiva Student Union President this coming year.

A little about myself: I grew up New Hempstead, NY and attended TABC in Teaneck, NJ for high school. After that, I spent two years studying at Reishit, and am now in my sixth semester on campus. I'm a finance major by day (marketing minor!), and an IBC Talmid by morning.

Also good to know about me: I am intimately involved in my campus- and why shouldn't I be? I love YU! When I'm not giving tours to prospective students, working games for athletics, helping with new hires in human resources, or waiting in the caf on Shabbat, I'm probably playing on the YU Baseball team, or scoring goals in hockey intramurals (three-time champion!), or, I might be in class...

I think my love for YU is evident in how heavily I involve myself here. I've already spent two years on Yeshiva Student Union (as Junior Class President and VP of Classes), as well as two years on the Student Life Committee. I spent this past year running the SLC, as well as a few months as YSU President (I know, interim president, but it's the same experience). I want to be YSU President because I really take pride in my campus. I really want YU to be an awesome place, and I have some really cool ideas how to make it even better!

ZACH STERMAN



Hi, my name is Zach Sterman. I'm running for YSU president and I want to tell you why. Presently the responsibilities and powers of student council are extremely narrow, essentially limited to managing a budget and allocating funds for clubs and events.

This is a mistake.

The primary focus of student government should not be on managing a budget, but rather on representing the

interests of the student body. The various presidents of our student councils have the ear of the administration and a unique opportunity to express the issues, concerns, and interests of the students in a way that might actually be influential. Let's set a new standard in which student government shifts the focus and ensures that the voice of the student body is being heard.

I think my diverse experiences at YU put me in a unique position to understand the many perspectives and personalities of our student body. My major is in YC and my minor is in Syms. I have been a part of both YP and IBC. This past year I participated in student leadership as an RA, and was highly involved in a bunch of clubs on campus, such as Tamid, YUPAC and The Commentator. As a co-founder of The Scope I've also had the chance to write satire and produce YU's Purim shpiel.

RAFFI WIESEN



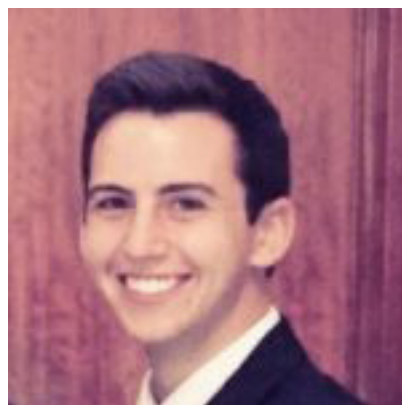
After High School at MTA I spent three years in Israel, half in Yeshiva and half in the IDF. When I came back to New York I knew I wanted to get involved in campus any way I could. This year I served as the Vice President of Clubs and saw firsthand the inner workings of the student council structure and procedures.

Since I am the head of clubs, maybe the most important part of campus life, I manage the budget, approve clubs and events, and plan for major events. I was one of the student liaisons for the IAmYU campaign, and was stunned by the unbelievable outpouring of support everyone showed. I also currently serve on the planning committee for the commemoration and celebration of Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut.

Through my experience as a student leader, I've learned that if there's anything we YU students are not, it's dispassionate. Student-run events are some of the most successful events that we have. Everyone here has great ideas for activities, events, and areas for improvement. Because of this, I want to create a new outlet that will allow everyone the chance to get involved. Every student should have the opportunity to take an active role in improving their college experience, even if they're not on student council or a president of a club. As president of YSU, my job will be to hear your voices, take your suggestions, and turn them into the best college experience we can have.

Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY)

DOVID SIMPSER



Hi! I'm Dovid Simpser. Many of you may know me

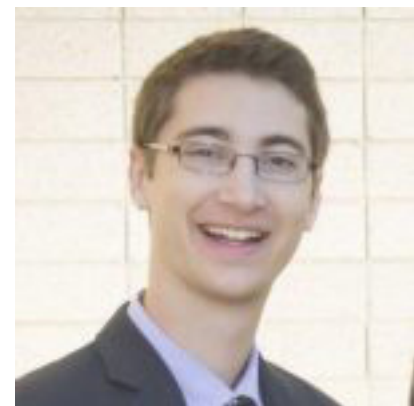
from my involvement this past year as Vice President of the S.O.Y. Student Council, where I worked to create religious programming that better served our religiously diverse community. Now, I'm running for S.O.Y. President to continue my vision of a warm and inviting community for all students here at YU.

Every student has their own unique religious needs and values, and we, as the center of Modern Orthodoxy, need to create an environment where all students can feel comfortable and engaged. Therefore, whether through religious outlets such as Klein @ 9, or broader ranging Shabbos programming, my goal as President is to help establish better opportunities for students to feel religiously engaged on campus. There are so many great programs and opportunities here at YU, but there is still much needed change and improvement for the Yeshiva to better serve its religiously diverse student body.

I'm always available to speak through any thoughts and suggestions, and by working together we can take the dreams of today and turn them into the reality of tomorrow.

Yeshiva College Student Association (YCSA)

JOEY JUBAS



"Work hard until you no longer need to introduce yourself" is a quote I have been living by since I started at Yeshiva University three years ago after my year in Israel. I have been involved with campus activities and student life since I set foot on campus. From my high school experience on student council in Detroit, Michigan, I knew I wanted to be a change-maker in college as well. Upon my arrival at YU, I immediately joined the Student Life Committee, started working as a lifeguard at the aquatic facilities, and was selected to serve on the board of numerous clubs. I also held a number of leadership positions including the co-presidency of YAS! (Yeshiva Activities Society), striking a balance between extracurricular involvement and academics as I pursue a degree in math/computer Science with a minor in Physics.

I currently serve as Vice-President of YCSA and I hope to further my role on campus by representing you, my peers, and by presenting a strong voice to the administration. I plan to expand class offerings, coordinate more on-campus events, construct a clearer schedule highlighting the courses offered only once per year, and streamline the course registration process.



Here's Who's Running for Student Council President

YCSA Continued

EITAN LIPSKY



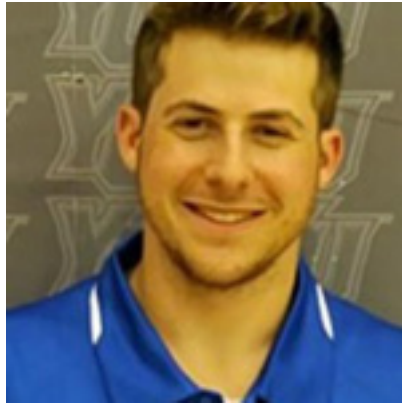
My name is Eitan Lipsky and I hail from the town of West Hempstead, NY. After attending DRS Yeshiva High School and spending two years learning in Israel in KBY and Gush, respectively, I am currently in my second year at YU where I am studying biology, with the long-term plan to study and practice medicine.

Since arriving at YU, I have felt privileged to be a part of all that the college has to offer; academics, extracurricular clubs, and even chesed missions. I have also been able to take leadership positions, serving as an editor for *The Commentator*; and a key board member for Project TEACH, a local tutoring club, and several university journals. As YCSA President, I would humbly serve as the necessary link between the YC deans and students, and ensure that students' complaints (of which I have heard too many without proper follow-up in my time here), are appropriately addressed.

If elected, I would look forward to working with the deans on improving the Hebrew requirement. I would like to rethink the placement process as well as what type of Hebrew curriculum would be most valuable to students. I would also like to take steps to make sure that academic integrity is maintained in YC so that students aren't disadvantaged by others' dishonesty. These are some of the many ideas that I have, but ultimately change comes from the input of all students. If elected, I hope to make sure that all voices are heard.

Syms Student Council (SYMSSC)

AVI LENT



My name is Avi Lent, and before starting Syms I attended MTA and Yeshivat Hakotel. While I'm currently an accounting major, I intend on pursuing a career in law. In past years, I have served in numerous leadership positions, including the Assistant Youth Director of the Young Israel of New Rochelle and the Assistant Head Lifeguard in Camp Morasha. Additionally, I've worked at the Supreme Court of Westchester, which sounds exceedingly prestigious if you don't think about it too much.

I'm running for Syms President for a few reasons. Firstly: Yehoshua, my fierce opponent, was running unopposed, and I could not allow him to simply seize the presidency without a fight. Secondly, I hear this looks good on a resume, and I really want to go to Harvard Law. Most importantly though, I want to make a difference. While Syms has blessed me with an incredible education, I think I have some cool ideas that can really make attending Syms an even more incredible experience. And to pacify any reservations you may still have regarding my candidacy, know that I've received endorsements from both Rav Schachter and Rabbi Klapper. So please, come out and vote, and help me win this glorified popularity contest.

JOSHUA ZIRMAN



My name is Joshua Zirman, and I am a finance major. I grew up in Teaneck, NJ and attended TABC for high school. I then went to Orayta for my gap year before attending Yeshiva University.

In my four semesters on campus, I have had the opportunity to interact with students across the YU spectrum: international, local, YP, BMP, and IBC. I have gotten involved in many diverse clubs on campus such as the Business Leadership Club, Shield News, TAMID, Macs Live, YUNMUN, Yeshiva University's TEDx event, and even a brief stint on the basketball team.

I have decided to run for president because I see all of the potential that YU holds, yet watch some of it go to waste every year. I want to improve Syms events to make them more desirable, and work with students who have passions to start new initiatives on campus. I believe one of my strongest qualities is listening to those around me, and I intend to bring that with into my presidency. The best way to improve the YU of tomorrow is to interact with the YU of today.



YU Honors' Programs Changes SAT Requirement for Admission, Lowers Mandatory Number of Honors Classes

By Shoshy Ciment

As of this year, admittance to the three undergraduate honors programs at Yeshiva University no longer requires an SAT score of at least 1400 or its equivalent ACT score of 32.

Whereas admittance to the S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program at Stern College and the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program at Yeshiva College previously required a 1400 minimum on the SAT (the Sy Syms honors program requires a 1350), the standardized test score is no longer a determining factor in admittance.

Geri Mansdorf, the Director of Undergraduate Admissions, explained that the change came as a result of ongoing conversations with college guidance counselors and heads of school regarding the unfortunate circumstances in which exceptional students were barred from consideration for the honors programs because they narrowly missed the cut on their standardized test scores.

Mansdorf wrote, "in response to [these conversations] and to allow truly outstanding students a chance to be considered for our undergraduate honors programs, we decided to try a new approach." "Our goal was to open the program to a wider array of students while maintaining the integrity of the program as well as its high academic standards", she explained. She asserted that by considering students "whose test scores were excellent, if perhaps a bit short of our previous cutoffs", they were able to meet with "stellar candidates" that might not have originally been given a chance.

Marcy Roberts, the Director of College Guidance at the Katz Yeshiva High School of South Florida, said that she was pleased to hear about the relaxed requirement for the honors programs, as it opened the doors for more students to be considered. However, she noted that it was interesting that "despite these more flexible scores, the average scores for those students eventually admitted was actually even higher than the original cutoff."

Indeed, the YU admissions page that outlines the requirements for the honors programs states that the average SAT score of acceptees is a 1450 on the SAT, or a 33 on the ACT, remarkably higher than the original requirement.

Despite what could be viewed as a drop in standards, Mansdorf asserts that those in admissions are "confident that this new cohort of honors students will continue to be high achievers at YU and challenge not only themselves, but their peers and professors, as well."

In addition to these new changes for admittance to the honors programs, the YC faculty recently announced that students who are in the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors program will now be required to take just 6 (rather than the previously required 8) honors courses in order to graduate. A reason for this change, as delineated in an email sent to all honors students on April 19th, is to increase the number of students writing honors theses

by giving students more opportunities to fulfill their requirements and still be able to enroll in the classes necessary for them to write their thesis in their last two semesters on campus.

"I remind you that the terms of your financial awards include completion of all aspects of this requirement (courses and thesis) and that compliance is closely monitored" wrote Shalom E. Holtz, the Director of the Honors Program.

Students in the S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program at Stern College are still required to take 5 honors courses in order to graduate in addition to completing a thesis.



CRITICISM, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

When pressed if he takes issue with a specific article or statement issued by Rabbi Klapper, Rabbi Schachter responded to the author, "You were born yesterday. I'm a little older than you. We have known the man for many years. He doesn't represent our *hashkafah* at all! I think there are more important things to write in *The Commentator*. I said a fantastic shiur today and yesterday – why don't they write that up? Why do they write stupid things? This is not newsworthy. The shiur that I said is newsworthy."

Rabbi Klapper recently wrote an article for *The Lehrhaus* where he spoke briefly about Rabbi Schachter. He writes how "various YU roshei yeshiva such as Rabbi Hershel Schachter and my teacher, Rabbi Mordechai Willig, have emerged as genuine leaders. Some of the distortions of 'gadolatry' remain all too present, but I think it would be dishonest and churlish not to acknowledge that they regularly take, publicize, and sustain novel, idiosyncratic, controversial, and courageous positions

on issues ranging from the prenup and anti-me'agen demonstrations to kashrut to niddah to Zionism." He later writes, "even those who think that Rabbi Schachter is unequalled in the area of halakhah recognize that he is not an incomparable lamdan or baal mahshavah."

As for the Rabbi Klapper event itself, which received considerable attention, it wound up proceeding mostly business as usual. "I thoroughly enjoyed the shiur," described Avi Hirsch, a YC sophomore. "I had been to a shiur by Rabbi Klapper at YU earlier this year, but there were a lot more people there this time." He added, "some of my friends who were at the shiur told me that they hadn't planned to be there, but had changed their minds after hearing about the controversy and *the Commentator* article about it."

Joshua Skootsky, after describing the attendance, added that "Rabbi Klapper had a *chiddush* about the *Maharik* that was not speculative, but rather emerged forcefully from reading the sources carefully. It seemed certainly correct. There is a recording of the shiur, people should go to the Center for Modern Torah Leadership's website where it should be uploaded soon."

"I think it's important," said Dovid Simpser, currently the Vice-President of SOY and the uncontested candidate for SOY president, "that we recognize that, as an institution, YU serves a broad community of individuals who hold for themselves different values and perspectives." He added, "it is imperative that before any actions are taken on the individual level, there is a conversation, with consideration and open-mindedness for difference in values, with the councils, offices, and administrations involved with campus events."

"Rabbi Klapper went through the vetting process," continued Simpser, "and was approved by the Office of Student Life as they believe him to be an appropriate speaker for students to hear from. He is also a *musmach* of YU and respected by many *rabbanim* and Roshei Yeshiva within the YU community. Furthermore, he has spoken on campus multiple times in the recent past without any incident."

Speaking about the specific Rabbi Schachter incident, Simpser reflected that it "shows that there needs to be greater dialogue between the Roshei Yeshiva of RIETS, the University Deans, and the Student Leaders."

Portable, Powerful, Practical: A Review of the Nintendo Switch

By Zev Behar

Nintendo recently unveiled their newest system: the Nintendo Switch. Following the abysmal sales of the Wii U, Nintendo knew that they needed something big, new, and engaging if they wanted to regain the trust of their fans after millions were lost on the Wii U's production. Thankfully, they did not fail. The Nintendo Switch has finally merged the two biggest gaming platforms — portable and home systems. Rather than needing two different systems to play the games produced by Nintendo, the Switch allows gamers to

“HAVING OWNED AND PLAYED SEVERAL GAMES ON THE SWITCH FOR OVER A MONTH NOW, I CAN ATTEST TO THE FACT THAT IT IS AN AMAZING AND UNIQUE SYSTEM, IF NOT WITHOUT SOME FLAWS.”

play at home or on the go whenever they please. Having owned and played several games on the Switch for over a month now, I can attest to the fact that it is an amazing and unique system, if not without some flaws.

The system itself contains a screen, a dock for TV mode, and two Joy-Cons (controllers for the Switch) which can detach from the sides of the system. The dock has an HDMI cable that, when the Switch is placed in it, allows for the games to project onto the screen. When the Switch is removed, the game immediately reverts to the Switch's screen and leaves the TV blank. For more versatile gameplay, the Joy-Cons can be removed and used separately in each hand or put together to make a standard controller.

The system boasts a new feature called “HD Rumble” which has such sensitive rumble features in the Joy-Con that you can, for example, move it around as if it were a box containing marbles and be able to successfully guess how many marbles were in it based on the rumble alone (which happens to be a minigame for the underrated launch game “1-2-Switch”). About ten games were released with the Switch, but none of them had as

much hype as the much-anticipated “The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild,” which fans had been eagerly waiting for since its announcement back in 2014 (the wait was worth

it). Leaving the well-known tropes of Zelda behind, this new game utilizes a sprawling open-world map. The gameplay itself is amazing, but the graphics are stunning as well. Featuring several different landscapes, one can walk from an icy mountain top in the far north of the map to a burning desert in the deep south without having to stop. This was a fantastic game on its own, and it was extremely smart of

Nintendo to use it for their launch of the Switch. As of now, more copies of “Breath of the Wild” (BotW) for the Switch have sold than actual systems themselves (which are currently out of stock everywhere, although new shipments are being worked on).

The flaws, however, do make themselves known. The most common flaw people are noticing is that the left Joy-Con seems to have trouble connecting with the system. It is unclear why, but Nintendo has had anyone having trouble with it send it back to them for a new one for free, and the new ones seem to have repaired this issue. People have also found their games lagging if too much is going on at once. I personally have experienced this while playing BotW. If too many enemies are being fought on screen, the game begins to slow down. It is not significant, but it is noticeable and can hopefully be fixed in future updates.

Overall, the Switch is a unique gaming system and has created a practical way of playing games at home and on the go. I for one am extremely pleased with Nintendo's most recent endeavor and look forward to what they come up with next.



Iron Fist Lacks Punch

By Atara Huberfeld

Iron Fist may sound like the name of the boxing gym a few blocks down from the uptown campus, or a kitchen utensil your mother asked you to use on a piece of meat over Pesach break. Instead, it's Netflix's latest Marvel superhero show, destined from its inception to follow in its older siblings' footsteps to become a wild success. Or not.

Our hero is Danny Rand, whose billionaire parents die (mysteriously?) in a plane crash, leaving young Danny to be raised by warrior monks in the Chinese mountains. At the start of the season, Rand returns (mysteriously?) with newfound kung fu skills, claiming ownership of the company. But this is a crime-fighting show, not a new version of *Suits* or a glammed up take on *The Office*, so before long, the plot includes drugs, assassins, criminal conspiracies, and secret identities. It's a story we're all vaguely familiar with, so while it's hard to make *Iron Fist* seem new and exciting, it's also hard to mess it up. And yet, they do. The show manages to fall somewhere between boring and painful.

Superhero shows are not famous for their logical plots and realistic storylines, but *Iron Fist* takes this problem to a whole new level. It's not just that the show seems to forget how Rand's, aka the *Iron Fist* (as he calls himself every ten minutes or so), powers work from episode to episode. Sequences appear to be placed out of order, characters act as if preceding scenes had not occurred, and logic flaws abound. There is, of course, a vague construct of a plot; there's plenty of blood and masked ninjas and jump-cut riddled fight scenes. But aside from not making much sense, at the end of *Iron Fist*'s 13+ hours, the show lands right back where it started. Characters are brought back from the dead and killed again; vengeance is sought, meted out, regretted, and then revived; guilt is felt, dealt with, and then forced back upon the same characters. Nothing. Changes.

It's not just the series of interchangeable fight scenes that lose the flow of logic. When we first meet Rand, he's just returned to NYC from his monastery hideaway for unknown reasons. And slight spoiler alert, these reasons stay unknown until *the last episode*. And when we do learn Rand's “true motivations”, it feels like the writers pushed off figuring them out because they couldn't come up with a decent answer. Aside from making the show

boring, it feels like the writers didn't even try.

Rand himself is not a particularly likeable character. And not in an anti-hero, morally ambiguous, they-just-committed-murder-and-hid-the-body-but-I-love-them-anyway way. Danny Rand is just boring. Rand is a supposedly well-trained monk who should be in control of his anger and emotions. Instead, he has two states of being: gullible puppy-like innocence and enraged fighting machine. When in the first mode, he blunders his way through corporate Manhattan, occasionally spouting moralistic speeches on the evils of pharmaceutical

“RAND AND HIS PLOT ARE WATERED-DOWN VERSIONS OF THE TROPES WE'VE SEEN TIME AND AGAIN.”

companies and righteousness of class-action lawsuits that sound as though the writers are using Rand as a mouthpiece for their rants. It is the latter mode, however, that dominates the show, and it is arguably worse. For a person who is supposed to be the master of his emotions, especially anger, Rand has a remarkably short fuse. Most of the show is spent watching other characters run around, cleaning up the messes that result from Danny's mercurial nature that he and the writers call righteous anger.

The show and its protagonist seem to suffer from the same flaw: they rush to fight, without taking the time to plan, or even think about who it is they're fighting and why. Eager for something to prove and quick to violence, they cast frantically about every so often for someone new to call a villain. Claire Temple, the character who appears in all the Netflix superhero shows as a tie-in, is the only voice of reason, constantly begging Rand to, “just think about this for a second.” But she is consistently ignored, and instead, she and the viewer are swept up in yet another fight with ambiguous purposes. The show leaves no breathing room, no space for the viewer to think about why the characters are fighting. By the end of the season, it's not even clear why “our hero” deserves that title.

Above all, Danny Rand, corporate hero, kung-fu master, and occasional moral preacher, is uninteresting. Earlier Netflix Marvel shows had heroes who were as

diverse as the city they protect, and showed how they related to being a superhero. How does the religious vigilante approach violence? How are the more violent actions of a black crime-fighter perceived? How does the female hero use her sexuality, and how is it used against her? How are these neighborhood guardians accepted by their neighbors? When they showed us superhumans, they placed the emphasis on human.

People want to look at superheroes and see themselves within them. Any religious person, Catholic or not, could understand Daredevil's moral struggle. People with disabilities watched as Daredevil turned his disability into a superpower. Most women can empathize with Jessica Jones's fears, even worry about them on a daily basis, and saw her triumph despite them. Luke Cage turns a hoodie into nothing less than a supersuit and badge of honor.

Danny Rand is a person, but he's not a *human*. He's not the person we're friends with, the person we see in ourselves, the person we wish we could be. He's no neighborhood hero - he has no community. His peers are at worst Daredevil's villains, and at best, not people we want to spend time with. Rand and his plot are watered-down versions of the tropes we've seen time and again. The hero mysteriously disappears for years before returning as a martial arts master (Arrow, minus the supporting team). The tension between fighting crime and running his father's company (Iron Man, without the robots). A crime fighting billionaire who lives in NYC (Batman, sorely missing a batcave). These are stories that have been rehashed so many times that we could tell them in our sleep. There's nothing new or aspirational there. All that's left is a bunch of ninjas.

If you're hoping to watch *The Defenders*, Netflix's superhero team-up show coming this summer, and think that you need to watch *Iron Fist* to be able to follow the plot, I get it. It's why I watched the show in the first place. But I can only hope that the other heroes look at Danny Rand with the same disdain that I now do and let him sit most of that series out. Towards the end of the season, one of Rand's enemies confides in another, “Everything in your life was better before Danny showed up. He ruined everything”. I cannot help but agree.

Rating: PG-13, for (fake-looking) violence, limb dismemberment, decapitation, and the occasional curse word.

Biloxi Blues: Where Comedy and Character Depth Meet

By Hillel Field

After a brief hiatus last semester, YCDS has returned in full form with a production of Neil Simon's semi-autobiographical play, *Biloxi Blues*. The play is essentially a comedy, but at the same time a *bildungsroman*, or a coming-of-age story. Eugene Jerome (Ezra Felder) is a young and naïve Brooklynite who is whisked off to Biloxi, Mississippi for basic training during WWII. The play revolves around his mission statement for his time in Biloxi: to stay alive, become a writer and lose his virginity. By the end of the play, he accomplishes his goals, in albeit unexpected ways. The connections created between the young soldiers from their shared experience under the wrath of a tyrannical sergeant stand at the heart of the play, and the actors of YCDS manage to convey a sense of strong brotherhood.



"THE CONNECTIONS CREATED BETWEEN THE YOUNG SOLDIERS FROM THEIR SHARED EXPERIENCE UNDER THE WRATH OF A TYRANNICAL SERGEANT STAND AT THE HEART OF THE PLAY, AND THE ACTORS OF YCDS MANAGE TO CONVEY A SENSE OF STRONG BROTHERHOOD."

While each actor brings out the unique and complex personalities of each soldier-in-training, Yaacov Siev steals the show with his explosive portrayal of the authoritarian Sergeant Merwin J. Toomey. Siev's southern drawl sounds authentic, and he makes excellent use of his booming and commanding voice to humiliate and intimidate the new arrivals. The way he carries himself makes his sheer physicality a force of authority. The sergeant spends large amounts of time shouting in the soldiers' faces with unrelenting persistence, and I would not be surprised if some of his wild antics are improvised at times. You can feel the palpable intensity of Toomey's presence when he pushes his recruits to their emotional and physical limits, especially when he makes his recruits perform one hundred push-ups on the spot. The actors throw themselves into the moment, allowing the audience to relate to their struggle.

The play sets up the character of Arnold Epstein (David Cutler) as the polar opposite of Toomey: reserved and a non-conformist, yet, at the same time, he is someone who is unafraid to speak his mind. From the first time they encounter each other, you get the sense that, in the words of Heath Ledger's Joker, "this is what happens when an unstoppable force meets an immovable object." The tension between Toomey's dominance and Epstein's defiance escalates throughout the length of the play, and climaxes in a scene where the sergeant almost puts Epstein's life on the line. The relationship that develops between the two is enjoyably unpredictable, and has a strong resemblance to the relationship at the heart of the movie *Whiplash*. In this film, an unforgiving music teacher pushes his student to unreasonable extremes, and while the

student despises him for his methods, he eventually comes to an appreciation of this extremist approach. Without giving too much away, Epstein seems to go through a similar acceptance of Toomey's ideology of someone whose entire being is dedicated to creating perfect soldiers. The fact that we really get in touch with both of these characters makes the final scene of the play all the more satisfying and memorable.

An interesting theme that runs through the play that was absent from the last several YCDS productions is the explicit references to Jews and Judaism. The two main characters are both Jewish, and Arnold Epstein's Jewishness is repeatedly emphasized with his references to "Talmudic Reasoning." At one point, one soldier pokes fun at him, predicting that he will end up at an institution like YU (the self-reference here comes off as a bit cringe-worthy). Both Eugene and Epstein face prejudice because of their Judaism, especially in the form of their fellow soldier Joseph Wykowski, whose roughness is portrayed well by Jack Turell. The play also explores the topic of homophobia, and it does a great job of giving the audience a sense of historical context by addressing both of these issues, prevalent taboos in 1940's American society.

Choosing *Biloxi Blues* for this semester's production might

seem puzzling. A given for any YCDS play is the absence of female actors, and this limits the options of plays to choose from where this would not cause major issues. Interestingly, *Biloxi Blues* has a major female role in its original conceptions, and the film version starring Matthew Broderick devotes a lot of attention to a budding relationship between Eugene and Daisy, a girl who is only described by Eugene in this production. While we do see Eugene indulging in his love for her in a well-executed "dancing" scene, it does feel like Daisy is a character who is conspicuously missing. This issue is also relevant when Eugene accomplishes his goal of losing his virginity, which all takes place behind the scenes. It seems somewhat inconsistent to keep something that is such a major element of Eugene's development as something that is only implied. On the other hand, I can also see why leaving out these elements of the play is not a huge sacrifice. This play immerses the audience into the dynamics of these ragtag soldiers, so much so that their exploits outside of the army base become secondary to their interactions among each other. The focus is not so much on how they achieve their aspirations, but on how these soldiers perceive their fellow's achievements.



In Defense of Obesity

By Jonah Stavsky

We've all been there — sitting around the dinner table with family and friends — and, when the dessert plate finally arrives, the conversation begins. Uncle Peter is convinced the carbs are to blame. Cousin Sarah begs to differ, as she understood fats to be the culprit — if you eat fat, you get fat. Brother Andrew asserts the importance of protein for proper nutrition. Mom, after having recently read an article about the probiotics in fermented foods

“IN ESSENCE, WHAT WAS ONCE A LIVE-SAVING ADAPTATION, IS NOW KILLING US.”

such as kombucha, claims it's all about the bacteria. Dad, skeptical as always, proposes the supremacy of exercise in losing weight.

Calories in, calories out — that's what we've all been taught. As a personal fitness trainer, I, too, emphasize this idea to my clients. However, according to current research, this view is proving far more complicated than initially thought — more on this later. Then there's the willpower argument. If we could just put the fork down, the pounds would melt away. Again, it's not that simple.

The etiology, or cause of obesity is complicated — considerably beyond what people realize. The obese population are often stigmatized as lazy or simply lacking this so called willpower. In this article, I'd like to describe just a few of the many etiological theories surrounding the obesity epidemic — some of which may surprise you. In doing so, I'd like you to re-evaluate your assumptions regarding obese individuals, and the conscious, or subconscious biases, termed “fat biases”, you may have towards them. Moreover, I intend to provide general advice for those who may be struggling with their weight. Therefore, if you are among the more than two-thirds of Americans who are either overweight or obese, I urge you read closely; and if you are among the one-third who are not, you should read even closer.

When presented with a disease or a condition, doctors and scientists tend to look to our genes — and for good reason. After all, the three billion letter sequence inscribed in our cells, to a large extent, codes for the type of individual we will become. Ideally, a “diseased” gene would be located and repaired. Unfortunately, more often than not, a multitude of genes are implicated in a condition; it is therefore a matter of solving the genetic puzzle to obtain the cure — a task which is easier said than done. Regardless, progress has been made in this area of research.

The most commonly implicated gene in obesity is the MC4R gene, which codes for the melanocortin 4 receptor — a deficiency of which has been highly associated with overeating. Nevertheless, this cannot account for the steep statistics on obesity. More likely, several genes acting in synchrony contribute to the phenotype, or visible characteristics, of an obese individual. Furthermore, even if the specific genes connected to obesity were discovered, how would that help? Aren't we stuck with our genes? This previously held notion has become obsolete due to advances in the exciting field of biotechnology, in which gene-editing is a real possibility — take out the broken, put in the fixed. However, our genes cannot take all the credit for the obesity epidemic.

Neuroscientists, particularly neurophysiologists, have brought their fascinating discipline to bear on the issue of obesity and overeating. Why do people overeat? It seems like a simple enough question. Alas — the answer is multifaceted, to say the least. In accordance with darwinian evolution, humans have evolved, through natural selection, to live and eat in a certain way. In theory, our current health may depend on the development of a lifestyle resembling that of our ancestors. While the implications of this theory have yet to be concluded among experts, we can still do our best to extrapolate.

In the hunter-gatherer era, food was scarce. Our bodies, therefore, developed adaptations that allowed us to get the most out of a potential encounter with food. Let us say, for

example, that one of our ancestors came into contact with a delicious looking blueberry bush, which would inevitably result in overindulgence. In order to take full advantage of the fruit, the signals that make us hungry, which work through a hormone called ghrelin, are extremely powerful. If we don't eat, ghrelin runs rampant, and has us soon scavenging for food, whether it be miles away on a berry bush, or next-door in the fridge. On the other hand, the hormone leptin, along with others, signals to our brains that we are full. When we eat a big meal, leptin skyrockets, and we feel satiated. Here's the kicker: the signals to stop us from eating are much weaker than those forcing us to eat. Who knows when the next food encounter would be? Through this mechanism, our ancestor at the blueberry bush is able to stock up on plenty of energy, overindulging for a kind of hibernation, so to speak — similar to a grizzly bear consuming salmon before winter.

Furthermore, our brains have developed in a way that reinforces the act of eating. When we eat, the brain releases dopamine — the famous “feel good” neurotransmitter — similar to a heroin injection, albeit to a significantly smaller extent. And people wonder why food is addictive! Parallel with our ancestor at the blueberry bush, this dopaminergic response allowed our ancestors to continue eating and not die out — survival of the fittest at its best. In modern times, however, when food is so readily available (i.e fast food), these mechanisms have backfired. In essence, what was once a live-saving adaptation, is now killing us.

But even with modern food availability, wouldn't we still be able to regulate our appetites? Sure — so long as we are eating the right foods. The human stomach was designed to signal satiety to our brains in specific, although complicated, ways. One of the simplest manners in which this is done is through stretch receptors. When we eat, the stomach expands, and stretch receptors tell our brain that we're full. Note that the effectiveness of this system is dependent on food volume. Fruits and vegetables are high volume, low calorie foods; that is to say, you get more nutrition and satiety for your caloric buck. Sociologically, however, many societies, especially those of Americans, have decided to compress foods, increasing their density — effectively decreasing your caloric buck per unit of satiety.

An example I like to give to my clients: in front of you lies a single donut or a table lined to the brim with broccoli — each contains the exact same amount of calories. Which is going to make you more full? The correct answer, of course, is the broccoli. However, if you thought to yourself, “but I want the donut!” you were looking for the immediate dopaminergic response that accompanies a densely packed container of fat, sugar, and salt — stripped of vitamins, minerals, and fiber — thereby falling right into the food industry's trap. Accordingly, my advice to someone who complains of chronic hunger (all other variables being equal), is to take a look at the density of their foods. Yes — orange juice is healthy — but whole oranges are even healthier.

While exercise and proper nutrition are currently the most powerful tools available as a means for fat loss, certain individuals may benefit from alternative perspectives on the issue. With that, I'd like to turn to more recent theories which attempt to reconcile our environment with our genes — the so called nature versus nurture debate.

On the forefront of this reconciliation is the field of epigenetics. Essentially, we previously believed that gene transcription was set in stone. However, research has uncovered the ability of our genes to turn on and off, like a light switch, in order to regulate certain bodily processes. While the topic of epigenetics requires a separate article in and of itself (or perhaps a book, of which there are several published), the basics can be applied to obesity. Have you ever heard that sitting is the new smoking? This is in accordance with epigenetic research, in which sitting has been found to turn off “fat loss genes”, while standing and walking turned them back on. Incredibly, some of these changes could be permanent — a person may be able to assign an “on tag” to their genes which could be passed on to their children. Your current lifestyle could affect your future offspring on a genetic level, predisposing them to start their journey off on the right, or perhaps wrong foot. Furthermore, what we eat may also be able to turn and tag genes off and on — a truly exciting concept for the field of nutritional science.

Additionally, the study of the human microbiome has taken hold of the public. While estimates vary, it seems as though we have more bacterial cells than human cells inside of us — in a way, we are more bacteria than we are human. Besides being an interesting fact, why should we care? While research into the human microbiome is vast and ongoing, its implications for obesity are already apparent.

In several studies, scientists have given the same diet to regular mice and germ free mice (mice born without any bacteria inside of them), and watched as the germ free mice became exponentially fatter than the regular mice — their caloric intake remaining constant. Moreover, when the microbes of a fat mouse were transferred to the colon of a skinny mouse, the skinny mouse began to gain weight; again, this was done with a consistent diet. How does this work? Science simply isn't sure yet, although progress is being made everyday. The fact of the matter is, that fields such as epigenetics and the human microbiome (and several others not mentioned) highlight the vast complexity of obesity. The cause of the issue clearly



extends far beyond what we currently know; calories in, calories out may not be the whole story.

The obesity statistics, as previously highlighted, are startling. Simply being even 20% overweight exponentially increases a person's odds of receiving a diagnosis of heart disease, stroke, cancer, high blood pressure, and diabetes, to name a few. Yet, as we have seen, the cause of obesity is complex. Accordingly, it is vital to account for these variables when deciding how one should perceive obese or overweight individuals. Moreover, how exactly do we place, or even define fault? Are we to blame an obese child for the way she was raised by her parents? What about her genetics? Epigenetics? What if she is still obese into adulthood? Can we blame her then? Her brain is now wired to crave fat, sugar, and salt, from a point in her life in which free will was limited. These philosophical questions regarding the place of fault, or blame, if you will, demonstrate further nuances into the stigmatization of obese individuals.

It is possible to perceive that the only difference between medical conditions such as obesity and heart disease is the external expression of the former, in that obesity is plain to see. You might never know about the hidden medical conditions of your friends, family, and colleagues. Obesity, however, is out for everyone to see — perhaps a duly unjust circumstance. Therefore, the selective stigma attached to obese individuals can be irrational and may even perpetuate comorbidities such as anxiety and depression. Instead, we should seek to evaluate obesity in a more understanding, yet scientific manner — to question our assumptions when assigning blame to any medical condition. Ultimately, by acting in this way, we can create an atmosphere conducive to prevention and healing.

A Note on the Author: Jonah Stavsky is a pre-medical student at YU completing a major in biology and a double minor in psychology and public health. Jonah is an American Council on Exercise (ACE) Certified Personal Trainer with dual speciality certifications in behavior change psychology and fitness nutrition.

An Interview with Sammy K

By Benjamin Koslowe

This author recently had the opportunity to sit down and talk with Samuel Kalnitz (aka Sammy K) and his manager Dennis Gindi. Here is the inside scoop on this rising star.

Benjamin Koslowe: Let's get right into it. Who are you, where are you from, and what's your background?

Samuel Kalnitz: I go by Sammy K. I'm from Atlanta, Georgia. I've been rapping for almost nine years at this point. I've been recorded for about two or three years. I put out a couple of mixtapes in the past, and now I'm trying to get my name out there, just trying to do some real music. There's a lack of realness to hip hop nowadays, so what I'm trying to do is try to help the cause and get that realness back to hip hop. That's what I'm about.

BK: How did you get started?

SK: I started out just writing covers, literally just writing rhymes and poetry, around sixth grade. It evolved into real songs. I started out listening to rap and realized that this is something I want to do. I started out then and kept pursuing it.

The first thing I ever released was in my freshman year of high school. It was a three-track EP, obviously not my greatest work. The next official release came about two and a half years ago with a couple of tracks. That's really when I started my actual career as Sammy K. It's been progressing ever since.

BK: What do you rap about?

SK: A lot of different stuff. Hip hop is definitely a reflection of who you are and what your background is. I don't make "Jewish music," per se, but my mainstream music that I make definitely has inspiration from aspects of Judaism. I'll do a rap about Israel or a rap about the Holocaust as a reflection of who I am. There are other aspects as well, such as word plays and puns, past experiences, struggles I've had, or other things that pertain to me. Whatever's going on in my life or whatever I'm thinking about, that's what my song will be about. Whatever emotions I feel from the instrumental is how it will translate into the song.

BK: You have a big following now, correct?

SK: Yeah, thank God. It's doubled in three days since the "Jewish Guy Rapping in NYC" video. My fan base has literally doubled since then.

Dennis Gindi: It's pretty cool how it all started. I work with Sammy K, going back with him to when we started working together on an NCSY program. Funny enough, when we were both on the program, we both liked rapping. Even though I'm not pursuing rapping at all, I really enjoy the whole art of it, being part of the experience. Sam and I used to bond over "freestyle rapping," which is just saying things off your mind and trying to rhyme them. Back then we were pretty immature (I'm still immature and Sam has evolved). When he came back to YU I got involved with him. We're thinking of ways to get his name out there.

We like having lunch meetings in the YU Caf. At one meeting, we came up with the idea of something unique that hasn't been done before. There are all these YouTube videos of "nerd raps in the hood" or "this guy with this specialty raps here," a lot of things like that. We tried to figure out what could be our niche that would promote Sammy in the right way. We were mulling through a few ideas and we finally got to one that would include Sammy wearing a black hat. Cool enough, he actually wears a black hat on Shabbat. He had the black hat and had the idea to include it in a video. After a few days of shooting – we had a tight schedule because the videographer had only one or two days – we got the video done with good team collaboration. As of this point, we're right over a million views on Facebook and 18,000 views on YouTube.

SK: On Facebook we used "clickbait." Basically, users scroll through tons of posts and it's hard to catch their eye without having something that's loud and in your face. So we made the cover with big letters across the top saying, "Jewish Rapper," and the bottom says, "Shocks NYC."

DG: Not only would users see "Jewish Rapper," but they'd also see a freeze-frame of a guy wearing a black hat and a suit on.

SK: Yeah, so we went with that for our post. And we put the video on YouTube too so that people could share the video or watch it again easily.



Funny enough, I had the idea a while ago. We were all sitting around the meeting thinking about how to go viral, and I just threw this old idea out there. We were like, yo, that's actually a good idea. Let's actually do that and put it to fruition. Crazy how it worked out.

BK: How does your business work? How do you manage your income, your expenses, and so on?

DG: The business as it stands now is a four-person group. There's Sammy K who's the talent, and then there are two managers – we both work on different aspects of the music group. I work more with PR, communications, and logistics, and the other manager works more on technical stuff, video editing, things of that nature. And then we also have a social media campaign manager who manages social media.

SK: Mark and Dennis are our managers. I always explain to people that Dennis is the optimist and Mark is the realist. Dennis is gonna be the one who goes out to everyone and is like, look, this is the product you want, you gotta get this stuff. And then Mark will come to me and be like, is this really what you want, do you actually mean this, is this really what you want to portray? It's a great balance.

DG: Then we have another Jewish rapper (he goes by Ursa) who goes to Binghamton who's very passionate about this field as well. He knows Sammy as well and we're all acquainted and friendly. He's visited a few times. We have good open communication for collaborative team effort.

As far as your question about revenue, at this point we've actually all invested a bit. Here and there we all put in a couple of bucks for things like mic rental, website domain, social media related promotions, stuff like that. As I like to say, we are in our "pre-revenue" stage, but we're hoping to exit that soon.

On one level, we're all friends. We all talk about funny things that happened in our day and things like that. But the conversation can easily switch to business and we're all very passionate about getting this moving.

There's a rap group that was very popular starting around 2008 called Travis Porter. Somebody got a hold of our video and showed it to Travis Porter. They responded to this person, "that's tight," a colloquial term saying that they liked it.

Separately, in another arena, we've been working with a fraternity at the University of Indiana to have us open for Travis Porter, which we did this past week (Thursday, April 20). Little did they know that this is the guy they saw on the video.

BK: When do you expect to exit the "pre-revenue" stage?

SK: We're definitely on the verge. We can't predict it for sure, since you never know what label will reach

out, and whether or not they're willing to work with our circumstances.

DG: I would say that at the early stages we'd put all of the revenue back into growing Sam's following and covering the costs we've had. We're lucky enough to be working with people who are extending their resources to help Sam. These include video editors, producers, and things like that. We're definitely looking into merchandising as an option. There's not too much we can give away as far as the actual numbers, but we're looking forward to starting those kinds of projects.

BK: Do you view what you're doing as a long-term career?

SK: That's definitely the goal. I'm not trying to rap to make money – I'm trying to make money to rap. I want to be able to make this my career. I want to do what I love, get paid for it, and be able to do it again. Instead of having some other job and rapping in my off time, I want to have this as my main gig. Shows, radio station interviews, all those sorts of things play into it. Do what you love, love what you do. That's what I stand by.

DG: A lot of times people hear of the phrase "Jewish Rapper" and they immediately think of Matisyahu or a handful of other Jewish rappers. But I genuinely think that there aren't many talented and devoted Jewish rappers that are religious and devoted to the Torah, Mitzvot, and learning in their everyday lives. For Sam and the rest of us, we view this as getting a voice out there from the Jewish community as an influencer through hip hop, a channel that Orthodox influencers don't generally take. To be able to have that voice is very important for Sam, and it's a very humbling experience to have people listen and react positively to the message that Sam, and we as a group, is trying to portray. So far, thank God, it's working out.

We want to stay away from the stigma of "just a Jewish rapper" or "just rapping about Israel." So we try to stay away from politics, race issues, and stuff like that. We try to show that Sam is a Jewish white male who can actually get his voice heard and have a nice message to share with the world.

BK: How would you categorize your fan base?

SK: I've definitely gotten feedback from people all across the spectrum. My little brother who's twelve years old loves my stuff. Whenever I write songs, I keep in mind that I want him to love it. At the same time, my grandmother is one of my biggest fans. She religiously listens to my music. And I also get broader feedback from people her age, people my brother's age, and all across the board. I feel like I can reach literally the entire world, because of this huge diversity of ages that all listen. There are different aspects that they like. Some like the beat, some the words, some the flow, some the lyrics, some the message, and these factors as well vary for different age groups. Obviously older fans appreciate the lyrics

SEE SAMMY K, CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Featured Faculty: Professor Barbara Blatner

By Arthur Schoen

Professor Barbara Blatner teaches in the Yeshiva College English Department. An accomplished playwright, poet, and composer, Professor Blatner has taught in YU since 2002.

Arthur Schoen: Can you tell us a bit about your life story/background? Where are you from originally?

Barbara Blatner: I grew up near a village about five miles south of Albany, New York called Slingerlands – have you heard of it? – in a stone and wood Frank Lloyd Wright-ish house my father designed. My mother painted, wrote, read furiously, and as a golfer won the Women’s Northeastern Championship twice. My father, also an avid golfer, was an architect whose work is now on the National Register of Historic Places. For twelve years, I attended the small all-female private day school, the oldest continually operating girls’ school in the US, the Albany Academy for Girls. My mother, sister and cousins also went there, my father designed the present school building, and so I have a prodigious affection for a place that schooled me beautifully in literature, writing and music. Several teachers at the Academy stood squarely behind me as a young artist and I am forever grateful for their support. I have returned to AAG to give a talk about art-making; I composed and performed with a 6th grade chorus AAG’s bicentennial song.

I am wonderfully married to my fiction writer and architectural illustrator husband Arthur Dutton. We moved to New York almost fifteen years ago so that I could teach at YU and pursue playwriting in a larger theatre galaxy than the one we left behind in Boston.

AS: You studied in Vassar College as an undergrad. How did you decide to attend a small liberal-arts college?

BB: My mother attended Vassar; I was attracted to her legacy. When I visited the campus, I fell in love with the massive stone gate entranceway, and tall, thick trees that were apparently decisive in keeping Vassar in Poughkeepsie, away from moving to New Haven to merge with Yale. I chose Vassar because the music department was strong, and Latin, which I loved in high school, was taught there. Grounding in that ancient language gave me a sense of words as infinitely plastic energies.

AS: Your bachelor’s degree was in music composition. How did you get interested in studying music? What sorts of different things have you done with music? Do you still compose?

BB: I am told that in my crib I moved in rhythm to Tchaikovsky’s music. I began classical piano lessons at age five; Bach, Chopin, Beethoven, Brahms, Bernstein, Bartok became heroes. As a music composition major at Vassar, I wrote everything from fugues to aleatoric and atonal music. After college, I played piano in lounges, joined a band, formed a jazz duo and taught piano. I continue to write songs, theatre scores, and incidental music for occasions. Dr Lin Snider, Director of YCDS, and I are now writing a children’s musical together, and I have been pianist/musical director in several of her musicals at YU (*Newsies*; 1776). Although I have felt torn at times between

“I BELIEVE THAT “GENIUS” IS NOT A PERSON BUT A QUALITY THAT ANY MIND, IF IT IS SUFFICIENTLY FREE, CAN FLASH WITH.”

-PROFESSOR BARBARA BLATNER

music and writing, I keep music in my life because it is an undeniable pulse in me and a conduit to the great pulse of our world.

AS: Your graduate education was in English and Creative Writing. What led you to switch the focus of your studies from music to English? In your own work and life, do you find any relationship between those two different sorts of “arts” (music and creative writing)?

BB: After Vassar, I was accepted by Boston’s Berklee School of Music, and BU’s M.A. Program in Creative Writing. Music or writing? I was at a crossroads. I realized both were essential to my blood, but decided to do music informally and pursue writing and the teaching of writing formally. Music shows up in my verbal rhythms, in songs and spoken verses in my plays, in my sense of musical texture and movement in storytelling. The finest writing IS music; I hope that some of my work at least approaches that state.

AS: You earned a Doctorate of Arts in English. How does this degree differ from the traditional PhD degree? Did it involve more teaching (rather than research)?

BB: Yes, SUNY-Albany’s D.A., which no longer exists, is not a research but a teaching degree. My courses were in writing and the teaching of writing, my thesis a collection of poems, my oral exam a presentation of twenty books that I felt had influenced my writing in some way. Great fun!

AS: In YU, you teach courses in creative writing, including play writing and poetry. On some level, I think most of us assume that there is some concept of inherent creativity - that some people are simply more “creative” than others. Do you believe that anyone can produce creative work? As a teacher, what do you do to try to coax creativity out of your students?

BB: I believe that “genius” is not a person but a quality that any mind, if it is sufficiently free, can flash with. I think fantastic writing can be produced anywhere, any time, perhaps surprising the writer. Look at the ingenious paintings of unselfconscious kindergarteners. But people are pulled by different magnets; those of us who choose to walk the austere path of writing are motivated perhaps by a desire to investigate how syllables might evoke what we call “meaning,” “story,” and by mysterious unconscious motivations. It takes practiced discipline to write, build a table, dig a ditch; I marvel at the glorious range of skills humans possess (and our non-human friends, too, apparently!).

If as a writing teacher, if I can help a student feel the thrill of solving words on a page, help him shed limiting ideas about who he might be as a writer, nurse freedom in his expression and simultaneous respect for rigorous editing into his writing life, I have succeeded.

AS: What might a student look to get out of studying creative writing even if they aren’t an English major or even if they might not think of themselves as particularly “creative”?

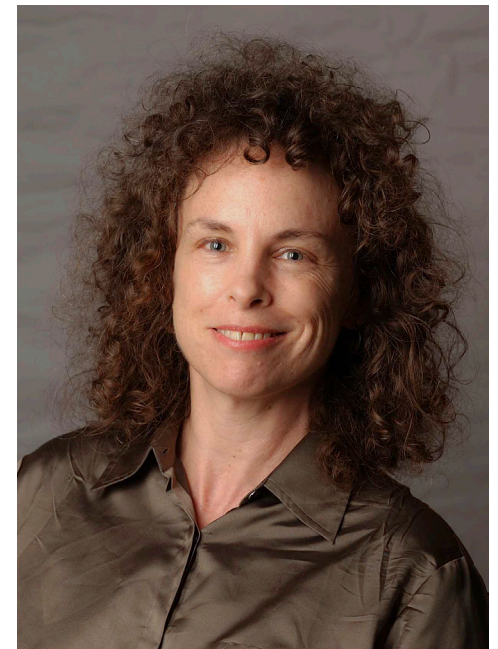
BB: A lot of being “creative” is what you believe about yourself. If you are sure you’re not creative, you’ll fear a creative writing class. If you’re open to the possibility of gorgeous things flowing from your pen or keyboard, you will welcome the experiment. A non-English major in creative writing might access innerness, self-ness. More practically, writing prepares you for the numerous rhetorical situations, written and spoken, of any job. Any language learning deepens awareness and therefore promotes job skills. But honestly, I’m more romantic than practical, am devoted to art-making as a way to celebrate life, breath, Spirit.

AS: Do you see a relationship between your teaching and your own creative work?

BB: Absolutely! In every class, I’m thinking with my students about writing, then harvesting all that for my own work. Teaching for me counters the isolation of writing, turns my obsession with writing craft and process into a social communing.

AS: Through the years, you have seen a lot of your own work - including plays, poetry, and music - published and performed. Can you describe the feeling when you see other people working to perform something that you put your heart and soul into creating?

BB: My first produced play went up in Albany at a playwrights’ theatre I founded with an actress friend. Seeing my script incarnated by actors was initially terrifying and surreal: what I had carefully carved in my head was strangely embodied before me. I wore dark glasses to opening night! After that first shock, I loved seeing my work on. There’s always a lag, though, because the ideal production you imagine never aligns with what you see onstage. But that mismatch is an interesting life phenomenon, yes?



AS: Take us inside your creative process. How do you begin a play? Do you wait for an idea or character to come to you? Do you begin with a specific plot in mind? How long does a typical play take you to write? Is there any formula for any of this or does it totally vary from time to time?

BB: I have no formula; I might know the plot before I write, I might discover the plot after years of burrowing blindly forward like a mole. Not knowing can be vital to my process, the state John Keats called “negative capability,” a fertile receptivity to what comes. I often flash on an idea for a play overhearing a conversation on a NYC street, reading something in the paper. In terms of finishing work, “How do you know when a poem is done?” I once asked an Irish poet elder. Looking at me quizzically, he replied: “When it’s done.” Sounds like a Zen koan, but I got it: there is no formula, and that’s why the process, as long as it takes, and I can take years on a play or poem, is exciting.

My process: quickly writing by hand a first draft, then revising and revising, adding, subtracting, brainstorming, cutting, standing back and seeking again the “beating heart” of the piece. Also, my husband’s feedback is a must; he knows where I struggle in my writing, can say: you’re doing that again – try this instead...he really is my collaborator and often I can’t proceed without his input. I do the same for the novel he is working on.

AS: Can you tell us about some interesting projects that you are currently working on?

BB: I am now finishing a play I have worked on a long time, *Clearing*, about an Afghanistan vet undergoing a hallucination/flashback to a traumatic combat event. I am proud that I have almost finished what was formerly a high energy, character-rich but chaotic play, in terms of storyline. And as I said, I am working with Dr. Snider, co-writing book and writing lyrics and music for a kids’ musical called *Heartsong*. I plan to write a folk musical based on the picaresque American folksong, “Betsy from Pike.”

AS: Could you tell us briefly about the different classes you offer in YU?

BB: I teach First Year Writing and creative writing courses (Playwriting, Introduction to Creative Writing, Poetry Workshop). The creative writing courses are joyful, full of discoveries I make alongside and because of my students. First Year Writing is more difficult to teach, but I am very process-oriented and seek to empower young writers to develop and grow their own most effective writing practices.

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

BB: I very much wanted to move to New York to pursue playwriting, so when I saw the position at YU advertised in the Times, I put all my intention toward getting the job. YU has been a gratifying place to teach since classes are small, and students, for the most part, are vibrant, engaged. I am Jewish but practice no formal religion. At YU, I learn a great deal about Judaism from students and faculty about the meaning of terms and holidays. I am moved by how my students are sustained by their Jewish communities; I

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The Soul of A Cappella: A Review Of A Kumzitz in the Rain 3

By Ariel Reiner

Just in time for *Sefirat Haomer*, producer and arranger Doni Gross has released his third album in the a cappella CD trilogy *A Kumzitz in the Rain*, and this time around, like with the first and second albums, listeners will not be disappointed. Now you may be thinking, “three? I never even heard one and two!” That would be a fair statement since the *A.K.I.T.R.* albums have flown somewhat under the radar. I’d like to briefly discuss why that may be, before elaborating in more detail on this specific album release.

I do not wish to go into the *Halachos* of listening to music, live or recorded, during *sefira* right now, but let it be noted that many Orthodox Jews refrain from listening to music during the days of *sefira*, even when the music that they might play in the privacy of their homes and cars is recorded. However, many *poskim* allow for a cappella music to be played during these weeks, as the lack of instruments detracts from the *simcha* with which music infuses us. It is something which is definitely worthy of contacting your Local Orthodox Rabbi to discuss.

Because of the limitation on music during *sefira*, a myriad of albums has been released over the years which consist solely of human voices in order to avoid the issue of listening to instrumental music. Well-known artists like A.K.A. Pella and Six13 revolutionized the Jewish a

cappella world with tracks that make you wonder how they can produce such sounds merely with their voices and beat boxing. The popularity of this genre has led as well to a cappella songs being produced for non-*sefira* times, such as A.K.A. Pella’s Purim song “What Does Haman Say,”

“EACH SONG IS A SOULFUL AND STIRRING CLASSIC. THEY ARE THE TUNES YOU OFTEN HEAR DURING KEDUSHA ON SHABBOS, MEANT TO BRING YOU DOWN MEMORY LANE.”

a spinoff of the secular song “What Does the Fox Say?” Other groups like The Maccabeats and YStuds as well have used the a cappella genre to produce creative tracks which can live up one’s day, in addition to producing more traditional ones.

Undoubtedly some Jewish Music listeners wish to listen to upbeat and lively music all year round, and these a cappella innovations help one do so even during *sefira* and

the Three Weeks. But sometimes, these tunes cause us to lose focus of what the limitation on music during these times is meant to be about. Sometimes Jewish a cappella releases are more of a technical circumvention of a prohibition, than a channeling of that prohibition to provide inspiration. What eliminating music can do for a person in terms of framing the days of *sefira* as more somber, soulful a cappella can do to turn those days into ones of inspirational introspection. This is what *A Kumzitz in the Rain* does so uniquely for its listeners. In fact, in the featured description of the third album on mostymusic.com, it states, “Once again, the group is focused

on delivering pure and catchy sing-along kumzitz songs with no electronic or synthesized sounds.”

Due to its more soulful and less creative a cappella style, as well as its general lack of well-known Jewish music names, *A Kumzitz in the Rain* may not be a familiar brand to many. But it should be. The tracks on these three albums help bring listeners back to those inspirational Three Weeks summer camp kumzitzes. Each song is a soulful and stirring classic. They are the tunes you often hear during *kedusha* on *Shabbos*, meant to bring you down memory lane. A listener may glance at the track list and wonder why it’s necessary to record “Hamalach” or “Habein Yakir” yet again, but these a cappella vocals give the pieces a whole new meaning.

A Kumzitz in the Rain 3 – which is available in stores, on iTunes, and with a free sampler on Youtube – has two new features setting it apart from the previous albums. First, *A.K.I.T.R.* has been successful in its first two albums in using children soloists to bring the songs to another level. These kids are not screechy, but rather hit their notes well and have impressive vocal abilities. *A.K.I.T.R.* continues this trend in its third album by making this CD a “junior” album, consisting primarily of kid solos. While most of the vocals are placed against the backdrop of skilled adults and familiar voices like that of Rivie Schwebel, the kids in this album certainly demonstrate their unique and tremendous talents in their own right.

The second new feature follows somewhat of a recent trend, in that the songs highlight the compositions of the great Abie Rotenberg. While Shwekey’s new release *Those Were the Days* also consists of a “Journeys Medley,” and others like Dovid Dachs in *Shiras Hayam* have made tributes to Rotenberg before, *A.K.I.T.R.* draws on Rotenberg’s unique capability to produce stirring kumzitz songs in addition to his classic English hits like “Joe Dimaggio’s Card” and “The Man From Vilna.” *A Kumzitz in the Rain 3* even features Abie Rotenberg in one of its songs, “Modeh Ani.”

Because this series of albums is in the unique position, given their name, to deem songs as “kumzitz worthy,” it essentially takes songs and adds them to the repertoire of kumzitz songs and *kedusha* tunes. While this third album is focused exclusively on songs from a past generation since it pays tribute to the work of Abie Rotenberg, the first and second albums did a good job of interspersing some lesser-known songs into the mix, expanding the sometimes too short list of potential kumzitz songs utilized in different venues. Look for future *A.K.I.T.R.* albums to hopefully continue that pattern of expanding our “kumzitz playlists” beyond just the typical “tov lehodos,” “ana Hashem,” and “vezakenini.”

If you are the type of Jewish music listener who always looks for the vocal-focused slow songs on albums, *A Kumzitz in the Rain 3* is certainly for you. And even if you are more into techno a cappella, I recommend giving *A.K.I.T.R.* a try. Certainly, during the days of *sefira* and the Three Weeks, days on the Jewish calendar meant for introspection and yearning, we can each use a little “Kumzitz in the Rain.”



BLATNER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

wish I had had more of that growing up in a secular home.

AS: You have held a wide range of teaching positions in a diverse array of contexts, You have taught ESL, creative writing, and literature. You have done graduate teaching, adult education, and writer's residencies. You have taught in traditional colleges, community colleges, and high schools. In all this teaching experience, have you found that there is some quality to the teaching that is really the same every time, or is each teaching position just a whole new adventure?

BB: Your wonderful question travels far and wide. Building relationships in the classroom is what I value most; I’m not a fan of virtual learning, though I’m aware of its benefits. Another thread through my teaching is that I aim to encourage creativity and creative problem solving in every student, so that perhaps a writer can write something he believed impossible.

AS: Have you noticed anything in particular that distinguishes the YU student (for better or for worse...) from students you have encountered in other settings?

BB: The homogeneity of YU’s student body produces visible, hearty comradeship. Guys here recognize and salute each other as members of the Jewish world family; I love that sparking. Sometimes, though, YU students, surrounded as they are by peers like themselves, (I’m generalizing here) seem walled off from our motley country and world. How do our students maintain their unique identity AND leave YU as world citizens? What boundaries do I, as a teacher, push at, where do I pull back?

AS: As a Washington Heights resident, do you have any advice for our readers about making the most of their time living in this neighborhood?

BB: What an educational adventure it is to be a white, middle/upper middle class Jewish person observing and interacting with people of color in Washington Heights! If I were queen of YU, I would require every incoming

student during orientation to watch a video of Lin-Manuel Miranda’s first hit, *In the Heights*. Seeing this vivacious musical opened windows for me onto the neighborhood I pass through every school day as I walk from my apartment on the west side of 181st Street to Belfer Hall. Like you (I am assuming now), I am a stranger to the Spanish music, families strolling arm-in-arm, street vendors selling jewelry. Explore west AND east of Broadway. Notice shops, clothing, street life, listen to sounds and conversations, even if you don’t understand them.

Washington Heights is layers deep in stories of immigrant life, German Jews, Irish, Hispanics. Go to the East River and over the Highbridge pedestrian bridge. Go to the Hudson and radiant Fort Tryon Park sunsets. Slow down, take a break from your stressful schedule, wander, talk to neighbors, dream them, dream with them.

Thank you so much for this very honoring, thoughtful interview.

Beauty and the Beast: Something There?

By Tzvi Levitin

There is one moment in Bill Condon's new live-action adaptation of 1991's *Beauty and the Beast* that hasn't garnered nearly enough attention. A moment that shocks the audience, jars the senses, and leaves many a viewer squirming in their seat. It's a one-second shot that calls into question the modernization of Disney, the challenges that come along with injecting "realness" into animated film, and whether tales as old as time are best left untouched by the 21st century. Yes, you know exactly which moment I'm speaking about.

Or maybe you don't. For it is not the revelation of the preening antagonist Gaston's (Luke Evans) right-handman LeFou's (Josh Gad) homosexuality that I speak of (I'm sorry, but shouldn't the Stockholm-syndrome-induced-bestiality trouble you more?), but rather a moment midway through the movie during Belle's (Emma Watson) performance of "Something There," when the princess-to-be starts to realize that the Beast (Dan Stevens) has a tender side. She engages him in a flirtatious snowball fight, and after she pelts his massive frame with a well-aimed shot, he gathers mounds of snow and ice into his massive paws and launches a ball the size of a watermelon at Belle's head with brute strength. The snow boulder slams into Belle's face at full force, dealing her a blow that in the real world would surely kill her even before her skull slams into the stone floor beneath her. In the movie, of course, Belle is unharmed and continues her song, and the entire theater bursts into uproarious laughter of the sort you'd hear watching a blooper reel or *America's Funniest Home Videos*.

At first, the cheap comedy of the scene troubled me, seemingly so out of place in the otherwise laugh-out-loud-free movie, but upon further reflection I realized that the film needs this moment – awkward, contradictory, and slapstick – to maintain its charm over the audience. We need to buy into the storyline of this imprisoned girl falling in love with her beastly captor, but we cannot do so without an appropriate amount of distance between our reality and that of the movie. The film lost some of that distance when it transformed the animation

into a combination of convincing CGI and live-action; whereas the 1991 version of the Beast was an amorphous tapestry of browns with the gentle voice of a nobleman, the 2017 Beast confronts us in high definition with the yellow-stained tusks of a boar, the matted fur of a bison, and the bone-chilling growl of Bane from *The Dark Knight Rises*. To compensate for what would otherwise become an uncomfortable experience of watching a young girl fall in love with an animal, the film maintains as many innocent qualities of the animated world – the world of birds sewing dresses, of enchanted forests, of the Road Runner dropping anvils onto Wile E. Coyote – as the live-action medium will allow without becoming too ludicrous.

Given this premise, many of the other elements of the movie that initially seem to miss the mark begin to make more sense. The film makes a half-hearted attempt at complicating and strengthening Belle by portraying her as an aspiring inventor instead of a ditsy and absentminded daydreamer. But they dare not make Belle too independent or fierce, lest her eventual swoon into the arms of the Beast lose its credibility, so any spunk or ingenuity Belle exhibits at the start of the film dissolves as soon as she is taken captive. The duo's bizarre magical trip to Belle's childhood home in Paris, the site of her mother's death at the hands of the Black Plague, ultimately serves as nothing more

than a throwaway attempt to make the Beast seem more human.

The singing and dancing furniture are the saving grace of the film; while at times they seem more animatronic than animated (Ian McKellen's Cogsworth loses too much humanity to the metallic workings of his clock), the furniture, more than anything, maintains the magical innocence of the original film and charms the viewer into the world of fantasy. Without Lumière's (Ewan McGregor) over the top "Be Our Guest," or the ensemble performance of "Days in the Sun," the viewer would likely fall out of the film's spell and question the problematic love story at its core.

The film employs these strategies to circumvent the dilemma lying at the heart of this remake: bringing the animated feature into live action requires injecting the story with realness without giving it too much credibility. Because we are not meant to think about this film. We are meant to be swept away into two hours of beautiful cinematography, flawless special effects, and heartwarming nostalgia. And in this, from the rose petals to the golden thread of Belle's iconic ball gown, the film flourishes without question.



SAMMY K, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

a lot more, but the younger crowd definitely likes how it sounds a lot more. When the music is aesthetically pleasing in all of those regards, that's how you reach the whole spectrum.

BK: What are you guys studying in YU?

DG: Currently I am in the JSS program. I'm a junior studying Accounting. I went to Israel for one year and now am finishing my fourth semester on campus. It's been a great experience so far. I really enjoy the school aspect of it. I was here for three semesters before Sam came along, and it was pretty good, and now it's just that much better.

SK: This is actually my first semester on campus. I was in Israel for a year and a half. I'm in Rav Belizon's shiur in BMP. I'm majoring in Management right now, but I plan on switching over to Marketing. But so far so

good. I'll be here as long as it takes to either get signed or graduate first.

BK: Would you in theory drop the degree for a promising enough career?

SK: For sure, if it's a high-paying job. If someone's in medical school and, before they graduate, some hospital comes to them and offers them an opportunity to start making millions of dollars a year, they'd probably take it. I'd say that example more or less carries over for me. Obviously I'd like to have a degree in my back pocket, but if next month someone wants to sign a million dollar deal, it would be hard to turn down.

And I really do like YU. I love my shiur. YU is a good community to be a part of. There are lots of students with similar mindsets, which is nice. It's a very nice community.

DG: YU is different from most other schools. At any school you can have a close network of friends, and even

maybe a Chabad or Hillel to reach out to, but in YU there's such a massive community. You can strike up a conversation with so many people who are similar to you. Everyone at YU who has heard about Sammy has been really supportive. People feel connected. It's different from just any rapper at any college campus. Sammy is a specifically Jewish rapper who relates to the students here in a specific way.

SK: I'll have people in classes that I'm in who I've never spoken to, but then they recognize me in class and will tell me that they loved the video, or something like that. People recognize who I am and it's all love, it's all great. I haven't gotten a single negative word from anybody here about the music.

You can follow Sammy K on Twitter (@SammyKTheRapper), Instagram, Facebook, Spotify, and at www.sammyktherapper.com.

How to be a Winner: Comparing Trump to your Favorite Television Characters

By Elliot Fuchs

"I don't worry, I just win." - Ari Gold

"I'm not about caring, I'm about winning." - Harvey Specter

"America doesn't win anymore... I'm good at winning."
-Donald J. Trump

How many times has the Entourage fan watched Ari Gold walk into a negotiation in a complete state of unease, knowing nothing about what is about to happen, other than the fact that he was going to walk out with a deal for Vinnie Chase?

How often has the Suits enthusiast watched Harvey Specter walk into a deposition for a case that he seems to have no chance of salvaging? And when Mike Ross asks what he is going to do, he responds by saying that he's going to mend the problem without any indication of how he's going to do it, yet manages to walk out the victor every time. In the first five episodes of season one, Harvey actually refers to himself as a "winner" at least once per episode, cementing that attribute into his fictional DNA.

The way these two characters develop throughout their respective shows portrays them as natural-born winners, who exemplify what it means to manipulate any situation in their favor through their impressive intelligence and limitless charisma.

The skeptic will say that it is easy for Harvey and Ari to win in every scenario because they are fictional. Further, as beloved characters, one could argue that the writers have sculpted these characters to induce affection from the audience strictly for ratings. It's a good point. But how come the viewers never question the realistic nature of these shows? Why are these shows so popular if you already "know" the outcome--namely, that Harvey and Ari are the inevitable winners?

The reason is because even though Ari and Harvey are fake, there are people in the world that are just like them. In fact, there are those that say that Ari Gold is meant to depict famous talent representative Ari Emmanuel, in which case many of these stories are not fictional at all. These people who self-identify as winners, and continuously win, assured by their own self-confidence. Donald Trump is one of those people.

You see, Specter, Gold, and Trump succeed by bending reality. The most famous scenario in which one's psychology bends reality is the "Placebo Effect." This is a famous phenomenon which occurs when an individual takes a fake medication and feels better due to a fallacy where he believes he is taking a real drug, and begins to feel better as a result even though he has not taken any actual medication. But it seems to me, that the Placebo Effect is the baseline of this concept, and we see people bend reality around us every day. These people possess a very special set of skills.

When you declare yourself a winner, and truly believe it to be the case, your confidence becomes top notch and you win more often. Confidence puts you at the doorstep of success even prior to any engagement in the endeavor you are about to embark upon. When the wins begin to tally up, you develop a reputation for being a winner. When you become famous to others as being a winner, your opposition will become less confident when they face off against you, increasing your success rate geometrically.

This phenomenon plays on the old adage about telling a lie enough times that people start believing it. That is what is happening here. Just as the lie spreads through recognition of the masses, so too, does one's esteem as a winner.

That is why, the American voters felt that it was vote Trump and win or vote Hillary and lose. Because Trump was already known nationwide as the winner. And like many of his other endeavors, he won the election too.

I would note that in his most recent book "Great Again," the very first chapter is titled "Winning Again" and he goes on to discuss the topic of winning at length for the next chapter and a half. It is the same strategy used by Specter and Gold. And it works for Trump as well.

While reading Steve Jobs by Walter Isaacson, I was often amazed by Jobs' unwillingness to ever concede to his colleagues. This was especially astounding in instances when it seemed as though his colleagues were right, such as, Apple's long lasting tradition to have different hardware than other companies so Apple users must purchase collaborative Apple products. Continuously, people would support Jobs' ideas while he was presenting them, and once he left the room condemn him for those very same ideas.

But despite his stubbornness and headstrong attitude, you still have an iPhone in your pocket. And the reason you do is because Steve Jobs, perhaps better than anyone else was a master of reality manipulation. He manipulated people into thinking that his "bad" ideas were good ones and manipulated consumers into buying those same ideas. Steve Jobs told himself he was a winner in even the most difficult times, and as a result, Steve Jobs died a winner.

This phenomenon was called, by people close to Jobs, Steve's "reality distortion field," wherein lied a mechanism to deflect his naysayers despite their valuable points. He created his own reality and pushed it so far down their throats that they themselves began to believe what he was saying. The truth is that with a strong presentation and the ambitious look in his eyes, he could have had them believing anything. The interesting connection between

of socks," or the "hot hand" in a basketball game. While a sock can't help you in anything other than keeping your feet warm, and even though some of the best psychologists in the world have disproven the hot hand, people still swear by these concepts. Similarly, by labelling himself the winner, a politician can create his own "hot hand" both in terms of his public perception and at the polls.

Because a person's expectation of socks will bend their reality to one where their performance is better. And if done well enough, when one bends his own reality, he will bend that of those around him. That is to say, that if your entire industry knows that you do not lose when you are wearing a certain pair of socks, then they will cower when they see you wearing them.

Of course, this only works to a certain extent, and eventually if one's expectations are unrealistic then the reality they are trying to form will come tumbling down upon them. Berdik describes as much in the interview, when he notes that the wine can only taste so bad before the expectation of a quality product will turn into the realization that is isn't as high quality as the price indicated.

In an effort to stick to the theme of celebrities, I'd like to include the example of Charlie Sheen. Two and a Half Men fans can remember when Charlie Sheen was a legend. He played a savage on the screen and took that savagery into his daily life. At this writing, Sheen's twitter bio self proclaims him as a "#Winner" but I assume that even the most diehard of Sheen's fans would admit that he is not an "all circumstance winner" like he used to be. Because when Charlie got in a fight with his cable television series, had



Jobs and Trump in this regard, is that when they bent reality, they bent it into one where rules didn't apply to them. They were successful, despite some of their egregious actions or comments, because the reality they created allowed them to be.

Perhaps this is what Jobs meant when he stated that "people don't know what they want until I give it to them." I venture to say that he was suggesting a situation where he knew what the people would want because he was going to force them to want what he was providing.

Pulitzer prize winning journalist Gareth Cook interviewed Chris Berdik, author of Mind over Mind, and he wrote about their discussion in a 2012 article in the Scientific American. In it, Berdik gives the example of wine to describe how expectation can bend a person's perception of reality. "Brain scans reveal that expectations about a wine's quality (based on price or a critic's review) actually change the level of activity in the brain's reward centers when a person takes a sip." If we apply this to our characters, it tells us that their expectations of winning will change a similar level of activity in the brain to help them develop qualities that will increase their performances in negotiations, deals, and even elections.

What I am describing here, in a way, is that "lucky pair

women coming out against his every action, and became very addicted to drugs, the winning persona disappeared. Sheen's wine was high priced until it was finally opened and tasted sour.

This really makes one wonder how Trump, unlike Sheen, has not lost his ability to bend reality. His statements throughout the campaign trail certainly seemed to have been inflammatory enough to do so. But I would suggest the following conjecture, as I suggested in a previous article for The Commentator, titled Breaking Rules and a Successful Brand: How Trump Won the Presidency, Trump won because of his "Halo Effect" and even though he made himself a despised individual on the campaign trail he didn't do anything to damage his brand. And as a result, people still flocked to his persona and presentation.

The most closely related Trumpian character in this regard is Frank Underwood from House Of Cards. This is, of course, because they are both politicians that used this persona to help them win the presidency. The difference is that as opposed to the characters and entrepreneurs we analyzed previously, Frank uses his reality distortion ability to manipulate others to progress his will as oppose

SEE WINNER, CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

Stoicism: A Philosophy for Ambitious College Students

By Rebecca Kerzner

College students are constantly busy. Running from activity to meeting to next activity, there is always something going on and off campus. That's part of the fun: the buzz of things constantly *happening*. This student body is filled with ambitious students. Presidents of clubs making endless meetings with the Office of Student Life. Athletes running from class to basketball or softball practice. Peer tutors hopping around to teach calculus to struggling newbies. Everyone has their own reasons for why they do what they do. For some it's the perfect GPA. Others just want to look good on paper. But at the end of the day, everyone's really in it for one overarching goal: Success.



What is success? We can try to delve into the topic theoretically. But I've chosen to focus on successes frenemy: it's opposite, failure. Sometimes the familiar library noise rings of laughter and joy as students socialize and talk about their school work and projects. Other times though, the noise becomes maddening, and all one can hear is talk of deadlines, pressure, and lack of time and the rumble becomes a white noise of constant stress. Somehow we've ended up involving ourselves in what feels like every club that exists on campus and staying up late to work past the yawns and coffees that keep multiplying on our dorm desks. We start scribbling down to do lists on napkins, iPhone notes, even backs of hands to try to keep up with everything around us. Our eyes and postures droop lower and lower until the stress and anxiety finally catch up to us.

So what happens when we snap? Failure is inevitable but still, when we face it, it comes as a shock every time. Everyone has their own way of dealing with their issues.

But what's most annoying about failure is that the struggle to overcome is setback for the meta goal: success. Each failed moment has its own degree of emotional fallout to deal with, which just increases time lost. So, how should one deal with such obstacles? How should one respond in the face of failure?

I love those cheesy quotes like "Choose to be happy" and "Enjoy the little things". They give me the inspiration and positivity to keep moving forward. I recognize that such "isms" tie a bow on life's issues and share an idealistic view that is often dubbed as cliché, irrational, and overused. But still, they adorn lock screens, post-it notes, and posters in our rooms. They're so widespread, and printed on so many consumer goods, so there must be a logical reason for why all of these isms have come to be part of today's consumer culture.

In my search for success, I came across a game changer called Stoicism. Stoicism is a school of Hellenistic philosophy founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in the early 3rd century BCE. Famously practiced by Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, the tenets of Stoicism asserted that attaining inner peace comes from within, rather than from external events. The goal is to battle destructive emotions head on by practicing self control and conscious intention, with a recognition of the short time we are given on this Earth. Stoics place great importance on facing and understanding our obstacles to overcome them instead of running away from them.

There is so much to knowledge to gain from the Stoics. But for the purpose of success, I've chosen to focus on three simple understandings.

First: Practice misfortune. Seneca believed that "It is in times of security that the spirit should be preparing itself for difficult times; while fortune is bestowing favors on it is then is the time for it to be strengthened against her rebuffs". Practicing misfortune is about making a point to practice what we fear. Seneca practiced living in quasi-poverty once a month. He would eat less food and wear worse clothes to put himself in the situation of poverty to experience it and would ask himself "Is this what I used to dread?" The idea behind his actions was that in putting himself in the situation where something bad like poverty actually occurred, he would be prepared. So if we were to prepare ourselves and anticipate that things would not always go our way by pushing ourselves more physically and mentally, we'd be prepared for whatever life throws at us.

Second: Train your perception to avoid good and bad. The stoics exercised "Turning the Obstacle Upside Down." With this logic, every "bad" moment became a new source for good. Every "bad" was supposed to be seen as an opportunity to develop strengths and break down limitations. For example, usually if someone was getting on your nerves, the response would be anger and frustration. But, with the stoic logic, it would be just a chance to practice patience and understanding. Debating whether situations are good or bad becomes irrelevant with this positive outlook because there is only perception, and that is something that we fully control.

Third: Remember-it's all ephemeral. It's important to remember just how small we are in the world. What we

achieve, no matter how big, is all miniscule in the larger scheme of the universe. If it's all fleeting, than what are we aiming for? The present. Be conscious of how you treat those around you: kindness to another human being is eternal.

I think practicing stoicism has a lot to offer in elevating the quality of life and could definitely help out in running things smoother.

The relevant practical sets of rules that Stoicism offers influenced presidents, entrepreneurs, writers, and artists, throughout history. George Washington was introduced by his neighbors to Stoicism as a teenager and later put on a play about Cato, Julius Caesar's old enemy and famous Stoic, for his troops at Valley Forge to inspire them. The economist Adam Smith's theories on capitalism were significantly influenced by Stoicism that he studied as a student. It should also be mentioned that Aurelius was not just a lone philosopher who spent his days sitting under a tree sharing deep thoughts and quotes. He was the Emperor of Rome from 161 AD and ruled for around twenty years. He put his own ideas on Stoicism into practice and attributed his successes to these philosophies.

Stoicism is timeless. The same philosophies were applied to powerful men two thousand years ago. I find it amazing that the same philosophies, through generations of technological advancements didn't turn obsolete, demonstrating the wisdom of the ideas. This is because the theories aren't meant to be a discussion for intellectual pursuit, but as tenets for practical application.

As for applying these principles to everyday life, I'd like to refer to the four questions psychologist Chuck Chakrapani, a Stoic minimalist, often asks himself when dealing with conflict:

1. Is this under my control?
2. Am I reacting to someone without exercising my choice to act the way I want?
3. Am I getting irritated by the little things?
4. Am I enjoying the life that I am blessed with?

These are definitely big questions. It's impossible to address them in their full scope. But if there's anything we know it is that asking the tough questions and delving into the possible answers for those questions is beneficial too.

Being that the YU college experience can be so intense and all encompassing, tough times are unavoidable. But Stoicism says that we are more in control than we think when it comes to handling those emotions. Changing one's perceptions on the good and bad is a great tool to use when dealing with the everyday college struggles, especially because it's impossible to guarantee that everything around you will always run smoothly. But dealing with the hard times efficiently begins with understanding yourself. There will always be times where it seems the deans just aren't listening, the Office of Student Life is taking forever to pass on your event, and you have two projects and three tests on one day but the next time it happens, remember to channel your inner Stoic. Of course, we are by no means all philosophers here. But everyone can take a moment to take advantage of the insight Stoicism has to offer.

Think about it. It might be worthwhile.

WINNER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

to making them bend to his personal desires, as Trump does. But the theme remains the same, namely, that they got the presidency as they wanted because they are winners. Interestingly, in an interview, actor Kevin Spacey made the comparison between his character and Trump.

By labeling himself a winner, Trump enters every situation that he does with a certain standard of excellence. And when he begins reciting that speech or starts negotiating that deal, both his and his oppositions' brains already know the outcome and now they just have to play it out as the puppets.

Perhaps, with all of this in mind, we can now understand why Aaron Korsch has Specter refer to himself as a winner in all of the first 5 episodes and why he continues to label himself as one through all six seasons of Suits to date. Furthermore, we can also understand why Mark Wahlberg and the creators of Entourage do the same.

While on the topics of these entertainment personalities, I would also add that I think since people overestimate how realistic these shows are in comparison to real life. When they see someone who reminds them of one of these characters, they actually believe they are as perfect as the TV show character. This is obviously absurd, given that humans don't follow scripts or get re-takes when they mess up.

But the absurdity will fade if the individual has already used your perception of reality and your perception of his abilities to take an immediate advantage over you. Season after season they talk about winning. Speech after speech he talks about winning. And both the character and the real person always seem to.

The last factor I want to discuss is the fact that in addition to their constant deliverance of confidence and their incessant discussion of winning is the fact that at some point or another in their respective shows, the characters have let their guards down and revealed that

they are all soft, caring people. When the facade drops, they go from winners, egotists, and narcissists to genuine people who care about their friends and loved ones.

Can we assume that the same applies to Trump? For sure we have seen that like all of these characters, Trump has shown tremendous loyalty which is another trait they all seem to have in common. Ari went to great lengths to get Vinny movies even after being fired, Harvey's yearbook quote was about loyalty (he was also willing to go to jail for Mike,) and Trump has been criticized for giving cabinet positions to his "billionaire buddies" instead of people who the left considers "qualified."

Trump continues to tell us: America needs to win again. And maybe, just maybe, Trump will bring his aura of winning past his campaign and start bringing it into his administration.

Why We Must Protest The Westboro Baptist Church

By Doniel Weinreich

This article was published online prior to the church's protest. A counter protest formed opposite the church's protest and was reported on by The Commentator.

Imagine the Wilf Campus at 9:45 on a Monday morning. People file out of Rubin with backpacks on and tefillin in hand after the 9 o'clock minyan. At the intersection of 185th and Amsterdam, students—perhaps some queer ones among them—pass each other as they navigate the ongoing construction and constant stream of traffic—some on the way to their 10 o'clock classes, while others tardily make their way to morning seder. Local Washington Heights residents—Jews and non-Jews alike—travel through our campus as well during their morning routine. A thousand students are already immersed in Torah study in the classrooms of Furst and our several batei midrash.

But today, something is different. Standing in the middle of this daily scene on our little strip of Amsterdam Avenue are half a dozen protesters, each with as many signs as he or she can display at once. The signs contain a variety of hateful and abominable slogans: "GOD HATES JEWS," "THE JEWS KILLED CHRIST," "YOUR RABBI IS A WHORE," "THANK GOD FOR DEAD SOLDIERS," and, of course, "GOD HATES FAGS."

And nobody reacts. Nobody speaks out. Nobody even looks for more than a couple seconds. Besides for the presence of this small group, everything goes along exactly the same way as any other day. Forty-five minutes later, this deplorable group packs up and moves on to its next victim.

This is what many people wish to see this Monday morning, when the Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) will be protesting here. In an email to the student body after the protest was first announced, Vice President Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph and Vice President for University and Community Life Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander encouraged us not to engage the group. During a meeting with students, Dr. Paul Oestreicher, Executive Director of the Office of Communications and Public Affairs, and Dr. Chaim Nissel, University Dean of Students, warned students that counter-protest is what WBC desires, that it gives them further exposure and that they make their money from frivolous lawsuits afterwards. Doron Levine, Editor in-Chief of *The Commentator*, wrote in his latest editorial that no one should protest, warning it would give the WBC unnecessary attention and divide the YU community; he even paints a similar picture to above as an ideal.

But what is contained in this picture? What message does it send? Is it one of resolute defiance, or of apathy and cowardice? We're not the first university the WBC has protested, but when the WBC visits any other university, it is always met with counter-protest. During the current school year alone, WBC has been met with counter-protests at University of Houston, University of Wisconsin, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, Vanderbilt University, University of Chicago, American University, and Washington University, among others. Most of these protests were non-confrontational, but rather served to reaffirm the students' commitment to the LGBTQ community; some even actively turned their backs

to the WBC.

Why can't we do the same thing? What message does it send if YU students, when met with the same situation, just go on with their regular day? What are the LGBTQ students at YU to think? What of the passersby who hear our audible silence in the face of the WBC's vile message? Should those students and the rest of the world think we're indifferent? Or, chas v'shalom, that we agree?

I understand that people don't want to give WBC satisfaction or any unnecessary attention—I certainly don't—but the idea that any counter-demonstration plays into their hands, perpetuates their message, or affords them some sort of victory, is ridiculous, and the resulting strategy to not protest will be inconsequential. The WBC has held protests every day for over 25 years. If you read their statements and replies to media, it is clear that they are completely divorced from reality. When they protested Shalhevet High School a month ago, they were barely aware of the institution beyond the fact that it is Jewish, and they told the media that they didn't care about the size of their audience or whether they accomplish anything. Regarding their protest at YU, they told *The Commentator* that the only response they seek from YU is the administration confessing that our ancestors killed Jesus and that we repent and accept him as our Messiah. These clearly aren't sane, rational, or grounded people. They view protesting with their abhorrent signs and songs as their sacred religious duty and will continue to do so tomorrow and the next day, without any regard for reaction or lack thereof. They aren't going to be fazed or defeated by some YU students snubbing them.

Furthermore, the effort to silence all counter-protest is futile, and the idea that the media won't cover the WBC's protest is fantasy. Protesting won't bring them undue attention; they already get that attention and will continue to. Does anyone seriously think it's at all realistic that no one is going to protest or engage with people so offensive? Does anyone think that Jewish media organizations aren't going to jump at the chance to cover something so exciting and controversial, happening in our little world? The only question is what we want that media coverage to look like. Do we want it to report that students callously carried on with their day? Or would we rather it report that YU as a community, in an organized effort, rejected the WBC's spite?

This isn't about the Westboro Baptist Church. This is about us. Who are we? The purpose of protest isn't always to make concrete change; sometimes it's just to affirm what kind of people we are. When people are on our doorstep spewing slurs at queer people and saying that God hates them and they're doomed to an eternity of hellfire, are we silent? Or do we stand with the LGBTQ people in our community?

Levine claimed in his article that the WBC's message is alien to us and that it has no relevance to, or purchase on, members of our community. But can we really say this is true? There were two articles in *The Commentator* this year by gay people about their experience at YU. One reported living in constant fear and that his rabbis "publicly called gay people an abomination, blamed them for natural disasters, and advocated for conversion therapy," and the other one—though more positive about

YU as a whole—also mentioned a professor who "talk[ed] with complete disgust about people like me." This year, I myself have heard a Rosh Yeshiva publicly advocate for conversion "therapy" and another student recommend it to someone personally. This is the university where Ben Shapiro's belittling of trans people was met with laughter and applause from the student body. And my personal conversations with queer people at YU indicate that they are extremely frustrated with their lack of visibility and institutional support. Granted, none of this is quite equivalent to asserting things like "Fags die; God laughs," but the latter is not quite alien or irrelevant

"WHAT MESSAGE DOES IT SEND IF YU STUDENTS, WHEN MET WITH THE SAME SITUATION, JUST WENT ON WITH THEIR REGULAR DAY?"

either. I certainly doubt it's alien to the queer people on campus who have personally faced religiously inspired homophobia before.

In the same article, Levine also voiced concern that a protest—especially one that encourages LGBTQ attendance and signs, T-shirts and flags—would make a "right-wing contingent" of YU "uncomfortable." Similar concerns of divisiveness were brought up at the student meeting with Dr. Nissel and Dr. Oestreicher, where after agreeing that it would be a good idea to counter the protest with a fundraiser (i.e. something concrete and positive), the idea of doing it for anything explicitly gay was met with extreme hesitation. Again, can we really argue that the message of the WBC is completely foreign and ridiculous to us, when it's acknowledged that a sizable part of our community will be made uncomfortable by just the visible existence of LGBTQ people who aren't ashamed? When the crippling fear of divisiveness impedes us from concretely supporting LGBTQ people?

It is clear that YU has not always excelled in this area, but there have been some high notes. After the aforementioned Ben Shapiro debacle, over 50 YU faculty signed letters to *The Commentator* and *The Observer*, condemning his statements and remarking "We also hope [our students] would stand up against discrimination and disrespect." The President of our university penned a similar letter, proclaiming "This university is committed to civility and the sanctity of all people." Earlier in the year, the yeshiva brought in Rabbi Chaim Rapoport who talked to us about the struggles gay Jews face and implored us to unconditionally accept them in our community, repeatedly invoking the verse "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor" (Leviticus 19:16). But alas, these were only post-hoc statements and abstract speeches. When push comes to shove, will we live up to these words? Will we fulfill our duty to the LGBTQ people in our community? Are we committed to the civility and sanctity of all people? Will we stand up to discrimination and disrespect? Or will we stand idly by the blood of our neighbors?



Time is Money

By Avi Kohanzadeh

As a science major, I can express a two-fold opinion on YU's recent decision to abolish the Natural World (NAWO) core requirement for all science majors and students pursuing a pre-health education track. On

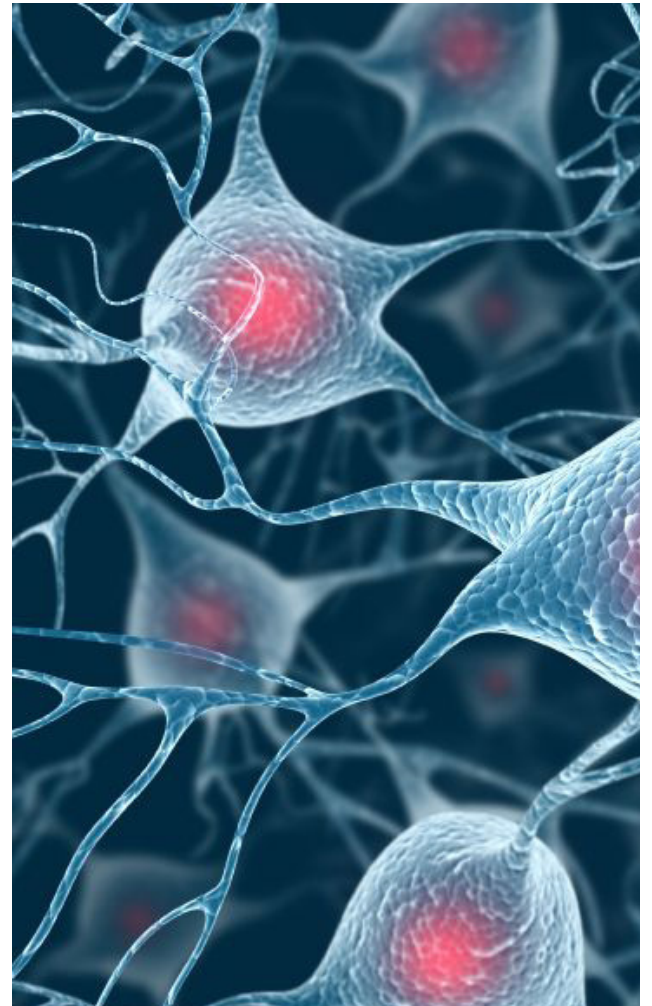
"I DO FEEL THAT YU AND ITS ADMINISTRATION HAVE A DUTY TO BRIDGE SOME LEVEL OF COMPENSATION OR CREDIT FOR THOSE STUDENTS WHO TOOK AND RESPECTED THE ESSENCE OF THE CORE DESPITE WHOLEHEARTEDLY KNOWING IT WAS A WASTE OF TIME."

the one hand, I am pleased that the school was finally able to sit down and piece together a final conclusive decision on the matter. On the other hand, however, I do feel a little ripped off. As a pre-med student and biology major, I was pressured by my advisors and the deans of the school to take NAWO in the Fall of 2016, as were many other science students. I was told at the time that the likelihood of NAWO becoming abolished was slim and I should simply get it out of the way early as a favor to myself. While the class may have interested some of my peers, as someone who has taken a fair share of advanced biology and chemistry courses, and various labs, I found it to be a waste of time. I took NAWO to

cross it off my list of requirements holding me back from graduation. For YU to come out now and permanently rid its existence for everyone pursuing a health career is severely unfair for those who were misinformed by the school faculty and forced to sit around for three hours a week listening to a lecture that was centered and designed for someone who didn't know what a cell was.

So, am I annoyed? Yes, of course. It's a little inconvenient, and I know countless pre-health students who have stayed an extra semester for the pure purpose of taking NAWO. For some, this decision has significantly quickened their path to graduate school and enabled them to take entrance level exams such as the PCAT, MCAT or DAT a little earlier than anticipated. For others, it potentially delayed this process and possibly pushed graduate school off by a semester or two. I'm not one to judge the fairness of this decision, as I'm sure it will not change anyone's ultimate career aspirations or goals to a degree worth stressing over. Regardless of such, I do feel that YU and its administration have a duty to bridge some level of compensation or credit for those students who took and respected the essence of the core despite wholeheartedly knowing it was a waste of time.

There is a saying that goes "time is money." The NAWO course is without a doubt guilty of wasting the time of many science students, and now that it is no longer needed to graduate the school administration should be burdened with finding a non-monetary form of compensation for students such as myself. A worthy suggestion could be using the NAWO core as a substitution for a different core of equal credit value. Ultimately, it is announcements such as these which force me to lean back in my chair on the fourth floor, take a sip of coffee, and humorously whisper under my breath "nowhere but here."



Consider our Daughters

By Adin Rayman

My wife has attended three educational institutions in her adult life. All three institutions taught both *Torah Shebichtav* and *Torah Sheb'al Peh* in single-gender settings. The first two offered women nearly equal access to Gemara learning with respect to time and resources allotted. The third institution offered her less than 20% of the time allotted to her male peers. Sadly, the institution that shortchanged my wife was not a school near the fringe of Orthodoxy, but the flagship institution of Modern Orthodox female education: Stern College for Women.

I wish to preface my arguments by insisting that—as an Orthodox Jew, my commitment to Halacha remains unquestionable. I am not a proponent of total religious egalitarianism or any other –ism which considers its own values a more powerful normative force than the words of the Shulchan Aruch and Rama.

A master of any discipline, be it art, athletics, or academics, will tell you that time and practice are the keys to proficiency and mastery. No matter how innately talented an individual may be, without time dedicated to a craft, true mastery can never be achieved. Mastery of Torah is no different. Spiritual mentors both inside and outside YU consistently stress the importance of dedicating time every day to studying Torah. Our daily *birkat haTorah* reminds us that we are commanded not only to learn, but to be *osek*, to busy ourselves, with Torah. And when it comes to the difference between Torah learning on the Wilf campus and on the Beren campus, time again proves its importance.

The Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) on the Wilf campus ensures its participants more than 21 hours (*sefer* and *shiur* time combined) of intensive study of *Torah sheb'al Peh* each week. Stern College's Advanced Gemara *shiur* is in session for a total of under six hours per week (including *sefer* time, of which SCW students are afforded only 1.5 hours *a week* compared to three hours *a day* in MYP). A Stern woman who wishes to devote additional time to preparing or reviewing for *shiur* must carve out of her own evening schedule. This time must be found among hours taken up by classes, labs, and coursework for the coming days. There is only one way to change the unequal reality our community finds itself in: Stern College must offer an MYP, or MYP-style program, affording similar amounts of time for accelerated Torah study during which no secular studies classes can be offered.

Those who would oppose such a program on ideological grounds presumably disapprove of the existing Gemara *shiurim* offered in Stern, and I harbor little hope of convincing these people that the hours women spend learning Gemara should increase. But I remind them that YU, an institution which looks to personalities such as Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik and Rav Aharon Lichtenstein as heroes, has already firmly accepted

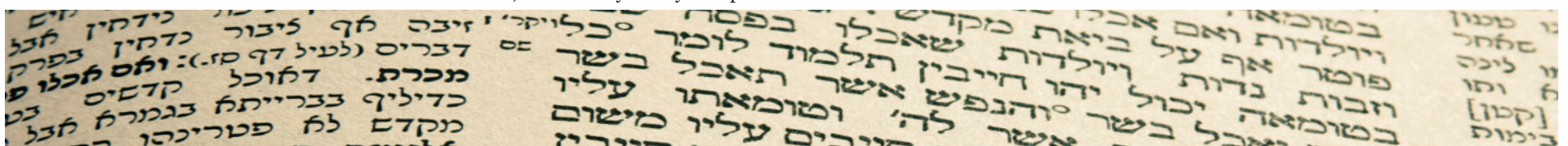
the importance of women's Gemara study. The change I advocate for is simply one of degree, an adjustment that will fully realize the institution's commitment to the highest level of Torah study for all. This change should not offend any member of the YU community on an ideological level. I am not suggesting, explicitly or implicitly, any shift in normative practice or ideology. All I push for is more of something that our institution and community has already decided is a value worth pursuing.

Many may respond that such a drastic change is not warranted, as the number of women who would be interested in such a program could be very small—20 women would be a very optimistic estimate. I would respond that these 20 women are worth the change. Looking towards the future, I dream of a Stern College in which 200 women would participate in such a program, but that dream can never be realized if we do not take the first step. If we do not send the message that we value the Talmud Torah of women as much as we do that of men, a generation in which as many women are learning Torah as men will remain a fever dream. I shudder to think that my future daughters may find themselves in an institution that caps their potential, a potential that would be more easily realized had they been born sons.

The only true obstacle to such a change is a logistical one, and although it may present a large hurdle, it is one with which the institution must grapple. The installation of such a program would likely mean that classes would run until later in the evening, a change that many women at Stern may find unwelcome. Why should the educational aspirations of 20 women force a pre-med student to be in lab until 8:45 PM?

I do not come to table carrying a torch and pitchfork; I realize that there are intense practical and ideological issues that must be addressed in ensuring educational equality at Yeshiva University. But the failure of Yeshiva University to offer programming that even resembles equality is magnified by its centrality in the Modern Orthodox world. We often quip "nowhere but here," but I would ask "if not here, then where?" The current educational set-up sends a clear message to our community: It is acceptable that women at the pinnacle of their Torah education be offered less than their male peers.

If one day I am blessed with daughters, I would hope that they choose to spend their college years at Yeshiva University. But I am greatly distressed that from the moment of their birth, our flagship institution has fated that they will not receive equal opportunity and access to the texts and traditions that define our practice of Judaism. Even if a fully equal option cannot exist for practical reasons, I hope that a new Yeshiva University administration will strongly consider implementing a change long overdue, one that will hopefully reverberate in the *batei midrash* of not only our current YU students, but in the *batei midrash* of our future daughters.





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Yeshiva University

“Who’s AK?”: The Need for Open Dialogue

By Yehuda Greenfield

“It’s funny how they called the *rosh yeshiva ztz”l*, the *Rosh Yeshiva*, while they called Reb Yoshe Ber, the Rav,” Rav Reuven Feinstein said in his much-imitated, wispy voice. “Really, it was the *rosh yeshiva ztz”l* who was the Rav, a *poisek*, and Reb Yoshe Ber was the *Rosh Yeshiva*.”

I was in eleventh grade, sitting in a *chumash shiur* given by my own *rosh yeshiva*, Rav Reuven Feinstein. He was saying a story about his father, Rav Moshe Feinstein, and a man unknown to me, Reb Yoshe Ber.

“Who’s Reb Yoshe Ber?” I asked my *chavrusa* later, during *sefer*.

“Reb Yoshe Ber? Oh, that’s JB.”

“JB?” I asked. “Who’s JB?”

“JB Soloveitchik. He was the head of YU.”

“Oh,” I replied.

I didn’t know much about YU, but I’d heard about it before, in whispers. It was a place of *kefirah*. Someone once told me that they had a gay club there. It wasn’t a place a proper *ben Torah* would talk about.

It was later that I realized I’d heard of JB before. My grandfather, rabbi of a small shul in Long Island, would often quote him. He called him “Rav Soloveitchik.”

“Who’s Rav Soloveitchik?” I asked my grandfather later that month.

He looked at me with interest.

“Rav Soloveitchik? Why are you asking about Rav Soloveitchik?”

I was a good *bochur*, in a *chashuva* yeshiva. He didn’t want me getting involved in such things.

“My *rosh yeshiva* mentioned him in a *shiur*,” I replied.

“Ah. Well, Rav Soloveitchik was a big *talmid chochom*, but his *hashkafos* were messed up. A real genius, but real *krum hashkafos*.”

From then on, my grandfather would remind me this, every time he quoted words of Torah from Rav Soloveitchik.

“A genius, but *krum hashkafos*,” he would say. “He made the first coed Jewish school! Such a thing was never heard of before!”

My grandfather owned his *seforim* though, and would

listen to his *shiurim*. In my yeshiva, Rav Soloveitchik’s *seforim* were nowhere to be found. No one would talk about him except in hushed whispers behind closed doors, and even then they would refer to him as “JB.”

It was only later, in post-high school *beis medrash*, that I discovered Rav Soloveitchik’s writings. I had become unhappy in yeshiva, dissatisfied with its closed approach to Judaism. In my search for something different, I went to a *seforim* store and began exploring literature that had, up to now, been barred from me. I read Rav Hirsch, Rav Kook, Rabbi Norman Lamm, and finally I came across Rav Soloveitchik. His “Lonely Man of Faith” blew me away. After reading Rabbi Lamm and Rabbi Soloveitchik, I knew one thing. I needed something like *this*, broader than the *hashkafos* I learnt in yeshiva. I wanted to go to Yeshiva University.

This my third semester at YU, and I love it here. I’ve become used to an environment where I can study Torah in the morning and *Madda* in the afternoon. I’ve become used to a place with many voices on campus, each one heard in their own right. I’ve forgotten *yeshiva*. I’ve forgotten the people who call the Rav, JB, and call the institution I learn in and love, a “*makom kefirah*” (place of heresy). Sometimes though, I’m shocked back into remembrance.

This past *shabbos*, I went home and, in the afternoon, learned in my old yeshiva, which is the only *beis medrash* nearby. My neighbor and old friend came over to me with a smile.

“Hey Yehuda!” he said. “You know, Reb Boruch mentioned JB in his *shiur* on Thursday!”

He smiled at me, happy that we had this one thing in common. That my old *rebbe*, who was now his *rebbe*, had mentioned “JB” of YU in his speech.

I wanted to shout at him. Don’t call him JB! Stop calling him JB! Have a little *kavod hatorah*! I refrained though. I remembered when I too would call him JB. I smiled back at my neighbor, and I was happy. I was glad I no longer attended a yeshiva where they degraded *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars) and called them names because they disagreed with their *hashkafa*.

How wrong I was, apparently. I was shocked to hear

that our *Rosh Yeshiva*, a student of Rav Soloveitchik, the man they called “JB,” ripped down signs for a *shiur* on campus and called the speaker an *apikorus* (heretic). The speaker, Rabbi Klapper, a great *talmid chochom* and a *musmach* of YU, is someone whom I greatly admire. This wasn’t the way I expected a torah dialogue to be carried out, here of all places.

I didn’t spend years struggling to leave yeshiva, so that I could hear the same type of close-minded dialogue in YU that I heard my whole life. I didn’t give up my old life, lose friends, and basically become an outcast of my community for attending this venerable institution, in order to hear the leaders of my Yeshiva humiliate others because they disagree with their views.

I’m shocked to my core. Someone needs to speak up. I don’t want Yeshiva University to become the same type of place my old yeshivas were. I came here searching for Torah *Umadda*. I came for thinkers like the Rav and Rabbi Lamm. I found those thinkers here, but I’ve also found other types of thinkers that I didn’t expect to find. Thinkers who denigrate others and call them names because they disagree with them. I saw too much of that in my old yeshivas. I don’t want to see it here.

I agree with what Rabbi Penner said in the *Glueck beis medrash* this morning. He said that we need open dialogue. We need to speak to each other. If Rav Schachter doesn’t like Rabbi Klapper’s views, let him speak to him. Let him give a *shiur* to his students about how he disagrees with Rabbi Klapper. To call Rabbi Klapper an *apikorus* and rip down the signs advertising his *shiur* shuts down any semblance of the open dialogue Rabbi Penner spoke of.

I’ve worked hard to get to YU. I came here knowing no one and terrified of this “*makom kefirah*.” After three semesters, I finally feel comfortable here, but I’m scared. I don’t want this yeshiva to turn into the sort of yeshiva I’ve attended in the past. I don’t want to have to leave and start my search all over again. I’m scared that if we continue down this road, we’ll have a new name for Rabbi Klapper. Instead of calling him Rabbi Klapper, we’ll call him “AK.”



The Problem of the Past in Religious Experience

By Yisroel Ben-Porat

History is problematic for religions. Although it contains a repository of useful traditions, customs, and ideas, history has a pernicious effect on the perception of sacred religious texts. As time passes, such texts fade into the distant realm of history, becoming “ancient” and “primitive.” Practitioners of a particular religion then begin to feel a dissonance with the original culture that produced their religion’s sacred texts. As a result, some reach the conclusion that the text is inapplicable to their “modern” society. This perception creates difficulties for these people, who consequently attempt to navigate the historical gap between the text and their own lives.

The above scenario, presented in abstract, is one aspect of the clash between religion and modernity—a story that is, unfortunately, quite familiar. The passage of time affects all religions, in all places. In the West, the Bible’s authority has increasingly eroded. Today, many people view the Bible as an outdated, barbaric text. To these people, the notion of following the Bible today—at least on the literal level—is laughable. In 2007, A. J. Jacobs, an editor at *Esquire* magazine, published *The Year of Living Biblically*, a bestselling satire describing the author’s year-long “quest” to follow the Bible as literally as possible. Jacobs humorously relates his “attempt” to follow the biblical law against adultery, which the Bible treats as a capital offense; obviously unable to truly fulfill this mandate, Jacobs instead “stoned” an adulterer with pebbles.



Similarly, religions in the East have faced the difficulties of a historical gap from their sacred texts. Confucianism derives its philosophy from an ancient collection of Confucius’ teachings entitled *The Analects*, which was compiled over two thousand years ago. In several East Asian cultures, especially in China, the *Analects* was equivalent to the West’s Bible, in terms of its authority and elevated status. Yet, much like their Western counterparts, Chinese people now view the *Analects* as an ancient historical document that is irrelevant to contemporary China. In 2010, Chinese media personality Yu Dan published *Confucius from the Heart: Ancient Wisdom for Today’s World*, a modernized retelling of the *Analects* containing Yu Dan’s meditations on Confucius’ “simple truths that every person knows in his or her heart.” The necessity and popularity of Yu Dan’s book stems from her ability to make the *Analects* relatable to modern Chinese society, despite (as the title implies) its perceived inapplicability to today’s world.

Judaism, unfortunately, is no exception to this phenomenon. Although the Torah is eternal, it cannot be denied that the foundational texts of Judaism—such as Tanach and the Talmud—were written in particular historical contexts. These contexts are foreign to a modern reader; as a result, some material in the Torah seems to be a product of an era no longer relevant to the 21st century. I am not raising a theological issue here, but rather a practical one: how can we find meaning

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A Response to The Commentator’s News Coverage of Rav Schachter’s Remarks

By Michael Shavolian

Doron Levine’s recent article entitled “Rabbi Hershel Schachter: Inviting Rabbi Aryeh Klapper to Speak at YU is ‘like inviting a Reform rabbi’” deserves a sensitive and balanced critique. Allow me to preface my remarks with the following admission, which I feel is necessary in a time when visceral reactions are more common than calculated responses. (A scroll through Facebook makes this rather evident.)

The comments herein are only my personal opinions, arrived at after careful but by no means comprehensive consideration. Any critique that follows takes for granted that Doron did not harbor any malicious intent and that his report was truthful to the information in his possession. His record as an editor and writer for *The Commentator* serves only to highlight his sterling reputation and service to the student community. For that, I thank him.

Allow me to begin. *The Commentator* has no fealty to investors or shareholders. Its value as a student-run newspaper lies in its mission to not only break news, but to facilitate productive conversation surrounding important issues. Hence, the decision to frame a piece of news with commentary is an important one. Doron’s

article was a piece of news that, if it indeed warranted publication, equally warranted commentary. By failing to take the time to make an additional inquiry or supply background information, it seems that *The Commentator* sacrificed comprehensiveness for the sake of a quick press release.

Following the publication of Doron’s article one Facebook user (a rare breed, indeed) commented, “[The article is] very unfair to [Rabbi Klapper] individually and professionally...it is also obvious to me that many people are going to read this and think less of Rav Schachter, so literally everyone loses.” Indeed, while I do commend Doron for including a paragraph about Rabbi Klapper’s credentials, I believe he could have done well by briefly paraphrasing the mission statement of Rabbi Klapper’s Center for Modern Torah Leadership (CMTL). Such information may have provided readers totally unfamiliar with Rabbi Klapper with the opportunity to form their own opinions about him (if they so wished). Furthermore, while Doron included a comment from a supporter of Rav Schachter—though inclusion of the comment was warranted in its own right, since the student removing the flyers was arguably a part of the story’s development—he failed to include a rejoinder in support of Rabbi Klapper from an alumni of the CMTL’s summer *beit midrash*. Such an editorial decision would have provided due counterbalance to the actions of the “junior in Rabbi Rosensweig’s shiur” and to the false perception that only one side has supporters among the student body.

Likewise, Doron failed to frame Rav Schachter’s purported actions and remarks in the context of his principled insistence on a tradition of *psak*. There is no doubt that the naysayers may have denounced such an inclusion as apologetic, but it would have informed readers that Rav Schachter sees himself as standing up for something quite important, even if they may not agree with that something.

While *The Commentator*’s follow up article did well in clarifying matters—it confirmed some hunches and debunked others—it is clear that Rav Schachter’s first thoughts rather than his subsequent full thoughts took the cake. *The Commentator*’s first piece covering this incident garnered almost 1,500 Facebook likes, while the follow-up piece garnered a little more than 400. Would it be safe to assume that few paid much attention to the follow up article? Approaching Rav Schachter *the first time* around and asking him to confirm, clarify or justify his remarks would have been the best thing to do. It would have been the “journalistic” thing to do.

The final, albeit minor, issue that I have with Doron’s article is its sensationalist title. “Rabbi Hershel Schachter: Inviting Rabbi Aryeh Klapper to Speak at YU is ‘like inviting a Reform rabbi,’” seems like a ploy to grab attention (even if not intentional). Perhaps a more appropriate title would have been “Perceived Rift at YU Highlighted with Opposition to Campus Speaker by Senior Rosh Yeshiva.”

One last thought. Unfortunately, much of *The Commentator*’s online readership gleans their uninformed opinions about the state of modern orthodoxy at Yeshiva University from anecdotes and Facebook posts, not from speaking with YU’s dedicated faculty or passionate students, not from observations of a booming *beit midrash* and not from living and breathing YU. And no matter how thorough Doron would have been, YU’s detractors, the pessimists, the *I’m glad I didn’t go to YU* commenters, the *modern orthodoxy is dying at YU* moaners, would have found something to shout about and nothing to reflect on. The fact of the matter is that delivery of even the best reporting won’t ensure receipt of the accurate information therein. This is partly because oftentimes what is left out is just as important as what is put in and partly because when some readers don’t detect bias, they invent their own.

All in all, I commend *The Commentator* for doing a much better job in maintaining journalistic impartiality than other Jewish publications that report every sneeze and cough heard at YU. I hope that the YU student body continues to discuss pressing issues with a sense of respect and humility, with a reluctance to draw conclusions when unnecessary, and with tremendous hope for YU’s continued success as the living, breathing, alive and kicking flagship of modern orthodoxy.



Working Within the System

By Kira Paley

Yeshiva University's purpose, according to its mission statement, is to "promote a Jewish community that champions Torah Umadda." The statement, though, does not clarify what it means by "Torah Umadda," and this openness to interpretation leaves students qualifying the statement for themselves. For some, it may mean having to fulfill Judaic Studies requirements in addition to General Studies requirements. For others, perhaps it means being able to participate in team sports without jeopardizing their adherence to Halacha. Maybe some students interpret "Torah Umadda" ideologically; combining college education and environment with Modern Orthodox values. It could, of course, mean all of these things to one individual and none of these things to another.



President Richard Joel, at his final Beren Campus town hall meeting, iterated, or technically reiterated, that "in the center of uptown is a classic litivish yeshiva." For many students, this is hard to forget. Yeshiva University is often deemed sexist for its focus on the fact that it is partly a traditional yeshiva, thereby excluding female students from going to certain places on campus. Namely, the pool that's located on the Wilf

campus, which is only accessible to male students.

If the Wilf campus is a traditional litivish yeshiva, then Torah Umadda should mean struggling with the tension inherent in the nature of Modern Orthodoxy: trying to exist as an individual or a university in the secular world while adhering to a set of values and to a Halachic system. In this way, YU exemplifies Modern Orthodoxy in that not only does it represent it on a microcosmic level, but it also shares its struggle of trying to satisfy everyone in the community's needs while working within in a system. Unfortunately, though, the satisfaction of one group often comes with the dissatisfaction of another.

The controversy that is the notion of women using the Wilf pool is an example of this. If YU was to allow women to use the pool, which it has tried in the past, perhaps students living in Rubin, where the pool is

are more important becomes the forefront of the issue.

What is frustrating about the pool case, though, is that I don't believe that every college student in America has access to a pool; being able to go swimming at one's leisure does not necessarily legitimize a person's college experience. Sure, perhaps it is unfair if at one university different students have different rights based on their gender, but students who attend YU need to realize that the school they attend is not like other schools. It embodies a movement in which, at the end of the day, there is deep-rooted difference between genders.

When you enroll in Yeshiva University, it is important to realize that just as religious movements are imperfect, so are schools that represent them. YU is successful in many aspects of its embodiment of Modern Orthodoxy; perhaps even the fact that a college exists where students theoretically don't need to sacrifice religion for education is representative of its success. However, though religion is not necessarily being sacrificed, there are other aspects of education and college life in general which may need to be sacrificed in order for one to be content at YU.

The school recently ran an ad campaign claiming that YU students can "sacrifice nothing" and "achieve everything" at YU. This is dishonest in that both YU as a school and its students make sacrifices, and need to in order for YU to succeed in its ultimate goal. YU sacrifices the needs of some of its students for the needs of others; it is impossible to please everyone, especially while working within a halachic and Modern Orthodox value system. Perhaps certain groups' needs are placed at the top of the hierarchy too often, but I don't think that fighting for the right to use a pool is a successful way to argue for the rights of those whose needs are made secondary.

YU students make their own personal sacrifices. I sacrifice my desire for certain classes or majors while remembering that I go to a small school. Though I'm frustrated by the lack of students to create a particular major, I am appreciative of the fact that because my school is small, I can participate in endless extracurriculars. Other student's sacrifices can manifest themselves in religious or gender related areas.

I am not saying that certain campus groups should be silenced or should stop advocating for issues they deem important. But like students' needs are sometimes placed on a hierarchy, issues should be placed on a similar hierarchy. While it might feel good to outwardly protest a known issue, quiet work to make important changes is more productive. Those who try to make changes in order to make a statement delegitimize those who try to make changes because they truly want to work within the system and improve the status quo.

It is easy to get angry, not only at YU, but at life in general. Instead of spending three or four years being angry at your institution, realize that YU is unique in that it is a microcosm of Modern Orthodoxy, and perhaps also of the world at large. Appreciate its uniqueness and make the conscious choice to make effective, worthwhile changes by learning to work within the system, or realize that life and its religious movements are unfair, and learn to make sacrifices.

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in our religious experience despite the dissonance we feel with our religion's sacred texts?

Perhaps the answer to this question lies in the *Haggadah*. We recently celebrated Pesach, to thank God for redeeming us from enslavement in Egypt—an event that occurred over three thousand years ago. The *Haggadah*, an ancient Tannaitic text (itself historically distant from the events of the Exodus), declares that all Jews are obligated to view themselves as having left Egypt. This requirement is exceedingly difficult to follow. Nobody alive today has witnessed or experienced the events depicted in the *Haggadah*. An unequivocal, truly miraculous display of divine intervention has not occurred for millennia. Few have any conception of

what life was really like in 1000 BCE. How, then, can we capture the feeling required by the *Haggadah*?

In that same paragraph, the *Haggadah* remarks that had God not removed us from Egypt, we would still be enslaved to Pharaoh. On the surface, this statement seems preposterous and unverifiable. Unless the author of the *Haggadah* was blessed with omniscience or the power of hypothetical prophecy, how could he be so certain of his assertion? Perhaps we would have eventually escaped from Egypt by natural means; alternatively, perhaps the Egyptians, like 19th-century Americans, would have ultimately freed their slaves!

The standard interpretation of this passage suggests that the *Haggadah* refers to Pharaoh and Egypt in a typological, or symbolic sense, rather than a literal one. In other words, Pharaoh and Egypt represent ideas, and those ideas are eternally relevant. Although we would not

have been actual slaves to the specific people and in the particular place described by the Torah, we would have been so in a conceptual sense—embedded in a culture of immorality of which Egypt was emblematic. Thus, when the *Haggadah* instructs us to try to feel that we have "left Egypt," our job is to determine how the idea of Egypt applies to contemporary culture.

This notion is a solution to the problem that I have raised in this article. When we have difficulty relating to our ancient sacred texts, we should remember that these texts carry meaning beyond the literal sense. "An eye for an eye," understood literally, is indeed primitive. What it does mean, however, is a profound idea about the value of the human body that remains true even in 2017. Perhaps this typological approach can help bridge the gap between the ancient and the modern eras and thereby enable a meaningful religious experience.

SEE CONSTITUTION, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

as they made the quick but always suspicious walk from that musty lounge to the *beit midrash* for a late *maariv*. We don't know any different and have little reason to assume any better.

We could just ask the framers, right? Well, we could, and probably would, if we knew who the framers were, but alas, the constitution is anonymous. It is not signed by anyone. There's no "in witness thereof," and needless to say, there is no secretary's signature affirming ratification.

Imagine you walk into the new apartment you just leased. The smell of freshly plastered drywall fills your nostrils. You notice a piece of paper on a windowsill titled, "Constitution of Apartment 2B." Even if your new home was indeed Apartment 2B (which would be particularly convenient in a walkup), you would not be bound by the provisions of that constitution. If Article One said you were president of the kitchen, you still would not be president of the kitchen. (Looks like you'll have to rock-papers-scissors it for the top shelf of the fridge after all.) We, the student electorate, have practically walked into an empty apartment and found a constitution – one that curtails our political agency (for example, we aren't all presidents of the student council) and that of our elected government (for example, the president cannot just ban clubs unilaterally). And we have no reason to believe that we are bound by this document.

The scenario would be completely different if we knew that the constitution was indeed ratified. To refer again to our residential analogy: if you take a spot in an apartment that already has three other roommates who've been living there for a while, and they tell you that they all agreed that the papers on the windowsill are the apartment's foundational document, then so it is. If Article Two says the newest roommate is the vice president of waste management, you'll be taking out the trash for a while. This is more or less why we are still bound by the United States Constitution hundreds of years after its ratification, and this is how we would be bound to a student constitution whose ratification was on record.

But let's suppose for a moment that we did in fact have official record of ratification. The constitution would still be invalid - if not in whole, then definitely in part. This is because of the second set of constitutional problems: jurisdiction.

The constitution grants powers it has no right to grant and imposes obligations it has no business imposing. Below are a few examples. They quote from the words of the constitution and may get a little technical, but they make the point that the document reaches far beyond where it can legitimately go.

An example of a constitutional power that the constitution claims to offer but cannot is subpoena. According to the constitution, there is a student court in which students can bring claims against other students. For any court to hear a claim against a party – think a defendant – the court has to be able to compel that party to appear before the judges. Government courts do this by subpoena, whereby they force an accused person to show up in court under the penalty of law. The Wilf Campus undergraduate constitution gives the student court the power of subpoena under Article XI, Section 2, (2): "The Student Court shall have the power to enforce its subpoenas by means of disciplinary action against those who fail to appear." The problem with this provision is that disciplinary action (think academic probation) can be taken against a student only by the administration of the university. Earlier this year, Dr. Chaim Nissel, University Dean of Students and a member of the disciplinary committee, confirmed this explicitly to Chief Justice Yossi Hoffman and myself, the Justice Pro Tempore, both of the student court.

This means that if you thought that an elected student leader was abusing his power or neglecting his duties, and you wanted to pursue student-legal means to get him to correct his ways, he could just decline to appear in court and there would be nothing you or the judges

could do. Your claim would amount to nothing and the official would continue with his corruption.

An example of obligations the constitution has no business imposing can be found in Article VIII, Section 1, (6): "The YSU President may sit in on all meetings of the Governing Board of *The Commentator*." It is a somewhat trivial truth that he may, but this fact is up to the discretion of the editors of *The Commentator*. If they choose to exclude the YSU president, that is their

"SIMPLY PUT, THE MOST INVALIDATING ISSUE OF OUR STUDENT GOVERNMENT'S FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENT IS THAT IT IS IGNORED AND VIOLATED BY STUDENT LEADERS."

prerogative, and no student constitution can compel them otherwise. Although many of its readers, most of its writers, and all of its editors study at YU, the paper is independent – it does not take a penny from the student council and is not bound by the student council constitution.

To put things in terms of off-campus housing, imagine that 2B's constitution said that you could charge your upstairs neighbors a noise fee for their late-night raves. Such a law would be pretty much meaningless; don't count on paying your wifi bill with that extra income. Your sleepless Saturday nights will remain uncompensated.

A related problem that is not as severe from a

Article II, Section 10 (1) and (2) restrict student senators from serving on the General Assembly. In previous constitutions, there was a student senate, but this document does not establish that organ of the student government. Maybe they had high hopes for YU students and thought a polisci major would unseat Chuck Schumer in the United States Senate while still enrolled as an undergraduate. Good thing the framers made sure to keep the feds out of our student government!

These are examples of the constitution overreaching, each of which show that there are chunks of the document that are invalid.

But let us continue our magnanimity and pretend for a moment that we have official record of ratification, and that we can ignore the invalid parts and keep the functional ones. There is still a third, and perhaps most serious, invalidating issue with the constitution.

Simply put, the most invalidating issue of our student government's foundational document is that it is ignored and violated by student leaders.

The most recurring instance of student leaders ignoring the constitution is the fact that the meetings of the general assembly (a collection of certain elected officials) are not open. Article IV, Section 1, (3), mandates that "all meetings of the General Assembly shall be open meetings" except in certain particular circumstances. At open meetings, "all students may participate in debate upon recognition by the YSU President."

When was the last time you participated in debate at a meeting of the General Assembly? When was the last time you even heard there was a meeting of the General Assembly? I suspect the answer to both questions is never. Perhaps there are General Assembly meetings, and perhaps they are officially open. But the fact that the time and location of the meetings is not publicized makes them effectively closed. (If I had to guess, they occur around 10:23 pm on a Whastapp group chat.)

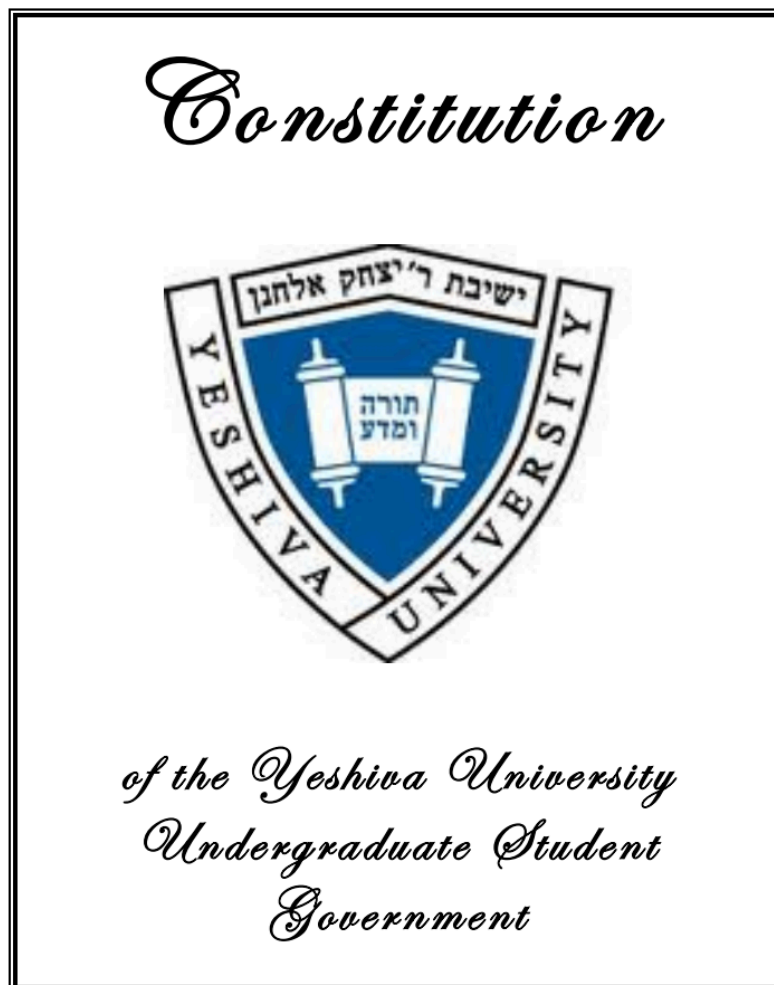
The secrecy is no trivial matter. Transparency in student government is unquestionably important. Even asking for a rundown of the student council budgets required cutting through red tape, and concrete dollar amounts still have not been publicized. This means that the student activity fee that you pay – \$150 per year – is distributed, if at all, in a way that you'll never know.

One more example of constitutional disregard: the student court has no records, despite being obligated to maintain records in various passages of the constitution. This absence of judicial records could very possibly be because it has never heard a case; but even caseless terms must have a non-trial meeting under Article XI, Section 4, (1). Either way, there is no record of any court proceedings.

In sum, things look pretty bleak for the student constitution of the Wilf Campus. I can understand why you may vote to ratify or reject the proposed amendments anyway – in the end of the day, the winners of the election will think, mistakenly, that they are in power by virtue of an invalid constitution, and they may actually effect changes, for better or worse, in our undergraduate experience. Insistent idealism be damned; there are Chanukahfests and Yoms to attend.

You might, however, recognize the fear that power invalidly constituted turns quickly into power invalidly wielded against the less powerful. The recorded ratification of a legitimate constitution would be the first step in a direction away from the abuse of an elected position. In the meantime, as I abstain on principle from the election this May, I will hope that the lessons of the second floor apartment are internalized by

next year's unconstitutionally elected residents of the second floor of Morgenstern.



constitutional perspective but may point to more serious attitudinal problems is the sloppy writing. Perhaps one example will suffice: the title page purports to introduce the "Constitution of the Yeshiva University Undergraduate Student Government," and the body of the document does at least try to construct a government for the male undergraduates. Nowhere, however, does it discuss the Yeshiva University undergraduate student government for females. Presumably, the framers forgot to put the word male on the title page, but such a glaring omission makes us wonder what else the framers forgot. (Did they forget to constitute a student senate?)

TAMID Tank 2017

By Joshua Zirman

One of the most watched TV show in America in 2016 was Shark Tank. Shark tank is not an action-packed drama or a tear jerking romance, rather it is a reality show where entrepreneurs pitch their products and companies to five investors or “sharks” who listen to the pitch, analyze the team, and make an investment decision. Shark Tank has gained such rapid popularity because of how relatable it is to viewers watching. Contestants on the show are just like the viewers watching: moms and dads, and hardworking small business owners who are sometimes living paycheck to paycheck trying to meet ends meet.

The second annual TAMID Tank event occurred recently in Barnard. TAMID Tank starts with finding student-run startups on campuses across the country. 103 companies applied to be part of the “Shark Tank” style competition this year, and after several rounds of vetting, there were only three companies left. TAMID members and non-TAMID members from universities around New York came out to listen to the presenters while the TAMID community hand-picked three investors to listen to the presentations and give feedback to each company. Two of the presenters were venture capital partners, while one investor was a private investor who owns a large company and does angel investing on the side.

The first company to present at the program was called Averia. Their goal is to develop a unique app that has a concussion test attached to a pair of glasses (think virtual reality) that could be used at the time of a collision to test for concussion. Currently 80% of athletic concussions go undetected because the only test to give athletes is an eye test which is obviously flawed. Although the company was very compelling and had an enormous potential they did not end up getting an investment because their revenue model was confusing and the device they were using as an attachment was not appealing to the investors.

The second company to present was called Vescence,

which was a spray on for solar panels to make sure that they do not accumulate dust and dirt which can reduce efficiency by as much as 40%. The technology was developed by a professor at the student’s university (the University of Houston) but these students were given



exclusive rights to sell the product. The company did not end up getting an investment because the investors were concerned with the revenue model of the company. They were attempting to partner with massive solar farms as opposed to going to private residents who have solar panels and selling to them. One investor said “you guys are going for the giants before touching the ants. Yes, it takes many ants to become a giant, but you need to start somewhere.”

The last company to present was called Pyle. Pyle is a software that helps students pay off their loans by creating a schedule for payments and investing some extra cash in the stock market to help repay loans quickly. The student loan industry has now overtaken all other kinds of debt as the leading defaulting loan and the idea came from there. There must be a way to help students who are not financially literate pay off their loans in a timely manner! The idea was phenomenal but the execution was not there yet. The company was in its earliest stages and still had not perfected its stock picking algorithm and payment methods. One investor said, “I would love to see you guys back here in six months with all of the developments you have made but you are just too early in the process for an investment.” Unfortunately for those in attendance at the event, an inside source told this writer that a company with \$1.3 million in revenue last year was scheduled to present as well but had to drop out at the last second. It would have been fascinating for the audience to see how the investors would have interacted with a more mature company doing over a million dollars of revenue.

Although none of the students received investments from the investors, students, parents and alumni loved the event. YU student Joshua Morrow said, “listening to my peers’ passions and accomplishments at such a young age was inspiring and a joy to be a part of.” Baruch Sophomore Daniel Jonas said that his TAMID chapter made the event mandatory but it was “the best decision they made all semester.” There is something inspiring listening to ambitious friends and peers pursue their passions and visions. The appeal to TAMID Tank is similar to that of Shark Tank: the audience full of entrepreneurs felt empathy and a direct connection with the presenters and could see themselves one day being on the big stage pitching their company to a group of investors. It’s the moms, dads, and students that are pursuing their dreams that inspire their peers to take risks and strive for nothing less than greatness. TAMID Tank 2017 was educational, inspiring, and a huge success even though no investments were made.

The Spirit of Entrepreneurship

By Ariel Axelrod and Doni Yellin

On March 23rd, the new X-Nihilo Entrepreneurship Society held its first event. The kickoff introduced members to the new society and its founders, and to establish an agenda for the coming semesters. At first glance, most people would not associate the term X-Nihilo with entrepreneurship; however, there is more to the society than just the unique name. The founders chose X-Nihilo as it’s a derivation of the latin phrase, “Ex-Nihilo,” meaning “something from nothing” or in Hebrew, “yesh me’ayin.” Just like God created the world from nothing, so too entrepreneurs utilize their God-given creativity to turn fleeting dreams into permanent realities. This is how the founder, Yonah Hiller, expressed the meaning of the society’s name.

As founder of the companies MitzvahWorld.com and Chilazon.org, Hiller is no stranger to the life of an



entrepreneur and neither are the rest of the society’s board members. Mark Weiss, Dena Skydell, and Yakira Klein all boast impressive entrepreneurial resumes. Mark, having started his own app called LIT™, plans to “unlock the entrepreneurial spirit in the student body.” Dena Skydell, one of the creators of Instagram account Hungry Twins, is ready to share her experiences with other students who have the desire to launch a business. Hungry Twins boasts a following on instagram of over 500 thousand followers. When asked why she joined the society’s board, Dena pointed out, “I saw that there was no forum here at Yeshiva University that helps students develop ideas into businesses. We [at X-Nihilo] want to turn passion into action and help motivate fellow students to push themselves.” Yakira Klein has had her hand at running three extremely successful fundraising campaigns for Chai Lifeline. Having the ability to sell an idea whether that’s for a charity organization or a business is an essential skill for an entrepreneur.

The first ever event was filled with bright young minds, gathering to hear from the board members who have gone through the steps of becoming entrepreneurs, having launched their own businesses. Members shared personal business experiences, struggles they faced, and ultimately the path to their successes. The underlying theme of the night was that passion breeds success. Passion is the driver for when problems arise and solutions need to be found.

Yonah Hiller affirmed that the main goal of the society is “to foster a community of entrepreneurs and give students the tools

and resources they need to start their own businesses.” As a community, members will discuss opportunities and create a milieu of innovation and creativity. One of the attendees of the event reflected on what he expects from the society: “The society will help my ideas become a reality and I can’t wait to continue to network with the members and hopefully accomplish great things.”

One way to think of the purpose of business is that it exists to further develop God’s world. When speaking

“JUST LIKE GOD CREATED THE WORLD FROM NOTHING, SO TOO ENTREPRENEURS UTILIZE THEIR GOD-GIVEN CREATIVITY TO TURN FLEETING DREAMS INTO PERMANENT REALITIES!”

with Yonah about enjoying the work one does, he reflected on the Mishna in Pirkei Avot, which reiterates the importance of loving work - “chov et hamilacha.” This is what X-Nihilo hopes to accomplish with its members. Not only will it offer members the structure of a startup think tank, but it will offer them a fun and interactive experience, regardless of their respective field of study. Having heard the feedback from the first event and the society’s future plans, the board members of X-Nihilo are well on their way to fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship at Yeshiva University.

What is Driving the Future of Uber?

By Ezra Berman

Every day thousands of people use Uber for the convenience it provides for private transportation. All it takes is one click on a cellular device to have a driver pick you up. Although Uber has found a way to break-in and dominate the transportation industry through a reinvented taxi business, it is evident that this will not be how the future of their business looks. In reality, Uber is not a transportation company, but rather it is a technology company. Travis Kalanick, the CEO of Uber, has noted, "It's a technology platform that connects riders and drivers." Despite Kalanick's indication that the company's function is solely for the app, Uber has demonstrated many attempts to shift the focus of their business to autonomous vehicles.

Before focusing on Uber's future it is important to understand the company and the business model as it is now. According to recent statistics, there are 1 million Uber rides taken every day around the world. Uber's business model is no different than a traditional cab company in that its only source of revenue is from rides; however, Uber allows essentially anyone with a car to become a driver and takes a twenty percent cut from the driver's revenues. Uber is the "middle man" between an individual and a cab and for that service it charges a slight fee to the driver.

Uber has been successful not only because they have revolutionized the taxi industry, but also because they have been able to segment their services in order to appeal to various demographics. For example, commuters on a tighter budget might elect to use Uber Pool, which is basically a carpool version of the service. Although an Uber Pool ride may take slightly longer, it allows riders to pay a cheaper fare by splitting the ride. Alternatively, Uber also offers Black Car services which appeal to users seeking a more luxurious mode of transportation, for a higher price of course.

Uber's revenue growth over the past few years is truly remarkable. In the first half of 2015, the company's gross revenue was \$3.63 billion, which is around \$1 billion more in gross revenue than the entire 2014. Despite tremendous success in the past, we must value Uber based on how we believe they will perform in the future,

not how they have performed in the past. This is based on the concept that the value of a business is the present value of all of the company's future cash flows. The market that Uber currently operates in has become extremely saturated in major cities with the entrance of competitors like Lyft, Gett, and most recently Juno. The shift to self-driving cars will be key for Uber for a number of reasons. I think that most consumers will use the taxi app that results in the cheapest fare, and with new competitors in the market, prices naturally will get driven down. This affects a company like Uber's profit margins and revenue expectations. Furthermore, Uber currently pays out eighty percent of each ride to the driver, and if they are able to own and operate fleets of self-driving cars, this will transform their "middle man" status into the supplier of the service. As with many early-stage technology companies, Uber has fast-growing revenue with a negative bottom-line. Uber's investment in driverless cars may be their only opportunity to change that.

The self-driving car industry is going to be huge. There are expectations for it to be a \$77 billion market by 2035. Uber has already tested a fleet of 43 autonomous cars in Pittsburgh that drove around 18,000 miles per week. Through this test run, Uber was able to complete 930 rides, demonstrating tremendous progress in the field. Not only will autonomous cars boost Uber's revenue due to the zero dollar payout to drivers, but studies show that



it will allow Uber to complete more rides per day. Right now, Uber drivers complete 1 to 2 rides per hour; however, researchers believe autonomous vehicles will be able to complete roughly 4 rides per hour. In this situation, it seems that although automatizing cars, in the beginning, will be costly, it will ultimately allow Uber to grow tremendously.

Although autonomous vehicles seem like an industry

"IN REALITY, UBER IS NOT A TRANSPORTATION COMPANY, BUT RATHER IT IS A TECHNOLOGY COMPANY."

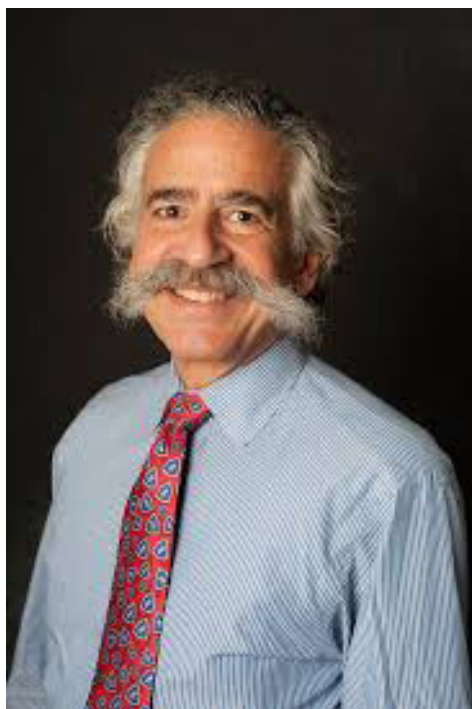
that Uber will be successful in, there are a number of risks associated with this business endeavor. Firstly, there is the risk of competition. Companies such as Google, Tesla, and automakers such as Ford have been extremely active in this space and it seems that it will be a race to implement the technology successfully. Furthermore, Uber will have to take much more responsibility for any accidents involving their fleets. Just a couple of weeks ago an Uber autonomous vehicle was involved in a collision in Arizona which may result in a lawsuit filed against Uber. Lastly, I think it is important to address whether society is ready for the shift to autonomous vehicles. Although it seems that people are comfortable with the current driving system, Uber's history shows that they can be successful at disrupting the marketplace. They've done it once, so what's stopping them from doing it again. Despite the tremendous opportunity in autonomous vehicles, I think Uber still has a lot of ground to cover, and until Uber can assure society of the unquestionable safety of self-driving transportation they will continue to be a high revenue, negative profit business. It takes years of unprofitability for companies such as Uber to change the way we live and it remains to be seen how innovation will impact our methods of transportation.

Syms to Launch New Master's in Taxation this Fall

By Adam Kramer

Sy Syms' new Master's of Science in Taxation program, led by longtime Syms accounting professor Leonard Fuld, will welcome its first cohort of students in the Fall of 2017. In an interview with *The Commentator*, Professor Fuld touched on many aspects of the new program, including some of the program's basic details, YU's clear need for the program, and his involvement in it.

While Syms has traditionally offered a Master's in Accounting, over the last few years Professor Fuld has been hearing from students that they would be interested in a Master's in Taxation program as well. He noted that it makes more sense for students who are interested in a career in tax who already majored in accounting for their undergraduate degree to spend the additional time getting a Master's in Taxation rather than Accounting, since honing their knowledge in taxation will make them that much more skilled and valued in their specific area of expertise. Professor Fuld also mentioned that major accounting firms are said to give employees a bonus for getting a master's degree, and will give a bigger bonus for people who get that master's



in taxation. Lastly, not enough people who studied accounting also know tax as a subject. Professor Fuld taught a course on contemporary tax issues at Baruch's graduate business school and it went from 29 students to 98 in 3 years, and he optimistically envisions Syms' program gaining popularity with YU students in a similar way.

In terms of the some of the basic details of the program, it will be a year-long program with classes taking place on the Beren campus at night. This will allow students to be employed full-time or to study for the CPA test while enrolled in the program. Professor Fuld has been working diligently for the past year, primarily on his own time, organizing the various aspects of the program. He has spent that time putting together syllabi for all of the classes, a budget and business plan, and, most importantly, gaining approval from senior YU administrators as well as from the New York State Education Department to run the program with the proper accreditation. Professor Fuld is hoping to have 15 students in the Fall 2017 cohort, but will be happy with a class of only 10 students. He hopes that around half of the students in the program will come from YU, with the other half having matriculated at other colleges for their undergraduate degree.

When asked how he's going to approach hiring new professors for

the program, Professor Fuld responded that initially they will need 3-4 adjunct hires, all of whom will need to be experienced in their fields. Rather than hire university scholars, Syms is looking for professionals with 25-30 years of experience in tax practice. Already, he's met with potential faculty members including an IRS agent with 30 years, a VP of taxes with 40 years of experience, and a compensation tax expert.

In the longer-term, as director of the program, Professor Fuld hopes to start a tax clinic where students in the Master's program will consult and advise local Washington Heights businesses, helping them out and gaining practical experience in the process. Additionally, he mentioned that he's exploring ways to partner with big accounting firms to leverage their employees to come speak to students in the program, and hopefully work with them to hire students for internships and full time jobs.

Professor Fuld expects that the low tuition of \$23,000, which is significantly less than most similar one year Masters of Science programs, will encourage students to choose Syms' tax program instead of similar ones at Baruch and other schools where those graduating Syms with a BA in Accounting might otherwise have gone. In terms of recruiting students for the program, Professor Fuld realizes that it's already late in the year and that it'll be a challenge to market and advertise the program as fully as it could have been if the approval process had taken less time. That being said, Syms has provided a marketing budget, which he's excited to use to recruit for this Fall, and expects the program to benefit the students and YU for many years to come.

Corporate Law: The Synergy of Law and Finance

By Noam Zolty

For many students in college, picking a profession can be a long and difficult decision. Many students want to be involved in the business world in some way, but at the same time have a desire to be engaged in other activities, rather than just dealing with numbers and dollar figures. For those that have an interest in going into a field that has a nice balance between the business world and the law world, corporate law is the perfect synergy of the two. Whether negotiating the acquisition of a multi-billion dollar company or assisting a small Internet start-up company, corporate lawyers are involved in advising businesses on their numerous legal rights, responsibilities, and obligations. A good corporate lawyer is one of the most valuable employees that a major financial institution such as an investment bank or a private equity firm can have. Therefore, one of the most exciting and stimulating professions in the business world is corporate law.

Corporate lawyers are engaged in a wide array of activities. The role of a corporate lawyer is to ensure the legality of commercial transactions, advising corporations on their legal rights and duties, which includes the duties and responsibilities of corporate officers. In order to do this, they must have a detailed knowledge of the aspects of contract law, tax law, accounting, bankruptcy, accounting, securities law, and intellectual property rights, and the laws specific to the business of the corporations that they work for. Many corporate lawyers work in law firms, particularly large or midsize firms, where they counsel clients or handle business transactions. Some of their activities include negotiations, drafting, and review of contracts and other agreements associated with the activities of the business, such as mergers, acquisitions, and divestitures. They also advise business clients on corporate governance and operations issues such as the rights and responsibilities of corporate directors and officers, and the general oversight of the legal activities of the company. In addition, corporate attorneys assist business clients with the financial information they must provide to their owners, employees, and shareholders, including reports that must be filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and other government agencies. Many corporate lawyers choose to forgo working in a large law office and choose to serve as an in-house counsel for a specific firm, such as a hedge

fund. These lawyers often work very intimately with their co-workers and help shape the decisions the firms make. They also act as advisors on a myriad of other issues such as labor and employment issues, contractual difficulties and ethics violations.

Corporate lawyers work for both public and private companies, helping them formulate contracts, and

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

avoid falling into legal pitfalls. They advise publicly held companies with regards to issues such as the public disclosure of disappointing financial results, an adverse judgment in a litigation matter, or the initiation of a government investigation regarding the company. The company may, for example, need to advise the public about an impending product recall, litigation that has been initiated due to an environmental problem, or an unfunded pension liability. A private company, however, may need a corporate lawyer for an entirely different set of needs. They may need help establishing a line of credit with a bank, creating the proper loan documents and helping guide the company in its quest to raise more funds. Privately held companies also seek advice on the formulation and enforcement of contracts, on tax matters, and even on succession issues, in which attorneys help plan for the orderly transfer of ownership or management to the next generation of owners. Most significantly, when a company decides to go public, the corporate lawyer is very involved in the process. Corporate lawyers work very closely with the investment banks in helping them prepare their clients for the Initial Public Offering (IPO). They help draw up the paperwork and negotiate and help decide exactly how many shares their client is going to offer to the public to invest in.

In addition to going to law school, corporate lawyers often spend an extra year in school in order to receive a J.D./M.B.A., which is a law degree combined with a Master of Business Administration. Since the activities of corporate law are so heavily intertwined with the businesses of their companies, it is expected that they possess an intimate knowledge of how finance operates and the mechanisms of the business world. According to Forbes, corporate law is the highest paid field within law. Average salaries for first-year associates range from \$160,000 to \$180,000. Since the salaries are so attractive, corporate law often attracts the top students from the most prestigious law schools. Many law students who decide to go into corporate law are the ones who have been interested in business for a long time. While the percentage of law school students who majored in finance or economics is about 7%, the percentage of corporate lawyers who majored in one of these two fields is around 40%. Many corporate lawyers love being able to be a part of Wall Street, while still remaining on the law side.

A recent study done by Harvard University revealed that corporate lawyers tend to be much more content and fulfilled by their jobs than attorneys who specialize in other fields. One of the reasons cited by the study is the lack of confrontation that is found within the job. The practice of corporate law is less adversarial than that of trial law. Lawyers for both sides of a commercial transaction aren't deemed to be opponents, but rather facilitators. Transactions take place amongst peers. There are rarely wronged parties, underdogs, or inequities in the financial means of the participants. Many trial, litigation and family attorneys describe how the constant fighting leads to many of them to become despondent. They describe how much of the passion for law that they had when they first began their jobs has significantly waned. On the contrary, many corporate lawyers note that there is a much more positive feeling within their workplaces than many other law offices. As noted, a career in corporate law can be an extremely rewarding job, in both monetary compensation and job satisfaction. Those that have an interest in making a nice salary while still having a career that is intellectually stimulating should seriously consider a career in corporate law.



Yeshiva University undergraduates can take courses at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

Classes are open to students either within the BA/MA Program or as upper-class undergraduates taking graduate courses with permission.

CLASS SCHEDULE FOR FALL 2017

BIBLE

BIBLICAL HEBREW I
Koller | M | 7 – 8:40 p.m.

THE MEDIEVAL PESHAT TRADITION,
c. 900–1300
Cohen | T | 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

BOOK OF AMOS
Holtz | Th | 2:50 – 4:30 p.m.

BOOK OF PROVERBS
Leiman | W | 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

AKKADIAN I
Eichler | TBD

JEWISH HISTORY

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND
RABBINIC LITERATURE
This course counts toward the concentrations in Ancient Jewish history and Talmud.
Angel | T | 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

MEDIEVAL JEWISH HISTORY:
CHRISTIAN EUROPE
Berger | W | 2:50 – 4:30 p.m.

JEWS IN MUSLIM LANDS II
Tsadik | W | 2:50 – 4:30 p.m.

JEWS IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE:
1492–1760
Carlebach | M | 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

JEWISH MODERNITY IN LITHUANIA:
FROM TALMUD AND MUSAR TO
REVOLUTION AND ZIONISM
Karlip | W | 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY: 1654–1881
Gurock | Th | 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

THE “PARTING OF WAYS”:
EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND ITS JEWISH
AND GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXTS
Fine | W | 6:50 – 8:30 p.m.

JEWISH CULTURE IN MEDIEVAL SPAIN
Perelis | Th | 6:50 – 8:30 p.m.

JEWS OF IRAN: HISTORY AND CULTURE
This course counts toward the concentrations in Medieval and Modern Jewish History.
Tsadik | M | 2:50 – 4:30 p.m.

JEWISH NATIONAL MOVEMENTS
Zimmerman | M | 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

THE INTERFACE BETWEEN
SEFARAD AND ASHKENAZ IN
THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES
Kanarfogel | Th | 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

SURVEY OF MEDIEVAL JEWISH
PHILOSOPHY
Rynhold | M | 6:50 – 8:30 p.m.

INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH MYSTICISM
Dauber | T | 2:50 – 4:30 p.m.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE CONCEPT
OF MITZVAH
Rynhold | W | 6:50 – 8:30 p.m.

MESSIANISM IN KABBALAH
AND HASIDUT
Dauber | Th | 2:50 – 4:30 p.m.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RABBI
JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK
Rynhold | M | 2:50 – 4:30 p.m.

TALMUD

INTRODUCTION TO THE MIDRASHIC
LITERATURE OF THE TANNAIM
Hurvitz | T | 2:50 – 4:30 p.m.

MAIMONIDES' HALAKHIC WRITINGS
Hurvitz | T | 6:50 – 8:30 p.m.

THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND
RABBINIC LITERATURE
See under Jewish history
Angel | T | 4:50 – 6:30 p.m.

LANGUAGES

ARABIC I
Open to undergraduates without special permission. This course does not count toward the ten required MA courses, but scholarship grants apply to this course.
Tsadik | M & W | 4:40 – 5:55 p.m.

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BERNARD REVEL GRADUATE SCHOOL
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