

MAY IT BE AN  
EVENING STAR  
SHINES DOWN  
UPON YOU

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

MAY IT BE WHEN  
DARKNESS FALLS  
YOUR HEART WILL  
BE TRUE

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## The State of Recycling on the Wilf Campus



Paper, bottles and cardboard are regularly thrown in the trash compactor instead of being stored for recycling.

AVI HIRSCH

By SARAH BEN-NUN and  
AVI HIRSCH

Throughout Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus, students can find blue recycling bins in most hallways and public areas beside their black or gray counterparts. Although these blue bins are designated for recycling only, many students at YU are under the impression that the materials in these bins never, in fact, recycled. Instead, they believe that the recycling ends up mixing together with the refuse (non-recyclable waste) from the black and gray bins.

Zachary Greenberg (SSSB '21) is one such student. "I thought there was no recycling on Wilf Campus," he admitted. "I heard the recycling bins are fake."

Other students, like Yaacov Siev (YC '20), have largely been left in the dark about the state of recycling at YU. "I think there is recycling on campus but to a small degree," he said. "There are bins for recycling bottles and papers on every floor of the dorms but I feel that only makes up a small amount of YU's disposal percentage." He added, "I

don't know if YU recycles. I don't know their disposal procedures and practices and how it works."

The doubt that many students at YU have about the university's recycling policies is a serious issue. For many students, the assumption that YU does not recycle translates into a license to throw non-recyclable materials into recycling bins. Greenberg, for example, stated that he is usually careful to throw recyclable waste into recycling bins, "but not in YU, because I hear that it doesn't actually matter."

In our investigation of recycling at YU, we attempted to trace the journey of recyclable materials starting from the moment they are thrown into recycling bins around the Wilf Campus. What *should* happen to the recyclables at each stage, and what does happen?

In theory, all recycling bins around YU should have transparent blue bags in them, and the recyclables thrown into those bags should make their way to a recycling storage area for weekly pickup by the NYC Department of

*Continued on Page 10*

## After Years of Delays, 16 Handles Opens in Washington Heights

By YOSHI ZIMLOVER

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on April 28.*

After years of delays, 16 Handles opened in Washington Heights on Sunday, April 28. The frozen yogurt store is located at the corner of W. 185th St. and Audubon Ave. and is certified kosher by the National Kosher Supervision hashgacha.

In Sept. 2018, a 16 Handles official told The Commentator that the store would open in the "very

near future." The chain then informed The Commentator this past January that the store would open its doors in February, and then "hopefully open by the end of March" when the store was still not open at the conclusion of February.

The development of the store began as early as 2016, but delays and other difficulties plagued the establishment until now.

"I never had anything like 16 handles in my community growing up, so I'm super excited to try their frozen yogurt and to see what new food options they bring to Washington Heights", remarked Ben Freund (SSSB '20).

16 Handles Project Manager Sean Gunner stated on Sunday, April 28, "I am happy to report that today is the soft opening of our 16 Handles store in Washington Heights. We are so happy to have our doors open to the community."

According to a sign posted, the store will be open every day of the week from 12 p.m. to 9 p.m. with breakfast hours "coming soon."

16 Handles and YU have not been in contact about an arrangement that would allow students to use their dining funds at the store, according to YU's Department of Dining Services.



16 Handles is located at the corner of 185th St. and Audubon Ave.

THE COMMENTATOR

## US Ambassador David Friedman to Keynote YU's 88th Commencement

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on April 17.*

Yeshiva University named U.S. Ambassador David Friedman as the keynote speaker for its 88th Commencement. The envoy to Israel will also receive an honorary

"Ambassador Friedman typifies the ideals that are central to Yeshiva University," said President Ari Berman in a prepared statement. "He is an exemplary leader from our community, in both the diplomatic realm and the world of values, who is committed not only to strengthening the U.S.-Israel relationship but also to building a brighter future for people of all nations."

*"I am deeply moved by the honor afforded me by Yeshiva University, a Zionist-driven institution, whose values I have identified with and championed throughout my personal and professional life."*

U.S. Ambassador David Friedman

doctorate degree at the graduation event, which is slated to be held on May 30 at the Hulu Theater at Madison Square Garden.

Friedman made history by executing President Donald Trump's

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Your Home Away From Home



# THE COMMENTATOR

2018-2019

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*The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.*

*For 84 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 Umadda, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.*

Visit us online at  
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# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## A View From the World of Tomorrow

By BENJAMIN KOSLOWE

WILF CAMPUS, Aug. 2027 — The beginning of the academic year is a time defined equally by prospect and retrospect. As wide-eyed freshmen tread unfamiliar grounds and schedules with the hope of transforming the mysterious into something workable and productive, experienced seniors see the same objects of academic routine, cast in history's revealing light, both for what they are and for how they have changed over the semesters.

In the vein of historical assessment, this fledgling Commentator editor shall take the opportunity to mimic the individual's reflection with a broader analysis. On the occasion of the tenth year since the investment of Yeshiva University's newest administration, this editor will deliver praise where praise is due. And praise, certainly, is due.

Since taking charge of the helm in 2017, this administration has truly ridden the positive wave of history. It is thanks to our shrewd administrators that Sy Syms School of Business now comprises nearly 85 percent of the undergraduate student body, reflecting the seriousness with which the university takes the essential task of any school of higher education, namely, to prepare its young adults for the market economy.

Whereas Yeshiva University was once chained by anachronisms like humanities and writing requirements, this administration last decade tested the tranquil waters of "optionality," and has since embraced this more sensible academic approach fully. No longer tied down by silly Core or Jewish Studies requirements, students have been able to focus instead on pursuing those courses that will actually advance their careers. Single-faculty liberal arts departments still exist for the rare student who wishes to pursue

academia, but for the most part, YU has succeeded in consolidating its undergraduate priorities to the more fundamental departments like Accounting, Marketing and Computer Science. Nonsense departments like Philosophy, Music and Art, whose courses are undoubtedly antiquated wastes of marketable time, thankfully have fizzled out in this bright world of tomorrow.

Aside from championing the needs of twenty-first-century students, this administration has masterfully addressed the financial instability that carried over from the previous leadership. Ten years

where students can connect with pioneering entrepreneurs and startups via tangible cutting-edge pathway programs and incubators. It is a testament to YU's values that these necessary labs have become the beating hearts of the institution.

Of course, this administration has not forgotten its Torah roots, which is why those 100 or so students who so desire still have the option to spend their mornings studying in the *beit midrash*. And Israel remains a central value as well, earning prominent mention with robust synergistic partnerships, as well as with the annual Yom Haatzmaut barbecue. Thankfully, though, these religious outlets, once upon a time considered integral as per old mantras like "*Torah Umadda*," are no longer forced upon students. The minuscule minority of intellectually-minded students aside, the vast majority of YU students

have been able to finally gain access to a college experience that is graced with optionality, and not burdened by taxing religious requirements that once drained precious hours out of every busy day. Now, YU more closely mirrors peer colleges, where religious obligations are relegated mostly to Shabbos and mealtimes, allowing for the workweek to be spent focusing on schoolwork and socializing.

So, on the brink of the tenth anniversary of Yeshiva University's newest administration, this editor extends many salutes. Thank you to our president, who has shaped a relevant vision for students entering the global market. Thank you to our deans, for creating lighter requirements to accommodate the needs and schedules of the modern young adult. Thank you to our vice presidents and marketing team, for ensuring finances that invest in the right areas and for promoting our institution's best features to the public eye.

We have sacrificed nothing. We have achieved everything.

*No longer tied down by silly Core or Jewish Studies requirements, students have been able to focus instead on pursuing those courses that will actually advance their careers.*

ago, Yeshiva University employed six vice presidents in its senior administration. These past few years, YU has invested in five more crucial vice presidents, and several new upper administrators as well, who have collectively paved a path of wise spending. Among many brave decisions, these policy-makers have skimmed down on excess spending, notably by persisting to freeze faculty salaries and by hiring new faculty only when absolutely necessary, for example, when professors were needed for the newest Katz School associate degree programs. Additionally, YU has cut Honors scholarships and cultural events, both of which were relics of a bygone academic era that focused on character rather than checkbooks. Instead, the university has invested in sensible spending that clearly serves vocational purposes.

As the Office of Marketing has made clear with its abundant advertisements printed throughout the tri-state area, Yeshiva University's *raison d'être* is to prepare students for the demands of the global market. To serve this end, Yeshiva University currently boasts several thriving Innovation Labs across its campuses



- 1

**"Avengers: Endgame"**  
I love it 3000.
- 2

**Being Pre-Law at Wilf**  
Are you a YC boy with a pre-med past and a primary breadwinner future? This fate could be yours with seven to ten simple emails to Fisch.
- 3

**Being a Syms Student at Wilf**  
Are you a YC boy with a pre-med past that led to a pre-law past and a primary breadwinner future? This fate could be yours with some simple test banks.
- 4

**Nationwide Commercials**  
Find someone who looks at you the way Tori Kelly looks at auto insurance.
- 5

**Shorts Season**  
CALVES. EVERYWHERE!
- 6

**YU Flickr Account**  
Surprisingly active.
- 7

**David Friedman as Commencement Speaker**  
I hope he does not say anything like this: "Are J Street supporters really as bad as kapos? The answer, actually, is no. They are far worse than kapos;" or this: "The blatant anti-Semitism emanating from our president and his sycophantic minions is palpable and very disturbing."

7 UP 7 DOWN

BY SAMUEL GELMAN

- 1

**New Morg Mechitza**  
Business in the back, party in the front.
- 2

**"Refreshments Might Be Served"**  
The Free Pizza Group's worst nightmare!
- 3

**Battle of Winterfell**  
I'm sure I would have enjoyed it if I was able to see anything!
- 4

**Notre Dame Fire**  
And Furst Hall still stands unscathed. God is cruel.
- 5

**You are attempting to log out of shuttle service. Are you sure you want to log out?**  
You are attempting to log out of shuttle service. Are you sure you want to log out?
- 6

**Mixed Dancing May**  
It always leads to mixed dancing.
- 7

**7 Up / 7 Down Not Being Long Enough**  
There is just not enough space for all my Key Food grapes jokes.

Corrections

An article titled "Academic Integrity and a Modified Core Curriculum: Fall 2019 Wilf Campus Academic Updates" in the April 15, 2019 issue of The Commentator shared a document pertaining to updated rules for AP equivalencies. The Commentator editors have learned from the Yeshiva College Deans Office that the document, which was originally obtained from YU's S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program Office, was not faculty-approved. As of this time, the Deans Office has declined to share the current status of AP equivalencies with The Commentator. The article has been updated on the website.

AMB. DAVID FRIEDMAN,  
continued from Front Page

decision to move the American Embassy to Jerusalem on May 14, 2018 — the 70th anniversary of Israel's independence. He also played a prominent role in Trump's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

"I am deeply moved by the honor afforded me by Yeshiva University, a Zionist-driven institution, whose values I have identified with and championed throughout my personal and professional life," Friedman said.

Prior to his appointment as Ambassador to Israel, Friedman was a founding partner at Kasowitz, Benson, Torres & Friedman, a New York-based law firm. Friedman earned a bachelor's degree from Columbia University in 1978 and a law degree from New York University School of Law in 1981.

In recent years, Friedman has made a series of controversial statements including comparing supporters of J Street, a self-described "pro-Israel, pro-peace" left-wing group, to "kapos," and accusing President Obama of emanating "blatant anti-semitism."

This will be the third consecutive year in which the Yeshiva University commencement will feature an Israeli Ambassador or Ambassador to Israel, following Ambassador Danny Danon's keynote address in 2018 and Ambassador Ron Dermer's keynote address in 2017. Other recent speakers have included Robert Kraft, Dr. Ruth Wisse, Dr. John S. Ruskay and Rabbi Joshua Fass.

David Friedman identifies as an Orthodox Jew and previously lived in the Modern Orthodox community in Woodmere, NY. He and his wife Tammy, who have five children and seven grandchildren, currently reside in Jerusalem.



Ambassador David Friedman

NEW YORK TIMES



## Who is Running for President on the Beren Campus?



From left to right: Talya Saban (SCWSC), Bella Adler (TAC), Shanee Markovitz (SCWSC) and Miriam Schloss (SSSBSC)

COMMENTATOR STAFF

### By COMMENTATOR STAFF

*Editor's Note: This article was originally published online on April 29. Though the main election took place on Thursday, May 2, a redo election for SCWSC president was set to take place on Monday, May 6.*

*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 her background and the goals she has for her desired position.*

*The introductions are arranged by council first (SCWSC, SSSC, TAC) and alphabetically second.*

*Elections will take place this Thursday, May 2; remember to vote!*

### Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC)

#### SHANEE MARKOVITZ

Hi! My name is Shanee Markovitz and I am running for SCWSC President. I was born in Eilat, and grew up in South Florida: your two vacation spots. Having served as the Co-President of YUPAC and Mock Trial, I am already extremely invested in YU and hope to bring my experience to Student Council in order to facilitate growth, a new perspective and true representation of the student body.

In addition to continuing and enhancing events we love, my platform is simple. I

will work on communication, pathways and relationships (CPR) if you give me the honor of serving as your president.

Communication: open forums/meetings with SCWSC; biannual club head chills; campus-wide surveys presented to the administration; one-on-one meeting times with students who want to be heard. Pathways: more diversity in events; workshops for new clubs; implement new Student Court; support for class presidents and vice presidents. Relationships: outreach to the broader community to bring people together; facilitate connections between experienced club heads and new ones; represent YU outside of these four walls; support trips that lead students to explore new locations and ideas.

It is extremely important to me that anyone who wants to share their ideas can; please reach out to me to discuss anything! If there is one promise I can make, it is that I will amplify the many voices of our incredibly unique student body. I will get things done. So come May 2, vote Shanee!

#### TALYA SABAN

Hi everyone! My name is Talya Saban and I am running for SCWSC President! I was born and raised in Toronto, where I spent four wonderful years at Ulpana Orot and after graduating, I moved on to another incredible year at Midreshet Harova.

I came to Stern two years ago with little knowledge of what Stern truly had to offer me and once I finally was settled, I realized how many opportunities I had here. Being the VP of Academic Affairs on SCWSC this

past year has really opened my eyes to the growth possible on our campus and if re-elected as President for this upcoming school year I would like to continue to build on the already established knowledge I was able to gain this past year.

Being on SCWSC is truly a privilege and not one I take for granted and I hope, if re-elected, I will get an opportunity to show Stern the many things that can be accomplished with continuity in their candidates.

Hope to be able to be around for another year!

### Sy Syms School of Business Student Council (SSSBSC)

#### MIRIAM SCHLOSS

Hi all — I'm Miriam Schloss and I'm running for President of Syms Student Council. I went to Ma'ayanot for high school and then spent a year in Migdal Oz.

Since starting in Syms, I have had the opportunity to be involved in various clubs on campus (the Data Analytics Club, So You Think Stern Can Dance, Music Vs and more). I am grateful to have found a community of peers through each of them. My goal for next year is to strengthen the sense of community among the women of Syms. There are so few of us — and it's our loss when so many of us don't know each other. Throughout next year, I hope to find solutions to your complaints, advocate on your behalf and create a positive experience for everyone on campus.

We have the opportunity to create a culture of connectedness in the coming year. It will take all of us to create the community

we deserve, and I want to help us get there.

--

### TORAH ACTIVITIES COUNCIL (TAC)

#### BELLA ADLER

[Insert your vision for religious programming on campus here] and that is my vision for the 2019-2020 academic school year. Because my goal as TAC president is not to push forth my own agenda, but to create pathways, tunnels, access points and distribute funding for all varieties of Jewish programming on campus

Serving last year as the VP of Shabbat Programming on TAC, I was exposed to a beautiful spectrum of communities that exist on our campus. I want to dedicate my final year at Stern College to empowering those communities to thrive. Being a member of TAC last year allowed me to learn the ropes of the organization so that I can be the best advocate for social change this year. Whether you feel at home in the *Beis*, in Brookdale, in the science labs or exploring NYC, know that the upcoming Torah Activities Council will be here to create Torah programming geared towards you. We will plan and facilitate scholarly speakers, social events, *geshmak chagiga* dancing, continued powerful Shabbat programming and a variety of unique and inspiring opportunities that bring *ruchniut* (spirituality) to our daily college-life experiences.

My name is Bella Adler, I'm from St. Louis, Missouri, and I want you to reach out to me (or any TAC member) with your ideas and concerns. Let's talk.

## Anywhere in the Heights & Anywhere in Town Aim to Enhance Shabbos Life for Wilf Students

### By DAVID SCHMIDT

Two initiatives called "Anywhere in the Heights" and "Anywhere in Town" have been established for Wilf Campus students to help facilitate attending and hosting Shabbat meals in Washington Heights and around the New York area. The programs were spearheaded by

Jacob Bach (YC '21) and Tzvi Moshe Wagman (SSSB '20), members of the YU Unity Club.

With two new WhatsApp groups up and running, the rules for each program curate an organized platform for pairing hosts to guests. Only hosts can write in the group, while potential guests respond privately to the host if they would like to be invited. Once the guest is

paired with a host, they can let them know if they have any special food dispensations, or if they should prepare a *dvar Torah*.

"I was thinking about a concept of Anywhere in Israel", Wagman said, referring to the website in Israel that allows strangers to connect with hosts for Shabbos. "I thought, why not bring this to YU to give students the opportunity to

have a more 'homestyle' Shabbos experience?" The goal was to help students who felt that they were "stuck" in YU every Shabbat while also giving those who live "in town" an opportunity to host people without needing to put in the work to find students who need somewhere to go.

When asked why he was the first to offer to host a meal for

the fledgling initiative, Teaneck resident Aryeh Burg (YC '20) said, "Why shouldn't I be opening up my home to people who aren't as close to home as I am?"

While they are aware that a couple of years ago, a similar initiative with the same name never got off the ground, they figured they would

*Continued on Page 5*



# Spring 2019 Wilf Campus Undergraduate Student Government Election Results

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

*Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on April 18.*

The Wilf Campus student body voted in the Spring 2019 Wilf Campus undergraduate student government elections, on Wednesday, April 17. The Canvassing Committee, which oversees student government elections, has shared the results of the election with The Commentator. In total, 586 out of 1033 Wilf Campus students voted, or 56.7% percent of eligible voters. Listed below are the results of the election, followed by per-candidate vote totals.

Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY)	SOY President Yoni Broth - 220 Yonatan Sonnenschein - 196 Jake Stern - 149
SOY President: Yoni Broth SOY Vice President: Hudi Rosenfeld SOY PR Secretary: Ari Brandspeigel SOY MYP Representative: Zev Jarashow SOY BMP Representative: Jacob Shiner SOY IBC Representative: David Shifteh SOY JSS Representative: Jacobo Bassan	SOY Vice President Hudi Rosenfeld - 207 Zach Lent - 186 Joshua Leichter - 70 Yehudah Rosenberg - 68
Sy Syms School of Business Student Council (SSSBSC)	SOY PR Secretary Ari Brandspeigel (Write-in) - 56
SSSBSC President: Chayim Mahgerefteh SSSBSC Vice President: Austin Marshak SSSBSC Secretary/Treasurer: Joey Aron	SOY MYP Representative Zev Jarashow - 143 Yitzchak Kaminetzky - 121 Larry (Leor) Levenson - 48
Yeshiva College Student Association (YCSA)	SOY BMP Representative Jacob Shiner - 93
YCSA President: Leib Wiener YCSA Vice President: CJ Glicksman YCSA Secretary/Treasurer: Albert Dweck	SOY IBC Representative David Shifteh - 94
Yeshiva Student Union (YSU)	SOY JSS Representative Jacobo Bassan - 27
YSU President: Ariel Sacknovitz YSU Vice President of Clubs: Zachary Greenberg YSU Senior Class Representative: Zev Hirt YSU Junior Class Representative: Benjamin Wade	SSSBSC President Chayim Mahgerefteh - 141 Daniel Elias - 108
	SSSBSC Vice President Austin Marshak - 157 Roger Adelson - 125
	SSSBSC Secretary/Treasurer Joey Aron - 242
	YCSA President Leib Wiener (Write-in) - 89
	YCSA Vice President CJ Glicksman (Write-in) - 48
	YCSA Secretary/Treasurer Albert Dweck - 228
	YSU President Ariel Sacknovitz - 466
	YSU Vice President of Clubs Zachary Greenberg - 526
	YSU Senior Class Representative Zev Hirt - 259 Benji Snow - 120
	YSU Junior Class Representative Benjamin Wade - 126

ANYWHERE IN THE HEIGHTS,  
continued from Page 4

revamp the idea to streamline the process of meeting new people, a key aspect of the YU Unity Club’s platform.

Due to the trouble they had attempting to build a website to match their goals for the new program, the new program has settled on using WhatsApp as the main platform for connecting students.

“I would be incredibly happy if the students running the new ‘Anywhere in the Heights’ used the old ‘Anywhere in the Heights’ website,” described Shua Brick (YC ’17), founder of the original “Anywhere in the Heights.”

The idea has been a culmination of various projects the YU Unity movement has created, including handing out business cards that say “Have a great day!” on them, solely to cheer up students. This idea, along with “Anywhere

in the Heights,” came out of one of the movement’s brainstorming sessions.

The impetus for the “YU Unity Movement,” an effort to, as Bach says in his own words, “create some positive vibes” on campus, came last year when Bach was a Yavneh Fellow at the fellowship for Jewish life on campus leadership. He realized that the YU community could use a little positivity and friendliness. Getting surprising looks from people after saying

hello made Bach feel like there had to be something he could do.

One of the incredibly memorable first events was handing out half donuts to random students as long as they agreed to give the other half to someone they do not know and introduce themselves. A similarly styled event took place around Purim, when students were given bags of *Mishloach Manot* as long as they agreed to give another bag to a student whom they did not know.

Regarding the future of the YU Unity Movement, Bach and Wagman “hope that these projects take off and are able to enhance the Shabbos and YU experiences of both our ‘in’ and ‘out of’ towners. We think it would be great if students at Stern would want to start their own ‘Anywhere in Town.’”

# Spring 2019 Beren Campus Undergraduate Student Government Election Results, Redo Election for SCWSC President to Take Place Monday

By COMMENTATOR STAFF

*Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on May 2.*

The Beren Campus student body voted in the Spring 2019 Beren Campus undergraduate student government elections on Thursday, May 2. There were multiple changes made to the composition of the student councils for this election. The positions of Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) Vice President for Programming and Torah Activities Council (TAC) Vice President of Chesed were introduced for the first time, while the SCWSC and TAC Treasurer positions were eliminated. Additionally, the Public Relations Secretary positions for SCWSC and TAC were renamed the Vice President of Public Relations for SCWSC and TAC, respectively.

According to the Canvassing Committee, “due to a lack of clarity in campaign policy, a new election will be administered for SCWSC president this Monday.” As of the time of publication, The Commentator has yet to learn details regarding the referenced policy.

Listed below are the results of the election.
Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC)
SCWSC President: To Be Determined SCWSC Vice President of Academic Affairs: Shira Schneider SCWSC Vice President of Clubs: Elka Wiesenber SCWSC Vice President of Programming: Chaya Green SCWSC Vice President of Public Relations: Melissa Goldstein
Sy Syms School of Business Student Council (SYMSSC)
SYMSSC President: Miriam Schloss SYMSSC Vice President: Shaiel Soleimani
Torah Activities Council (TAC)
TAC President: Bella Adler TAC Vice President of Chessed: Atara Levine TAC Vice President of Shabbat: Ariella Etshalom TAC Vice President of Speakers: Orit Reiter TAC Vice President for Public Relations: Nina Siegel
Class Boards
Senior Class President: Elianna Sharvit Senior Class Vice President: Yael Feder
Junior Class President: Tehila Azar Junior Class Vice President: Nechama Levie
Sophomore Class President: Sarah Serfaty Sophomore Class Vice President: Alex Volchek



## From the Sy Syms President's Desk

# Looking Backward and Forward

By **BRANDON EMALFARB**

As we are completing another successful year of college, it is important to reflect and celebrate all of our accomplishments. As students of the Sy Syms School of Business, we have much to be proud of and a lot to look forward to.

Our clubs have hosted many engaging and incredible events on campus this year, and it was such a pleasure coordinating with all of our club-heads to produce

our school and incorporate new and exciting programs into our curriculum. This year, Dr. Maria Blekher started the first Innovation Lab at Yeshiva University. The YU Innovation Lab incorporates Israeli and local start-ups and allows students to gain hands-on experience with new companies. Additionally, the YU Innovation Lab helps foster our special relationship with Israel, while staying true to the values and core beliefs of the Sy Syms School of Business and Yeshiva University as a whole.

A recent addition to the Sy Syms

and mentor to many students and his leadership is, and always will be, much appreciated.

As part of the Sy Syms School of Business community we have so much to celebrate and be grateful for, so I invite you all to join me at the Sy Syms School of Business Annual Awards Gala Dinner on May 12. We will be celebrating all of the exciting endeavors and successes of our business school, while also honoring students and faculty. I am proud to announce that Professors Robert Greenberg and Francine Mellors-Rothenstein will be receiving Professor of the Year and Adjunct of the Year awards, respectively. I encourage everyone to join me in honoring these incredible professors, along with the student awardees. It will be an evening to remember filled with wonderful company and amazing food. I look forward to seeing you there and celebrating the Sy Syms School of Business with all of you.

Sincerely,  
Brandon Emalfarb

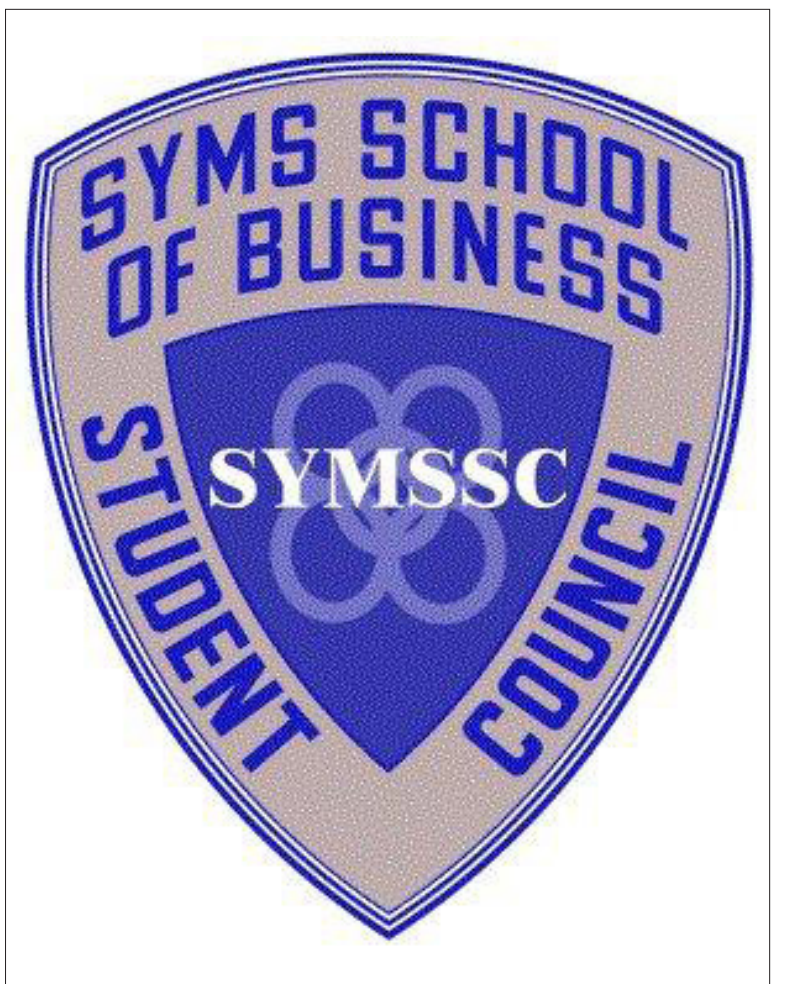
President, Sy Syms School of  
Business Student Council

*As students of the Sy Syms School of Business, we have much to be proud of and a lot to look forward to.*

educational and exciting events throughout the year. Business professionals, executives and even sports players have come to speak to our students this year, in order to expose them to different areas within the business world. I could not thank all of our club-heads enough, who have worked tirelessly on behalf of the student body.

The Sy Syms administration has constantly worked to enhance

School of Business is Dr. Noam Wasserman, who has been appointed dean, starting in May. I urge you all to introduce yourselves and get to know him. As we welcome Dr. Wasserman to our school, it is also important to thank Dean Michael Strauss, who has acted as the interim dean for the past several years, for all of his hard work and loyalty to our school. Dean Strauss has been a friend



Sy Syms School of Business Student  
Council Logo

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## Daydreaming

By **ELLIE PARKER**

There are few commonalities all people share; sleep is one of them. At the end of every day, be it man, woman or child, each and every person surrenders to the call of the moon. While the time one spends asleep varies, resting the mind is a necessity no one can fight. So much so that we are internally wired to adhere to a specific sleep cycle.

Sleep is a funny thing. As humans, we exhibit boundless control over the world. We believe that we are smarter, better and more powerful than any other creature that inhabits the Earth. But, once the sun sets and the day ends, we are shown that some things, like the resting of our minds, are beyond our power.

To make the point even stronger, sleep not only rids us of our physical control, but it removes some mental power as well. When our eyes close, our subconscious runs wild and allows for thoughts and feelings to flow in and out undisturbed. While our conscious, daytime mind fixates on work and practicalities, a rested mind jumps from thought to thought in no apparent order. Crazier still is the idea of dreams.

In a world ruled by science and discipline, it is rare to find an unexplained phenomenon. However, scientists have yet to find a rationale behind dreaming. The unpredictability and presence of dreams is a mystery to us all. And yet, it is a mystery that we all share and partake in. Dreams are a universal unknown, uniting all dreamers in their existence and variance.

Sleep is not only an inevitable, end-of-the-day occurrence. It is pivotal to one's health. Studies show the dramatic effects sleep deprivation has on the mind and the

body, so much so that too little sleep has the power to inhibit organ function. Adding to our false notion of control is the fact that no matter how advanced we become, there is no substitute for sleep. We have found replacements for food, drink, bacteria and even limbs, but sleep is a constant.

Sleep keeps us centered and grounded. Without it, human beings would have no reason to slow down. Sleep reminds us that a day is only 24 hours and the potential

within that period is contained and finite. It represents the cyclical nature of life, from conscious living to nonconscious death.

It boggles the mind to contemplate how much could be accomplished if sleep were optional. Considering that our allotted time in this world is naturally limited, giving half of it to the night is a difficult thing to do. But when one examines how we spend our waking hours, the idea is even more troubling.

I often sit in class daydreaming about

travel. If I could be anywhere in the world, I would want to be anywhere in the world. I think about the adventures I could experience if I broke convention. And yet, here I sit, in New York City at a desk for six hours a day, ignoring this deep desire. In a strange way, the dream world keeps us grounded. It allows us to operate a life solely based off our inspirations and aspirations. Maybe that's why we dream. To actualize the life we can't live while we're awake.

*Sleep reminds us that a day is only 24 hours and the potential within that period is contained and finite.*

The repetitive nature of the day mirrors the predictable nature of our life. The morning, our youth, brings with it light and potential. Sunrise elicits a sense of newfound opportunity and time. As the day ticks by, we fall prey to the typical-allowing ourselves to play it safe, following the motions set in place by years of the same. We count the minutes until we can slip into the realm of the unconventional. We crave something different, but we continue with the unchanging.

This continuation stems from a sense of fear. We are more comfortable in a business-like world, imitating others' use of the day. We are scared of the unknown. But what is more unknown than sleep? And simultaneously, what is more humdrum? Sleep represents the ultimate dichotomy, unifying our thirst for the uncharted with our wish to remain realistic.





## Reflections on Yad Samuel Belkin

By **DONIEL WEINREICH**

I remember the first time I visited the Yad Samuel Belkin. It was during my first days at Yeshiva College. There was a library session during orientation and I arrived a bit early. I had gone to high school on the Wilf Campus, and was therefore very familiar with most of it, but I never spent significant time in the university library. So when I arrived on the second floor of the library, which had only recently been renovated, the existence of a tiny museum in an alcove next to the entrance took me by surprise. Ever the lover of museums, I made a beeline toward it and spent my spare ten to fifteen minutes there.

I've visited the Yad Belkin many times since, especially this year as my interest in YU history has grown. Nearly every time I exit the library through the second floor, I'm drawn in on my way out. I can't resist the lure; I must spend a few minutes there. Though everyone else seems immune to its appeal, I am always there alone. I don't think I've ever even seen anyone else enter. Nearly everyone passes it by without so much as a glance.

The space itself is quite small — about the size of a Wilf dorm room. It's immediately distinguished from the rest of the library by its granite floors and columns. The primary feature, on an elevated platform, is a glass-encased series of black-and-white photos with explanatory captions and a handful of items along the back wall. Other than that, there are two more displays. On the left wall is a tapestry and a trophy of a lamp once given to Dr. Belkin. The right wall, at the end of the exhibit, has a portrait of Dr. Belkin and a medal given to him upon his retiring as president. In the middle of the space are the two barren pits in the granite, one covered in grime, and the other containing a

shallow layer of what seem to be dirt, rocks and woodchips.

Rumors, videos and newspaper archives indicate the space was once far grander, including plants, a fountain and an audiovisual presentation. None of these items remain; all that is left are the dirty hollow pits that once housed the former two. The old rundown

I found out about an old volume containing it that the YU library purportedly had in storage, but upon requesting it, it could not be found and was declared missing. One of Dr. Belkin's seminal works could not even be found in his own institution's library!

In any case, the four dimensions are "The world in which we are born," "The people

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*Belkin's very roots drew on the synthesis between Torah and culture — a value upon which Yeshiva University is built.*

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vibe is almost immediately felt upon entry. It even smells like history; the space has a smell I might otherwise associate with an attic or an old decaying library book. Several light bulbs have been burnt out for longer than memory. And the items in the display are coated in thick dust and cobwebs; there's even a large dead fly.

The space was dedicated in 1979 in commemoration of Dr. Samuel Belkin, the second president of Yeshiva University, who had died three years earlier. In his 33 years in that role, Dr. Belkin took what was a small religious college and built it up into a major university. His tenure oversaw the addition of a women's undergraduate college, more undergraduate programs for men and many graduate schools, including highly regarded medical and law schools. The exhibit tells his story.

The exhibit is framed according to the "Four Dimensions of Higher Education," an essay by Dr. Belkin which the exhibit identifies as "a statement of educational philosophy and purpose, [which] has been widely reprinted and is required reading in many colleges." Despite, this description, I was unable to find the essay online. Eventually,

among whom we are born," "The study of man himself" and "The moral and spiritual purpose of life." The exhibit is divided into four sections accordingly, each beginning with the relevant quote from Belkin's essay and excerpts from an identically named short biographical appreciation of Belkin in honor of his 25th anniversary as president.

The first brief section of the exhibit is "The World in Which We Are Born." This section emphasizes Belkin's personal origins but also touches on the origins of Yeshiva University itself and how both shaped Dr. Belkin. Dr. Belkin was born in Poland in 1911 and didn't come to America until 18 years later, already a rabbi. He had no familiarity with English when he arrived but would earn his doctorate — focusing on Philo Judaeus — in just six years. He then became a Greek professor at Yeshiva College and a Talmud instructor in the Yeshiva. Eight years later he would become its second president.

The exhibit draws attention to the town Belkin was born in, Swislicz. It features a picture of the local theater troupe and another of the dedication of a Hebrew school. Belkin's very roots drew on the synthesis between Torah and culture — a value upon

which Yeshiva University is built. It features Belkin's father, who the exhibit repeatedly refers to as Belkin's first teacher, emphasizing his educational roots. But Belkin's father was killed in a pogrom on suspicion of being a communist. Which leads to the next point this section emphasizes: the flight of Jews from Europe.

To understand Yeshiva University, you must understand the historical context in which it emerged. The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth saw mass migration of Jews from Europe to America. While Europe was home to many yeshivas that emerged over the nineteenth century, none were found in America; the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary was the first. Later, due to student demands and the need of the rabbinate in America to meet a highly assimilated laity, RIETS hired Dr. Bernard Revel, who went on in 1928 to found Yeshiva College. Revel's pioneering vision was of a harmonious synthesis of faith and scholarship, of Torah and culture, where students could learn and grow holistically. This philosophy would later come to be known as *Torah Umadda*.

Thus, it's not just that Belkin fled Europe in the early twentieth century. It was this mass migration phenomenon that made the existence of Yeshiva University both possible and necessary. At the time, it was people in similar circumstances to Dr. Belkin whom the institution served.

The next part of the museum is framed as "The people with whom we live." This brief section focuses on the origin story of Yeshiva University itself, as well as Belkin's arrival to America. It features photos of traditional immigrant sites such as Ellis Island and

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Yad Samuel Belkin



YAD BELKIN,  
continued from Page 7

the Statue of Liberty. It also shows Belkin's certificate of naturalization, as well as some young portraits of him. Beside these is a large portrait of Dr. Bernard Revel, the founder of Yeshiva College, who infused the institution with purpose. Looking upon Dr. Revel always fills me with reverence and awe; his vision guides my experience at YU, and I try my utmost to be cognizant of it. Below this is a famous picture of many people — most holding Torah scrolls — in front of the RIETS building on the lower east side as they abandon it for their new domed edifice in Washington Heights. In the picture, I recognize several notable figures such as Dr. Revel, Rabbi Moshe Margolies and Harry Fischel.

The history of Yeshiva University is not just the history of the college I happen to go

shown of the groundbreaking for the Belfer Graduate School and a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Mendel Gottesman Library. There's even a picture of Dr. Belkin on CBS.

What's stunning in this section is the number of prominent figures from outside YU shown and mentioned. Among them are Albert Einstein, President John F. Kennedy, President Lyndon B. Johnson, First Lady and U.S. delegate to the UN Eleanor Roosevelt, Supreme Court Justice Harlan Stone, Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Harry Belafonte, Norman Rockwell as well as many others. Notably missing among the figures are rabbis or religious figures who were featured prominently in the previous sections. The only exceptions are mention of the Chief Rabbi of Vilna, who received an honorary degree at Belkin's inauguration, and a picture of Belkin awarding a doctorate to Rabbi Norman Lamm, his future successor as president.

*Belkin stands straight in his academic regalia, clutching his robe and a book. The caption emphasizes Belkin's status as an "unforgettable educator," one with dedication, vision, and commitment to values and humanity.*

to. YU is at the center of a much larger story: the story of American Modern Orthodoxy. In turn, many of the goings on in Modern Orthodoxy at large are macrocosmic of the developments in the university. Because of the university's nature at the center of a small, close-knit religious community, it has the potential to foster an unparalleled attachment. Many of my community members and nearly all of my rabbis went to YU; many of the most looked up to religious figures of the last generation were affiliated with YU. The philosophy that drives my life has its origins in YU. The story of YU is not just the story of a college; it's the story of a community and religious movement. It's the story of **my** community and religious movement. YU's story doesn't just tell me about YU; it tells me about myself.

Below the pictures are a few personal effects of Dr. Belkin including his tefillin and a very well worn — the pages are tattered and the binding nearly snapped in two — *siddur*, emphasizing his religious devotion. But most interesting is Dr. Belkin's key from the Phi Beta Kappa honors society at Brown University, where he received his doctorate. The key is attached to a pocket watch that the exhibit says was gifted to him by the RIETS Rabbinic Alumni. The fob literally intertwines the religious and academic traditions, physically manifesting the institution's philosophy. This fob can be seen adorning Dr. Belkin in several of the pictures.

The third and longest section is framed by "The study of man himself." Most of this section strongly emphasize Belkin's building up of the university. Among its pictures are many groundbreakings and notable figures. Special attention is given to the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, which is shown even in planning stages, but pictures are also

The figures can be fairly neatly divided into three categories: political, cultural and scientific. Several messages are conveyed by their inclusion as well as the absence of rabbis. This segment primarily serves to convey Yeshiva University's legitimacy as a serious academic institution and cultural force in the American scene. Hence, religious figures are unnecessary. The political figures, especially ones as prominent as presidents, governors and senators, emphasize the American character of Yeshiva, and solidify it as a major institution in the country. The artists and scientists present at commemorative events bespeak dominance over the gamut of secular disciplines and embeddedness within the broader culture. Not only is Yeshiva a major player in the world of Torah and a pioneer in the synthesis of *Torah Umadda*, but it also excels at *madda qua madda*.

Despite the absence of religious leaders, it is apparent that many of the figures — Albert Einstein, Isaac Wolfson, Andre Lwoff, Senator Jacob Javits, Edward Robinson, Zero Mostel, Governor Abraham Ribicoff, Mayor Abraham Beame, David Sarnoff, Harry Wolfson — are Jewish. This, on the one hand, speaks to the Jewish character at the core of the institution, even when engaging in secular pursuits, but also, more practically speaking, indicates an institution with connections to all types of Jews, not merely the religiously practicing or *yeshiva*-oriented.

The sorts of events on display here speak to similar themes as the figures. They are nearly all groundbreakings, commencements, commemorations, convocations and inaugurations, and feature the bestowing of honorary degrees. All of these are ceremonies with extreme pomp and formality. They are also decidedly not things one would

find in a traditional European *yeshiva*. This once again underscores Yeshiva's place as a prestigious American academic institution, engaging in the traditions belonging to them.

Below this segment are some more artifacts. However, among them are some with no explanation. I suspect there once were captions, but they've since been lost to time. One item does have a plaque, but it's covered in too thick a layer of dust to enable its reading.

The other element of this section emphasizes Belkin's relationship with students. One picture features an "impromptu sidewalk session" of Belkin interacting with a hoard of students. The "impromptu" implies comfort and positive rapport with the student body, and the label of "sidewalk session" implies this wasn't just a singular occurrence. Indeed, the biographical appreciation the exhibit draws from confirms this impression. There's also a picture of students carrying a Torah scroll dedicated to Belkin. The very same Torah scroll is also featured in the display. The caption to the photo reads: "During the nation's campus rebellion of the 60s, a small drama unfolded at Yeshiva University. The students expressed confidence in and devotion to President Belkin by presenting him with a Torah. A student leader carries the sacred scroll." The exhibit implies students had unanimous confidence in Dr. Belkin in contrast to most universities at the time. However, Commentator archives tell a little bit of a different story.

According to The Commentator archives, the late sixties saw increasing tension between the Yeshiva College Student Council (YCSC) and the administration over a variety of issues. Student Council even considered striking at a meeting attended by over 500 students. These tensions eventually culminated in the announcement of a University Senate that would include students, faculty and administrators. However, as October of the next academic year came to a close, this plan had not yet come to fruition. It is within this context that the president of the student council organized the convocation for Dr. Belkin and presented him with the Torah scroll. This was not without controversy though. In the following issue of The Commentator, the YCSC president came under attack in an editorial for the convocation. The editorial claimed, among other things, that the ceremony was planned unilaterally without broad student input or agreement and that only 40% of students attended. Collective memory often supersedes history; unpleasant details can be glossed over in favor of the preferred narrative.

The final section of the display is framed by "The moral and spiritual purpose of life." Here the focus turns away from Yeshiva University and falls back onto Dr. Belkin personally. What drove him? The emphasis here is on his family and academic work. Half the pictures in the section are devoted to Philo of Alexandria, Belkin's primary academic focus. There is also a picture of Belkin studying Talmud — surely a central component of his life. The rest is devoted to his family. Pictures are shown of his wife

and children and of him meeting his sister and her children upon coming to America. The final picture is of Belkin embracing his granddaughter, conveying continuity with future generations.

Spending time in this space always makes me nostalgic for a past I never experienced. If only YU still had the prestige conveyed in these photos. If only it even deserved it. If only YU was led by brilliant scholars and visionaries. If only YU united American Jewry. If only YU cared about its own story. It's impossible to imagine world-renowned scholars and actors spending time at YU today, let alone presidents. The exhibit gives the most attention to the Albert Einstein School of Medicine, one of Belkin's crowning achievements, but the school is now totally unaffiliated with YU. Belkin's legacy was sold away.

One also can't help but feel alone. The memorial is located on the second floor of the library, which is one of the more populated and social floors. There are so many YU students there, all talking or studying, but none seem to care about our history or what it means to be a YU student. The thoughtful stewards of our history are drowned out by the indifferent masses.

The indifference towards the space is palpable. Nobody even glances at it, not even when there's some student who dragged a library chair into it and is typing vociferously while wheeling through the exhibit. The exhibit itself is in disrepair. The dust looks as if it has built up for over a decade. While the rest of the library received fancy renovations over the past few years, the Yad Belkin was gutted of its former aesthetic amenities. I even fear they might one day try to eliminate it completely.

Though I must wonder to what extent my nostalgia is justified. Given all the time I've spent rummaging through newspaper archives, I'm keenly aware that most of my grievances with the institution far predate me. Was it ever any better? Or have I overlooked that which doesn't suit my narrative?

On the right-hand wall that you come to at the end of the display case, there is a painted portrait of Dr. Belkin. Belkin stands straight in his academic regalia, clutching his robe and a book. The caption emphasizes Belkin's status as an "unforgettable educator," one with dedication, vision and commitment to values and humanity. The glass in front of the portrait is very reflective; it's difficult to fully take in the painting without your reflection obfuscating it.

Reflections feature in several places in the Yad Belkin. The wall between it and the library proper is fully mirrored. The reflection begs you to see yourself within the YU story and in Belkin's life.

However, when I look up from the portrait, I discover the cause of the reflection. The lightbulb above this space in front of the portrait is burnt out, rendering it darker and the glass reflective. Indeed, the light over Samuel Belkin has burnt out.



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*RECYCLING,  
continued from Front Page*

Sanitation. But when housekeeping employees run out of clear blue bags, they simply line recycling bins with the black garbage bags they have on hand. Those black bags are then thrown into piles with other black garbage bags, and will eventually make their way to the trash compactor with all other non-recyclable waste.

Although David Pianko, Energy Manager at YU, denied that the color of the bag had any impact on whether or not the waste in a recycling bin would be recycled, Randy Apfelbaum, Chief Facilities & Administrative Officer at YU, confirmed that “black bags will not be processed by the Department of Sanitation as recyclables and should not be used in the dedicated recycle bins.”

This issue affects many recycling bins throughout the Wilf Campus, as a cursory examination of recycling bins throughout the campus confirmed. Approximately two out of five recycling bins on all the floors of Furst Hall, Morgenstern and Rubin Residence Halls, the Glueck Center for Jewish Study and the Gottesman Library had black bags in them.

Apfelbaum acknowledged this issue, stating, “We can and will do a better job of enforcing clear plastic bag use with our housekeeping staff.”

Furthermore, even recyclables like bottles and cans that are thrown in blue bags will not necessarily make their way to the recycling storage area. When a housekeeping staff member notices that a recycling bag contains a considerable amount of refuse mixed in with the recyclable materials, the entire bag will be treated as non-recyclable refuse. Recyclable materials that might be mixed in will end up in the trash compactor along with all other refuse.

According to YU’s Office of Housekeeping, this occurs frequently, since students often throw non-recyclable garbage into recycling bins. Several housekeeping staff members commented that before removing blue recycling bags from their bins, they look inside to see what’s in the bag. If the bag is mostly filled with non-recyclable materials, everything inside will be considered refuse and

will be mixed in with other trash bags. One staff member noted that in his experience, recycling bins at YU are almost always filled with non-recyclable materials.

Non-recyclables that make their way into recycling bins severely limit the amount of waste YU can recycle, but the reverse is also an issue. One housekeeping staff member estimated that YU recycles about 20% of what they could due to students throwing recyclable waste into regular trash bins instead of the recycling bins.

Per NYC guidelines, recycling areas in schools should be set up “wherever recycling and trash is commonly discarded.” According to the guidelines, every recycling bin should be labeled to clarify what waste

in the basement of Belfer Hall, which is far from enough space to hold a week’s worth of cardboard from the kitchen alone — ignoring all other recycling from other buildings in the university. Thus, Dining Services has been forced to throw most of their recycling into the trash compactor with other refuse.

Furthermore, despite the insistence of multiple administration members that Yeshiva University recycles, the trash compactor in the basement of Belfer Hall regularly contains clear blue bags filled with shredded paper, blue bags filled with bottles and cans, and heaps of cardboard mixed together with the black refuse bags. Although much of the material in the compactor is recyclable, it will all be picked up by the

refuse before the trash is collected. According to the NYC Department of Sanitation, these laws apply to private universities like Yeshiva University just as they do to businesses and residences throughout New York City. There is no exemption for schools from laws requiring recycling.

Apfelbaum delineated plans to improve the recycling situation around the university by making recycling guidelines more transparent and encouraging student awareness and participation. “We are constantly working on improvements in our operations,” said Apfelbaum. “We plan on putting out more signage at the recycling areas and will put out a newsletter prior to the start of the school year.”

He particularly stressed the importance of student awareness and cooperation, stating, “Both University Operations and the students need to partner in educating the university community in proper recycling technique ... It is the obligation of every person in the university to make sure that they dispose of their waste in the proper receptacles.”

Nonetheless, Apfelbaum acknowledged that there is more work to be done on the university’s end to make sure recycling at YU works as it should. “In the near future, larger recycling dumpsters will be used and a larger area will be created for storage of recyclables in the compactor area of Belfer Hall,” he said.

Dina Stein (SCW ‘19), one of the presidents of the Environmental Club at YU, was not fully satisfied with the situation of recycling at YU. “Although some floors on the uptown campus have recycling bins, there should be more of a presence on campus,” she explained. “Every single floor should provide students and faculty with the opportunity to recycle.”

The problems with recycling at YU are concerning, and Apfelbaum confirmed that he is aware more needs to be done to improve the state of recycling at YU. “We can always do a better job of educating students, faculty and staff — and our operations personnel — as to what can and can’t be recycled.”

*The Commentator found that six floors in different buildings on the Wilf Campus, including four floors in Glueck, had no recycling bins in public areas or hallways.*

belongs in each bin. The Commentator found that six floors in different buildings on the Wilf Campus, including four floors in Glueck, had no recycling bins in public areas or hallways.

According to Apfelbaum, this occurs when cleaning staff, students and faculty move bins around. He added that YU has ordered additional bins to replace those that have gone missing.

Dining Services on the Wilf Campus do not have their recycling or refuse picked up by YU’s housekeeping staff. Instead, they are responsible for disposing of their own recyclable and non-recyclable waste. For most of this year, the large quantities of recyclable cardboard produced by them have been thrown into the trash compactor instead of being picked up by the Department of Sanitation with the other recyclables. A machine in the loading dock area, once used to crush cardboard for storage before being recycled, had laid unused for months.

According to Dining Services, the large quantity of cardboard waste that the kitchen produces made it effectively impossible to recycle most of it. The storage space for all of YU’s recyclable waste consists of a few bins

Department of Sanitation and treated as refuse.

According to Apfelbaum, “Often the recycle bins in the trash compactor area are full and so recyclables are thrown in the compactor so that they don’t accumulate.” Acknowledging that “sometimes mistakes are made,” he added that the university had “ordered larger recycle dumpsters to reduce or eliminate the times when this happens.”

The number of serious issues in the execution of YU’s recycling program may be explained in part by how YU views its responsibility to recycle. Apfelbaum, referring to the recycling program on the Wilf Campus as a “voluntary” program, stated, “New York City only requires recycling in commercial businesses and residential dwellings. Schools are exempt from the strict requirement but are encouraged to participate.” When asked to clarify, Apfelbaum explained, “Our policy and practice is to endeavor to comply [with the Department of Sanitation’s guidelines for recycling] ... We don’t violate the law if we at times neglect to separate the trash.”

New York City law requires that commercial, residential and all other institutional buildings separate recycling bags from other



The black bags which sometimes line recycling bins at YU often never end up being recycled.





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FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

*Editor's Note: Just over fifty years ago, Yeshiva University was confronted with student pushback following its response to Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination. Some of the articles related to that saga are reprinted here.*

## From the Archives (May 2, 1968; Volume 33 Issue 12) — In My Opinion: A Time To Mourn

By JOSEPH KAPLAN

Yeshiva University is unique, our Public Relations department proclaims. Yeshiva College is unique, our catalogue states. Yeshiva policy is unique, our administrators pontificate. Indeed, all are correct, and this uniqueness has been shown in many areas. And we continue to be unique. A few weeks ago, while a great part of the nation was mourning the assassination of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Yeshiva College was the only college in New York City to have classes on Sunday, the national day of mourning and Tuesday, the day of Rev. King's funeral. Oh yes, we are unique. Yet I cannot help feeling that in this respect we should be ashamed of our uniqueness, not proud of it.

Of course, Dr. King's passing did not go unmentioned. A notice in Furst Hall stating "non-violence does not mean non-learning" proclaimed to one and all that by continuing in our studies on that day of sorrow we were memorializing Dr. King in our own way. A nice thought; a touching idea. But in practice, how many classes were dedicated to the memory of Dr. King? A Rabbi Rackman who spoke about Dr. King during his lecture and a Dr. Pleskin who showed a film on Rev. King—but how many more? How many

*rebbeim* spoke not about Dr. King but rather what he stood for—man's responsibility to his fellow man? Which teachers discussed civil rights? Who stressed the work still left to be done? The notice in Furst Hall was neither indicative nor important; neither was the black bordered ad in *The New York Times*. It is the answers to these questions that show the true attitude, and the answers are all too clear.

Other colleges and universities acted

colleges for Negro students and pledges were made to double minority group enrollment in 1969. These were some of the positive actions taken; actions, not mere lip service paid in notices and ads.

The students are not blameless either—in fact, they are perhaps more guilty. The YCSC Reception held that Sunday should have been either postponed or cancelled. Money might have been lost, a few students might have been angered, several plans might have been

another symptom of a far larger malady. For all of Yeshiva's expansion and accomplishments, it is so concerned with itself that its response (or non-response) to the world around it is quite poor. Its attitude towards Israel, Public Relations notwithstanding, is apathetic, as was shown in the Editor's column a few issues back. The Jewish community, indebted as it might be towards YU, has not received nearly as much from Yeshiva as it should, especially in the realm of Jewish education and scholarship. Concern with Israel is relegated to the graduate schools, as was pointed out by Rabbi Greenberg at the *Yom Iyyun* symposium. Contemporary problems, both Jewish and other, in ethics and morals have yet to be studied in depth within our four walls. It is not surprising Yeshiva acted the way it did after Dr. King's murder. It fit right into the pattern.

It is not too late to change this pattern. What is needed is the realization that Yeshiva cannot exist any longer in its cloistered atmosphere. Concern with itself is important, but not enough. It must open its doors, its mind and its soul to what is happening. Then it will be able to take its proper place in the academic community, take the reins of leadership of the Jewish community and become a force in the national world community.

*"Yeshiva's insensitivity to Dr. King's death is not the disease—it is merely another symptom of a far larger malady."*

—  
Joseph Kaplan

differently. Memorial services sponsored either by students or administrations were held on Friday or Monday and, in general, they were well attended. Classes were not held on Tuesday in show of proper respect. (Let me emphasize, that when I decry the non-cancellation of classes in YC, I refer to college classes and not those in the religious divisions. The learning of Torah can truly serve as a memorial to one who has died, *if it is dedicated to his memory*.) *Time* reported that scholarship funds were set up in many

disrupted, but at least the student body would not have been shamed. YCSC represents the student body and this reception, held when it was, offended a substantial part of that student body. It is interesting (and saddening) to note that while the High School realized this and postponed its Senior play, our student leaders did not. I like to feel proud that I am a part of the Yeshiva College student body. I usually do. That Sunday I could not and did not. And yet, Yeshiva's insensitivity to Dr. King's death is not the disease—it is merely

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Yagoda Commons

**Wilf Campus**  
Monday, May 13  
11 a.m.–2 p.m.  
Heights Lounge

**Commencement is Thursday  
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FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

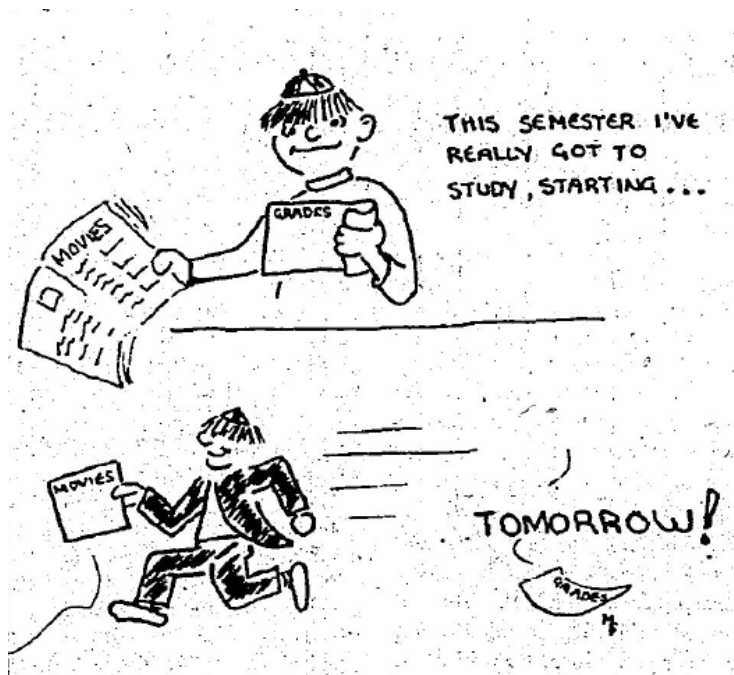
## From the Archives (May 2, 1968; Volume 33 Issue 12) — From The Editor's Desk: Infamous Isolation

By GARY SCHIFF  
(Commentator EIC 1967-68)

The platitudes had been offered by the President's office—and such sentiments were necessary and proper—and the time was right for a meaningful tribute to the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King. Yet, not only was no such ceremony forthcoming, but the administration showed its insensitivity

to events on the American scene by allowing college classes to proceed as usual, both on the national day of mourning and on the afternoon of Dr. King's funeral. When will those in charge learn that a public-relations type, black-bordered box in The New York Times does not free the fifth-floor office from the responsibility of providing a vehicle for the expression of genuine student sentiment?

### Flashbacks



"THIS SEMESTER I'VE REALLY  
GOT TO STUDY, STARTING..."  
"TOMORROW!"

February 16, 1967; Volume 32 Issue 8

## From the Archives (May 23, 1968; Volume 33 Issue 13) — Letter to the Editor: Objection!

By DAVID SHATZ

To the Editor:

Joseph Kaplan's observations regarding the University's decision to hold classes on the national day of mourning for Dr. King and on the day of his funeral ("A Time to Mourn," *The Commentator*, May 2, 1968), leave me very much bewildered as to Mr. Kaplan's position. Equally ambiguous, but more disturbing in tone, is *The Commentator* editorial entitled "Infamous Isolation."

Let me make myself perfectly clear. I concur with Mr. Kaplan's censure of Student Council for not cancelling the Student Council Reception. However, the question of cancelling classes is more complex than this, and there is at least room to believe that a man who stood for education and enlightenment can best be memorialized through a day of education and enlightenment.

Regarding the University's decision, Mr. Kaplan writes: "A notice in Furst Hall ... proclaimed to one and all that by continuing in our studies we were memorializing Dr. King in our own way. A nice thought, a touching idea." It is not yet clear whether Mr. Kaplan is being serious or sarcastic. Judging from the sentence beginning "But in practice," he is deploring not the University's decision, but the failure of certain teachers to emulate Dr. Rackman and Dr. Pleskin by implementing that decision.

Yet in the very next paragraph, Mr. Kaplan writes "when I decry the non-cancellation of classes at YC...." Now this clearly contradicts his previous remarks. Is Mr. Kaplan now saying that Dr. Rackman showed disrespect by not staying home?

Let us suppose, therefore, that what Mr. Kaplan *meant* to say was that the University should have held mass lectures for the entire student body. This is a fine suggestion, and here we may admit an administrative oversight. But if this is Mr. Kaplan's main point, why did he not mention it? Nevertheless, even granting that these mass lectures are what Mr. Kaplan and *The Commentator* had in mind, what does that have to do with the holding of regular classes? It appears to me that by holding a "ceremony" and *in addition* holding regular classes in Dr. King's memory, we would be demonstrating that we can memorialize Dr. King not merely in a hastily improvised ceremony, but even in our regular classes! Besides, I cannot help feeling that by the same logic by which *The Commentator* and Mr. Kaplan impugn the sincerity of the ad in the *New York Times*, *The Commentator* would have dismissed even these "ceremonies," if held, as a Public Relations gimmick.

*The Commentator* editorial is equally ambiguous. It maintains that "the Administration showed its insensitivity to events on the American scene by allowing college classes to proceed as usual." That phrase "as usual"

may mean either that college classes should not have gone on at all, or that they should not have gone on "as usual"—i.e. Without special class lectures dedicated to Dr. King. If the former is meant, i.e. if the editorial advocates closing classes altogether, its tone is nevertheless overly harsh and intolerant, as I have pointed out that one may be completely "sensitive to events on the American scene" and yet believe that classes should have been held. And if the latter is meant, i.e. that special classroom discussions should have been held, why blame the administration? Is this not the fault of the faculty?

Let me state that I share at least some of *The Commentator's* general skepticism of the past few years towards the faculty and administration. But one need not endorse the opinion expressed in the Furst Hall notice to realize that, in this case, those who formulated the University policy may very well have acted with greater sincerity and sensitivity than either Mr. Kaplan or *The Commentator* is willing to acknowledge. Both, therefore, should have exercised greater temperance in wording their objections.

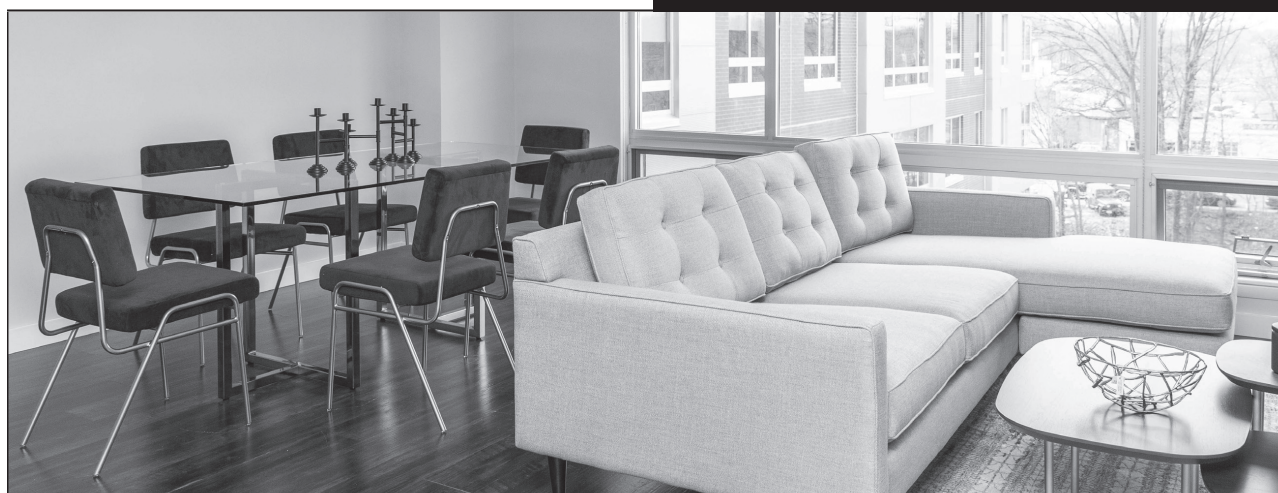
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# Causes and Cathedrals

By SHAYNA HERSZAGE

Immediately after the fire, French President Emmanuel Macron began making calls for donations to help with the cost of rebuilding the Notre Dame. Within a day of the fire, nearly \$1 billion were raised in funds, primarily from French billionaires.

Backlash arose soon after the fundraising began. Professional golfer Thomas Pieters tweeted, “Kids are starving to death in this world, and the EU wants us to donate to rebuild a building. I don’t understand.” While some supported the raising of funds, others were irritated that these funds were going to the rebuilding of the Notre Dame cathedral while other tragedies go unfixed.

Still, the Notre Dame cathedral is something familiar. Even the many who have never gone on a vacation to Paris have read or seen “The Hunchback of Notre Dame,” or have at least heard of it. It is a part of a long list of international landmarks that have grown familiar and, in a strange sense, it is comforting to know that these landmarks

are constant. No matter what happens in an ever-changing, incredibly messy and unfortunate world, the Statue of Liberty, Notre Dame, the pyramids in Egypt and the like continue to exist.

As a result, I understand a need to rebuild this stability. The world may be a mess, but if the names we have always seen on Pinterest dream-boards and in tour booklets remain in existence, at least something can feel constant.

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*People cannot focus on all the problems in the world all at once.*

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The next reason is admittedly perhaps a more pessimistic perspective of humanity. Problems such as world hunger and dilapidated small-town schools have been in existence far longer than anyone’s angry Twitter, Facebook or Tumblr posts. Meanwhile, wealth, charity and lack of charity have existed just as long, if not longer than, these problems. If people have never banded together to solve these problems in a day before, why believe that Notre Dame

is taking the potential that could easily go to any “more worthy” cause? The ability to fix problems by having the wealthy band together is not a one-time magic wish that can apply to any situation.

Additionally, not every cause can be the center of every person’s attention at all times. When a school receives a large donation, people ask why the soup kitchen did not receive the donation instead. When the soup kitchen receives a large donation, the school

asks the same question. The recipient of donations will always be considered undeserving in comparison to some other cause that is not being attended to at the given moment. However, this is no reason to call a cause undeserving. People cannot focus on all the problems in the world all at once.

The last reason is more from a logistical perspective. Problems such as world hunger and education are not issues isolated from the rest of the world. They exist in part due

to factors such as climate, government decisions and deeply ingrained inequalities in national and international society. Such things cannot be fixed with a big check. The Notre Dame fire, meanwhile, is thus far considered an isolated event — no foul play has been found — so a check and hardworking construction staff may very well be all it takes to solve the problem.

The narrative seemed simple to me at first — rich European families donate their inheritances to build big cathedral instead of solving world hunger. However, I have come to realize that it is more complex. We must consider the emotional connection the world has to familiar landmarks, the mostly unchanging ways of humanity and charity, and the fact that money alone can not solve all of our problems. We must understand that the world is imperfect, and, rather than looking to the wealthy for salvation, we must look to ourselves to change the world where we see fit.



The Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris before the fire

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



# NETFLIX

Netflix has produced numerous romantic comedies in the last year.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

## Netflix's Finely Crafted 'Perfect Date'

By ELI AZIZOLLAHOFF

In a few short months, an actor most known for replacing a former Disney channel star in "The Fosters" skyrocketed into fame and the hearts of girls nationwide.

After the success of Netflix's "The Kissing Booth," the film ushered in a new wave of Netflix rom-coms geared towards teen fans, and Noah Centineo has starred in more than half of them. Noah was the lovable jock in "To All the Boys I've Loved Before," he was the unassuming cute nerd in Sierra Burgess, and he was the ambitious over-achiever in Netflix's most recent hit, "The Perfect Date."

But here's the thing about Noah and the lovable roles he's been playing: He hasn't won girls over just by relying on his classic "tall dark and handsome" aesthetic, no, he's wormed his way in by playing male leads that are sincere, sweet, openly affectionate and emotionally aware (or at least as aware as a lead in a teenage rom-com can be). And what's really won him so many fans? That he seems to really have that sweet sincere personality himself.

As one YouTube Influencer, Edvasian, described him, Noah Centineo is the epitome of a "softboy." Urban Dictionary defines this by saying: "The Softboy will butter a girl up by appealing to her emotions and showing a 'sensitive' side." This term has a very cynical association, in that most use it to describe a guy that is just using this as a ploy to "get with a girl" and then forget her.

But I see softboys in another way. Yes, these softboys appeal to and try to take advantage of the heart (which we can all agree isn't grade A humaning), but despite this, there is the good in this new phenomenon; their popularity shows a shift in large media towards actually understanding what makes a good relationship and representing that to the masses. The reason Noah Centineo and all his "softboy" roles have been so successful is that the movie industry is finally gearing towards the demographic it is pandering to. This is to say, Netflix, the hub for millennials and gen-z-ers to view content, tries to stay up to date on internet culture (like trends, memes and personal advocacy) and what the content the populace of the internet wants. Since (at least a large portion of) the internet is populated by real people, this has unsurprisingly finally led the film industry, headed by Netflix, into realizing that yes, women love

romantic comedies, but also we, like, love and crave healthy emotion-based relationships. Baffling I know.

But here's the thing about rom-coms: They have been mocked and ridiculed for decades because, yes, often they can be pretty cliché and stereotypical, but really, who doesn't love a happy ending and want one of their own?

But why does the happy ending have to be a love story? That's a fair question. Romance isn't the only good thing in life. I would like to pose the theory that so much of the world has such a fixation on it, though, because when things around us get worse and worse, when we are in the eleventh hour, when all hope for the world is gone, seeing the true goodness in another person, seeing and connecting to that humanity, that right there, is hope. Romance stories aren't just about love. Well actually, yes, they are, but they aren't just about romance: They are about hope.

So why is it important for these "softboys" to be taking over as the leading man? Because for so long the representation of the way to get the girl was to be aloof but also to be sure to make the first move. Miscommunication and stupid grudges and holding back the truth have been glorified in movies over and over again since the 80s, the golden age of rom-coms.

By the film industry shifting to have sweet guys as the leading man, to having healthy relationships built on communication at the center of the story, by having leading ladies who aren't dunces to be dragged around by some guy who comes along with a nice smile, we facilitate the representation of healthier people and relationships to be the model for a new generation of consumers.

Yes, movies will always be fantastical and I would never go as far to advocate that these rom-coms are teaching this generation everything they need to know about love and romance. But I also think it can't be overlooked how much self-hate, unhealthy relationships and warped perceptions we had to unlearn because of the representation we saw mixed into these movies.

Hope isn't some jerk who won't call you back. Hope isn't the manic pixie dream girl. Hope isn't kissing in the rain. Hope is love and love is built on genuine connection and best intentions and trying everything you can to be the best person you can be. And *that's* a media model I can get behind.

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# How Dirk Nowitzki Restored My Faith in Sports

By ELIMELEKH PERL

Following professional sports has always been a hobby and a passion of mine. Growing up in Dallas, but with strong New York roots, the walls of my childhood bedroom were plastered with the reds and blues of the Texas Rangers, Dallas Mavericks and New York Giants. Fully invested, I would watch games, track stats and play fantasy. Some of my fondest memories include sweltering summer afternoons at The Ballpark (of blessed memory) and taunting my friends who rooted for the hometown Cowboys after a Big Blue victory.

Recently, however, my enthusiasm for the Great American Sports Machine has diminished.

The last decade has ushered in the era of superteams, max-contracts and forced trades. Take Deflategate, Mike Trout's mega-deal and the Kawhi Leonard saga as just a few examples of drama-filled narratives that dominate headlines. Paychecks, personalities and pomp seem to have grown more important than the game itself. ESPN has become indistinguishable from reality TV, resembling "Celebrity Wife Swap" around the trade deadline and "The Bachelor" during free-agency season. As I got older, I began to ponder the consistency of the values I believe in and my life's component parts; along the way, sports' toxic egotism and self-centric storylines began to taint the naïve obsession of my youth.

This maturity brought with it some frightening perspective on the entertainment industry as a whole, with professional sports accompanying Hollywood in the upper echelon of extravagance and excess. When I was younger, a smashing box-office turnout or a lucrative sports contract represented empty figures, as I could never fully contextualize it with everyday dollars and cents. This changed when I arrived at college a year ago and was confronted for the first time with the daunting prospect of future employment. With it came a greater appreciation of real-world numbers like big-boy salaries. It hit me hard when I realized that even a realistically ambitious annual salary I might earn would be chump change compared to, say, the absurd \$1,193,248 the Mets are still shelling out each year to Bobby Bonilla (who hasn't played since 2001). Or the \$357 million "Avengers: Endgame" raked in over a single weekend. Or the \$14.8 billion of consumer spending in 2019 for the annual six-hour media blitz known as the Super Bowl.

Don't get me wrong, I'm also human, and appreciate the valuable relaxation that commercial entertainment provides. Nevertheless, I'll occasionally catch myself doubting how I can, with good conscience, support the culture and institutions which prioritize leisure to such a ridiculous degree. Imagine the impact a fraction of those billions could have if they were allocated to philanthropic pursuits, scientific advancement and other societal causes.

My unabashed love of sports slowly morphed into a guilty pleasure. I began to grow increasingly detached — I'd still watch the games and check the scores, but whether my team won or lost seemed to matter less. I realized that no matter the outcome of a given game, life moved on. Just a short time ago, the thought of dedicating my precious time to write a sports-related article would seem ridiculous.

But a few weeks ago, as the NBA regular season drew to a close, something happened that pushed aside my jaded disillusionment, bringing the wide-eyed fanatic I had been in high school back to life.

After the Dallas Mavericks' final home

game, forward Dirk Nowitzki confirmed what the basketball world has suspected the whole year — this season would be his last. I'm typically the stoic type, and, especially in light of my recent emotional divestment, rarely find myself moved by the sports world. But, as I watched Dirk swish his last flamingo-esque jumper — equal parts awkward and graceful — I found myself feeling nostalgic and even sad. Because for me, there is no Dallas Mavericks without Dirk Nowitzki.

I was born on June 10, 1998. Only 14 days later, Dirk was drafted 9th overall by the Milwaukee Bucks and promptly traded to the Mavs.

After moving to Dallas in 2003, I reached the age of sports consciousness just in time to witness Dirk's gut-wrenching Finals loss to the Miami Heat in 2006 and his dominant MVP season in 2007. While not yet a dedicated superfan, I began to take notice.

In 2011, I was privileged to witness the Mavericks' magical playoff run. An island of misfit role players fueled by Nowitzki's sheer will, Dirk and Co. plowed through the Western Conference competition. Reaching basketball's biggest stage, they prevailed over Lebron's newly formed Big Three and settled their championship vendetta against the Heat. Dirk, awarded Finals' MVP, delivered to the city of Dallas its long-awaited first NBA title.

My family and I moved to New York in 2014. With their championship roster long since dismantled, I watched from afar as the mediocrity-mired Mavs assembled a new team on an almost annual basis. Each offseason, they would cobble together an awkward collection of players whose tenure in Dallas rarely lasted beyond a year or two. But no matter how different the supporting cast looked from year to year, one constant kept their identity firmly grounded: a blond, gangly German with a sweet jump shot.

In anticipation of his retirement

announcement, the Mavericks' organization thanked Nowitzki with a promotional campaign. Consisting of merchandise and a tribute video, it centered around the numbers 41.21.1: forty-one, representing his jersey number; twenty-one, signifying the years of his illustrious NBA career; and one, highlighting that over those two-plus decades, he played for only a single team.

This campaign and the countless articles responding to the news of his retirement celebrate Dirk's true legacy. They all acknowledge his personal accomplishments as a player and his revolutionary influence on the modern game of basketball. But their praise

while his stature as a leader somehow stood even taller.

It feels strange to put in these terms, but Dirk has been a Maverick for pretty much my entire life. Next year's NBA experience will be my first without his patented fadeaway and his competitive spirit. Reading through the outpouring of thanks his retirement has generated, I find myself among thousands of fans who, at the close of his incredible career, are reflecting on this incredible gift of continuity.

Nowitzki represents what sports can and should be all about. For two decades, Dirk tried his hardest to provide the city

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*Paycheck, personalities and pomp seem to have grown more important than the game itself.*

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and appreciation focus more on Nowitzki as a person and his impact on the city of Dallas. Rarely does an athlete play for over 20 years, and even rarer do they sustain the level of excellence that Nowitzki has over such an extended period. But it is unprecedented for a player to do both for only one team.

From 1998 through 2019, Dirk has been the face and the heart of the Dallas Mavericks. Over that span, he never once considered leaving in pursuit of more rings. He never complained about his teammates, his coaches, or his contract. He has never been the subject of a scandal and is happily married with three children, all born and raised in Dallas. Throughout his career, he hosted numerous charitable fundraisers and youth basketball camps, wholeheartedly offering his goofy persona to the city and his fans. For 21 years, Dirk has been cementing his legacy not only as a basketball legend but as an upstanding and generous Dallas citizen. He found a way to be humbler than his seven-foot frame might suggest, all

of Dallas and its residents with a culture of basketball excellence and a franchise that the city could rally around. Day in, day out, game in, game out, and year in, year out, Dirk proved that sports are more than a conduit for self-aggrandizement, and could unify a city under a common identity. His final moments as a Dallas Maverick, and the genuine, well-deserved love that NBA fans of all allegiances showered upon him, demonstrate the far-reaching impact of such hard-working, selfless commitment. Athletes and fans alike would be wise to take notice of Dirk Nowitzki's incredible legacy and strive to live up to his example of tireless, unselfish dedication and deep communal loyalty.

So thank you, Dirk. Thank you for showing me, and the countless others you have inspired since the previous century, that not all professional athletes are lost to consumerism, vanity and self-importance. Thank you for proving that sports still have significant, real-world meaning and value left to offer.



Nowitzki represents what sports can and should be all about.

FLIKR



## Overcoming Major Doubts

By SARIT PERL

“So, what are you majoring in?”

Up until a few weeks ago, I had reacted to that question with a frustrated little sigh and a string of non-committal responses: “Well, I’m trying to work something out with the dean ... it’s not concrete yet, I haven’t been able to schedule a meeting ... I don’t know if they’ll approve it ...”

I came to dread that question and the doubt and skepticism that inevitably followed my answer. While I still find myself fielding people’s concerns about my academic choices, it feels great to now be able to respond to them without hesitation and uncertainty. I can finally say to them, firmly and proudly, “I have it all worked out with the dean. We put together a list of classes and had my shaped major approved. I am studying theater.”

This is the part where all you readers will be asking the same questions I’ve grown accustomed to hearing: “What kinds of classes are you going to be taking?” “How are you going to get enough credits?” And, my personal favorite, “Wait, there’s a theater major at Stern?”

The answer, of course, is no. But what surprises me the most is how strongly people believe that if there’s no set course of study for a particular subject, it’s impossible to pursue it at YU. I used to believe it too; I had been told my whole life that theater wasn’t the place for a good frum girl. The fact that Stern seemed to treat theater as a hobby and nothing else cemented that idea in my mind. I know people who have left YU to study theater. That wasn’t an option for me, so there was a point where I had given up on it completely. I listened to the voices around me that said, “You’ll never be able to make it work.” Resigned to accept a more “realistic” career path, I declared a poli-sci major but was determined to take advantage

of extracurricular theater while I still had the chance.

The 24-Hour Show was a ridiculously intense experience that reminded me why I was so passionate about theater. During that crazy day, in which all my friends and I did was live and breathe theater, I fell in love with it all over again. I got to experience

*Though it will likely still be an uphill battle, getting confirmation that my goals are legitimate and a concrete plan to achieve them has empowered me to welcome whatever challenges I may face in getting there.*

every element of this beautiful process in a heightened yet playful atmosphere, and the best moments happened while waiting in the wings or wading through piles of costumes, not onstage. Because this was all happening “behind the emerald curtain,” I realized that to all those naysayers, most of them casual play-watchers at best, theater means bright lights, divas, curtain calls and little else. If that were true, I can understand why they might want to steer me away. But I am drawn to theater for reasons far less glamorous — and far more meaningful.

To me, theater is running lines or painting sets at ungodly hours with my best friends. It’s teaching young girls to step into someone else’s skin while encouraging them to become comfortable in their own. It is the epitome of human creativity in the way it explores and expresses human nature. It is an artistic vision brought to tangible reality. It’s the most creative, loving and supportive people collaborating to bring an entire world to life. To have a fulfilling career in theater, I don’t need to be a Tony winner. I don’t need to perform on Broadway. I don’t even need to be onstage. Educating, directing, designing, you name it — I just want to be in the proverbial “room where it happens,”

doing what I love and sharing it with others.

So with encouragement from a few mentors and friends, I made the decision to pursue my passion. Once I articulated my perspective and developed a plan, I was pleasantly surprised by the amount of support I received from my parents, my peers and even Academic Advisement. Though it

will likely still be an uphill battle, getting confirmation that my goals are legitimate and a concrete plan to achieve them has empowered me to welcome whatever challenges I may face in getting there.

For those of you who relate to any part of this struggle, you should know that putting together a shaped major is far less complicated than it is made out to be. Not only should you pursue your passion — you can pursue it here. If YU is the right place for you, don’t transfer just because there’s no established department in your field. Don’t allow the status quo to dictate the path your life takes. Don’t give up something you care about because other people can’t see your vision.

It won’t be easy; it will probably get pretty lonely at times. But if you want it badly enough, you can make it work. The more of us that come forward the easier it will get. Dare to defy the gravity of perceived obstacles, and take a cue from Wicked’s leading lady, Elphaba Thropp: “I’m through accepting limits, cuz someone says they’re so. Some things I cannot change, but ‘til I try, I’ll never know.”



The author acting in SCDS’ performance of “The Game’s Afoot”

THE COMMENTATOR

## Wilf Election Results: Why the Numbers Should Not Be Made Public

By FRUMA LANDA and TZOPHIA STEPANSKY

On my first night back from vacation I sat down to face the essays that I had ignored for the past few weeks. Instead of writing the essays, I had a better idea: I was going to procrastinate. I started with checking my long list of sstuds; I opened an email from The Commentator and noticed the news article “Spring 2019 Wilf Campus Undergraduate Student Government Election Results.” Curious to see who won the elections, I clicked on the article and began to read. After the article, there was listed all of the winners of the elections — the breakdown of votes for each race as released by the Wilf Canvassing Committee. Curious to see if I knew anyone who ran, I scrolled on. At first glance, it seemed like a harmless list of all those who ran in the election, but as I skimmed the list I noticed that there were numbers next to the names of each candidate. I was absolutely horrified to see that the number of votes that each candidate received was listed alongside their names!

I internally freaked out, my insides froze and my brain screamed, “THIS IS NOT OK!” I was not willing to believe that the number of votes each candidate who ran received would be so shamelessly posted in such a public forum. I convinced myself I must have missed something, so I took another look at the article still denying the possibility that the number of votes would ever be posted. I

was wrong, they were indeed posted.

This begs the question: Was it really necessary to expose these results in such a blatant manner? Is it really essential for the entire Yeshiva University and World Wide Web to be informed of the exact number of votes each candidate received? Does anyone really need to know with how many more votes one candidate became victorious over another?

*Having these results displayed online where absolutely anyone can access it in any location at any time seems downright wrong.*

All of these thoughts were racing through my mind when I realized there may be a larger issue at hand. There can be severe *halakhic* ramifications for posting these results. The Talmud in tractate *Bava Metzia* states: “Anyone who humiliates another in public, it is as though he were spilling blood” (58b-59a). A few homiletics were brought to highlight this concept. The Talmud says, “...It is preferable for a person to engage in intercourse with a woman whose married status is uncertain and not humiliate another in public.” This excerpt illustrates the length we are permitted to go to in order not to embarrass another. Furthermore, “One who engages in

intercourse with a married woman before witnesses and with forewarning, his death is by strangulation, but he still has a share in the World-to-Come. But one who humiliates another in public has no share in the World-to-Come.” Humiliating someone is so severe that its punishment is even greater than the punishment for committing one of the three cardinal sins. Besides for these homiletics which illustrate the severity of humiliating someone in public, there are many codified halachic sources that bring down laws pertaining to this matter as well. Whether these homiletics are supposed to be taken literally or not, we learn that there is absolutely no excuse for embarrassing another in public.

Still eager to get understand why this was posted, I did my research. Article 3, section 1.8 of the Wilf Campus Constitution states in the third Amendment Regarding Disclosure of Election Results: “Within three days of the election, the Canvassing Committee will disclose the data regarding numbers of voting turnout, the amount of votes cast per race as well as per candidate on the ballot.” This was an amendment voted on by the student body and all candidates were aware of this when they entered the race. The Canvassing Committee sent out an Excel spreadsheet to the students of the YC campus with the information included in the amendment; then, The Commentator chose to publish the voter breakdown as news.

The Canvassing Committee sent out the Excel sheet as a way of disclosing the information they are mandated to disclose. But

the amendment does not specify to whom the information needs to be disclosed. Perhaps the committee can disclose the votes to the candidates or to any student who requests to see it. The democratic transparency will still be preserved because the information can be accessed by anyone who chooses to request it. Having these results displayed online where absolutely anyone can access it in any location at any time seems downright wrong. The reasons why each candidate was voted for does not change the fact that some candidates received fewer votes than others. No matter why they were voted for, whether based on popularity, or qualification, etc., these numbers can portray these candidates in a negative light. We learn from the discussion in *Bava Metzia* the extent to which we must go to protect one’s feelings. Sensitivity toward others is of utmost importance and not something to take lightly, even if it means drafting a new constitution.

This is not our constitution and this does not directly affect us. The Beren Campus Constitution does not mandate the disclosure of the election breakdown. We encourage students on the Wilf Campus to amend their constitution to incorporate these standards of sensitivity. As students at Yeshiva University, showing compassion to others should be a value of ours. Our university should not allow legislation that can potentially cause embarrassment to others.



# Endgame vs. Infinity War

BY ZACHARY GREENBERG

On April 26, 2019, the final chapter in the Infinity War Saga was released. “Avengers: Endgame” earned an astonishing \$1.22 billion in the opening five days, nearly doubling its predecessor of Avengers: Infinity War for largest box office opening in history. This movie holds a special place in the hearts of hundreds of millions of Marvel fans, concluding what has been an 11-year, 22-movie run for the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU).

Personally, I have been watching the Marvel movies since the beginning when I was in fourth grade. I remember watching over and over again “The Incredible Hulk” (2008), the second movie in the MCU, with my little brother and always cheering when Iron Man appears on the screen saying, “What if I told you we are putting a team together.” We always fantasized on what it would be like for these two heroes, and more, to actually team up. Then finally that statement came true in “The Avengers” (2012), the 6th movie in the MCU where the main characters from the prior films joined forces in the first crossover movie. In this film, Marvel introduced the antagonist of the MCU, Thanos, in a post-credit scene. Little was known about Thanos at the time, until in 2018, “Avengers: Infinity War,” the 19th film in the MCU, was released. In the movie, Thanos managed to wipe out half of all lifeforms using the Infinity Stones and Gauntlet. Having lost half of humanity, the remaining heroes had to find a way to bring everyone back in the most recent film “Avengers: Endgame,” the 22nd film in the MCU.

On IMDB, “Infinity War” received 8.5 out of 10 stars and “Endgame” received 9.0 out of 10 stars. The next highest film in the MCU is “The Avengers” which received 8.1 stars, so for argument’s sake, and in my opinion, “Infinity War” and “Endgame” were by far the two best films in the MCU. These two movies successfully managed to bring together dozens of characters spread throughout different films and even galaxies, while managing to make the film not feel overcrowded. The films were packed with amazing action sequences, special effects, great humor and tear-jerking moments which put them far and above the rest of the MCU.

## WARNING: Spoilers ahead!

To decide which of the two is better, we first must look at each film’s opening. The opening of “Infinity War” was on board the Asgardian wreckage after Thanos had destroyed most of the ship and crew. The strongest Avenger, Hulk, comes onto the scene and tries to beat up Thanos as he had done to hundreds of other foes. But Thanos manages to overpower Hulk in a physical fight, knocking him out after a few hits.

The opening of “Endgame” showed Hawkeye having a nice picnic with his family. Suddenly, he turns around and his whole family has turned to dust as a result of Thanos’s snap which wiped out half of the universe. It is an emotional scene watching a father mourn over his wife and children, but the problem for me was that it was not that moving. We had already seen dozens of people lose their family members and friends in “Infinity War,” so to open up with yet another person mourning over his family wasn’t so inspiring. I understand that it was to set the tone of where the world was holding (in despair), but it wasn’t an out-of-nowhere scene with as much of an impact such as Thanos beating up Hulk and showing he’s the toughest person in the galaxy. The “Infinity War” opening had a much larger impact on me so I give that point to “Infinity War.” 1-0 “Infinity War.”

The next comparison for the two films are the two different *heists* of getting the Stones in each film. In “Infinity War,” Thanos and his four children split up to get the remaining four Infinity Stones. They each have to fight different Avengers to get the Stones and the scenes are very intense and awesome as the Avengers try to stop them. In “Endgame,” the Avengers must travel back in time and recollect the Stones at various points in time where the Stones are mostly unguarded. Although sometimes there is some delay in getting the Stones, they mostly collect them with ease. It was fun seeing the current Avengers turn up at various points of past films and interacting with old characters, including sometimes themselves, but I never was on the edge of my seat like in “Infinity War.” During “Infinity War,” I never knew what to expect, and the fight scenes were far more exciting with more powers and characters going up against one another to get the Stones. During “Endgame” I felt like the heroes got the Stones pretty effortlessly. So once again,

point to “Infinity War.” 2-0 “Infinity War.”

Next comparison is the fight scene versus Thanos. In “Infinity War,” Spider-Man, Iron-Man, Dr. Strange and various “Guardians” characters team up to surprise attack Thanos. Thanos, using the Infinity Gauntlet, manages to overpower the heroes, thus capturing yet another stone. It was an intense fight with the heroes almost winning, and it had amazing special effects where Thanos dropped a moon on the heroes. In “Endgame,” Thor, Captain America and Iron Man fight Thanos to try and kill him once and for all. The most incredible moment was Captain America picking up Thor’s hammer Mjolnir, which until then, only Thor was worthy enough to yield. This was a pinnacle moment in the movie which had people across the world cheering in happiness. The fight, to say the least, was of epic proportions. Hands down “Endgame” wins. 2-1 “Infinity War.”

The final fight scenes in the movies were also very similar. In “Infinity War,” the heroes try to make one last stand before Thanos wipes out the galaxy in a massive fight in Wakanda. Although there were dozens of main characters fighting at once, it did not feel at all overwhelming. The highlight of the fight was Thor coming down from the sky with his new hammer, Stormbreaker, and crying out “Bring me Thanos!” This scene made me so excited and gave the audience a feeling of hope that maybe the heroes would actually win (they didn’t). It was an epic battle, and I loved every second of it. In “Endgame,” the final fight scene was also spectacular. Hulk, using the collected Stones, brings back the other half of all lifeforms. The previously dead heroes join the fight and pretty much every single character ever in any MCU movie (including Howard the Duck) shows up to fight against Thanos and his army. It’s an epic battle with guns and powers being used everywhere and so many explosions... yet it all felt like too much. I was overwhelmed by all of the characters who entered the screen suddenly, and the bad guys never really seemed to have much of a chance. It was an amazing scene, but I have to give the point to “Infinity War” for not overwhelming me and making me believe that the losing side had a chance. 3-1 “Infinity War.”

Lastly, the conclusions of the films. In “Infinity War,” the film ended with half of the universe being wiped out. Many of the main heroes die, including the famous scene of Spider-Man dying in Iron Man’s arms. (That was a tear-jerker.) The movie concludes with Thanos sitting on top of a mountain, finally at peace for bringing, what he believed, peace to the universe. This was a brilliant moment as it revealed that although Thanos was the villain, he was really the protagonist of the film the whole time. To me, this was an extremely powerful moment since in general, one does not relate to the villain, but here it was clear that Thanos truly believed he had done the right thing even though he killed half of the universe. The conclusion of “Endgame” was Iron

Man using the Gauntlet to wipe out Thanos and his army. By doing so, he put himself in a critical condition and was near death. The heroes gathered around him and finally, Pepper Potts, his wife, says “You can rest now” as he dies. They then have a funeral for him where Tony’s arc reactor with the inscription “Proof that Tony Stark has a heart” is floated in a lake to commemorate him. It is a powerful scene and a great closing... but that’s not all.

Captain America agrees to travel back to the past to return all of the Stones. He was supposed to return a few seconds later but does not. Suddenly, they see an old man sitting on a bench and the heroes realize that it is an older version of Captain America. He explains that after returning the Stones, he went back to 1940 to visit his old girlfriend Peggy Carter who he owed a last dance to and decided to live out his life with her. The closing shot is in 1940 with Captain America

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*This movie holds a special place in the hearts of hundreds of millions of Marvel fans, concluding what has been an 11-year, 22-movie run for the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU).*

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and Peggy slow dancing and looking truly happy together. It is a tear-jerker moment that shows that true love is possible and is always worth striving for. Although the conclusion of “Infinity War” was phenomenal, “Endgame” tied up so many movies in the most brilliant and moving fashion possible. Point goes to “Endgame.” 3-2 “Infinity War.”

Both films were breathtaking and put me in an emotional rollercoaster which I will never forget. I do, though, give the slight edge to “Infinity War.” Overall, I thought the fight scenes were better, the stakes were higher and the movie flowed much smoother. I also loved how the plot revolved around Thanos despite him being the villain. “Endgame” was a masterpiece and was the best ending that the MCU could have asked for, but I did not enjoy the build-up of the film as much and the fight scenes were not as good. Plus, Thanos was much less complex in the film, as he was mostly just a heartless villain trying to kill everyone, contrasting to “Infinity War” where he was trying to do what he thought was the right thing. The ending of “Endgame” was perfect and made me cry, but I cried even harder during Spider-Man’s death during “Infinity War.” I would give “Infinity War” a 10 out of 10 and “Endgame” a 9 out of 10.

Thank you, Disney, for giving the world the MCU. It has been an entertaining, thought-provoking, conversation starter for us. I am happy to have seen all of the films, and am looking forward to the next saga. Maybe this time Galactus will be the main villain.



Poster for “Avengers: Endgame”

WALT DISNEY STUDIOS MOTION PICTURES



# What Academic Bible Gets Wrong... And Right

By ALEC GOLDSTEIN

As an undergraduate, I loved the synthesis of traditional Torah and secular wisdom. My undergraduate degree was in French Language and Literature. I read Aristotle and Kant for fun. I delighted in how Maimonides and Rabbi Soloveitchik imbibed secular ideas, and absorbed them in the name of traditional Judaism.

In a similar vein, I have found that academic Bible can enhance some people's appreciation for Tanakh. At the same time, many professors do not approach Tanakh with reverence. For this reason, some segments of the Orthodox community have been skeptical of academic Bible. The religious individual approaches Tanakh with a sense of God, faith and reverence, expecting to find religious inspiration. These traits are not always present in academic Bible scholarship. Currently, certain segments of the Jewish community are at a crossroads about how (if at all) to teach academic Bible to the next generation. What follows — it should be stressed — are my personal encounters.

As an undergraduate, when my colleagues resented the Bible requirements, I was eager to learn Tanakh with academic scholarship. I took four undergraduate and three graduate courses; I devoured scholarly commentaries. I would sooner consult Baruch Levine and Jacob Milgrom before Rashi and Nahmanides. Much of this work was technically heretical, but I believed that academics were more objective. I revered the Rishonim for their mastery but considered them less advanced than modern scholars because of their tenuous fealty to fantastical Midrashim and rabbinic hyperliteralism. Yet as the semesters drew on, I began to recognize the limitations of academic Bible as well.

First, I observed a lack of reverence for the text of the Tanakh itself. Academics often assume the received text is corrupt and/or written without Divine inspiration (called lower criticism and higher criticism, respectively). Scholars frequently opined that the biblical text was written in a certain way to further the agenda of an ancient editor. For example, many academics envision a rivalry between the followers of Moses and followers of Aaron about who would earn the priesthood; ultimately, the Aaronides won out, which is why the text was edited to indicate that Moses anoints his older brother. Bible scholars often did not hold the sacred text in the same esteem that I did. Many academics believe Tanakh to be the work of man, and some consider it a poorly edited work at that.

Second, many academics were overly insulting towards the biblical figures as people. For example, Nahum Sarna writes that the patriarch Jacob “is portrayed as having acquired the birthright, first, by the heartless exploitation of the suffering of his own brother and then, by the crafty deception practised upon his blind old father” (“Understanding Genesis,” p. 183). While Midrashim and Rishonim think critically about the actions of our forebearers, there is a world of difference between questioning specific actions and characterizing a person as a scoundrel.

Third, academics neglected or even mocked the traditional sources, while over time I became more interested in learning from traditional viewpoints as well. I wanted to see how traditional commentaries addressed questions academics were asking. Academics demonstrated hubris in assuming that when a particular scholar asked a question, nobody had ever asked it earlier. With few exceptions, most academics couldn't care less about traditional Jewish interpretation. In many of the Bible classes I took, we never

studied a piece of Talmud or comment of a Rishon seriously.

Fourth, I remember having a conversation with a professor about some detail I've since forgotten. The professor proclaimed that the Bible lifted this idea from another culture. I asked him why he thought we had taken it from them, and not the other way around. He replied, “We were a small culture so we probably didn't develop it.” Taken to its logical extreme, that statement — and attitude — indicates that there is nothing unique about the Tanakh. The Hebrew Bible is no different than other ancient Near Eastern texts, just luckier.

Fifth, the academic culture was intolerant. Once in conversation, a professor asked what my father did for a living. I responded, “He works for the Republican caucus of the Westchester County Board of Legislators.” This professor replied, “All Republicans are *resha'im merushaim*,” using a yeshivish term for “extremely wicked.” Regardless of one's political opinions, to say such a thing to me — and to accuse my father of wickedness merely on account of his post as a bureaucrat — was offensive and did not foster an open environment of learning and mutual respect.

My personal turning point was editing a book for a professor whom I knew to be a *mentch*, *ma'amin* and *yorei Shamayim*. I asked him why his writing was lettered with J, E, P and D, the jargon of the Documentary Hypothesis, which Orthodox Jews regard as heretical. He replied that if he didn't write that way, the academic community would not consider his conclusions.

I was stunned. This God-fearing professor who believed in Divine authorship of the Torah was forced, for professional reasons, to feign that he believed a heretical doctrine. Clearly there are challenges for a religious individual to partake in the discipline of academic Bible.

It is no surprise that many religious people demur to the study of academic Bible. To recapitulate: (1) academic Bible assumes the text is not of Divine authorship and is edited (sometimes sloppily) by man, (2) it is excessively critical of biblical personalities, (3) there is a neglect or mockery of traditional sources, (4) it denies the uniqueness of Tanakh, (5) it is hostile and does not foster an environment of openness.

Surely there are religious individuals who can navigate these obstacles and emerge unscathed or even edified. I have worked with — academically, professionally and personally — truly great, God-fearing academics who have forever enhanced my appreciation of Tanakh and its messages. I would be spiritually poorer had I not encountered them, and I hope I have expressed my gratitude to them satisfactorily over the years. Here are some places where academic Bible excels:

First is comparative Semitics. Classical and Medieval sources did not have access to the inscriptions and documents of the Ancient Near East that have been unearthed in the past two centuries. These discoveries can help us understand the meaning of biblical words, both common and rare. Academics have tools the Rishonim did not. For example, the word *shotrim* might very well be “scribes” (or “court reporters”), based on the Akkadian word for “write.” This meaning reemerges in the word *shtar*, “contract.” (Compare this to Rashi's definition of “enforcers.”) A discussion of a word's meaning will benefit from comparative Semitic

analysis. For example, the first chapter of my book on holiness (“A Theology of Holiness,” pp. 23ff) analyzes how the root *k-d-sh* is used in other Semitic languages.

Second, modern commentaries excel at providing comprehensive cross-references of words and concepts, spanning biblical, ancient Near Eastern, Jewish, Christian and Greek sources. Rishonim will often use one or two prooftexts, and with few notable exceptions look beyond traditional sources. Academics can supply more exhaustive lists.

Third, the historical context is important. For example, did the story of Esther occur immediately before the Second Temple was built, or once construction was underway? The story becomes far more critical of the Jews if we read it against the backdrop of a Temple in the process of being reconstructed.

Fourth, related to the historical context, is the religious context, which is crucial because the Bible is primarily a religious work. When there are purported parallels between ancient Near Eastern beliefs and biblical ones, it is essential to examine how the Bible treats those beliefs, whether by accepting, modifying or rejecting them. For example, I have examined the possibility that



It is no surprise that many religious people demur to the study of academic Bible.

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the ten plagues in Egypt were a response to Egyptian belief, showing the futility of pagan deities. Some of this material is already in the Rishonim, but academics deal with these questions more fully.

Fifth, academic Bible excels at showing how plots and characters develop. Some traditional comments show this development, but it is rarely fleshed out. Traditional sources level out the characters and transform them to archetypes. For example, there is a common trope that Abraham represents *chesed* (lovingkindness), Isaac represents *gevurah* (strength) and Jacob represents *tiferet* (splendor, a synthesis between the two). Similarly, on the phrase *hu Mosheh ve-Aharon*, which is grammatically awkward, Rashi writes that Moses and Aaron remained unchanged in their mission and their righteousness “from beginning to end” (on Exod. 6:27). Such analysis reduces these personalities to automata: Did Abraham have doubts when he was told to travel to the land of Canaan? Did Moses have doubts when the nation's rebellions were at their bitterest? Robert Alter is absolutely correct that there is great value in reading the Bible as literature, meaning focusing on linguistic cues and character development.

To summarize, academic Bible's greatest contributions are (1) comparative Semitics, (2) providing comprehensive parallels, (3) examining historical context, (4) examining religious context and (5) literary reading and character analyses.

There is an added difficulty in translating academic Bible for a curriculum *en masse*. Browbeating traditionally-minded students to enroll might compel them to complete a college course or two, but it will not facilitate their appreciation of how academic Bible might enhance their religious growth or appreciation of God and Jewish identity. Rather, here are some questions we should be asking:

- How do we properly teach a synthesis of Masorah and academia, if at all? Are we overloading our students with too much information and not enough critical analysis? Synthesis, the forerunner of *Torah Umadda*, is about actively *accepting* certain aspects and just as consciously *rejecting* other aspects.
- Should there be Bible classes that just use traditional Jewish sources without academic ones?
- How accountable are the professors? Should they have Orthodox explanations for the questions that academic Bible poses? Are professors responsible for their students' spiritual welfare or for merely teaching the text according to the academic method?
- Should there be a class based on the principle *da mah le-hashiv*, “know how to respond,” to a heretic? In other words, should there be a course — either mandatory or elective — that focuses exclusively on how to respond to academic heresies?
- Should we focus on the Bible's contribution to Western thought at large? One can barely read Locke or Hobbes without encountering scriptural passages. Capitalism and communism, nationalism and universalism, parochialism and egalitarianism, slavery and emancipation, pacifism and militarism have all been imputed to have their roots in the Bible. In other words, is the Bible an *academic* discipline, or should we examine its impact on world history?

Tanakh is open to many modes of interpretation. Some individuals find academic Bible enriching, others find it disgraceful and permeated with heresy. Some can navigate the ancient Near Eastern parallels to find reward, some find it a path of confusion and others find it a waste of time. There is no question that academic Bible poses significant theological risks. Whether those risks are worth the reward is something that each student of Tanakh needs to decide. That decision should be made on the grounds of *halakhah*, *hashkafah*, a priori preferences in Torah learning and the religious resiliency of the students. An Orthodox Jew, even a so-called “Modern Orthodox” Jew, has excellent and justifiable reasons for expressing healthy skepticism. In other words, each person has every right to pursue a path of religious growth he or she finds most conducive. We should never sacrifice our students' spiritual welfare on the altar of devotion to the academic method. If in pursuit of the fruits of academia, our community chooses to accept the risks, we must be cognizant and even vigilant. Whatever choice we make, we should make that choice with an eye on growing intellectually, emotionally and above all religiously.

Alec Goldstein received his B.A. and ordination from Yeshiva University. He is the founder of Kodesh Press (kodeshpress.com) and author of “A Theology of Holiness: Historical, Exegetical, and Philosophical Perspectives” (2018).



# Who Are the Servants and Who Are the Princes? Conscious Smartphone Usage in the Modern Age

By ILAN HIRSCHFIELD

Whenever I walk in public, I cannot help but think of a verse from *Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes): “I have seen servants [riding] upon horses and princes walking as servants upon the Earth” (10:7). Humans created smartphones slightly over a decade ago in order to serve us. They can perform countless tasks. But as smartphones have entrenched themselves in modern society, the roles have switched with us barely noticing in the process. We now serve our technology.

In November of last year, the media website CNET reported that Deloitte’s 2018 Global Mobile Consumer Survey concluded that Americans collectively checked their phones fourteen billion times per day in the past year. That averages to 52 times per day per person. Anecdotally, I can also tell you that in the course of my day on the Wilf Campus I will constantly encounter someone within my personal vicinity absorbed in a smartphone. It doesn’t make a difference whether they look at a smartphone screen or have headphones plugged in. It is consistent, even pervasive.

I’ll be the first to admit I love using my smartphone, particularly to take pictures, use WhatsApp to keep in touch with others and check my email on-the-go. In fact, I just bought a new one a month ago.

However, if I told you I only use these phone functions, I would have lied. I periodically get sucked in the YouTube or Internet browser black hole until, to my horror, I realize the clock has struck 2:00 a.m. and I must get to sleep. Immediately. I occasionally whip out my phone rather than making conversation with someone else in the empty classroom five minutes before class starts.

This picture begs the question: How can we change our hyper-connected reality? Bringing about this change means *rethinking* that relationship instead of terminating it, implementing practical yet powerful methods to reduce our screen time. Having frequently thought about and discussed this problem with my friends and family for the last two years, I have concluded that its solutions must address two aspects of the smartphone’s pervasiveness: its sheer

physical presence or attraction and its functional diversity. I’ll begin with the aspect of physical presence because it’s the easiest tactic to outline and explain. I can sum it up in three words: no-phone zones. That means putting away your phone during mealtimes, while you walk in public (and no, that doesn’t mean you can wear headphones and listen to music instead), not carrying your phone into bed and doing short errands without your phone on your person. With respect to using your phone in public while walking, if you remember something you must immediately take care of, pull over to the side of the thoroughfare and take care of it. Then, squarely shove your phone back into your pocket and go on your merry way. When eating in the caf with your friends, pressure them to put their phones away as well and just talk, laugh and relax with them. Strive to feel that warmth of eye-to-eye human connection.

## How can we change our hyper-connected reality?

Our eyes. What do they have to do with all of this? We are visual beings and our eyes engineer desire. How, then, do our screens create that excitement? They use vibrant colors for icons and text. If the iMessages you send didn’t have that azure blue background, how often would you text other people? “Alright,” you ask. “How can I fight back against these shiny colors to decrease my phone usage?” Easily. Most, if not all, smartphones have a grayscale setting in the accessibility menu under general settings. Enable the setting and watch the color drain from your phone. Just pray that the color doesn’t drain from your face as well.

The problem with our eyes and our phones runs deeper, though. If you have every app set to deliver push notifications, your phone could vibrate, light up and chirp up to hundreds of times a day. Motion and sound catch our attention just as easily as color. You can combat this barrage through changing your notification settings. Turn off the sounds and push email notifications. Oh, and delete your phone’s social media apps

as well. Except for Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp; they primarily act as communication apps, not posting like Facebook. Don’t worry. You’ll still have access to your social media accounts but that access will take a different shape.

Congrats! You’ve now eliminated the majority of temptations that stem from the device itself. But once you’ve started using your phone for a legitimate reason, how do you prevent falling into a black hole like the ones I described earlier? You can set a hard usage limit on your phone. The iPhone now has a Screen Time section of its Settings app where you can track your usage time in one day or see your phone behavior over a one-week period. You can also limit usage of each individual app to a designated amount of time. The end result? No more bottomless YouTube pits. Well, you can still fall into the pit. It’s just a bit more difficult.

Essentially, an app will “shut down” once you’ve used it for the allowed amount of time. However, if you want to resume your YouTube free-fall, you can re-enter your device password to unlock the app, creating a certain amount of friction you must overcome to continue using the phone. Android phone users shouldn’t fret because they can download the app ActionDash to track their usage and break it down app-by-app. It can’t shut off apps after a certain amount of usage time like on the iPhone, but it’s a good start. In order to maximize this strategy, you can determine your average daily usage time and then set a goal for a lower usage time. For example, if you determined that your average daily usage is five hours, then you can set a goal for yourself to reach a daily average of three hours over the course of a month, or decrease your usage by a half hour per week. If you reach your goal successfully, then go for broke. Set another goal for decreasing your usage. If you don’t reach your goal, then perhaps re-evaluate your strategy. If you want to give yourself some external motivation to take this project seriously, have a contest with your friends to see who can come out with the lowest screen usage stats at the end of a week or a month. Nothing raises the stakes like some friendly competition.

Despite offering these wonderful solutions to screen addiction enumerated in the

last six paragraphs, I haven’t yet addressed the elephant in the room. Why do we use our smartphones so much to begin with? Because of the smartphone’s sheer functional diversity. Put differently, if our phones can perform such a bevy of functions, why use something else to complete them? The final several resolutions attack this siren song with the simple yet powerful democratic principle engraved in the United States Constitution — separation of powers.

The first resolution entails using the “phone” part of the smartphone. However, what does that *mean*? Use the phone to call people. Since embarking on my journey to break free of smartphone addiction, I’ve come to a deeper appreciation of phone calls because they’re a more efficient and personable way to communicate than texting. Who really wants to send endless texts? Here’s a great quick-and-dirty rule for calling versus texting: If your conversation over text will take more than one exchange, then call. Or schedule an in-person meetup if you can. More often than not, you will find yourself calling more than texting, and I consider that a step in the right direction.

What happens, however, when you want to use social media and don’t have the apps for them on your phone? You head to a laptop or desktop computer to access them. You can extend this usage to web browsing and writing emails when sitting down. Check your email accounts on-the-go for responses to those emails, and you’ll be golden. Hammering the constitutional metaphor deeper into the ground, buy different physical objects to fulfill some phone functions: a calendar, a non-smart iPod or music player, a (non-smart)watch, an alarm clock, a timer, a notebook for planning your days, etc. The greater the number of “separatist” elements you find for your phone functions, the more physically you will connect to the outside world and grant your phone less power over your life.

I hope that you can achieve some level of success in using the above-mentioned tactics, but if you still find yourself struggling with excessive smartphone usage, then take one pre-planned day to go cold turkey and debrief on it with a close friend or family member to determine your own strategies for using your phone less.

I must also mention one yet unstated but incredibly powerful implication of these tactics for decreasing phone usage; we must simply learn to accept boredom as a fact of life. As humans, we aim to maximize our engagement, but that will never reach saturation. If you let yourself simply be bored, you can engage yourself in the world in unexpected and creative ways. For example, at the end of last semester I once took the YU shuttle to Beren Campus for Shabbat *minyan*. I got into the van and my hand instinctively reached for my phone. I paused and stayed my hand, deciding instead to look out the window. As the van sped down Harlem River Drive, I peered at Roosevelt Island through the bridge pillars. It had just rained and fog hovered over the river, stretching lazily towards the sky. My eye moved up towards the skyscrapers and caught a breathtaking view: a mass of fog had collected just below the tip of one of the buildings, giving it the impression of having been partially erased by the fog. I had a full 45 seconds of bliss taking in this view, and by the time it was over, I realized that I missed the opportunity to take a picture of what I saw. But I felt at peace with that. The memory of that image lives in my mind and I can retrieve it at a moment’s notice.



An assortment of modern smartphones

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Disney is in a prime position to maintain its massive presence in the industry due to its investment in both traditional and modern media.

## Jack of All Trades, Master of... All?

By NATHAN HAKAKIAN

From animated cartoons, to black-and-white films, to 3D, the media industry always finds a way to outdo itself. Over the last decade, the increase in technology has left media companies with a decision to make: focus on the broadcasting of live events or on the streaming and production of original content.

Most companies have chosen to allocate to only one strategy. As a result, companies that were once viewed as elite have failed to keep up with the competition. Twenty-First Century Fox, with a rich history of classics such as *Ice Age*, *Prison Break* and *Taken*, is a great example. Fox was one of the most successful companies in the media industry; however, due to increased competition, it felt that acquiring British broadcaster Sky was necessary in order to keep up with the competition and continue growing into a more global company. After losing a lengthy bidding war with Comcast, who ultimately acquired Sky for \$39 billion, Fox decided to change their strategy. Instead of looking to expand, they were looking to be acquired. In March 2019, Fox was acquired by Disney for \$71.3 billion.

In the last five years, Netflix's stock has grown by 800%, generating \$15.79 billion in revenue last year. HBO added over five million subscribers in 2017, and Apple's TV Streaming Service is projected to generate \$10 billion in revenue in 2020. These are all signs that the streaming route is the way to go. It seems Netflix's stronghold on the streaming industry is at risk, just as Fox's dominance over traditional television was, due to increasing willingness to spend, spend and spend some more. According to *Variety.com*, Netflix plans to allocate at least \$15 billion toward content in 2019. HBO has budgeted \$15 million for each episode of the final season of their award-winning show *Game of Thrones*. Apple plans to spend \$1 billion on original content. But what about

Disney? How will the beloved, storied franchise keep up with the pack?

Disney has approached this dilemma in a unique way by investing in both strategies. Disney owns Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars and a majority stake in ESPN. In 2018 alone, Disney reported a net income of \$12.6 billion, a 40% increase from 2017. Disney also released plans for their own streaming platform, Disney Plus, which is scheduled to debut in the United States in November 2019. With a subscription fee \$6.99 per month or \$69.99 annually, Disney plans to undercut Netflix's price of \$12.99 a month. Disney is also looking to expand their service to Western Europe and Asia by early 2020.

Additionally, through their stake in Fox, Disney owns a 60% share of Netflix's rival Hulu. Disney CEO Robert Iger announced during Disney's annual shareholders meeting that the company plans to help Hulu with its goal of international expansion and may even consider buying a greater percentage of the company, if offered the opportunity.

The goal for the near future is to create a service in which customers could easily access the content of ESPN, Fox, Hulu and Disney, and will likely include a discount for a bundle of the services. With this platform in place, Disney can deliver content for all ages, with Hulu targeting adults, Disney still focusing on kids, Fox catering to teens and ESPN to sports enthusiasts. Disney executives have been optimistic that their strategy of blitzing the market will be successful.

In an industry where change is constant and the complacent are acquired, it's difficult to predict the outcome of this industry when the dust ultimately settles. Companies that were once powerhouses have crumbled and have been replaced with innovative start-ups. But one thing is for sure, Disney will be with us in our adulthood, just as they were in our childhood and teenage years.

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## Accounting Society Hosts Event Aimed at Educating Students for the Future

By ELI FRISHMAN

Over thirty students met in Furst Hall this past Thursday night for the Accounting Society's "Accounting for the Future: The Convergence of Technology and Accounting." The panelists all work in accounting-tech fields and included Gavriella Seftel of PwC, Yehudah Polakoff of Ernst Young and Hillel Caplan of Deloitte. They participated in a moderated discussion and fielded questions from current accounting majors about how technology is shaping the industry. At the end of the event, attendees had the opportunity to network with the panelists.

*Accounting students would be able to benefit from more events and undergraduate classes geared towards the new accounting reality.*

The topic for the event comes at a point in time when the financial services industry is becoming increasingly tech-based. As such, the theme of this year's YU Hackathon was Fintech, which allowed business students and computer science majors to design financial computer programs. For accounting, automation is predicted to change the field at a rate faster than other professions. A study from PwC reported that accountants, specifically bookkeepers and clerks, were the number one job at risk of becoming obsolete within the next twenty years, a statistic that has many accounting students wondering what skills are necessary outside the formal accounting curriculum to stay competitive in the automated age.

According to Ephraim Benoff and Rebecca Shiner, co-presidents of the Accounting Society, the event was planned because

"Technology, with its constant advancements and improvements, is rapidly becoming more critical and relevant to the accounting profession. Hearing a diverse group of active professionals describe the many ways that they incorporate and utilize technology in their respective fields would be insightful and also provide the opportunity for students to gain an awareness of what important tools or knowledge bases they should have when starting their careers." Benoff served as the moderator for the event and started the discussion by asking the panelists what aspect of their job had changed the most since they started working. The responses varied as the panelists' work experience differed significantly. However, a common

software they'll be using in their line of work.

A software of interest that was discussed was Robotic Process Automation (RPA), a technology that learns the repetitive tasks of users and can then robotically apply the process for future projects, saving users time and money. The panelists suggested that students familiarize themselves specifically with Microsoft Office programs and learn the basics of some of the accounting software they'll be working with.

However, even with all of the technological advancements, the panelists still stressed that the human factor is still a crucial part of their job, and while technology has certainly reshaped the industry, it allows for accountants to concentrate the bulk of their

to prepare for Shabbat. During busy seasons, which usually culminates around Passover, accountants are now able to get their work done at various times outside of work hours.

Chaim Mahgerefteh, a current Accounting major and incoming president of Sy Syms Student Council, remarked, "As an accounting major, the event provided me with a framework of what to expect when I start my career and what I can do to prepare while still an undergrad. I thought the panelists were excellent and that the Accounting Society did a wonderful job planning the event." Hillel Caplan, one of the panelists, noted, "There was a great turnout of students. They asked great questions and I was overall impressed with all of them."



Accounting students from both campuses came to hear from panelists about how technology is shaping the field.

THE ACCOUNTING SOCIETY

response was centered around how data is being used to speed up and provide more thorough accounting results.

Additionally, because many of the large accounting firms are constantly staying up to date with the latest accounting software, many firms have been providing extensive training for incoming associates with the

time on less automated projects that require more human intuition and problem-solving.

Pertinent specifically to YU students was how technology has allowed for the panelists to navigate Orthodox-Jewish life while being an accountant. Many accountants are now telecommuting, saving them time commuting and being able to end their work in time

As the accounting industry becomes increasingly automated, with the focus more on software than manual human journal entries, accounting students can benefit from more events and undergraduate classes geared towards the new accounting reality.

## Your Home Away From Home

By NATHAN HAKAKIAN

Everyone loves a good vacation. Whether it be for days or weeks, the feeling of dropping all responsibility and leaving town is second to none. The increase in modern technology has simplified the booking process like never before. Instead of settling for the traditionally over-priced hotels, travelers can choose from an array of homes using applications such as Airbnb. But how does the lodging industry plan to compete with profitable startups who can offer tourists more options across the globe?

Marriott International may have an answer, planning to compete with Airbnb at its own game with the announcement of a home-rental subdivision. This will be no easy feat, seeing as Airbnb offers more than 3.5 million more homes than Marriott does at this time.

The solution to this problem could come in the form of a new pilot program offering 2,000 upscale homes in 100 markets throughout the U.S., Europe and Latin America. Guests will be able to use the same loyalty points they earned with the other Marriott-affiliated brands towards these homes. From one bedroom apartments to Scottish castles, the Marriott can be seen as a more flexible booking option — a great

option for wealthy corporate executives and students looking to travel the world on a tight budget.

Additionally, Marriott guarantees hotel-esque amenities such as Wi-Fi, clean sheets and smoke alarms. The properties being owned by one organization is a significant advantage: "One of the challenges you see with home sharing is there's too much inventory without quality filters or brand assurances," said Marriott Global Chief Commercial Officer Stephanie Linnartz.

*Instead of settling for the traditionally over-priced hotels, travelers can choose from an array of homes using applications such as Airbnb.*

This approach, however, does not come without risk. Many hotels have struggled to transition into the home-sharing market. In 2016, Accor Hotels acquired home-rental service Onefinestay for \$169 million and a majority share in concierge platform John Paul for \$120 million. A mere two years later, Accor hotels reported a \$288 million write-down on these investments. In 2017, Hyatt



Airbnb has grown tremendously since its founding in 2008.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

invested in luxury home-sharing sight Oasis, but ultimately divested in 2018 because of government restrictions preventing growth. The great uncertainty that comes from entering into the home-sharing market cannot be overlooked. With a trial test targeting in New York, Marriott hopes that this model can translate into international long-term success.

To counter the lodging industry's efforts at disrupting Airbnb's momentum, they have been investing in more traditional lodging operations. In addition to its purchase of Hotel Tonight and Indian hotel booking

company Oyo Hotels & Homes, Airbnb has partnered with RXR Realty to launch its first hotel in New York City. Located in the Rockefeller Plaza, these 200 apartment style-suites provide guests with magnificent views of the St. Patrick's Cathedral.

The introduction of home-sharing has greatly complicated the once simple lodging industry. Instead of wanting a cookie-cutter hotel room, guests oftentimes look for unique experiences. While Marriott and Airbnb are leading the pack right now, numerous challenges and challengers await.



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### CLASS SCHEDULE FOR SUMMER 2019

#### MONDAY, TUESDAY, THURSDAY

**9:00 – 10:40 A.M.**

**Perelis:** JHI 6407 Marranos and Other Heretics

**10:50 AM – 12:30 P.M.**

**Angel:** JHI 6233 Dead Sea Scrolls

**6:00 – 7:40 P.M.**

**Rynhold:** JPH 6862 Nietzsche and Modern Jewish Philosophy

**7:50 – 9:30 P.M.**

**Yitzhak Berger:** BIB 7325 Book of Judges

### CLASS SCHEDULE FOR FALL 2019

#### MONDAY

**2:49 P.M.**

**Eichler:** BIB 6605 Biblical Legal Texts: Parshat Mishpatim

**Tsadik:** JHI 5337 Jews in the Lands of Islam III

**4:50 P.M.**

**Carlebach:** JHI 5400 Jews in Early Modern Europe: 1492–1760

**Rynhold:** JPH 6872 Jewish Existentialism: Buber & Rosenzweig

**6:50 P.M.**

**Koller:** BIB 5203 Biblical Hebrew

**Rynhold:** JPH 5011 Survey of Medieval Jewish Philosophy

#### TUESDAY

**2:49 P.M.**

**Dauber:** JPH 6522 Secrecy in Jewish Thought

**Hurvitz:** TAS 5872 Midrashic Literature of the Amoraim

**4:50 P.M.**

**Cohen:** BIB 6084 The Medieval Peshat Tradition, c. 900–1300

**Gurock:** JHI 5571 American Jewish History: 1654–1881

**6:50 P.M.**

**Olson:** JHI 6419 Zionist Culture Before the State of Israel

**Hurvitz:** TAS 7809 The Editing of Critical Editions of Rabbinic Literature

#### WEDNESDAY

**2:49 P.M.**

**David Berger:** JHI 5321 Medieval Jewish History: Christian Europe

**Mermelstien:** JHI 6242 Perspectives on Halakhah in Jewish Antiquity

**Tsadik:** JHI 7600 Reading Modern Arabic Sources on Jews and Judaism

**4:50 P.M.**

**Eichler:** BIB 5115 Introduction to Biblical Studies II

**Karlip:** JHI 6444 Jewish Modernity in Lithuania: From Talmud & Mussar to Revolution & Zionism

**6:50 P.M.**

**Leiman:** BIB 6611 Book of Deuteronomy

**Zimmerman:** JHI 6484 Destruction of European Jewry: 1933–1945

#### THURSDAY

**2:49 P.M.**

**Angel:** JHI 5213 Second Temple Jewish Literature

**Dauber:** JPH 6522 Secrecy in Jewish Thought

**4:50 P.M.**

**Kanarfogel:** JHI 6832 Topics in History of Halakhah II

**Hidary:** TAS 5801 Introduction to Tannaitic Literature

**6:50 P.M.**

**Fine:** JHI 6285 The Synagogue in the Greco-Roman World

**Perelis:** JHI 6386 The Sephardic Atlantic

#### Language

**Tsadik:** SEM 5111 Arabic I

(Monday and Wednesday, 4:40–5:55 p.m.)



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