

THE COMMENTATOR

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Alluf Returns to the Court for Men's Basketball After a Season-Long Absence

By CHANA WEINBERG

As first reported by Macslive.com, senior point-guard Bar Alluf is suiting up for the '19-'20 men's basketball season after sitting out in '18-'19 over NCAA eligibility concerns. Alluf was second in three-point percentage, shooting percentage and average points per game and was named an All-Conference First Team Player during the Mac's Skyline Conference championship-winning season in '17-'18.

On March 2, 2018, as the men's basketball Macs were about to make their first appearance in the NCAA tournament, an undisclosed team brought forward allegations about Alluf's amateurism status.

"We immediately reviewed this information with the conference office and experts on NCAA eligibility rules," said the statement released by YU Athletics on March 2, 2018. "While this review confirmed our belief that Mr. Alluf's eligibility was properly certified based on the information that had been

provided to Yeshiva, we – Yeshiva University and its community of students, faculty and alumni – take pride in holding ourselves to the highest possible standards on and off of the court. As such, we have decided that Mr. Alluf will not play in the tournament in order to avoid any possible impact these new allegations may have on our team's participation."

After their beliefs were confirmed that his "eligibility was properly certified," he did not play in the 2018-2019 basketball season, though he did play volleyball in Spring 2019.

In conversations with YU's NCAA compliance officer Marty Craft and athletics director Joe Bednarsh, it was confirmed that Alluf sitting out the '18-'19 basketball season was not related to the allegations brought forward about his amateurism at the end of the '17-'18 season. In the conversation, it was not made clear what aspect of Alluf's eligibility

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Bar Alluf in 2017

YU ATHLETICS

Administration Admits Failure at Meal Plan Town Halls

By YOSEF LEMEL and MICHELLE NAIM

In response to student complaints regarding Yeshiva University's new undergraduate meal plan, informational sessions were held on the Wilf and Beren campuses on Wednesday, Nov. 21. Approximately 30 students were present at each session.

— who represented the President's office; Jonathan Schwab, Director of Housing and Residence Life at the Wilf Campus and Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Schwab was the primary speaker at the Wilf event. Also in attendance at Wilf were Cohen; Rabbi Josh Weisberg, Senior Director of Student Life and Samuel Chasan, Director of Dining Services.

"We hear you and will be making changes. I am hopeful that the changes will be announced within a few days."

Dean of Students Chaim Nissel

Representing the administration at the Beren event were Randy Apfelbaum, Chief Facilities and Administrative Officer, who was the primary speaker; Rachel Kraut, Director of Housing and Residence Life at the Beren Campus; Yoni Cohen, Director of Special Projects

From the outset of his presentation, Schwab stated, "The people who would have made more sense to present tonight both were unavailable," in reference to Dr.

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Former Student Leaders Detail Past Efforts for LGBTQ Inclusion

By JACOB STONE

Over the course of last year, the presidents of the undergraduate student councils repeatedly met with President Berman and other university officials to discuss the issue of LGBTQ inclusion on campus. Amitai Miller, Shoshana Marder and Nolan Edmonson, last year's presidents of Yeshiva College Student's Association (YCSA), Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) and Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) respectively, were heavily involved with these discussions. Miller, Marder and Edmonson believed that LGBTQ inclusion was a serious issue that needed to be addressed in YU student life and tried to initiate discussion with the administration on the matter.

"Our approach to addressing LGBTQ inclusion was to collaborate with the YU administration to better understand and practically address LGBTQ students' needs," said Miller.

In the fall 2018 semester, the

three student council presidents had a series of meetings with the staff of the Office of Student Life (OSL) and Dr. Chaim Nissel, University Dean of Students, to discuss ways to make LGBTQ students feel more welcome on cam-

submitted for approval under SCWSC on Beren Campus and under YSU and YCSA on Wilf Campus in spring 2019. The club sought to "provide a safe space for students to meet, support each other, and talk about issues re-

"Our influence as student leaders felt like a facade. And it seemed that administrators felt similarly shackled by a system of hazy processes, deflections of responsibility, and crippling stagnation."

Shoshana Marder, former president of SCWSC

pus. With growing support among the student body for some form of an LGBTQ club, they discussed, among other things, the creation of a GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) on campus. During their discussions with the OSL and Dean Nissel, they came to believe that an application for a GSA during the spring 2019 semester could be approved in some form.

An application for a GSA was

lated to the intersection of sexual orientation and Jewish identity." Miller, Marder, and Edmonson were contacted during the club application process by members of the OSL, who told them that the GSA could not be approved. They were informed that a club addressing tolerance in the

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Would You Like to Hedge the Verdict?



THE COMMENTATOR

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 85 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

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

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

It Is Time to End the Failed Dining Plan Experiment

By THE COMMENTATOR
EDITORIAL BOARD

In response to student dissatisfaction with high cafeteria prices and extra money left over at the end of the year, the YU Dining Club plans were radically restructured at the beginning of this year. The resultant system has been a mess, leaving many students with little to no money left with weeks to go in the semester. Chief Facilities and Administrative Officer Randy Apfelbaum has contended that the new system was the administration's response to frustrations expressed in student focus groups last year, but it remains unclear how those comments led to a plan so unpopular that over 300 students have signed a petition in protest.

What is clear is that the new plan, which is both confusing and expensive, negatively affects most students. It has become nearly impossible to live off the lower level meal plan without resorting to adding additional funds. The reaction of the administration to frustrated students has been to emphasize the optics of the discount while dismissing the significant financial concerns of the student body. Additionally, while administrators contend that the membership fee is necessary to recoup operating expenses, they have neglected to offer a convincing explanation as to how the overhead costs of YU's Dining Services exceed those of other kosher food establishments and supermarkets.

The new system is a violation of the trust we placed in YU's administration to act in our best interest and must immediately be replaced with one that takes into account the difficult financial situation of many of YU's students, treating them with the dignity they deserve. Moving forward, our trust in YU can only be restored through increased transparency and meaningful dialogue with those making decisions that impact us on our behalf.

Perhaps the most basic flaw with the new plan is that it charges students too much for too little. For the average student — who is on the lower of the two plans — the flat “membership” fee of \$1,350 for the year that they must now pay amounts to more than all of the discount they will receive over the course of the year for being a member. Students have been urged to add more of their own money to their chosen plan over the course of the semester in order to break even, since all funds added are discounted in the cafeterias. It's important to keep in mind that however much money a student has left over at the end of the year, their membership fee has already been paid. To recover that fee, students are left

scrambling to buy as much as they can from YU's cafeterias at the discounted rate (participating restaurants do not discount their prices) to avoid suffering a loss.

All of these complex calculations speak to the other major flaw with the plan: it is not designed with transparency in mind. Although some food items have both full and discounted prices listed in the cafeteria, some do not have a listed discount price; the membership discount is applied only after an item is purchased, which makes scanning the item's price to ascertain the discounted price useless. Students have been left unable to budget themselves for the semester due to the frustratingly convoluted new payment system.

forum was led by Director of University Housing and Residence Life Jonathan Schwab, who confessed to attendees that he was not one of “the people who would have made more sense to present” and that he was merely reading off a PowerPoint created by another university administrator. At the session, Schwab admitted that things “could have been done a lot better” — and they certainly should have. Meanwhile, at the Beren session, one administrator patronizingly responded to Apfelbaum's statement on overhead costs by remarking that students “don't care. They don't care how much you pay for staff and pots. They're students.”

One Beren student's remarks in opposition to the dining plan revisions

The new system is a violation of the trust we placed in YU's administration to act in our best interest and must immediately be replaced with one that takes into account the difficult financial situation of many of YU's students, treating them with the dignity they deserve.

One student concern that the new plan was supposed to solve was remaining funds left over at the end of the year. But out-of-towners and international students, an increasingly growing group on campus, had the opposite problem. Unlike so-called “in-towners,” these students often remain on campus for Shabbat, eat meals in the YU cafeterias on Fridays and Sundays, and buy food on school holidays. As last semester came to an end, these students were running out of funds, with many forced to borrow their friends' “caf” cards to buy food. With the new plan, the YU administration has sent a message that these students will be left to fend for themselves.

Three months into the semester, only after the student outcry over the plan reached its breaking point — with articles in both The Observer and The Commentator, as well as the aforementioned student petition — the administration finally caved, only to schedule two “info” sessions with the stated goal of responding to student questions to “better explain” the plans as they are, with no mention of any intention to change them. Over the course of the sessions, approximately 60 students questioned representatives from the administration, searching for some logic that would explain why the plan was changed in the first place and what benefit the new plan was supposed to infer on the students.

The sessions did little to assuage students' contentions. The Wilf Campus

speak to the heart of the issue and the imperative need for change. “I decided to become kosher,” remarked the student at the Beren info session. “I decided to take this challenge on myself. I am grateful that we have a kosher cafeteria and it is easy to be kosher when I'm here, but now I am literally working my a-- off every day of the week to pay for the \$3,000 of my reduced meal plan and now I see that I have \$100 left.”

Hearing the calls of struggling students at info sessions is just the tip of the iceberg and does little to rectify the predicament so many of our peers are facing. Tangible action must now be taken to right the wrong that was perpetrated upon ourselves and our classmates.

Accordingly, we feel it is imperative for the university to rectify the problems that they themselves created. Reverting to the simpler dining plan structure from last year is the most basic step that must be taken. Recognizing that cafeteria items are expensive, the university ought to look into ways to mitigate these costs for students, who are already struggling to make ends meet and pay YU's hefty tuition and fees. Recognizing student frustration with leftover meal plan balances, perhaps the university should push for solutions to return unused funds back to students. Either way, something must be done to fix the broken system and end the injustice that has been committed against the student body of YU.



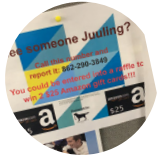
1 The Elevator Manifesto

“Under no circumstances should you hold the [elevator] door open to finish a conversation or wait for your friend to get out of the bathroom.” – Unknown (nevertheless, my new #YUhero)



2 Thanksgiving

A pumpkin spice-themed *Shabbos* meal with a bunch of crazy Americans who try to convince you that it isn't *chukas akum*. But hey, at least you get to use your phone. #shabbospregame



3 See someone juuling?

I called, but nobody picked up. What kind of sick joke is this? #whistleblower



4 Torah Tours: Building the Jewish Home Since 1969

The Start of Something New, or The Worst Trip Ever. There is no in-between.



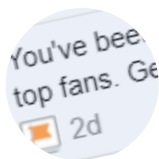
5 Seforim Sale interviews

Speed dating ... but it's frum *and* free!!!



6 Rick and Morty season 4

“What did you do while you were waiting? Hope you didn't sit around and waste your life!” -Mr. Poopybutthole



7 Being our own top fans on Facebook

Sounds about right. Get your badge now: <https://www.facebook.com/YUCommentator/>

7 UP by Elisheva Kohn DOWN

Sitting on the wrong side of the Monsey Trails bus mechitza

Still less traumatizing than sneezing on the 4th floor.

1



Computer Science internships versus literally any other internship out there

FREE TRAVEL, FREE FOOD, FREE APARTMENT, AND FREE SWAG sound so much better than “coffee and payment not included.”

2



WiFigate

It was either Baby Yoda or the Ukrainians.

3



Bio majors

It's not your fault, but we all hate you.

4



No Keilim Mikvah near Stern

Great. Now we can't *toivel* all those prohibited kitchen appliances housing keeps warning us about. #Wedidn'tstartthefire

5



Open House

Ah, the sweet smell of naiveté, accompanied by clueless parents, hyperenthusiastic administrators, and FREE FOOD!

6



Biweekly reminder that the elevators will never be fixed

Do they think we are going to jump over the fence...? Count += 1

7



LGBTQ,
continued from Front Page

university community would be allowed to form, but a club specifically addressing LGBTQ inclusion would not. The club application was denied.

After this, Miller, Marder and Edmonson had additional meetings with Dean Nissel discussing the issue of LGBTQ students' experience on campus. “We know that some of the student leaders were frustrated last year,” said Nissel about the meetings. “But the conversations helped provide more insight into the LGBTQ+ students' experience on campus and pave the way for additional conversations this year.”

Earlier, in December 2018, Miller, Marder and Edmonson had emailed the President's Office, asking to meet with President Berman regarding the club approval process and to discuss the importance of the creation of a space for LGBTQ students on campus. In the email, Edmonson wrote, “It has happened in the past that events proposed by students and clubs are rejected often without a clear reason as to why or a clear determination as to who rejected the event.” They hoped that in meeting with President Berman, they could create more open communication regarding club and event approval, especially concerning the creation of a space for LGBTQ students on campus. They also hoped that he would have the authority to make decisions on the issue that other members of the administration lacked.

In February 2019, they met with President Berman, who argued that the issue of LGBTQ inclusion on campus should be solved through student-facilitated discussion, not administrative decisions. He did not articulate a standard by which LGBTQ-themed events could be approved. He also did not express support for the creation of a GSA but thought that student input from the diverse community of students at YU was vital in the discussion of LGBTQ issues.

Miller, Marder and Edmonson left the meeting frustrated. “I felt as though the administration generally, and President Berman particularly, regarded the issue of LGBTQ inclusion on campus as not important enough to merit serious thought or consideration,” said Edmonson. “Additionally, it seemed that the school just did not value the input of its student leaders.”

Following the meeting, Miller, Marder and Edmonson decided to arrange a conversation between a diverse group of students, hoping to create the type of dialogue that President Berman had requested. They invited LGBTQ and straight students, men and women, students who spent their day in the *beit midrash* and others who did not. They also invited Dean Nissel and a representative from the President's Office to sit in on the discussion. They hoped the meeting would facilitate communication between the spectrum of students at YU and members of the administration regarding LGBTQ issues. “We were optimistic that this would not only start a dialogue but would reach practical solutions for President Berman to consider,” said Miller.

In March, while the meeting was being scheduled, President Berman responded to them via email. “Although the format you've described is not really what I had in mind,” wrote Berman, “I appreciate you taking the initiative.” To facilitate further discussion, President Berman invited Dean Nissel and the seven student council presidents, including Miller, Marder and Edmonson, to another meeting “to talk about how best to facilitate discourse around important issues that matter to our students and the campus community.”

According to the three student council presidents, more conversations with the administration led them to feel that the administration would not pay attention to the results of the conversation they had previously arranged between students. Consequently, they abandoned the idea and focused on the new meeting scheduled with President Berman.

At the meeting, they were disappointed to find that President Berman tried to discuss other topics, such as women's involvement on campus, while giving limited time to the discussion of LGBTQ issues. “We had very different agendas in the meeting,” said Marder. “It was clear that President Berman wanted to talk generally, while we tried to prioritize the issue of dialogue around LGBTQ inclusivity, the reason we felt we were having the meeting to begin with.”

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*TOWN HALLS,
continued from Front Page*

Chaim Nissel, Dean of Students — who was not present at either session — and Apfelbaum.

Before the meeting, Mili Chizhik (SCW '22), a student who has advocated against the current meal plan, mentioned that she had set up at least two meetings with Apfelbaum in the last two weeks, both of which he canceled, one of which was canceled less than 45 minutes before the meeting was scheduled to take place. Apfelbaum canceled the other meeting because he had to attend a funeral in Toronto, Chizhik said. In response to the informational session, she remarked, "I don't think it'll be helpful. And ask me after the meeting and I'll say the same thing."

The first part of both events was devoted to a PowerPoint presentation prepared by the university to address common concerns of students regarding the plan. After the PowerPoint presentation, a question and answer session was held.

Last year's meal plan consisted of three different tiers and ran on a declining balance program. First-year students were unable to buy in under the lowest tier. According to Apfelbaum and Schwab, the administration heard a number of complaints regarding this plan. One major complaint was that food prices were too high, especially when compared to outside vendors. Additionally, it was found that students had excess money left over at the end of the semester that was not refundable.

"Both of these are pretty large intractable problems," Schwab stated. "But we wanted to create a system that allows, at least optically, for this to not look like as much of a problem."

Apfelbaum and Schwab emphasized the expense of running University Dining Services. They explained that the expensive nature of the meal plan is to counterbalance the overhead costs — the fixed costs to run a cafeteria operation. Furthermore, while other universities have a non-kosher operation to offset the price of the kosher operation, there is no such system in YU.

Prior to the creation of the current meal plan, Apfelbaum and his team looked at the meal plans of other universities in New York. Once the current plan was formulated, Apfelbaum laid it out to student focus-groups on both campuses. According to Apfelbaum,

the students "had some comments and tweaks which were incorporated. But, generally, the reaction was positive. Otherwise, it would have been dead on arrival."

Yossi Zimilover (SSSB '20), a member of the focus group, commented, "At the focus group, they presented the plan and its reasoning. It kind of made sense at first but obviously, we didn't know that they were lowering the buying power of people and we weren't going to whip out our calculators and figure it out."

Another member of the focus group who agreed to comment on the condition of anonymity also recalled that students in the group "were unfazed and onboard" with the plan which he "personally found pretty shocking at the time." "I thought that people were not going to be too keen with having half of their money not be spendable," he stated.

The new meal plan split the overhead costs at the beginning of the process. Instead of students paying for overhead costs throughout the semester, a fixed \$675 fee was instituted on both the reduced and standard plans. The up-front fee allowed the university to reduce all food prices by approximately 40%. Students would be able to add funds with no further fees incurred. Under the new plan, there are only two tiers priced at \$1,500 and \$1,750 per semester. Furthermore, first-year students could buy into the lowest plan as opposed to last year's plan.

Apfelbaum explained that overhead and the cost of labor increased this year. If the status quo meal plan was kept, prices would have been raised by 5-8%. "We didn't raise the prices because we figured that there was only so much change we can do in a period of time," stated Apfelbaum. "We actually took the hit."

Apfelbaum mentioned complaints he received following the implementation of the current plan from students who were running out of money early in the semester. "In almost every case of students who complain that they are running out of money, they were on a higher meal plan last year," Apfelbaum said. "They will run out of money because they are eating at the same rate ... but they just don't have enough money on the plan."

Both Apfelbaum and Schwab indicated that they would be interested in making changes to the meal plan in the future. Apfelbaum told Beren students that he will

gather more student focus groups to suggest changes to the current meal plan. "If the changes are technically feasible and financially feasible we will absolutely make changes," he said.

After both meetings, Dean Nissel remarked, "We hear you and will be making changes. I am hopeful that the changes will be announced within a few days." As of the time of publication, Cohen did not respond to a request for comment.

Beren Q&A

A common theme throughout the meeting was that students were more concerned about their day-to-day experience in the cafeteria than the technicalities of the plan. One student even said that she can only eat three bagels a day in order to afford to eat in the cafeteria.

Another student relating her experiences said, "I decided to become kosher. I decided to take this challenge on myself. I am grateful that we have a kosher cafeteria and it is easy to be kosher when I'm here, but now I am literally working my a-- off every day of the week to pay for the \$3,000 of my reduced meal plan and now I see that I have \$100 left."

"What's the point of the meal plan? I am hungry. I eat five meals a week in the caf and I am out of money already," remarked one student. "The only facts that I know right now is that my parents are struggling to make ends meet. I am in Yeshiva University and I don't have enough money for food."

As Apfelbaum attempted to respond to this student he was met with interruptions from a number of students. During the disturbance, Kraut stated, "I'm going to interrupt because people are getting angry and frustrated because I believe you guys are thinking you're not being heard. You are. Okay? I think the responses [by Apfelbaum] are logical and statistical and I hear you. You're hungry ... I get it, I really do. We don't want you to be hungry. We don't want you to eat three bagels a day."

The interruptions did not stop there. While Apfelbaum suggested raising the lowest plan per semester from \$1,500 to \$1,700 one student shouted, "Or you should just stop taking our money!" The student continued to repeatedly interrupt as Apfelbaum attempted to answer her.

When Cohen offered to show a student "emails from hundreds of students" complaining about leftover money on their plans in years past, a student interrupted him saying, "Okay. Now reply to every single one and say: 'What if we took away all of your money and you ended up running out?'"

"Excuse me. You weren't listening. We aren't taking away your money. We are dividing your money into two different buckets as opposed to keeping it together," Apfelbaum responded.

Apfelbaum asked by a raise of hands how many people signed onto the lower meal plan as opposed to the higher plan. Almost every student in the room raised their hands.

Cohen suggested that anyone who wants him to compare their spending habits between this year and last year should approach him after the session. In response, a student retorted, "I feel like you want us to prove it to you and it is frustrating."

When Apfelbaum referred to overhead costs as a rationale for the membership fee, Kraut replied, "They don't care. They don't care how much you pay for staff and pots. They're students."

At one point during the session, Kraut admitted that she didn't think the new meal plan "worked for the majority [of students]." "It needs to be tweaked and changed in different ways," she stated.

Wilf Q&A

Throughout the session, Schwab apologized to students for the way the implementation of the meal plan was handled by the university. "For students to be frustrated by it is entirely reasonable and understandable," he said. "I think we could have done a better job alerting the students that the meal plan was changed."

When students asked what options the university was looking into implementing for next semester, Schwab stated that they are considering "implementing a new meal plan that is just \$1,500 with no membership and no discount," among other options.

After one student suggested the implementation of a meal swipe system, Schwab indicated that it would be a complicated system to switch over to. "It can be particularly complicated given the nature of kosher food and the eating habits of Modern Orthodox Jews which might be different than other college populations. It's something that we can explore, but very carefully. It has the potential for making things worse," Schwab stated.

Schwab indicated that he had trouble understanding why students who are on the same plan as last year are running out of money earlier. According to Schwab, Dining Services have noticed that they are ordering more food than last year, which means that students are eating more food overall. One student suggested that people may have gotten "sticker shock" last year. "People aren't thinking about the balance; they're just thinking about the price. They don't think how much it is comparatively," the student remarked.

One student expressed that he did not see a notification of the new plan by the university prior to its implementation. Schwab responded that it was "actually spelled out in the housing application." He continued, "I think people just blew right past that because the meal plan is the least interesting part of the housing application."

After being asked whether the goal of the cafeteria is to be a moneymaker for the university, Weisberg stated that "the dining service program is part of the larger not-for-profit status of the university. Any profit that the dining service makes has to be reinvested into the university."

Akiva Poppers (SSSB '22) presented mathematical calculations which he claimed showed that "the only scenario where a student is better off is when he is on the standard plan and spends little to no money in the restaurants. Should a student on the standard plan use all of their available Omni money [in restaurants], the comparative value of last year's plan to this year's plan computes to a loss of 6.5%."

Poppers concluded that if a student spends \$500 in Omni funds at restaurants — the yearly amount allocated on the standard meal plan — "they would need to add \$375 to their standard plan to get to a breakeven point... If a student on the reduced plan uses up all \$300 of available restaurant money, they will lose \$270 in value" compared to last year's reduced plan. "When students say that the new caf plan is stealing money, they're right. It's just not in the way they think," Poppers asserted.

Cohen invited Poppers to speak with him after the event to review his math. Poppers told The Commentator that Cohen mentioned to him that if Poppers' math was correct, someone in the administration erred when calculating the pricing of the plans for this year. If that was the case, the plan would be illogical to use in future semesters, according to Cohen. Cohen told Poppers that he will schedule a meeting between them and Apfelbaum to further discuss the details of his calculations.



MICHELLE NAIM

ALLUF,
continued from Front Page

was under question.

“It’s really about the number of seasons that should have been available to him,” said Bednarsh. This seemingly refers to the 10 semester/15 quarter rule of eligibility for Division II and III players. This rule states that a student athlete has the first 10 semesters or 15 quarters enrolled as a full-time student to complete the four seasons of competition eligibility.

“The rule is not designed to keep a player like Bar out,” said Bednarsh.

“I wanted to make sure that when we brought Bar back we would not have a

With this fast start, it seems like another berth in the tournament — where Alluf could finally make the appearance that eluded him almost two years ago — is their ultimate goal.

situation where anyone could slip in an allegation,” said Bednarsh about Alluf missing the 2018-‘19 season. “Finding the right way to present things and the right way to have everything go by the rules... we weren’t able to do that in time for the season last year but we could this year.”

Bednarsh added, “You want everyone to be unimpeachable... You are [looking into the situation] to protect the student athlete

and the team and the program.”

“Obviously the addition of a First Team All-Conference player to our roster helps us, but even more so is the leadership and understanding of the system that he brings with him,” said Coach Elliot Steinmetz to Macslive.com.

Alluf has averaged 20 minutes per game in five games this season.

After being named the unanimous pick

to win the Skyline South division, the Macs dropped their first game against Occidental College in Los Angeles. Since that first loss, the Macs have gone 5-0, most recently defeating the Mount Saint Vincent Dolphins 103-73, putting their season record at 5-1.

Entering last season, Coach Stenmetz declared that his team “had a target on its back” — they exited the season with a repeat appearance in the conference championship. With this fast start, it seems like another berth in the tournament — where Alluf could finally make the appearance that eluded him almost two years ago — is their ultimate goal.

LGBTQ,
continued from Page 3

Throughout the semester, Miller continued to meet with other prominent university officials, including Dean of RIETS Rabbi Menachem Penner and Senior Vice President Josh Joseph, regarding the issue. “Through these meetings, I was hoping to find support from leaders on campus who have the influence and power to implement meaningful policy changes. These individuals have valuable perspectives and I believed that pursuing one-on-one conversations would be conducive to reaching the solutions needed to better our campus community,” said Miller. He hoped through the meetings to convey to these officials the necessity for LGBTQ students to feel more accepted on campus.

“Most people we spoke to genuinely

wanted to help but felt they didn’t have the power to do so,” said Marder. “Our influence as student leaders felt like a facade. And it seemed that administrators felt similarly shackled by a system of hazy processes, deflections of responsibility, and crippling stagnation.”

In April, Miller met with President Berman again, this time without Marder and Edmonson, to discuss solution-oriented approaches to issues related to the LGBTQ student experience. At the meeting, Miller advocated for the formulation of clear criteria by which LGBTQ-themed events could be hosted on campus. He also spoke to President Berman about the need for LGBTQ students to be able to create some sort of community or club, as well as the need for the administration to break the silence on LGBTQ issues on campus by creating a forum for the discussion of these concerns.

President Berman redirected Miller

to OS� at the meeting, claiming that they were better equipped to deal with the issues Miller wanted to discuss. He again did not express support for the creation of a GSA and stressed the importance of student discussion on the issue. Miller had already met extensively with members of OS� throughout the year, who said they did not have the authority to discuss solutions to many LGBTQ issues on campus.

Miller, Marder, and Edmonson left at the end of the year feeling frustrated with the process of communication with the administration. “Yeshiva University claims to encourage its students to be leaders within their communities. Yet, when their students try to lead in effective ways, they are consistently deterred and met with intense opposition,” said Edmonson.

They also stressed that their efforts were only one part of a greater struggle for increased LGBTQ inclusion on campus, noting

that many LGBTQ students created dialogue with the administration and submitted requests for events regarding LGBTQ issues.

In a September 2019 interview with The Commentator, President Berman said that he had formed a committee, led by Senior Vice President Josh Joseph, to “address matters of inclusion on our undergraduate college campuses, which includes LGBTQ+.” They were tasked with formulating “a series of educational platforms and initiatives that will generate awareness and sensitivity,” by meeting with students, administrators, and other institutions over the course of a number of months. “I know the team is working to continue to learn more and has already met with various individuals and groups, both within YU and outside of YU,” said Dean Nissel on the issue. “I am hopeful that their work will provide additional guidance to help identify ways for our campus to be more inclusive and respectful.”



The Wilf Campus plaza, with Furst Hall on the left and the Gottesman Library and Glueck Center on the right.

Second Student Caught in Elevator Scare on Beren Campus

By ELI AZIZOLLAHOFF

A Stern College for Women senior was taking the elevator in Stanton Hall on Tuesday, Nov. 12, when it malfunctioned, falling three floors and stopping abruptly. The student, who wished to remain anonymous, was on her way to the cafeteria for dinner from the 11th floor when the elevator abruptly stopped on the 10th floor. She then felt the elevator drop to the seventh floor in what the student described as a “lurch.” The student pressed the call communication button in the elevator, but there was no answer.

According to the student, the elevator stopped falling once it reached the seventh floor because another student had pressed the call button. The student jumped off the elevator as the doors closed behind her and warned the other student of the situation. From there, she walked down the stairs and informed security of what had transpired. The security guard told her that they would shut down the elevator immediately.

Randy Apfelbaum, Chief Facilities and Administrative Officer at YU, commented, “When [our maintenance contractor] inspected the elevator after the incident, they found the mechanisms were all in working order ... The elevator didn’t fall — elevators, including the Brookdale cars, have multiple redundant safety systems, all required by building code, to ensure passenger safety.”

Although she is physically fine, the experience was traumatic for

the SCW senior. “I was scared, and the second I got out on the seventh floor, I started crying,” she said.

For months there have been complaints regarding the elevators that service the buildings of Beren Campus. These grievances

elevator malfunction or not, this still shouldn’t have happened,” said Lindenberg about this second elevator ordeal. “Malfunction or not, the message YU is sending to its students is that they don’t care enough about our safety nor

The student pressed the call communication button in the elevator, but there was no answer.

range from the inability of students to get to class when the elevators are out of service, to difficulties that out of service elevators present students and faculty members with disabilities, to previous stories of elevators on campus malfunctioning with students inside. Last spring, The Observer reported that Shifra Lindenberg (SSB ‘21) suffered a minor concussion after experiencing what she described as an “elevator free fall” in the Brookdale Residence Hall. In response to this incident, Apfelbaum contended that YU elevators have a number of safety redundancies to prevent them from ever entering a “free fall.”

Regarding the most recent elevator malfunction, Apfelbaum stated, “It seems that the safety circuit on the elevator may have shut down the elevator momentarily — its computer probably reset itself. When that happens, the elevator stops and then resets itself. The stopping action can feel like a fall but is a part of the many safety features on the elevator. Essentially, the elevator worked as designed and stopped.”

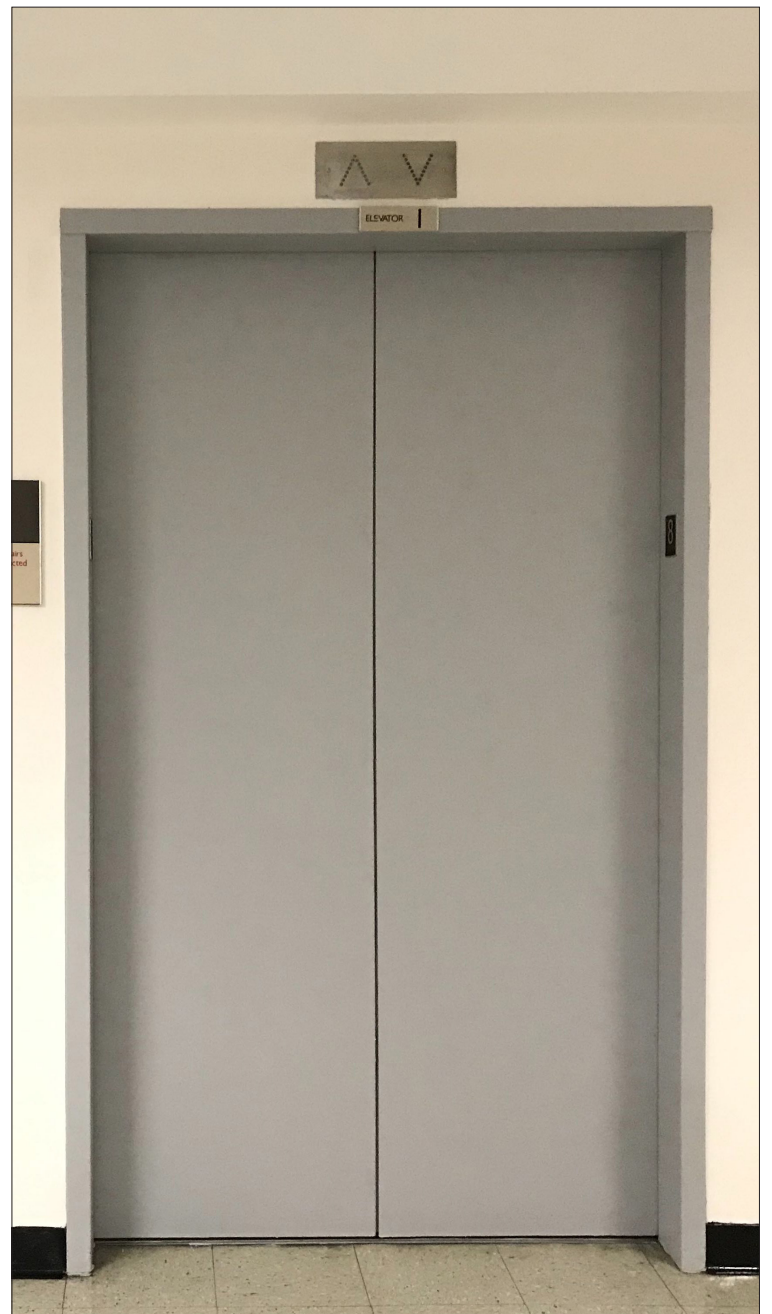
“Regardless of if this is an

do they care about the trauma that these incidents bring upon its students.”

YU did not address the issue of the emergency communications system failure. In March of last year, the university was issued a summons by FDNY fire inspectors for failing to comply with a previously-issued order that they must maintain two-way communication capabilities between elevators in the Schottenstein Residence Hall and the command station. Since the summons, the university has settled the violation in New York County Criminal Court, according to state court records.

“[YU] does great things, but it’s all overshadowed by their incompetence,” the SCW student stated. She noted the irony of leaving a university-sponsored Physical Therapy session and then immediately experiencing this ordeal in the elevator.

“It disgusts me that the elevators are still putting students in danger,” added Lindenberg. “I don’t think the university is doing anything to show that they care about our safety.”



An elevator at Stern College’s Stanton Hall

THE COMMENTATOR

University Plans ‘Info Session’ Regarding New Dining Plan Fees

By YITZCHAK CARROLL

Editor’s Note: This article was originally published online on November 17.

An “info session” will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 20 at both the Beren and Wilf Campuses to clarify the newly revised dining plan that was implemented earlier this academic year, Dean of Students Dr. Chaim Nissel announced via an email to the entire student body on Friday, Nov. 15.

“We understand that students have many questions about the new meal plan structure,” Nissel wrote. “Yeshiva University Dining Services would like to invite all students to an info session to respond to your questions and better explain the meal plan structure.” The Beren session will be held from 2:45 to 3:30 p.m. in Yagoda Commons, and the Wilf forum will be held from 5:45 to 6:30 p.m. in the Rubin Shul.

Students were irked by changes to the university’s student dining plan instituted at the beginning of the semester. Under the new plan, participants are charged a flat \$1,350 “membership fee” for the academic year. Becoming a member provides discounts of 35-40% from standard pricing for non-members on food sold in a YU cafeteria. Mili Chizhik (SCW ‘22) garnered over 250 signatures on a petition she drafted in opposition to the new meal plan.

When asked about the purpose of the

information sessions as well as if any changes to the dining plan are forthcoming, Nissel said he is keeping an open mind. “We want to hear the student sentiment and fully understand the issues involved. At that point, we can see what the options are moving forward.”

Chief Facilities and Administrative Officer

Randy Apfelbaum contends that the new meal plan was designed to cater to students’ needs. “They are to discuss the current plan and dispel some misinformation that has been circulating,” he said regarding the forums. “We would also like to hear student comments and feedback. Ultimately we want the dining plans to work for the students.

That’s their only purpose.”

Chizhik, however, disagrees with Apfelbaum’s assessment, and feels the information session should have been held earlier in the semester. “After waiting seven weeks for the administration to respond to my [petition], they send the email inviting students to these meetings to try and explain the structure of the meal plan,” she said. “Maybe the meetings will allow students to gain an understanding of why they will have to start skipping meals to last the remaining time in the semester.”

“There is no reason why we would need to gain an understanding of the structure of the meal plan,” she added, noting that students who oppose the revised dining plan should make an effort to attend the meetings. “Perhaps instead of explaining how everything works they should just take responsibility for the fact that they took money from students, many of whom can barely afford tuition itself.”

Some students, like Sara Verschleisser (SCW ‘21), were concerned with the vague language of the email. “Explaining the meal plan is pointless unless they are ready to take constructive criticism,” she remarked.

Other students, like Temmi Lattin (SCW ‘22), reacted to the email with optimism. “Taking students’ opinions into account in a formal setting by providing an opportunity to have questions answered seems like a very positive step towards valuing student input,” she noted.

“Perhaps instead of explaining how everything works they should just take responsibility for the fact that they took money from students, many of whom can barely afford tuition itself.”

Mili Chizhik (SCW ‘22)



The Furman Dining Hall on the Wilf Campus

THE COMMENTATOR



NEVER. STOP. COMMENTATING.

Got something to share?
Email adhirsch@mail.yu.edu

Bnot Sinai: The Grassroots Initiative Beit Midrash

By TAMAR BEER

When a group of individuals share a common dream and work together to bring their ideals into reality, something beautiful is created. This is what happened with Bnot Sinai, an all-women's summer *beit midrash* program in the Five Towns, created by college students and intended for Orthodox women college-aged and above.

I started Bnot Sinai after my second year in Israel because I missed the intensity of full-time *beit midrash* study. I suspected that I was not alone in this, so I began to gauge interest for Torah-learning opportunities by creating a simple Whatsapp group of like-minded individuals. After only two days of its existence, forty women had joined the

years later, Bnot Sinai has become a home to 15-20 participants at the end of the summer, united by a love of Talmud Torah and the desire to further their religious growth. I plan the program each year with the help of a few particularly passionate participants.

The schedule at Bnot Sinai covers a wide variety of topics such as Talmud, *Tanakh*, *halakha* and *machshava* under the guidance of renowned educators. Through *chavruta* study, the students learn from each other and engage in the texts before shiur. Rivky Elbgerger (Touro, 2021), one of the participants of the program, said, "The teacher *talmida* relationship fosters a more interesting conversation in the class, as opposed to a more frontal-oriented shiur."

The participants from Bnot Sinai come from all walks of life and span a variety of

into a cohesive group of friends who bonded over a shared love of *Talmud Torah*."

It is inspiring for me to see this program's success and the support that it has received — whether it be through generous donations, the women who choose to devote the end of their summer to learning Torah, the incredible teachers and staff who put so much of their time and energy into this project, or the various features we have received in publications such as *The Jewish Action* and

The Jewish Week's "36 Under 36." People are inspired by Bnot Sinai's startup story and want to be involved in furthering the Torah education of women in the Orthodox community.

Editor's Note: For more information about Bnot Sinai's newest projects, visit bnotsinai.org or the Bnot Sinai Facebook page.

Two years later, Bnot Sinai has become a home to 15-20 participants at the end of the summer, united by a love of Talmud Torah and the desire to further their religious growth.

chat. Rachel Fried (SCW '19, GPATS '21) said: "I was thrilled by the opportunity to learn Torah at a high level in a structured environment with equally passionate peers."

A short while later, Yavneh and the OU Women's Initiative got wind of this grassroots initiative and wanted to support it. Two

ages. Having a diversity of backgrounds in the room makes for interesting and insightful discussions, a respectful atmosphere and unique bonds. Says Rabbi Dr. Frazer, a Bnot Sinai educator, "I was struck by how diverse the group was - a range of ages, backgrounds and *hashkafot* — yet it meshed



The students of Bnot Sinai with Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier

TAMAR BEER

YU Students Receive Mental Health First Aid Training

By ZAHAVA FERTIG

You are walking down the street. All of a sudden, a seemingly healthy, middle-aged man stumbles in front of you; his legs seem to have given out. He is gasping for breath, his eyes are wide open in fear and he is sweating persistently. He can't speak, and he's clutching the left side of his chest. These signs are consistent with a heart attack. But they are also consistent with a panic attack. How do you know the difference?

Everyone knows that when someone requires emergency physical aid you call 911. However, when someone is experiencing a mental illness emergency, who do you call?

On Nov. 17, the YU Counseling Center and

the Active Minds Club presidents Hadassah Penn (SCW '20,) Shira Levy (SCW '20) and Aaron Purov (YC '22), invited Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) to present a six-hour course to train Yeshiva University students to identify and respond appropriately to a person who is experiencing a mental health crisis. MHFA "is a skill-based training course that teaches participants about mental health and substance-use issues."

Over the span of the course, the MHFA instructor, named Blerim "Blair" Cukovic, discussed how to identify if someone is experiencing a mental crisis. He discussed how to approach, ask and observe someone who might be a risk to themselves or to others.

Students learned how to identify signs, symptoms and disorders ranging from major

depressive disorder, anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder, self-injury, suicide, panic and trauma attacks, psychosis, schizophrenia and substance abuse disorder.

"It was like watching something happen in front of me, but I couldn't understand what the person who was talking to me was saying." These short exercises allowed the

Everyone knows that when someone requires emergency physical aid you call 911. However, when someone is experiencing a mental illness emergency, who do you call?

Cukovic used practical methods to simulate the experiences of various mental illnesses. For example, in order to experience what hallucinations might feel like, participants were asked to try having a normal conversation while someone else was whispering into their ear. One participant remarked,

participants to be more understanding towards experiences of mental health panics.

Cukovic repeatedly emphasized that students who underwent the course are not diagnosticians; they were simply there to learn how they can help in a situation only when desired.

Another goal of the training was to teach students how to adjust their language when it comes to the discussion of mental illness as it is a sensitive topic. According to Cukovic, the statement that an individual "committed suicide" should be changed to "died by" or "completed" suicide. This adjustment is meant to disassociate suicide from crimes that are "committed." Cukovic expressed that talking clearly and directly about suicide shows that you take it seriously.

Small adjustments in our speech patterns can change a society that stigmatizes mental illness into one in which people get the help, support and treatment they need and deserve.

Looking back on what she gained from the training, Hadassah Penn, co-president of Active Minds remarked, "The training session reminded me to view other people with compassion. Through the training, I gained some skills to actually help people. It was gratifying to see people who were invested in the program, who stayed the whole time, participating and engaged."

Editor's Note: For more information regarding Mental Health First Aid, visit mhfa.cityofnewyork.us.



Students attended a six-hour course on mental health first aid training.

HADASSAH PENN

Bioethics in Practice: Battle of the Sexes— Talent or Testosterone?

By BAILEY FROHLICH

Gender, as both a means of identification and a sociological construct, is constantly evolving. The traditional two gender system has been supplanted by an expanding lexicon that includes nonconforming terms such as genderqueer, gender fluid and non-binary. In order to mitigate misgendering, it is now common in diverse workplaces to include in one's email signature preferred gender pronouns, such as "he/him/his," "she/her/hers" or the gender-neutral, "they/them/theirs."

Whereas differential treatment by gender is illegal in many domains, such as medical care, employment and education, sports remains one of the few areas in which it is legal, and in fact necessary, to differentiate between males and females, consequently creating an international bioethics controversy.

Most recently, the controversy surrounds South African Olympic athlete Caster Semenya, who holds two 800-meter Olympic titles and three world titles. Semenya was born and raised as a female, as she has external female sexual characteristics and identifies as cisgender. Yet, after being forced to undergo "sex-determination testing" following her 2009 Berlin victory, Semenya was diagnosed with 46, XY disorder of sex development (DSD), a congenital condition in which her chromosomal makeup is XY, the normal male chromosomal pattern, yet her external anatomical development is typical of a female. Individuals with DSDs are often referred to as "intersex," and conditions such as 46, XY DSD, in which a person's reproductive anatomy or appearance is not

consistent with their 23rd chromosomal pair, are termed "sex reversal".

In April 2018, the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) issued new eligibility regulations for female athletes with DSDs, requiring them to reduce their blood testosterone levels to below 5 nMol/L — which the IAAF considers the upper limit of natural female levels — in order to be allowed to compete in certain female events. They were advised to do so via hormone therapy. Although the International Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) upheld the IAAF regulations in an Executive Summary they released this past May, Semenya refuses to take any hormone-suppressing drugs and continues to contest the decision in court.

Sports remains one of the few areas in which it is legal, and in fact necessary, to differentiate between males and females, consequently creating an international bioethics controversy.

According to CAS's report, both parties agree on the necessity of gender division in sports, as "there is a substantial difference in elite sports performance between males and females." This assumption is the basis of separate men's and women's teams in every athletic level, from Little League to the Olympics, and it is at the heart of the historically-famous "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match between Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs.

However, the ethical issue surrounding CAS's controversial policy hinges on the acceptability of using testosterone levels as

the determining metric for gender categorization in DSD athletes. While varying levels of testosterone contribute to the differential performance of males and females in sports — such that testosterone contributes to the power and size of skeletal muscle and the number of red blood cells — the *degree* to which elevated testosterone levels confer a significant competitive edge is a matter of scientific debate.

Proponents of the CAS ruling err on the side of caution: although the decision may be discriminatory to DSD athletes, as it bans them from competing in events based on a congenital condition that is beyond their control, it ensures athletic fairness and preserves the original purpose of gender divisions in sports. Since there must be a concrete basis

on which to distinguish between male and female athletes, testosterone levels seem like the best option since it can be scientifically linked to athletically-superior traits. Thus, if a 46, XY DSD athlete can lower her blood testosterone level to 5 nMol/L, she would be allowed to compete, as her competitive advantage would be diminished.

However, the opposing opinion argues that testosterone cannot be used as a metric, since biologically, it is not the sole determinant of athletic prowess. High testosterone levels is just one single factor that contributes to athleticism, among others such as

height, natural agility and coordination, body structure, and mental toughness. What distinguishes Usain's Bolt's height and Michael Phelps's reduced lactic acid production from Caster Semenya's advantageous physical traits? In fact, Eero Mäntyranta, a Finnish Olympic skier who won seven medals, had a condition called polycythemia, which causes abnormally elevated blood hemoglobin and red blood cell concentrations due to a mutation in the erythropoietin-receptor gene. Although his increased oxygen-carrying capacity undoubtedly conferred a competitive advantage, Mäntyranta competed without opposition. How is his case different than Semenya's?

Furthermore, to take CAS's decision to its natural conclusion, what would the policy be against XX females who naturally produce levels of testosterone that exceed 5nMol/L, such as with women who have the inherited disorder congenital adrenal hyperplasia? Although such a woman would have elevated testosterone levels akin to Semenya's, the former *would* be allowed to compete simply because her inherent chromosomal makeup is typical of a female, regardless of the "substantial difference" in athletic performance that the IAAF and CAS claim is caused by testosterone.

As a female collegiate athlete, I appreciate the merits and shortcomings of both sides of the discussion. Although maintaining fairness in sports is a significant value, Semenya's case begs us to consider the ethical implications of basing an international policy on controversial scientific evidence and such a decision's ramifications for future gender-related policies.



Caster Semenya

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Editor's Note: Yeshiva University has recently initiated a new meal plan which has aroused much discontent among the student body. The YU students of 30 years ago faced similar cafeteria-related problems. Their dissatisfaction culminated in a Student Council sanctioned boycott of the Furman Dining Hall which led to further discussion between student leaders and the administration.

From the Archives (September 21, 1989; Volume 55 Issue 1) — Cafeteria Prices Spur Student Anger

By SHUKIE GROSSMAN

Recent price adjustments at the Furman Dining Hall have evoked a voice of outrage from students allegedly victimized by fiscal impropriety.

In response to increasing student interest in a formalized meal program, the current fall semester marks the operative commencement of the Yeshiva University Undergraduate Dining Club at the school's Uptown and Midtown campuses. Along with the implementation of this venture, however, increased prices on many popular food items have stigmatized the inception of this long awaited program.

According to Dean of Students Dr. Efreim Nulman, the system's structure reflects "recommendations of last year's Food Services Committee," as well as the professional advice of a hired consultant. The program's objectives, as outlined by a midsummer mailing, include to "assure parents that students will be eating well and regularly at the University's dining facilities," as well as "greater convenience, accessibility, and money management" for the students themselves.

But much to the student's dismay, less of a breakfast selection, smaller portions, longer checkout lines, and exorbitant prices, don't correspond with these anticipated improvements. Senior Michael Paskas asserts, "Since

I'm only here for one semester I didn't think I'd finish my \$600 card, but thanks to the new prices, I'll have no difficulty."

Mr. Jeffrey Rosengarten, Director of Support Services and Personnel, maintains that the new prices in the cafeteria "reflect reality." Mr. Rosengarten contends, "prices were calculated with a well accepted formula which attempts to capture the costs of food and labor," thus, "for the first time appropriate prices are being charged." Dr. Nulman explains, "our consultant expressed shocked over three price levels (existent in previous years). Consequently, adjustments reflect one price which can be modified in an appropriate way each year, not haphazardly."

Aside from general discontent over costs, many students insist that the structure of the present Dining Club doesn't meet previous expectations. According to Director of Yeshiva University Food Services Mr. J. Lieberman, the system of "declining balance" currently utilized in the Cafeteria allows the students to "spend what they want to spend." Lieberman emphasizes that "if you're not there, you're not losing out," as meals are paid for individually rather than in bulk. Senior Josh Thomas responds, "the students didn't say give us a credit card to eat in your restaurant!"

Other factors such as an initial minimum deposit of six hundred dollars as well as no refunds on remaining balance have



The Commentator archives

discouraged a majority of students from joining the plan. Mr. Rosengarten believes, however, that six hundred dollars is "a reasonable amount to part with on faith," also accentuating that refunds aren't offered in order to compensate the "major cost to the University to implement such a plan."

With approximately four hundred members from both campuses, Mr. Rosengarten underscores the fact that "the Dining Club provides us with a guaranteed customer base, a key to improved food and service for all students." "Ideally," adds Rosengarten, "we would like to see a larger percentage of

students participating in the Dining Club Plan."

Dr. Nulman reveals an additional plan in conjunction with Yeshiva College Student Council to open an on-campus late-hour convenience store which would complement the current offerings of the Division of Food Services. In reference to the current meal plan, he hopes that "students are patient with something they've wanted for a very long time." Although patience is a virtue, many students wonder whether its limitations have been exceeded.

From the Archives (November 21, 1989; Volume 55 Issue 4) — Caf Attack Causes Resignation

By DANIEL OSHINSKY

A secretive anti-cafeteria organization helped renew student protests against the cafeteria last week, but also compelled Senior Joseph Hyman, Chairman of the Food Services Committee, to resign his post.

Hyman resigned after a satirical flyer on cafeteria prices appeared on dormitory bulletin boards and stairwells Sunday evening, November 10. A computer printout, the flyer asks in bold letters, "Hey Jo, how much was that salad?" "Jo" then answers, "Only \$9.95, but I also got a free one ounce drink!" The flyer ends, "Signed ROTEC, Rest Of The Eaters Club."

ROTEC's three organizers later approached the *Commentator* and agreed to be interviewed, but said they wished to keep their identities a secret for the time being.

ROTEC produced three other sarcastic portrayals of the caf last week, surreptitiously distributing the flyers around campus during the early morning hours

In general, students showed support for ROTEC. They were especially amused by the flyer

which joked, "Why did the student cross the road? To get his chicken at HaBodegal!"

But Hyman, who says he has been dealing with student anger over cafeteria prices since the beginning of the year called ROTEC's first flyer "The last straw."

"Criticism to my face I can take, but having my name up on the wall, that's not something I want to deal with. I want to deal with issues, not politics."

ROTEC claims its flyer was directed solely at the cafeteria, and that the name "Jo" was chosen arbitrarily. "Why would we waste time attacking a committee which is trying to do the same thing we are doing?" asked one ROTEC member. Another member said that before this incident he did not even know who Jo Hyman was.

Although the ROTEC members apologized to Hyman, Hyman still termed the incident extremely aggravating. "Maybe it was arbitrary," he says, "but a lot of people didn't look at it that way."

Explaining the goal of ROTEC, one member states, "We want to show the cafeteria that students are willing to take

action, and we want to show the students that they can take action." Members say they were particularly incensed when at a recent open forum on the cafeteria, administrators insisted there would be no lowering of cafeteria prices.

According to ROTEC, the flyers were meant not just to humor students, but to prevent the cafeteria from becoming a dead issue. "The *Commentator* has come out with numerous articles. Then there was a meeting just to say there was a meeting," explained one member. "But nothing's been done."

ROTEC members hope to meet with the cafeteria after the Thanksgiving break. "We want to be shown figures which justify their prices," they say, "and to see if something better can be done." To demonstrate the students' desire for change, ROTEC also plans to organize a one day boycott of the caf.

Although they feel the Food Services Committee has been ineffectual, ROTEC members say they wish to work in conjunction with the committee. "We're not trying to take over here," said a member. It is still unclear who will be succeeding Hyman as

Chairman of the committee.

Hyman remains skeptical of ROTEC. "If these people want to work so hard with the Food Services Committee," he complains, "and didn't even know I was the chairman, then I can't understand how they're going to be effective."

"Bashing the cafeteria, and blowing things out of proportion only makes them lose credibility in the eyes of the administration," he adds.

Hyman also states that, barring outside donations to subsidize a meal plan, the cafeteria will never be able to lower its prices. Food prices are rising steadily, he says, while Glatt Kosher meat, Choluv Yisroel dairy products, and a full time Mashgiach mean added expenses.

But ROTEC members say the present price structure is unacceptable to students. They also feel students are being hurt by the lack of a genuine meal plan. "Right now, all we have is a credit card," said a member. ROTEC members believe, that faced with continued protests, the administration will realize that changes are necessary, especially if the cafeteria ever hopes to win back the student body.

From the Archives (December 20, 1989; Volume 55 Issue 6) — Boycott Breeds Negotiation

By MARK I. KOFFSKY

A YCSC-sponsored boycott brought cafeteria service to a standstill on Thursday, December 7. Throughout the day, protesting students stationed at the cafeteria entrances appealed to would-be customers not to patronize the cafeteria. The boycott was honored by almost all members of the YU community, including MTA and WSSW students, leaving the Furman Dining Hall empty of customers for all three meals.

To prepare the student body, YCSC sold hundreds of "Boycott Survival Kits" containing deli sandwiches from Bernstein's on the night before the boycott. Other activities to publicize the boycott consisted of placing large signs in the lobbies of the Residence Halls and writing "BOYCOTT" in red ink across the cafeteria's publicity posters that are posted in the dormitories.

Continued on Page 11

*BOYCOTT (ARCHIVES),
continued from Page 10*

According to Barry Kaye, President of YCSC and chief organizer of the boycott, the boycott was implemented to call attention to student concerns about the cafeteria. Kaye outlines the four major demands that are being sought: to lower the prices, to increase the portion size, to examine the Food Services' books, and to ensure that a meal plan will not be mandatory next year.

Most students feel the boycott was a resounding success in that though it demonstrated concretely their dissatisfaction with the cafeteria, many were also impressed with the student unity displayed during the boycott.

Students hope that the success of the boycott will convince the Administration to make concessions on prices and portion sizes.

In an interview on the day after the boycott, Mr. Jeffrey Rosengarten, Director of

Supporting Services, stated that he felt the boycott showed the inability of the student leaders to deal with the cafeteria issues in a professional manner. He contrasted the uptown boycott with the Food Services Committee at Stern College, which meets with Food Service administrators on a regular basis to discuss student concerns regarding the Midtown Center's cafeteria.

According to SCW Junior Elizabeth Botterman, Co-Chair of the Stern College Food Services Committee, the committee has addressed many issues of concern to Stern students such as food quality, taste, and presentation. Ms. Botterman admits she is not entirely satisfied as there are issues still to be resolved, but it was felt that a concurrent boycott at Stern would hinder further progress of the Committee.

In response to the boycott, a Food Services committee meeting was held uptown on December 13. Persons attending the meeting included: Mr. Rosengarten, Food Service Directors Mr. Alan Lieberman and Mr. Allen Soloman, YCSC President

Barry Kaye, *Commentator* Editor Dov Pinchot, ROTEC members Jay Lehman, Steven Dyckman, and Steven Felsenthal, former Food Services Chair Joe Hyman, and Eli Cohen, who served as chairman. Mr. Cohen opened the meeting with a statement expressing his desire to see the Committee become a strong force in resolving the cafeteria issues.

Mr. Rosengarten indicated at the onset of the meeting his unwillingness to allow a student review of the Food Services' books. He did, however, express his desire to hear comments from the committee members about specific food items. The committee then considered the price and portion size of various food items: the salad bar, fish, chicken, bread, cereal, and french toast. Changes in cafeteria pricing that resulted from the committee's discussion included: a slice of bread would be free with a lunch or dinner entree, the french toast portion would be increased from one slice to two with no increase in price, and a cereal and milk combination would be reduced from

85 to 75 cents.

The committee also addressed itself to other issues such as the possibility of a mandatory meal plan for Residence Hall students next year. Mr. Rosengarten stated that the possibility does exist since it may become an economic necessity for Food Services to be guaranteed a reasonable amount of business from the student body as many other universities do. He explained that the \$600 required to join the YU meal plan is minimal compared to the costs of other university kosher meal plans. An example cited for comparison from information provided by Joe Hyman was Barnard College, where kosher meal plans range from \$2,412 to \$2,740 per year.

Before the meeting was adjourned, Mr. Rosengarten asked for assurance from the student leaders that any complaints about the cafeteria be addressed through the Food Services Committee and not through subversive signs and additional boycotts. The committee closed the meeting by resolving to meet again in the near future.

From the Archives (November 21, 1989; Volume 55 Issue 4) — Student Dissonance

By **Dov J. PINCHOT** and
THE COMMENTATOR
GOVERNING BOARD OF 1989-90

Recent price adjustments at the Furman DiMuch to the student's dismay, the status of the Food Services remains a neglected issue. Students are reacting to the cafeteria, even as the semester nears the Thanksgiving recess, with a fervor reminiscent of early September.

The reason for these sentiments is clear-cut; Yeshiva College students have been abandoned in their quest for cafeteria changes not only by the University, but by Student Council. The "complaint session" of almost a month ago resulted in nothing more than 45 minutes of aimless exchange.

Unlike the cafeteria prices, talk is cheap. Words must be transformed into action.

Since the beginning of the semester, students have been more than eager to actualize their ideas into reality. Indeed, The Rest of the Eaters Club and increased business at HaBodega are salient indications of student opinion.

So, where is the progress? The students are still speaking out. The Student Council must pay heed to these three month old complaints, especially if the University continues to ignore them.

A suggestion for our student representatives: a meeting between the students and the Student Council in order to gear student body input and recommendations toward decisive action.

The need to finalize this prolonged issue is imminent; its fate rests in the hands of a cohesive student body unit, leaders and laymen alike.

The World of Eternity

By **JEREMY KOFFSKY**

There are many posters of quotes around campus. The people quoted range from President John F. Kennedy to Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks; all espouse the greatness of YU. I feel that many of them come across as cheesy. But despite their usual corniness, there is one that continues to leave an impact on me every time I ponder it. It comes from the Rav himself:

"When I enter yeshiva I am at home because I am grounded in the world of eternity."

The quote is reflective of the Rav's typically complex vocabulary choices and really got me thinking about the differences between my time in *yeshiva* and my time in YU. In *yeshiva*, you can fly. You fly to a different country, to a different world, your personal capabilities flourish. Things you never thought

possible become possible. There is an energy there that uplifts you into a stratosphere of spirituality that you never thought reachable. When it ends, the plane flies back and you are grounded. Initially, being on the ground is strange. You think things should be like they were up in the air, but it seems as if

Yeshiva is about the building blocks of your life. What is important to me? Who do I want to be?

If *yeshiva* is about questioning who we will become, YU is about the act of becoming. I am becoming a doctor, one student says at YU. I am becoming a lawyer, says another. To me, the

what is important. But in YU the choices we are making and the people we are becoming have eternal reverberations, and there are an endless amount of ways to get there.

The majors we choose will determine our career. Some of the biggest decisions of our lives are arriving. These decisions will ground us. We are asked to make sacrifices that we didn't have to make in *yeshiva*.

The decisions and their impact never fades. It lasts for eternity.

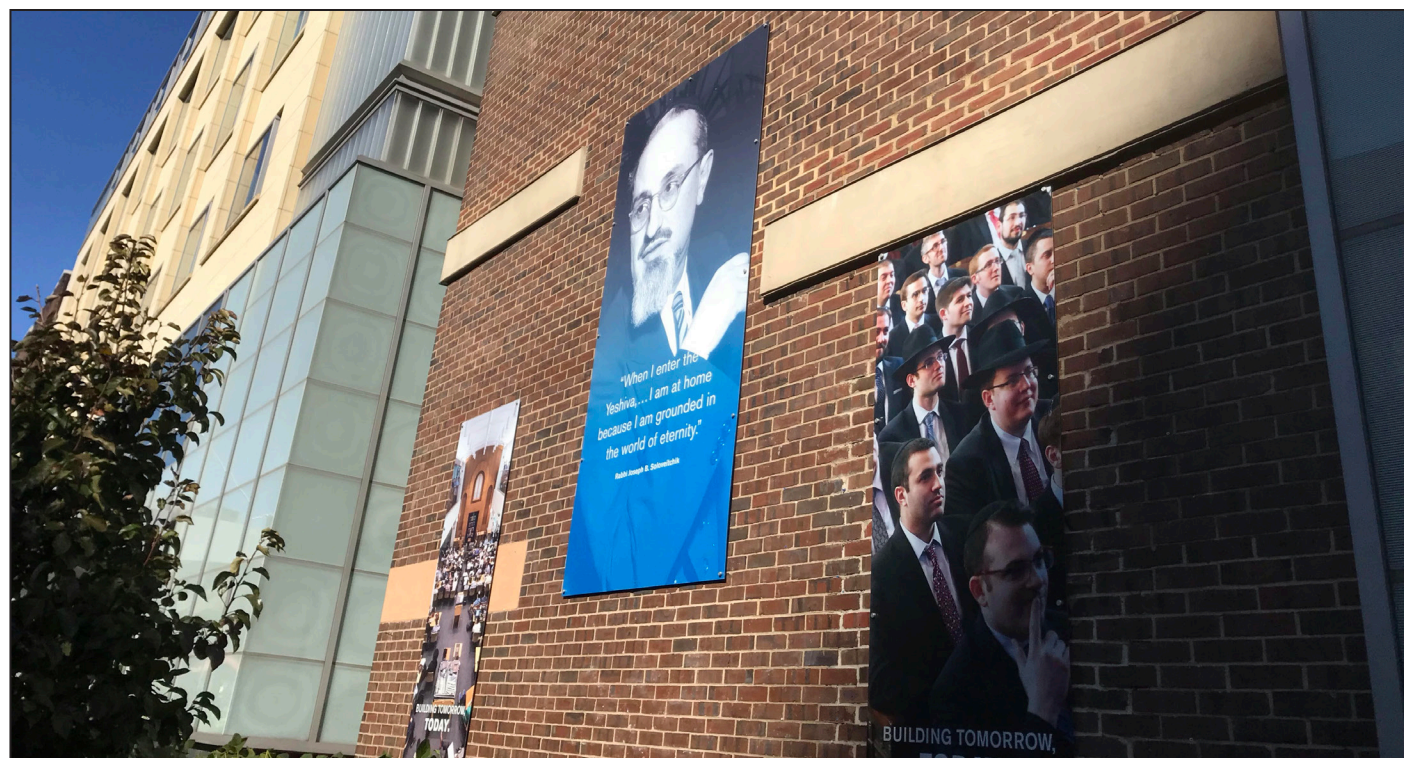
While the transition may be tough, when walking in the *beit midrash* in the morning and at night it's inspiring to see students in this incredible eternal world. There, *talmidim* are investing time just when time is pulling them in other directions. They are becoming who they wanted to be in *yeshiva*. Although they are grounded, it is not in a world that is stagnant — it is in a world of eternal possibilities.

*But in YU the choices we are making,
the people we are becoming, have eternal
reverberations, and there are an endless
amount of ways to get there.*

you are the only thing that has changed.

For many, the adjustment is not easy. We are given more responsibilities and to some it can feel like Israel was its own little world. The people we were there seem to be irrelevant to who we are now. But from my experience, I have found that both serve a profound purpose.

world of becoming — YU — offers so many unique opportunities that the *yeshiva*, the world of questioning who we will become, does not. When we are just beginning to realize who we want to be in Israel, the choices of becoming are irrelevant. We are not picking our careers in *yeshiva*, most are not dating, we are immersing ourselves in



A poster in the YU plaza quoting Rav Soloveitchik.

JEREMY KOFFSKY

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BUILDING TOMORROW, TODAY

Nishma Research Publishes Study on Modern Orthodoxy

By SARAH BEN-NUN

Nishma Research conducts sociological studies analyzing various topics in the Modern Orthodox (MO) community in the United States. On November 4, 2019, they published two new studies: “The Successes, Challenges, and Future of American Modern Orthodoxy” and “The Journeys and Experiences of Baalei Teshuva.”

The impetus for this survey is a survey that was previously conducted in 2017. The issues that are explored here were indicated as being significant back then, warranting further research. To do that, Nishma contacted *shul* rabbis through the RCA, who passed the survey on to their community members.

The findings are based on 2,629 responses, 1,817 (a little over half) self-identifying as Modern Orthodox. The religious identities of the other respondents were *charedi*, Conservative, or non-Modern Orthodox. 888 respondents identified as *baalei Teshuva* (Nishma’s classification is that they became Orthodox at or after their *bar/bat mitzvah* age, or older); 744 of those self-identify as Modern Orthodox. The in-depth analysis that the study provides shows that a majority of responders (85%) consider Orthodox observance an important presence in their lives.

In the first study, 51% of respondents were male, 49% female, with a median age of 49; in the second, 49% were male, 51% female, with a median age of 53.

Off the Derech

63% of respondents admitted concern about people leaving Orthodoxy and becoming not *frum*; 21% didn’t share this worry. An even greater number of people (67%) were extremely concerned that this issue is *not* being properly addressed by MO communal leaders.

As a footnote, the compilers of the study state that they’ve experienced “quite a bit of leeriness among shuls and communal organizations about discussing the topic,” and that while it can be a challenging and sensitive subject, “people want it to be much better addressed.”

LGBTQ

12% of respondents felt that the Modern Orthodox community is too focused on change to the detriment of tradition. 35% responded that drawing fragmentation lines prevents much-needed changes from coming to fruition. 53% felt that there is an appropriate balance.

That 35% listed the changes that they’d wish to see. The top two are, respectively: the role of women (52%), and LGBTQ (17%).

“Our current (male) leaders are (more) obsessed with figuring out what titles female leaders should have ... than in serving the needs of Orthodox women and girls,” said one respondent during an interview.

On the LGBTQ issue, one respondent called for “compassion and welcoming toward LGBT members of our community.” Another claimed, “It’s not our place to judge them. We need to support these members of our community.”

Shmirat Halakha

“In probing the responses, it became clear that secular society is having an impact on Modern Orthodoxy,” says the Introduction. The study proceeds to probe how much of that impact affects the visible acts of observance.

Regarding general day-to-day practices,

That 35% listed the changes that they’d wish to see. The top two are, respectively: the role of women (52%), and LGBTQ (17%).

77% say they’re “comfortable.” 77% of men are reportedly comfortable with *davening*, followed by women, at 66%. The survey also states that “young people,” at ages 18-24, are the least comfortable with *davening*, at 54%.

Half (51%) say they remain consistent and rooted in their *halakhic* practice, but a significant minority — 37% — “compromise at some level,” the most popular compromises being *Shabbat* and *kashrut*.

Baalei Teshuva

The second study focused its investigation

on *Baalei Teshuva*. Close to half (42%) of today’s MO communities are made up of *Baalei Teshuva*. Half (49%) of them come from Conservative or Orthoprax backgrounds. (Orthoprax is the state of not maintaining any belief, but practicing some rituals.) Various reasons are given for their attraction to Orthodoxy. Respondents were asked to select up to five factors that they felt influenced their decision. Top among them were intellectual curiosity (53%) and Orthodoxy being viewed as a more authentic form of Judaism (52%), among others.

A great number (37%) admitted the greatest challenge they face in their Orthodox life is their relationships with their families; this challenge manifests itself in things like *Shabbat*, *kashrut*, and family activities. One respondent said, “I had to work really hard to maintain a good relationship with [my mom]. That’s not covered in *kiruv*.”

Compared with FFB (*frum* from birth) respondents, *Baalei Teshuva* reportedly felt less comfortable with different aspects of Orthodoxy (such as *davening*, “Jewish learning,” and “day-to-day Orthodox living”) by margins ranging from 12-18%.

As Nishma’s Method Statement states, “We hope this research will further communal dialogue.”



The Breed Street Shul in Los Angeles, California, which has deteriorated over time.

Average YU SAT Scores Released

By MICHELLE NAIM

Yeshiva University recently released its average First Time On Campus (FTOC) student SAT and ACT scores for the 2018-2019 school year. The Common Data Set (CDS) is released yearly by YU's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment.

The CDS is an important statistical tool that universities produce annually for the public. As per YU's website, "The Common Data Set (CDS) provides a common format for supplying information to the College Board, *Peterson's Guides*, *U.S. News & World Report* and part of the Thomson Corporation. CDS covers such information as student admission, enrollment, retention, and graduation; academic offerings and policies; student life; financial aid, etc. The CDS is a set of standards and definitions of data items defined by these groups."

According to the CDS, from 2016-2017, 59% or 321 first time on campus students submitted SAT scores, compared to the 53% (330) in 2017-2018 and 45% (253) in 2018-2019.

A close comparison of the CDS charts shows that SAT scores of current first year

students are slightly lower than years prior. In 2016-2017, the score for SAT critical reading was 540 in the 25th percentile and 680 in the 75th percentile. In 2017-2018, which features scores after the creation of the New SAT, students in the 25th percentile scored 600 and 710 in the 75th percentile on SAT evidence-based reading and writing. The most recent CDS shows that students

The most recent CDS reported that 52% submitted their ACT marks and 45% submitted the SAT, making the ACT the most commonly submitted standardized test for the first time in YU's history.

achieved 580 in the 25th percentile and 700 in the 75th percentile on SAT evidence-based reading and writing.

For SAT math during 2016-2017, students scored 550 and 680 for the 25th and 75th percentile, respectively. In 2017-2018, students achieved a 560 in the 25th percentile and 710 in the 75th percentile. This past year (2018-2019), students scored 560 in the 25th percentile and 700 in the 75th

percentile. Scores in the 25th percentile remained constant while those in the 75th percentile dropped by 10 points.

The average student score on the ACT has not varied much over the past three years. In 2016-2017, students in the 25th percentile achieved a composite score of 23 on the ACT and a 30 in the 75th percentile. 2017-2018 scores for the ACT brought a composite of

23 in the 25th percentile and 29 in the 75th percentile. The most recent CDS exhibited an ACT composite score of 22 in the 25th percentile and 30 in the 75th percentile.

ACT math scores were 23 in the 25th percentile and 28 in the 75th percentile in 2016-2017. The following year's CDS (2017-2018) showed that students achieved a score of 22 in the 25th percentile and 29 in the 75th percentile. ACT math scores for the

2018-2019 year were 22 for the 25th percentile and 29 for the 75th percentile.

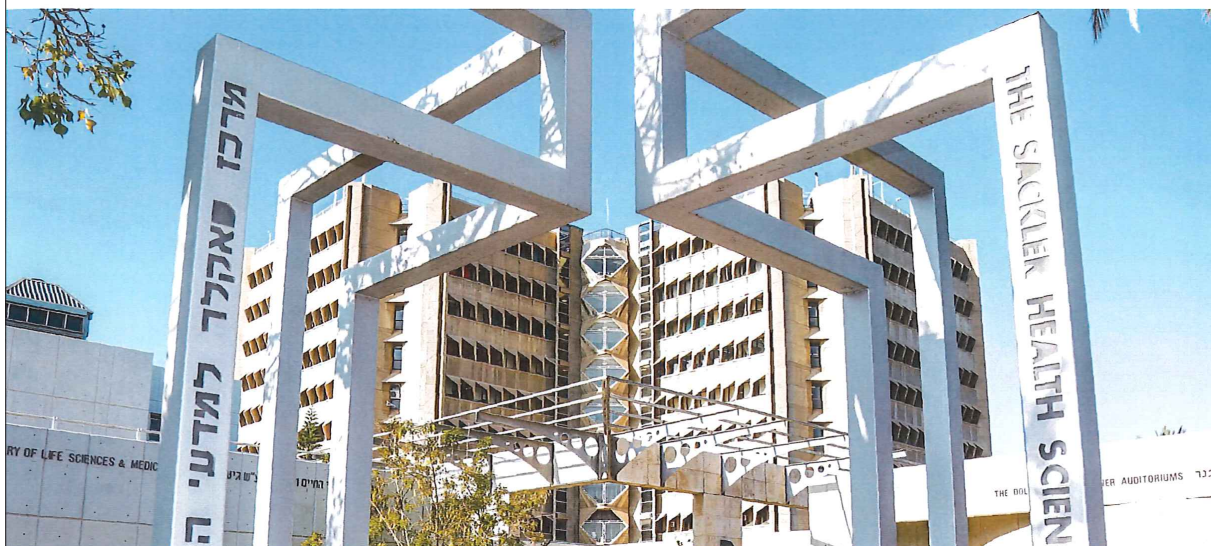
2016-2017 ACT English marks were 24 in the 25th percentile and 31 in the 75th percentile. The next year, in 2017-2018, students earned ACT English scores of 23 in the 25th percentile and 31 in the 75th percentile. In 2018-2019, English marks were 23 and 33 for the 25th and 75th percentile, respectively.

Between 2016 and 2019, there was an increase of 10% of students who chose to submit ACT scores rather than SAT scores. In 2016-2017, 59% of students sent in SAT scores, while a mere 42% sent in ACT scores. The most recent CDS reported that 52% submitted their ACT marks and 45% submitted the SAT, making the ACT the most commonly submitted standardized test for the first time in YU's history.

According to the university's Director of Institutional Research and Assessment Yuxiang Liu, "The scores for the past two years looks [sic] like a regular fluctuation, with no dramatic up or down for either SAT or ACT. The ACT scores fluctuated less than SAT, and the transition from [the] old SAT to [the] new SAT may explain part of it."



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Faculty Spotlight: An Interview with Dr. Neil Rogachevsky

By YOSEF LEMEL and
MICHAEL WEINER

As the Associate Director of the Straus Center for Torah & Western Thought at Yeshiva University, Dr. Neil Rogachevsky has a mission. As he explained an interview with *The Commentator* this past week, the goal of the Straus Center is to create a “cadre of leaders” who can combine their study of Judaism in the *beit midrash* with “deep engagement” in the Western philosophical tradition in order to meet the political and moral challenges of our time.

Growing up in Toronto, Canada, Rogachevsky inherited his love of literature from his mother, who was a librarian. Additionally, in attending Bialik Hebrew Day School, a Labor Zionist institution, he received an “intense education” in Israeli history and culture, where his lifelong passion for Israeli affairs began. While grateful for this experience, he now regrets the “perfunctory” nature of his traditional Torah education, recalling that upon graduation, he could “barely read Rashi.”

As he got older, Rogachevsky gravitated towards Russian literature and French philosophy but wasn’t particularly politically active. Reflecting on that period, Rogachevsky recalled that he gave a comical speech as a 12th grader “advocating a politics of world government,” based on reggae music. As a college student at McGill University, he experienced a “political awakening” following 9/11 and the Second Intifada, which drew “vicious anti-Israel protests” from fellow students. In response to that, Rogachevsky delved deeper into his political and philosophical studies, and also started a political

literary journal — *Entrepot* — that quickly became a “Canada-wide” student publication. In contrast to the culture of American universities, Rogachevsky noted that the academic environment at McGill was less competitive and ambitious, but rather fostered free intellectual inquiry for its own sake.

After finishing his undergraduate studies, Rogachevsky completed a one year master’s degree in political science from the University of Toronto, where he studied with Clifford Orwin, a prominent political philosopher, before moving on to study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which he considers to be the most “decisive

academic research. While in Israel, he made a few contributions to *The Jerusalem Post*. He also worked on the editorial staff of *Mosaic Magazine* and has written for *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard* and *The American Interest*, among other publications.

Soon after concluding his doctoral studies, Rogachevsky chose to conduct his post-doctoral research at Yeshiva University’s Straus Center for Torah & Western Thought, where he also taught classes in political philosophy. Rogachevsky stressed his “tremendous admiration” for Rabbi Meir Soloveichik, director of the Straus Center, who he has worked with closely for the past four years.

publications over the years, including a forthcoming book on the founding of Israel.

Discussing his personal perspective on Zionist thought, Rogachevsky shared that though he marvels at the achievements of the Labor founders of Israel — like David Ben Gurion, Chaim Weitzmann and Abba Eban — he believes that their ideology had certain intellectual limitations. In particular, he is skeptical of their strongly-held view that all “moral and spiritual significance” comes from working the land of Israel. Instead, Rogachevsky asserted that “my kind of Zionism is a Zionism that I hope will be elevated by Chazal and by political philosophy.”

At YU, Rogachevsky guides his students through the “great works” of Western political theory — Aristotle, Plato and Machiavelli, inter alia — and attempts to convey their relevance for thinking through contemporary political problems.

intellectual experience” of his life. While there, he lived a “quasi-yeshivish/monkish” lifestyle, intensively studying ancient Greek, German and Hebrew, and reading Spinoza’s philosophy in a seminar with Professor Warren Zev Harvey. Though offered the option to learn ancient Greek in his native English, Rogachevsky opted to study in the Israeli program. While it was a “killer experience” for the first semester, the knowledge he gained there prepared him well for his doctoral studies at Cambridge. Under the supervision of Robert Tombs, a noted historian of France and England, he wrote a thesis on the bureaucratic despotism of Napoleon III’s regime.

Rogachevsky considered a career in journalism and has consistently written articles and reportage to complement his

At YU, Rogachevsky guides his students through the “great works” of Western political theory — Aristotle, Plato and Machiavelli, inter alia — and attempts to convey their relevance for thinking through contemporary political problems. His hope is that students learn to go beyond the latest political trends and ideologies and ask the “deeper theoretical questions” about the proper uses and limits of politics.

In addition, he continues to focus on his own research, where he explores questions like the character of the modern Israeli regime and its meaning in “the sweep of Jewish history.” Rogachevsky points out that while there is a vast literature on the origins and nature of the American political system, far less such scholarship exists about Israel — a lacuna that he has tried to fill in his various

For students interested in pursuing political theory more seriously, Rogachevsky advises that they study an additional language, read “everything” while they still have the time — “whether it be Thucydides, Plato, Machiavelli, Locke, Hobbes or Nietzsche” — and spend a summer working in D.C. or local government to get an insider’s perspective on the political world.

While Rogachevsky doesn’t think everyone should study political philosophy, he thinks that those who do must read great works of literature and wrestle with the most difficult questions of what it means to be human and how to construct a political order that can enable human flourishing. Only with this background is one well equipped to “face the den of sharks that is life in America.”



Straus Center students with Dr. Rogachevsky overlooking the Temple Mount

NEIL ROGACHEVSKY

Why We Must Acknowledge Carlebach's Sexual Abuses

By **DONIEL WEINREICH**

Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach has been accused of sexually assaulting and harassing numerous teenage girls and women, yet somehow I remained unaware of this until I was 18 years old. Through all the elementary school music classes, the *yeshiva* stories and the Friday night *minyanim*, no one had managed to mention this, despite the allegations being public since 1998. I only found out about them from a post on an internet forum five years ago. The comments on that post indicated I was not alone in my ignorance; many people who went through establishment Modern Orthodox institutions were ignorant. Perhaps you are unaware as well. It's probably not your fault. After all, Orthodox institutions continue to celebrate the man without acknowledging his abuses. And it's time we stopped.

The first public allegations appeared in *Lilith* magazine over 20 years ago. The article in question documented several cases occurring over several decades where Carlebach harassed women and molested minors. In one particularly graphic account, he dry-humped a teenage girl in camp until achieving orgasm. In another, he groped a 12-year-old's breast while whispering his famous greeting of "holy *maidele*." Carlebach was also known to make unsolicited phone calls to women in the middle of the night asking what they were wearing or professing his love for them, and many reported hearing about this at the time. As with many predators, it was an "open secret" among those who knew him.

The allegations did not end with the *Lilith* article, and there has been a renewed focus on them in the past couple of years. On many articles and blog posts concerning the issue, you can find comments by women who also claim to have been harassed or assaulted by Carlebach. In real life, one does not have to go far to find a second-hand account about their friend's relative or teacher who also had such an experience. The whispers have become a roar, so loud that even Carlebach's daughter cannot deny it.

And yet little has changed practically in our community. You can find many posts from rabbis on Facebook about the issue, but I know of few institutions that have adjusted accordingly. We certainly haven't at YU. Carlebach's name graces our Shabbos schedule each week (twice this week), and last week a student and Rosh Yeshiva hosted a YU-sanctioned *farbrengen* for his *yahrzeit*. Needless to say, among the many stories told at the *farbrengen*, none made mention of his sexual assaults.

Many are inspired by Reb Shlomo in different ways. His music is the most prominent part of his legacy, but among those who

consider themselves close followers of his, it's usually subordinate to his personality and the stories about him. People are inspired by the acts of profound, selfless love and kindness Reb Shlomo performed during his life. They are moved that despite intense opposition, a child prodigy left the ivory *yeshiva* to inspire the masses on the street.

No doubt, in a vacuum, it is very inspirational to hear of a man's unhesitant embraces

has. But perpetrators nearly always have a great reputation. This tactic also tends to also go hand-in-hand with accusations of *lashon hara*, conveniently ignoring the fact that the prohibition is inoperative when it comes to preventing harm. But if you have an *a priori* belief in the perpetrator's innocence, any allegation — no matter how serious or substantive — is merely tarnishing their reputation.

widespread rumors, accusations and a complete refusal on the part of communities around the world to protect youth and women against a charismatic leader. In the deluge of requests pleading with us not to print the story two years ago, callers reminded us of all the good Rabbi Carlebach did, as if somehow his stature would lessen the pain he was accused of causing. On the contrary, his greatness may have worsened the pain. Their power and charisma make it that much more difficult — and that much more important — to bring such allegations to light.

How then do we practically respond to the fact that Reb Shlomo was a sexual predator? At the bare minimum, we must acknowledge it.

of the criminal and deformed, of a man who found himself in poverty because he unquestioningly gave money he couldn't afford to those in need. I personally know rabbis who treat everyone with extreme unconditional love and engage in interpersonal endeavors I can only aspire to — all because they were directly inspired by Reb Shlomo's example. One such rabbi would host dozens of homeless people every Shabbos and would spend holidays in third world countries with supposed lost tribes.

Why then must we talk about the abuse? Can we not let the man's reputation stand? He's already dead. What purpose does acknowledging it serve now? The most immediate and obvious answer to this question is that sensitivity to his victims warrants it. Abuse doesn't just occur in the moment — it has lasting traumatic effects, which we ought not trigger.

But acknowledgement is not just a matter of justice or sensitivity; acknowledging Carlebach's abuses is also practically effective. It may be too late to stop Carlebach, but in order to stop future predators we need to recognize past abuse and understand the factors and dynamics that contribute to it going unaddressed.

Inroads have recently been made on this front in the Modern Orthodox community. Two years ago, a special issue devoted to the issue of sexual abuse was published in *Tradition*, the Rabbinical Council of America's journal of Orthodox Jewish thought. In one of the articles in that issue, Shira Berkovits, the founder and CEO of Sacred Spaces, thoroughly detailed these factors, many of which are relevant to the case of Carlebach.

One of these factors is cognitive dissonance. Berkovits explains how predators are often charismatic and respected leaders, and how many actively foster that sort of image in order to deflect allegations. When faced with those allegations, supporters often try to dismiss them by talking about the fantastic reputation the alleged perpetrator

has. These dynamics can be clearly seen in other cases of sexual abuse in the Jewish community. When Gary Rosenblatt publicly exposed the then Director of Regions of NCSY — and now convicted child molester — Baruch Lanner in 2000, he was met with many of the same responses. One letter to the *Jewish Week* mentioned the thousands of Jewish souls Lanner had brought back to Judaism and criticized Rosenblatt for "defaming" him. Others invoked *lashon hara* or accused the publication of having an anti-Orthodox agenda.

One can look even closer to home, at the lawsuit YU is currently facing. The lawsuit details how despite molesting numerous boys over three decades, MTA principal Rabbi George Finkelstein was highly regarded and held up as a role model in YU promotional materials. He was honored as Educator of the Year and was given a prestigious Heritage Award upon his departure. The lawsuit also alleges that when continuing to bring up the incidents, the primary plaintiff was told by then Senior Vice President Israel Miller that proceeding would not be good for Yeshiva, in an attempt to guilt and intimidate him into silence.

In both of these cases, there were numerous instances in which superiors were made aware of the abuses and chose to do nothing. They either did not believe that the abuses happened, or determined that it was expedient to ignore them. Because of this, the predators went on to abuse many more victims over the course of decades. The dynamics that lead to denial and silence about Carlebach are the same as those that enable active predators.

These connections aren't novel. The author of the original *Lilith* piece also wrote a letter to the *Jewish Week* in which she linked them, remarking:

In our reporting in *Lilith* magazine on decades of alleged sexual misconduct by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach, the same pattern emerged as in the Lanner case:

Some critics want to take extreme measures. Some want to stop singing Carlebach tunes altogether. I'm not convinced this is desirable, and even if it is, I'm skeptical of its practicality given how entrenched the tunes have become in our liturgy. I might choose not to attend a Carlebach *Kabbalas Shabbos*, but nearly every Friday night minyan I've been to still uses his tune for *V'Shameru*. Others claim that *niggunim* (tunes) cannot be *mekabel tumah* (susceptible to impurity), and in an attempt to preserve the good without the bad, propose we keep the music but erase the figure. I fear many of the advocates of this approach don't understand that those inspired by Reb Shlomo are inspired far more by the example he set than by the music he played. His music is only a small part of his positive legacy.

How then do we practically respond to the fact that Reb Shlomo was a sexual predator? At the bare minimum, we must acknowledge it. Children cannot grow up in our community on Carlebach stories and *minyanim* in ignorance of his darker side. There can be no place for unadulterated celebration. If one attended the *farbrengen* last week, they would have been met with stories about how Carlebach was a *gilgul* (reincarnation) of Avraham Avinu and Dovid HaMelekh and how he possessed *ruach hakodesh* (divine inspiration). This obviously cannot be tolerated. If we must tell stories about Reb Shlomo's mind-bending acts of love and kindness, we cannot let the rest of the story go unsaid. *Minyanim* ought not be named for a predator. When we must mention him, we must also mention his abuses.

We cannot let the enabling silence be perpetuated. If we cannot recognize Carlebach as a predator, how will we identify the future Lanners and Finkelsteins? If we do not believe his victims, how will future victims trust us?

We need to foster the sort of environment where no figure — no matter how charismatic or respected — is untouchable and where victims need not fear coming forward. If we do not, abuse will continue to flourish in the future. In order to prevent this, we need to acknowledge Carlebach's past abuses now.



The grave of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach

Rosh Hashana in Venezuela

BY AHARON BENCHIMOL

Returning to Caracas to spend the *chagim* with my family and experience the situation of the Jewish community there inspired me to write down my reflections on what it is like to live in Venezuela today.

As is well known from the news, Venezuela is currently experiencing the worst political and economic crisis since its independence in 1811. A corrupt authoritarian regime has turned the country with the largest oil reserves in the world into a country full of poverty and desolation.

An ideology that was supposed to make society more equal by diminishing the upper class and “empowering” the working class has ended up just creating and enriching a new upper class.

The country is paralyzed and people no longer have faith in the economy. The enormous level of inflation has eaten away at any remaining hope for the economy. The majority of stores in malls closed. Traffic in transit no longer exists: routes that used to take 30 minutes now take 5 minutes. In a country with the largest oil reserves in the world, it takes hours to wait in line for some gas.

The images of families rummaging for food scraps in the garbage on the street become more ordinary every day, to the point that it is now considered normal. Over four million Venezuelans have fled the country to look for better opportunities.

Sadly, the Jewish community cannot escape from this reality. Every day, the services of different Jewish organizations are needed more and more, to provide food and basic household goods along with



The Jewish cemetery in Caracas

AHARON BENCHIMOL

weakened, threatening a new electrical blackout. Just a few months ago, Venezuela experienced a blackout for over 3 days.

During the rest of the *chagim*, I attended two funerals. After leaving the second one, I tried to remember: when was the last time there was a wedding in Venezuela? The Jewish community is getting older, and most young people leave their families after graduating from high school in order to find opportunities in other countries.

During the rest of the chagim, I attended two funerals. After leaving the second one, I tried to remember: when was the last time there was a wedding in Venezuela?

medical assistance. Before traveling to Venezuela, my family asked me to bring several medicines with me. Some seemed unfamiliar. Upon arriving home, I realized that they were not only for my family, but for several other families as well. I saw that local WhatsApp groups are full of members of the community asking for medicines that they cannot find in the country. Another thing that shocked me about being home was seeing how busy the *aliyah* office was. In the midst of uncertainty, many Jewish families are now considering *aliyah* a precious opportunity to start from scratch in another country.

Middle-class Jews have transitioned from jobs like store managers and lawyers to less secure work like reselling car articles and imported food. With the minimum wage at \$8 a month, it is the only work still available.

On the first night of Rosh Hashana, panic appeared in every Jewish home as the lights shook and

Nevertheless, the community struggles to keep everything as normal as possible. The Jewish club Hebraica represents an oasis for the community and a place where you can forget for a few hours what is taking place outside. The synagogues strive to maintain their services as usual. In addition, several Jewish organizations based in America are aware of the needs of the Venezuelan Jewish community, and they bring a lot of assistance to our national Jewish organizations.

In spite of the terrible situation, the beauty of the Venezuelan nature remains intact. The vivid colors of the Avila mountain surrounding the capital give Venezuelans some hope.

The trees fill the streets with colorful mangos, and the union between the enlightened blue of the ocean and the sky gives the Jewish community the strength to tackle this difficult situation.

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Why YU Should Give Students Off on Election Day

By TEMMI LATTIN

Midterm season is undoubtedly one of the hardest and most stressful times of the college semester. With a number of cumulative tests on half of the semester's work piled on top of regular coursework and classes, there's often no time to breathe. Then, right smack in the middle of it all, Election Day falls on the first Tuesday after Nov. 1.

Almost everyone can recite the importance of voting, and most of us know enough history to appreciate the liberties provided to us through voting. Thank God, the movement to gain these rights was long enough ago that we can take suffrage for granted. However, that creates a serious problem.

At YU, Election Day was just like any other school day. There were no signs reminding students of the importance to vote and no reminders of when and where to go vote. There are many initiatives that we can, and should, start to change the culture of YU with regard to voting, such as voting drives and related events. Most importantly, however, I believe that YU as an institution can and should take a stand and make it substantially easier for students to vote with one simple decision: giving the day off for students who live close enough to travel to their county's voting location.

With the bombardment of terrible breaking news happening in the U.S. and internationally, it often feels like there are just too many societal issues to combat. The question often arises: which one do I devote my time, energy and passion to? Yeshiva University is an institution with many important ideals and values. We have multitudes of clubs on campus dedicated to social and political issues, whether related to the American-Israeli relationship or about improving the Orthodox community in areas such as inclusion and diversity. While the work these clubs do is crucial and substantial, one of the foremost actions we can do as citizens of a country is to vote and let our voices be heard,

and counted. Yeshiva University has the opportunity to encourage its student body as well as its faculty to actively participate in our democracy by giving us the day off — and in turn, the time required — to get to the polls.

Voting is a fundamental civic obligation, and YU's rhetoric about "building tomorrow" does not mean much if it is not accompanied by the strong encouragement to vote.

As is discussed incessantly, the current political climate is enormously polarized and the average voter is often hard-pressed to identify a candidate who fully represents their nuanced views. The solution to this

problem is to have better voter turnout, especially by those who are not extremely passionate about an issue one way or the other. Making it more convenient for students to be able to vote promotes these more moderate

voters to cast a ballot. If YU wants to shape the "leaders of tomorrow," what better way to do this than send the message that voting is a crucial aspect of democracy, and one that their student body should take part in.

Voting is a fundamental civic obligation, and YU's rhetoric about "building tomorrow" does not mean much if it is not accompanied by the strong encouragement to vote.

Many universities have fall break, with a weekend or even a full week for students to travel home for voting day. While that obviously wouldn't make sense for YU, given all the days missed for the holidays, many YU students live locally, and would only need a day for traveling. Yeshiva University can set an example and put the weight of their institution behind the message that even during midterms season and beyond, as life becomes busier and more hectic, partaking in our nation's democracy warrants spending some time and effort, and yes, a day off.



At YU, election day was just like any other school day.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A Boring NFL Season?

By MAYER FINK

So far the NFL season has been boring. As predicted, the good teams have beaten the bad teams with rare upsets victories. The bad teams are bottoming out, with six teams having two wins or fewer; last season only four teams had two losses at this point and no team has fewer than two wins (as of week 10 in the NFL season). It is like they are trying to lose. Additionally, there haven't been many games with top teams playing

each other, though on Nov. 11 the Seahawks (7-2) 49ers (8-1) will, but that was one of the few outliers. The teams that are at the top of their divisions look like they will run away with them as there are very few close races. The records of the 49ers (9-1), Bills (7-3) and Colts (6-4) have been pleasant surprises and some teams have underachieved more than expected but there hasn't been much unpredictability in what should be an unpredictable game. The teams that everyone thought would be good this year are good

and the teams that everyone thought would be bad are bad.

That being said, the season doesn't look to remain boring. Many of the good teams were granted an easy schedule to start their seasons. The back half of the season has many great games in store. The Patriots only played three teams over .500 in their first nine games; in their final seven games they will play five teams above .500. The 49ers, the surprise of the season, will show us if they are contenders or pretenders as their schedule gets significantly tougher including games against the Ravens (8-2) and Saints (8-2) on the road later this year.

While the top teams may have gotten a break in the early games of the season, many of them will play each other in the remaining weeks. Week 12 gives us the Eagles versus Seahawks as well as the 49ers vs Packers. Thanksgiving gives us a game that would've been considered boring before the season, but the Bills and Cowboys have both become top teams and look to make noise in the playoffs.

Moreover, due to the disparity in the league, we should be in for a very good postseason. This season has given us around 8 to 12 top teams with at least half of those teams looking like Super Bowl contenders. This year's playoffs should give us many close games which should give us a great finish to the season. Last season had a similar hype to the postseason where we were expecting

many close, thrilling games, but we were left disappointed as many were one-sided victories. This year we will be able to indicate if the postseason will be good depending on these weeks to cap off the season. If we get close games between the top teams, then we should expect the same come January.

Is this disparity between teams good for the league? The common trend in all leagues is despite the league being tainted by a large imbalance in power, the fans want to see the top two or three teams try to become dynasties instead of a ton of teams have an equal or similar chance of winning a championship. When it comes to sports, equality isn't appreciated by the fans, they want to see greatness (and terribleness, inevitably). Baseball was the national sport in the 1950s before football became America's game. During that time, the New York Yankees won six titles in 10 years and 10 titles in 16 years. If you were watching the World Series, you were either rooting for the Yankees (as a fan of the team or for the dynasty) or you were rooting for the opposing team out of hatred.

Fans may consider the 2019-'20 NFL season may be considered great at the end. If the playoffs are great and the finish to the season is memorable than that is probably all we'll remember. We have to keep in mind that the main reason behind this is the disparity in the league, which may taint this season for those that want to see competitive football every week by every team.



The National Football League has had an overall unremarkable season so far.

PIXHERE

Upholding Integrity Means Applying Standards To Both Sides

By DANIEL MELOOL

A few weeks ago, on Nov. 5, it was Election Day. Don't worry — you didn't miss your chance to vote for or against President Trump. These were local elections, held in several states such as Kentucky, Mississippi, Virginia and New Jersey. The first two states held elections for the governor's mansion, while the latter two held elections for their respective state houses. Other states like Washington, Colorado and Texas, among others, held elections on various state-wide propositions. Since most of the election results were not particularly surprising, they didn't receive any major media attention.

However, Kentucky was a different story. Incumbent Governor Matt Bevin faced a tough reelection campaign, thanks to his extreme unpopularity. From the beginning of the race, Bevin trailed Andy Beshear, the state's attorney general, in the polls — often by double-digits. Considering that President Trump won the state by 30 points in the 2016 election, reelection should have been a walk in the park. However, as the polls closed and the results were tallied, Beshear eked out a victory of about 5,000 votes, out of more than a million cast. At first, Bevin refused to concede the race to his opponent, saying that there were “a number of irregularities,” and pointing to Kentucky's past history with voter fraud. Bevin explained that his campaign would seek an official canvass of the votes. He also claimed that “thousands of absentee ballots were illegally counted,” and cited unconfirmed reports of voters being “incorrectly turned away.” Bevin would finally concede the race nine days later, on Nov. 14.

For all of his claims about voter fraud, Bevin did not provide any conclusive evidence. Robert Stivers, the Republican leader in the Kentucky Senate, called on Bevin to concede the race, saying, “It's time to call it quits.” NPR sent out a tweet promoting an article about Bevin's and other claims about voter fraud. The tweet read, “Without providing any evidence, Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin questioned the election's legitimacy. And he isn't the first politician to do so. Election specialists worry that unsubstantiated claims about voter fraud erode confidence in democracy.” The article then goes on to talk about other instances of politicians claiming voter fraud, such as then-Florida Governor Rick Scott and then-candidate Donald Trump. Regarding the aforementioned candidates, NPR noted, “After the 2018 midterms, then-Florida Gov. Rick Scott alluded to “rampant voter fraud” that was never borne out in his Senate race,” and President Trump alleged that “millions and millions of people” voted illegally in the 2016 election, in order to explain why he lost the national popular vote to Hillary Clinton. Trump has never presented any evidence for that claim, and “a group his administration assembled to investigate voter fraud disbanded less than a year after it was formed, with no major result.”

At first glance, NPR seems to be rightly pointing out that evidence-free claims about voter fraud are bound to have deleterious effects on the legitimacy of our institutions. Everyone, regardless of their political affiliation, should condemn politicians that blame voter fraud for their election losses without providing any evidence.

However, the article did not give the same treatment to former gubernatorial candidate, Stacy Abrams. Abrams lost a close election for governor of Georgia in the 2018 midterm elections. She has constantly blamed voter suppression for her defeat. That same NPR article prefaced all the Republican claims of voter fraud with the qualifier “without evidence,” but when it came to Abrams' claim, the article said, “Democrats also have continued to blame the results of the Georgia gubernatorial election on election administration issues that they say suppressed turnout.” The same Washington Post article that NPR cited concludes that it isn't clear if there was any voter suppression, or if there was, whether it affected the outcome. NPR even promoted an article last year on social media about the Georgia gubernatorial race saying, “In a fiery speech, Stacey Abrams insisted this was no normal concession, decrying what she called “deliberate and intentional” voter suppression by Brian Kemp that she believes led to this result in Georgia's governor race.” Interestingly, this claim was not prefaced with the words, “without evidence.”

When Matt Bevin claimed, without evidence, that there was voter fraud in his election, NPR rightly pointed out that there was no evidence to back this claim. However, when Abrams, a Democrat, blamed voter suppression on her election loss, not only did NPR not point out that there

was no evidence to this claim, but she was actually lauded by other Democrats, and declared to be the “real” governor of Georgia. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand said in a talk to the National Urban League Conference, “But for voter disenfranchisement, Stacey Abrams would be the governor of Georgia,” Senator Bernie Sanders said, “Without the outrageous voter suppression that took place, it's likely that Stacey would have been elected governor of Georgia,” while Senator Elizabeth Warren and Mayor Pete Buttigieg went as far as calling Abrams the rightful governor of Georgia. Again, no conclusive evidence has been provided to substantiate such claims.

voter suppression, Clinton denied that Abrams lost the race in a fair manner. What happened to the moral indignation about direct threats to our democracy?

The present situation echos an idea similar to the one I spoke about in the second issue of *The Commentator*. In that piece, I talked about how the political divide has caused us to easily dismiss our opponents without examining the details more in depth. The present issue is just as severe. There is a fine line between upholding the integrity of our institutions and meaningless virtue signaling. All politicians, regardless of their political affiliation, should be held to a clear standard of accepting the fair and honest process of

If the only time you get outraged by a politician impugning the integrity of our elections is when that politician is a member of the opposing party, are you honestly concerned about upholding the integrity of our institutions, or is your umbrage dictated by political allegiance?

In the 2016 presidential race, then-candidate Donald Trump said he would not accept the election results. For this claim, he was met with rebuke even from his own party. One particular individual that criticized Trump for his unwillingness to accept the results was Hilary Clinton. She sent out a tweet decrying, “Donald Trump refused to say that he'd respect the results of this election. That's a direct threat to our democracy.” However, at an event hosted by the Albert Shanker Institute, Clinton said, “We saw what happened in Georgia where Stacey Abrams should be governor of that state.” Despite no conclusive evidence that there was any

our elections. If they wish to contest the election results for any illegitimacy, they must provide conclusive evidence for the claim. If the only time you get outraged by a politician impugning the integrity of our elections is when that politician is a member of the opposing party, are you honestly concerned about upholding the integrity of our institutions, or is your umbrage dictated by political allegiance? We all must set a clear standard for how we judge politicians and apply that standard to all sides. This is the next step in the return to normalcy that America must take in order to be a bastion of liberty and justice for all.



Former Governor of Kentucky Matt Bevin — the latest politician to allege election fraud.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Rabin Assassination, 24 Years Later: Have We Learned Anything?

By MICHAEL WEINER

Nov. 4 marked the 24th anniversary of the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by Yigal Amir, an extremist from the *dati leumi* (national-religious) community who was convinced that Rabin's signing of the Oslo Accords made him a *rodef* — a pursuer endangering the lives of others — and thus liable to be killed. This year, as always, the anniversary was widely commemorated in Israel, most notably with a memorial gathering at Rabin Square that drew tens of thousands of Israelis.

1995 was a long time ago. The internet was in its infancy, Nirvana was in its heyday, and today's college students were not even born. That being the case, it isn't crazy to wonder why anyone still cares about this increasingly ancient event. Isn't it time to move on?

Judging from the state of Israeli politics today, I believe the answer is a resounding “no.” Despite it being so many years later, Israelis still feel deeply traumatized by this episode of political violence. Moreover, the stark division of Israeli society that it revealed continues to rock the country to this day. Just a month before the 24th anniversary, a controversial new Israeli movie — “Incitement” — was released, and has taken the country by storm. It provides extensive footage of interviews with Yigal Amir in prison, taking us on a psychological journey into the mind of a murderous zealot who continues to believe he did the right thing. “Incitement” will be Israel's entry for the Oscars next year, showing the resonance and staying power of Rabin's assassination in the collective consciousness of the Israeli public despite the passing of over 20 years.

More disturbingly, a recent poll conducted by the Rushinek Research and Strategy institute in advance of the anniversary of the assassination — which got major coverage

in the Israeli media — found that 20% of Israelis believe Yigal Amir should be pardoned from his life sentence in prison, and 40% believe there is a medium-to-high likelihood that there will be another political assassination in the coming years, with a plurality of that group predicting it would likely come from a right-winger.

Buttressing this fear, a 2016 Pew poll found that 70% of self-identified *dati leumi* Israelis agree with the statement that “Arabs should be expelled or transferred from Israel.” It isn't at all difficult to see how the popularity of these threatening, vaguely violent sentiments could lead an especially devout (or disturbed) *dati* individual to “take matters into his own hands” and kill a future Israeli leader who dismantles Jewish settlements in the West Bank as part of a peace agreement, unlikely as that is right now given current political realities.

If a fifth of Israeli society today wants to pardon the unremorseful assassin of their own prime minister ... I am left feeling extremely concerned about the future of Israel.

While some might wave off these red flags as fear-mongering or mere anti-*dati* prejudice, the ghosts of religious murderers past continue to haunt us. In August, Israel's current Minister of Transportation, Bezalel Smotrich, attended an event in which an award was given to Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh, a hardline rabbinic figure notorious for his emphatic praise of Baruch Goldstein, who carried out the 1993 Hebron Massacre, killing 29 Arabs at prayer in the Cave of the Patriarchs. Facing backlash for his attendance, Smotrich defended himself in a tweet by saying, “you don't have to agree with him on every single thing to believe he deserves an award.”

Taking all of these facts together yields some disturbing conclusions. If a fifth of Israeli society today wants to pardon the

unremorseful assassin of their own prime minister, if a supermajority of *dati leumi* Jews want all Arabs to be “transferred” from Israel and if a prominent Israeli politician in *dati leumi* circles has no qualms about honoring a rabbi who publicly supports the murder of innocent people, I am left feeling extremely concerned about the future of Israel. These numbers clearly demonstrate that dangerous rhetoric is not limited to a handful of “bad apples,” but is rather far more firmly entrenched in *dati leumi* culture, even if it is a minority position. The consequences of this reality are concerning: for one, as many Israelis correctly point out when it comes to terror by Islamic jihadists, violent beliefs and actions do not have to be accepted by a majority of the population in order for them to be lethal. Rather, all that is needed is for a non-negligible minority to support such actions, and for everyone else

to turn a blind eye or deny its existence at all. Moreover, if non-religious Israelis perceive violent rhetoric or support for violence as being permanent, tolerated fixtures of the *dati* world, there will continue to be severe damage to the unity of the Jewish people.

Days after the assassination in November 1995, R. Aharon Lichtenstein gave a *sicha* in the *beit midrash* of Yeshivat Har Etzion in which he refused to take the easy way out and minimize the blame his own community ought to accept. Rather, he courageously exhorted his students to feel distraught, ashamed and yes — partially responsible — for the tragedy that was perpetrated by a member of their camp. To put it more crudely than R. Lichtenstein ever would have — if it takes a village to raise a child, it also takes a village to murder a prime minister.

In his remarks, R. Lichtenstein shared the following story: “Last week I visited *mori ve-rabi*, Harav Aharon Soloveitchik, whose fierce opposition to the peace process is well-known. As soon as I walked in, he repeated over and over — a badge of shame, a badge of shame. We should feel deep shame that this method of supposedly solving conflicts has become part of our culture.”

Rabbi Lichtenstein did not avert his eyes, deflect responsibility, or insist that it was all leftist propaganda. Instead, he was honest — brutally so — about the moral failure that his own ideological community had nourished and bred: “the self-confidence that arises from commitment and devotion to a world of values and eternal truths...sometimes has led to frightening levels of self-certainty and ultimately to arrogance. This arrogance has sometimes led us to act without sufficient responsibility towards other people, and at times even without responsibility to other values. We are good, we have values, and they are worthless - this attitude has seeped deeper and deeper into our consciousness.”

I do not know what Rav Lichtenstein or his *rebbe*, Rav Aharon Soloveitchik, would say to us in our current moment of deep division and aggressive sentiments in the *dati leumi* camp. Even so, I feel the sharpness of his 24-year-old critique as if it were given today: indeed, as he wondered, can we “understand the importance of the *Medina*, to understand the historical process in which we live - without losing a sense of morality, of proportion, of right, of spirituality?”

I do not know the answer to that question, but both recent events and long-simmering trends have convinced me that it is still profoundly pertinent to contemporary Israeli society and ought to be on the minds of all religious Zionists, lest we run the risk of losing everything we hold so dear.

It is 24 years later, and the badge of shame remains.



Israel mourns Rabin



Paintings from Yayoi Kusama's latest exhibition

AHARON NISSEL

On Creativity and Mental Illness: A Conflicted Appreciation of Yayoi Kusama

By AHARON NISSEL

Walking through the new Yayoi Kusama exhibition at the David Zwirner Gallery, one begins to wonder if it is really accurate to describe these works as “new.” Sure, the collection contains pieces that are technically new creations and have never been exhibited before, but it felt more like a recycling of old ideas that have not actually been updated in any new or complex ways.

The Yayoi Kusama exhibition, titled “Every Day I Pray For Love,” opened to the public on Nov. 9 at the David Zwirner Gallery in the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan. It features a body of works that were created specifically for this show. This comes just two years after a considerably larger, hugely popular show at the Zwirner Gallery two years earlier, which drew 75,000 visitors in the 23 days it was open. The Zwirner Gallery is expecting this year’s show to reach 100,000 visitors. Walking through the exhibition, it was clear that they are trying to capitalize on the same hype that the previous Kusama show created. Unfortunately, because this show arrived so soon after the last one, it just feels rushed — almost like half a show.

For example, while this show features 42 new paintings from the artist’s “My Eternal Soul” series, which cover just one wall, the previous one had 66, spread over four walls in a much more immersive presentation. These works were placed as they were to elicit the effect of walking into a space and being overwhelmed by the sight of an entire wall covered in these paintings. However, compared to last year’s collection of paintings, this one just seems halfhearted. These psychedelic paintings, all of which are squares with each side measuring exactly 100.3 cm, sort of resemble cells under a microscope, with bold colors and thick brush strokes. They feature names like “The Best of my Art Singing Everywhere the Infinite Beauty of Forms” and “A Hope for the Love of Blue and Orange Found Throughout the Universe.” The paintings are impressive: each is unique, each is — in its own way — mesmerizing. While each painting is different, they are

all part of the same series — a series which now contains over 200 works. Perhaps each painting is uniquely meaningful to her (as evidenced by the overly expressive titles) but to everyone else, it’s starting to get kind of boring.

Another example — and this one is perhaps even more disappointing — is the new infinity room, titled “Dancing Lights that Flew Up to the Universe.” Kusama’s infinity rooms are perhaps her most well known works. Each room is a cube, a few feet by a few feet, and each wall is a mirror. Thus, the viewer, and everything else in the room, is reflected infinitely in every direction. These rooms have gained considerable popularity for their “instagrammability.” But the new room feels artistically weaker than the previous ones, which seem to be more complex, for example featuring hand-painted pumpkins or hand-sewn creations. This room is just a number of hanging lights that change color. Of course, the effect is still amazing and existential. It asks us to question our place in an infinitely expansive universe. It definitely works as a piece of art and viewers will take some epic selfies in the room, but compared to other infinity rooms, this one just felt simple. Moreover, wait times for the room tend to be over two hours, and the four viewers that enter the room at a time only get one minute in the room. Is your selfie worth a two hour plus wait for just 60 seconds in the room, which you share with three strangers?

That said, there were two works that I feel really stole the show. The first is “Cloud,” which consists of 90 metallic mercurial blobs arranged on the floor. These evoke the artist’s 1966 work, Narcissus Garden, in which the artist stood amongst 1,500 large reflective marbles with a sign that read, “Your Narcissus [sic] For Sale.” The field of balls reflected and distorted everything around it, including the viewers, who were forced to confront a distorted version of their own ego. Originally the artist sold the balls for \$2 each, reflecting on the economic aspects of art production and commercialization. Cloud succeeds in taking this concept further. The mirrors are no longer so simple and conventional. Now they are amoebic blobs,

that seem to ooze about space, despite being made of stainless steel. The effect is that the contorted confrontation with the viewers’ vanity is intensified.

The other work, which also uses mirrors (it’s a theme in Kusama’s work — she wants us to confront ourselves, as we truly exist, in an infinite universe) is “Ladder to Heaven,” and it features a ladder comprised of neon bars that change color, wrapped in a metal cage. The ladder extends from the floor to the ceiling, and mirrors at each end make it appear to go on infinite. Looking at the ladder elicits a powerful effect on the viewer: we are on the ladder of the universe, as it were, and it extends forever in either direction. We are small and insignificant, but there is always light and hope.

But who is Kusama really? And what is she getting at with all this?

Yayoi Kusama is now 90 years old and is the most expensive female artist alive today. People wait for hours to see her works, which sell for millions at auctions. She explores big themes such as the universe, the cosmos and our place in it. Her major question in this exhibit, if we were to distill it into one question, is: how do we reckon with our complex creative identities — encompassing both biological and psychological aspects — while existing in a cold, dead, universe that operates far beyond what we think or do? Over her career, Kusama has also presented a lot of work that deals with sexuality, but this exhibition seemed to lack that theme. It makes sense that her works have gotten considerably more PG since she got famous, probably at the behest of whatever agents and curators want to capitalize on her art with a wider audience. In 1969, in one of the works that helped make her famous, she painted a group of nude models with polka dots and had them wander around the MoMA, unauthorized. In this show, none of her usual daring came through, and everything just felt muted.

At age 90, Kusama, who is already of a shorter stature, is wheelchair confined. When she paints, a canvas is brought over to her and placed flat on a table before her. She paints, and then her assistants turn the canvas around so she can paint the other

side. In some ways this mechanical means of art production deeply affects the paintings. The artist is severely limited in her role as a painter, as she does not have complete access to the entire canvas and thus cannot paint such large works.

Kusama has long struggled from mental illness, and has lived in a mental hospital for over 40 years. Her mental illness has deeply affected her work. She paints how she feels, how she is. This should make audiences interact with her paintings in a more uncomfortable way: are we in fact romanticizing her mental illness? Is the Zwirner Gallery, and other galleries worldwide, just trying to take advantage of her for monetary profit? The answer, it seems to me, is an unequivocal yes.

There is a long history of the “mad genius” trope — the scientist, philosopher or artist who is clinically insane, but whose insanity somehow allows them to tap into some greater creative impulse and unlock the truths of the universe. Perhaps the most notable example of this is Vincent Van Gogh. Van Gogh suffered from psychotic episodes and delusions and also spent time at a mental institution. It is there that he painted his most famous work, *Starry Night*. Mental illness actually inhibited his work, as it led him to be unable to paint for weeks on end. We have romanticized his mental illness and attributed his greatest works to his mental instability.

This trope, creates a false and unhealthy view of what mental illness is and how it affects people. The notion of the crazed, tortured artistic-genius is false and delegitimizes their works.

So, as you walk through the Kusama show, snapping selfies left and right (as you should), maybe it is time to think differently about her work. Of course, think about what she wants you to think about as you look at her works. Think about your place in the universe. Think about love, and emotion, and ego. Think about all the epic selfies. Think about Kusama as a real human, deeply flawed, and suffering, but also an artistic genius whose work has touched millions. And also, at least for a moment, think about how she might be getting used and abused by people who can make money off of her work.

Would You Like to Hedge the Verdict?

By YAAKOV METZ

Inscribed above the door just outside of the Attorney General's office in Washington, DC is the following quote: "The United States wins its case whenever justice is done one of its citizens in the courts." This ultimate proclamation of duty is a mantra that defines success in the eyes of the US justice system. More broadly, justice within the courts speaks to the core values of America. However, with the current state of litigation, is that quote nailed high above the Attorney General's door panel really within reach?

US courts are fatally flawed in one major way. In a civil court case, if one party has more or better resources to deal with expense and risk, the party without that luxury is put at a massive disadvantage. A system where money skews outcomes does not sound like a just one, or one where the "United States wins its case..." This system becomes less about right or wrong, and more about who can afford more right and wrong.

Currently, there are three typical ways one can fund a lawsuit. The first is to finance it yourself. The second is a contingency case, where the lawyer does not charge up front, but gets a cut of the winnings (that is, if you win.) The third is to try and convince a lawyer to represent you pro bono.

There is, however, a fourth option for funding a lawsuit that is slowly creeping into the mainstream. Litigation finance is the practice where a plaintiff receives capital to fund a lawsuit from a 3rd party investor. The investor is then rewarded a portion of the financial recovery from the lawsuit. This practice, although it has been around for quite some time in countries like the UK, Hong Kong and Australia, is relatively new in America, with laws varying from state

to state. The reason this financial tool had not been used until recently dates to an ancient doctrine known as champerty, or the disallowance of outside parties financially benefiting from a lawsuit. The general understanding in America in years past was that

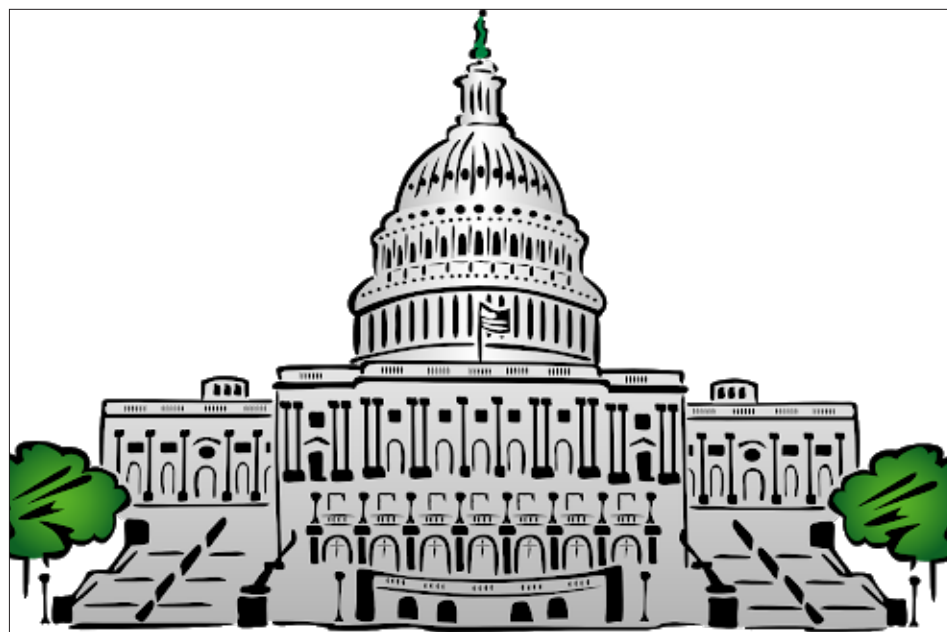
an end to noblemen exacting judicial harassment. A lot has changed since feudal England: sliced bread, indoor plumbing and this little thing folks like to call democracy.

Democracy is supposed to give citizens equal access to justice in the courts. Dispute

A lot has changed since feudal England: sliced bread, indoor plumbing and this little thing folks like to call democracy.

litigation finance was a prohibited practice, though not always explicitly outlawed per se. The origin of this doctrine dates back to feudal England when lords that had disputes with other nobility would fund the lawsuits of people in legal disagreement with their rivals. Champerty was put in place to put

should be settled on the basis of legal fact and not financial situation. However, courts in their current state don't exact absolute justice. Verdicts are determined by how much justice citizens can afford. Financing court cases could restore balance to the justice system.



The Capitol, Washington, DC

PIXABAY

After the financial crisis of 2008, there were a lot of lawsuits with little to no money to fund them. In the years following the crisis, commercial financial litigation started to gain traction. Lawyers began the risk analyses, weighing variables like the duration of the court cases and the strength of the argument. Law and financial firms began posting higher gains than the portfolios of top hedge funds. Business owners and major corporations began to see justice where they wouldn't have 10 years prior. By allowing capitalism in the courtroom, it seemed as though the Achilles heel of the justice system had been rectified.

Beyond the exhilaration of large returns and the newfound affordability of lawsuits, there is a dark side to mixing justice with capitalism. Although investors are only supposed to write the checks, they are still able to place immense pressure on the plaintiff or defendant. Lenders can do this because unlike lawyers, who have legal and ethical obligations to their clients, 3rd party investors do not. This power imbalance can favor an outcome for the investor (who doesn't even have a judiciary claim to the case) over the plaintiff or defendant who they have invested in.

Much like the reality of investments, financial litigation can have immense upside and downside. It could solve one of the age-old problems that have pestered courts for thousands of years, or it could give lenders a dangerous amount of control in judicial outcomes. Either way, it has arrived in nearly all of America, exploding into a three billion-dollar industry according to the most conservative estimates. Did the lords and ladies of feudal England have the foresight that current policy makers lack? Only time will bear witness to the new industry that could make or break justice in America.

Finance and Networking Clubs Set High Bar for Future Events

By NOAM GERSHOV

On Oct. 30, the Finance Club and Networking Club teamed up to host an event titled "What is Wall Street?" The Sky Café was buzzing with excitement as students gathered for one of the first club events of the year. A panel consisting of six student speakers discussed business topics and aspects relating to the internship and job search. Over 50 students were in attendance.

The dais consisted of students in their final year at YU who had internships this past summer and are either presently employed or have jobs lined up upon graduation. In no particular order, the following seniors sat on the panel: Solomon Shulman (YC '20), who interned in investment banking at the Royal Bank of Canada; Ariella Kohansieh (SSSB '20) in wealth management at Merrill Lynch; Tzvi Rotblat (SSSB '20) in sales and trading at Natixis, Samuel Katz (SSSB '20) in real estate finance at Meridian Capital Group, Sam Schultz (SSSB '20) in financial analytics at

Houlihan Lokey, and Avraham Novick (YC '20) in equity research at Cantor Fitzgerald. Nathan Hakakian (SSSB '22), president of the Finance Club and MC of the event, welcomed everyone and introduced the panelists.

The panelists shared their opinions, pulling from individual experiences in the corporate world to advise the students. They discussed choosing fields, tips for landing an esteemed internship and methods to differentiate themselves from the ever-growing pool of competition. One speaker stressed the importance of proper preparation and

The panelists shared their opinions, pulling from individual experiences in the corporate world to advise the students.



Nathan Hakakian, MC of the event, introducing the panelists

ARIEL SCHNEIDER

research about a company prior to the interview. Upon being accepted, another emphasized the qualities of alacrity and enthusiasm when performing tasks. Novick, for example, used his economics background to create spreadsheets and charts, pleasing and impressing his boss. Other suggestions included the importance of hard work and sincerity. Kohansieh noted that a friendly demeanor and the ability to work with others goes a very long way.

The event drove home the idea that an intern must be skilled and well-versed in the language and techniques of his specific field while simultaneously being motivated to assist the company and capable of working alongside other employees. According to the speakers, the perfect intern is complex, knowing both the technical aspects of the job and having the people qualities of the environment.

When the panel concluded, the students had the opportunity to participate in the networking portion of the night. They mingled with the panelists who stayed behind to answer their questions. The success of the event prompted Hakakian to send an email later that night about the possibility of having a more focused follow-up event with concrete topics and practical tools about internships.

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

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

CLASS SCHEDULE FOR SPRING 2020

MONDAY

2:49–4:29 p.m.

Tsadik: JHI 5335 Jews in the Lands of Islam I (*via live video connection*)

Rynhold: JPH 5012 Survey of Modern and Contemporary Jewish Philosophy

This course does not count toward the ten required MA courses, but scholarship grants apply to this course. Available to undergraduates without special permission. (Via live video connection)

4:50–6:30 p.m.

Eichler: BIB 7350 Biblical Historiography

Carlebach: JHI 6409 Sabbatean Controversies

This course does not count toward the ten required MA courses, but scholarship grants apply to this course. Available to undergraduates without special permission. (Via live video connection)

MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY

4:40–5:55 p.m.

Tsadik: SEM 5112 Arabic II

This course does not count toward the ten required MA courses, but scholarship grants apply to this course. Available to undergraduates without special permission. (Via live video connection)

6:50–8:30 p.m.

Karlip: JHI 5445

East European Jewry Confronts Modernity: The Russian Haskalah and the Rabbinic Response

Eichler: BIB 6213: Patriarchal Narratives

TUESDAY

2:49–4:29 p.m.

Dauber: JPH 6760 Messianism in Kabbalah & Hasidut

NEW COURSE

Koller: BIB 6002 Mishnaic Hebrew
(*This course also counts towards the concentrations in Medieval and Modern history*).

4:50–6:30 p.m.

Cohen: BIB 8305 Book of Job in the Jewish Exegetical Tradition

Olson: JHI 6417 Jews and Empires

Hurvitz: TAS 7544 Maimonides' Halakhic Writings

6:50–8:30 p.m.

NEW COURSE

Fine: TAS 5872 Midrashic Literature of the Amoraim

(*This course counts towards the concentrations in Ancient, Medieval and Modern history*)

Hurvitz: TAS 5871 Midrashic Literature of the Amoraim

WEDNESDAY

2:49–4:29 p.m.

Tsadik: JHI 6399 Jews of Iran: History & Culture (*via live video connection*)

(*This course counts towards the concentrations in Medieval and Modern history*).

Berger: JHI 6652 The Jewish-Christian Debate in the Middle Ages

4:50–6:30 p.m.

Leiman: BIB 5031 Introduction to Bible I

NEW COURSE

Mermelstein: JHI 6244 Diaspora and Exile in Ancient Jewish Thought

6:50–8:30 p.m.

Kanarfogel: JHI 6822 History of Biblical Exegesis in Medieval Ashkenaz

Zimmerman: JHI 5441 The Jews of Eastern Europe: 1914–89

THURSDAY

2:49–4:29 p.m.

Dauber: JPH 5260 Introduction to Hasidic Thought

Hidary: TAS 5804 Introduction to Amoraic Literature

4:50–6:30 p.m.

Hidary: TAS 6877 Classical Rabbinic Thought

NEW COURSE

Grunhaus: BIB 6087 Rabbi David Kimhi and his Exegetical Methods

6:50–8:30 p.m.

Rynhold: JPH 6885 The Philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

Angel: JHI 5215 Jews under Roman Rule

Perelis: JHI 6387 Varieties of Jewish Autobiography: From the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period
(*This course counts for concentrations in Medieval and Modern history*).



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