

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

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## YU Administration Rolls Out New P/N Grading Policy as Classes Continue Online

By SARAH BEN-NUN

In light of the coronavirus pandemic and following the model of other universities, Yeshiva University's undergraduate schools are expanding their pass/no credit (P/N) policy for the current semester. Under the new policy, which was announced to the undergraduate student body on Monday, March 23, students will have the option at the end of the semester to choose to keep their letter grade or — subject to certain restrictions — opt for a P/N mark on their transcript instead. A grade of C or higher may be changed to a P, which indicates that the student passed the course, and a grade of C- or below may be changed to an N, which means that the student will receive no credit for the course.

For Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) and Katz School undergraduate students, this option will be limited to two courses that do not fulfill any major or minor require-



In-person classes have not been in session since March 4.

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THE COMMENTATOR

## COVID-19 Pandemic Ends Men's Basketball Team's Greatest Season Ever

By MITCH GOULSON

Editor's note: This article was initially published online on March 13.

The #13 Macs' historic season has officially come to an end — not via a loss, but due to the novel coronavirus pandemic. Although the NCAA attempted to continue conference tournament play without any fan presence, NCAA President Mark Emmert was left no choice when all U.S. major sports leagues postponed or canceled their seasons within a span of under 24 hours. With this news, the Macs (29-1) will not get a chance to extend their record-breaking 29 game win streak against the 3rd ranked team in Division III, Randolph-Macon College.

After the NBA announced on Wednesday night that they were suspending their league's season following Utah Jazz center Rudy Gobert's positive COVID-19 test, the NHL followed suit on

Thursday at around 2 p.m. EST, the MLB announced that they would delay Spring Training at 4 p.m. EST, and finally, the NCAA canceled this season's March Madness just before 5 p.m. EST.

still get paid millions from their couch (though they will make less money) made the cancellation of the tournament inevitable.

Over the tournament's first two rounds, the hottest shoot-

*The Macs will end the 2019-2020 season with their record 29-game winning streak intact and an unequivocal claim as the best team YU has ever fielded.*

The financial ramifications of these cancellations likely caused the late decision by Emmert; while the schools' losses of ticket revenue would be substantial, the NCAA stood to lose billions of dollars worth of television revenue without "The Big Dance."

But when NBA Commissioner Adam Silver announced that the NBA was suspending its season on Wednesday night, the cancellation of the NCAA tournaments became merely a formality. The optics of forcing college players to play without pay while NBA players

ing team in the country proved their mettle in front of a spectator-less stadium in the Goldfarb Gymnasium at Johns Hopkins University. Head Coach Elliot Steinmetz and his Maccabees dissected their Round of 64 and 32 opponents, Worcester Polytechnic Institute and Penn State-Harrisburg, respectively, as the team tallied a staggering 102 points in each game.

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## YU High School Employee Benefits Undergo Dramatic Changes

By SRULI FRUCHTER

Employee benefits of Yeshiva University's high school staff have undergone significant changes since the start of 2020, The Commentator has learned. Under this new benefits plan, high school employees are faced with costly reforms.

The 2019 Benefits Enrollment Guide covered "All full-time faculty and full- and part-time nonunion employees scheduled to work at least 20 hours per week," including both university and high school employees. For 2020, however, YU published a new Benefits Guide, designed specifically for high school employees, namely, employees of the Samuel H. Wang Yeshiva University High School for Girls (Central) and Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy (MTA) High School for Boys.

All employees were previously offered three medical plan options under Empire Blue Cross:

Exclusive Provider Organization (EPO), Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) and High Deductible with Health Savings Account (HSA). Now, these options have remained the same for university employees under Aetna, but high school employees are only offered an EPO plan under Oxford Health Plans (United Healthcare). The most dramatic effects are found, inter alia, in the medical plan and premium rates.

### Medical Plan

Under Empire Blue, all employees had a base contribution of \$250 or \$500 for an individual or family, respectively, unlike Oxford Health. Empire Blue's EPO plan had deductibles of \$1,500 or \$3,750 for an individual or family, respectively, but those numbers have more than doubled to \$4,000 and \$8,000 under Oxford Health; this is over

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The Cartel, Coronavirus, and Combustibles

# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## The Coronavirus Pandemic has Highlighted YU's Communications Failures. Now is the Time to Fix Them.

By THE COMMENTATOR  
EDITORIAL BOARD

Yeshiva University's administration has a responsibility to communicate frequently and candidly with its students to keep them in the loop whenever possible and informed of developments that will affect their lives. But over the last few years, communications failures have resulted in a lack of transparency time and again. Although we have no doubt that university administrators have been working behind the scenes to help lessen the extraordinary burden weighing on the student body and broader YU community during this time, the communications deficiencies that have plagued the university in the past have only become more apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic, perhaps the most pressing challenge the university has faced in its existence. With the stakes so high, YU cannot afford to continue to fail in communicating with its students.

In the early morning of Tuesday, March 3, several Jewish day schools in the greater New York area canceled classes, as they had just learned that the parent of a local student had contracted the coronavirus — the second reported case in the state. Realizing the exigent risk to public health, these schools immediately crafted an email to parents and sent buses back home mid-route to protect students and their families. Meanwhile, Yeshiva University said nothing, despite the fact that a son of this parent not only dormed on campus, but also eventually contracted the coronavirus himself.

Even as news crews converged on campus and the university became the subject of media attention, the university remained open for business as usual. FDNY ambulances arrived early the next morning to take students to the hospital as rumors continued to spread. In fact, midterms were held on both campuses that day, and students found themselves in a state of worry and confusion as they looked to the YU administration for guidance. Finally, only shortly after 8 a.m. on Wednesday, March 4, did the university decide to cancel classes uptown for the day.

Nevertheless, students were hesitant to leave campus for what some assumed would be a one day closure. As the university remained silent, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced via tweet that the Wilf Campus would be closed through the end of the week at a midday press briefing, an announcement the university echoed later that evening. Likewise, students first learned from New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio's tweet that two "close contacts" of the infected YU student were taken to the hospital for testing.

When President Berman finally informed students and the greater YU community on Thursday, March 12 that all undergraduate and graduate classes would be held online until the beginning of Pesach break, international students were left to fend for themselves as they hurried to book flights before their home countries issued travel bans. Many domestic and international students spent Purim alone on campus instead of returning home that week, under the mistaken assumption that class would resume after the holiday.

The university's poor communication and lack of transparency have become an endemic characteristic of an institution that puts its own image above the welfare of its students far too often. The Commentator has reported on these fundamental flaws numerous times, and our editorial board penned a piece on it last month. Be it the litany of elevator rescues, botched security protocol updates, the bevy of fire and building code violations or December's dorm break-in, transparency has been little more than an afterthought time and again, as public relations efforts take precedence over student safety.

Furthermore, one of the most important vehicles of communication that YU has at its disposal — its website — has been a tremendous source of confusion and misinformation for students over the years; during this turbulent time, its flaws have become more noticeable and harmful. As of the time of publication, the Registrar page on the website states that "all Yeshiva University classes will move to online instruction until April 20, 2020 when classes will return using their original delivery method (face to face or blended)." This is simply not true: classes have already been moved online for the remainder of the semester. But this fact will come as no surprise to most students, who have grown accustomed to disregarding information on YU's website, knowing that much of it is out of date, inaccurate or incomplete.

Making matters worse, the university failed to respond to The Commentator's frequent inquiries regarding when the university was first notified that a YU student was being tested for the virus, why it took so long to communicate the information, as well as a host of other questions. Indeed, The Commentator posed dozens of questions to the university's Office of Marketing and Communications over the last few weeks, asking for insight into how the university has approached this crisis and what it plans to do moving forward, in order to share that information with the student body. We have yet to receive a substantive response to any of them.

President Berman laudably held two "COVID-19 community calls" in the early days of the crisis, perhaps sensing that communication had been sorely lacking and wishing to get ahead of the curve. On

the calls, he promised to "overcommunicate" with the student body regarding the complex situation. But the president's promise turned into little more than a pipe dream, as students have been the last to know about vital updates ever since. Insofar as the university aims to prevent "panic" amongst the student body, its concealment of information has fostered further worries, as students are left to rely on rumors while administrators keep tuition-payers in the dark as they scramble to release an official statement. Is this what President Berman meant when he vowed to "overcommunicate?"

It is important to acknowledge the areas in which some administrators have managed to step up to the challenge of the current situation to communicate effectively with the student body. The Counseling Center, Academic Advising and various other student services continue to operate virtually, and the OSL has transformed student events into video conferencing shows with varying degrees of success. When a new pass/fail grading system for the spring semester was announced for the undergraduate schools, the deans of YC and Stern did not deem it worth their while to actively engage with their students on the plans; Dean of Sy Syms School of Business Noam Wasserman, on the other hand, went out of his way to hold a virtual town hall meeting for all Syms students to clarify the new system — a system that was drafted in collaboration with Syms student leaders. Syms students are lucky to have Wasserman as their dean, and the example he set should serve as a model for other administrators to follow in his lead.

No community calls have been held since the initial two calls nearly a month ago, but many areas of concern for the student body remain unresolved. In the most recent coronavirus update to the YU community, President Berman failed to state whether the school will be refunding cafeteria, housing and other costs to its students, pushing off the announcement of a decision until after Pesach break. The university has an obligation to communicate how and when students will be refunded in a timely and direct fashion. Whereas other colleges have already committed to refunds, YU has met students' demands with little more than silence. With dormitories set to remain closed following Pesach break, the university should have already informed students how it will compensate them — not only for the time following the break when dorms will be closed, but for the past few weeks, when students understandably fled campus in fear of NYC quickly becoming

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## 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.*

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

*Views expressed in The Commentator are those of its writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board or the student body, faculty, and administration of Yeshiva University.*

Visit us online at  
[www.yucommentator.org](http://www.yucommentator.org)



**1 Virtual Viennese Cuisine with Elisheva Kohn**

That’s right, folks. The world is falling apart, but at least you will know how to make proper Kaiserschmarren — aka “scrambled pancakes.”



**2 Zoom University Hillel**

Who knew a pandemic was all it took to finally bring Hillel to Yeshiva University?



**3 MeetJew University**

We all want to, but we wouldn’t dare post on this 18.6K-strong Facebook page. Keep in mind, it’s 23% more effective and 100% funnier than YUConnects AND it’s free.



**4 Beren Haggadahs**

Massive *yasher koach* to Bella Adler for sending out 500 copies of these art pieces!



**5 Good Shtick with Lackey Zachey**

I can’t believe I wasn’t the only Sergeant of Arms. It looks like he found a new gig after being fired as The Commentator’s paperboi.



**6 New P/N policy**

Ahhhh yes, a perfect excuse to mute the microphone, block the camera and do something useless while I actively suppress thoughts about grad school, my non-existent future career and the recession that awaits me.



**7 New Virtual Post Pesach Program for Women**

One small step for women... and that's about it. Creating a "virtual *beit midrash*" exclusively for the men makes perfect sense when you realize that YU is a *yeshiva*, which, literally translated, means, "MEN ONLY. WOMEN NOT WELCOME." Okay, maybe this one belongs somewhere in between the 7 up and the 7 down.

**7UP** by Elisheva Kohn  
**NMODL**

**“Netiquette”**

What if I set “morbid” and “serious” backgrounds? Are onesies considered pajamas? WHAT IF I JUST TALK REALLY LOUDLY? Is this smiley ;) considered inappropriate? What if my professor turned off his camera?? Pathetiquette.



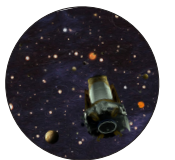
**Time difference**

Based on professors’ Zoom skillz, it’s afternoon in Europe, tomorrow in Australia, and 1973 at Yeshiva University.



**Virtual Zoom backgrounds**

That galaxy background isn’t fooling anybody. You’re probably sitting on the toilet.



**Going overtime or assigning more homework because we’re “not going anywhere” anyway**

Things you can do in a mere 15-minute break: Make lunch, watch more than half of an episode of “Friends,” call your grandparents, scroll down YU and Stern Confessions, read each of your YU emails, study for a class you plan to P/N, annoy every family member in your house, etc. etc. IDK about you, professor, but we’re going places!



**No meal plan refunds (yet)**

A shameless plug for our editorial ... flip back to page 2!



**YU Survivors**

Can’t wait to invite people to a Heights party in an effort to “try to get the virus?” Want to fool underage students into involuntarily clicking on a link that leads to obscenity? Then this is the WhatsApp group for you!



**Broken elevators everywhere**

I bet this is why they ended up canceling the turn-YU-facilities-into-makeshift-hospitals plan.



# Coronavirus Update: IBC Instructor Tests Positive, Infected Student's Roommate and Cardozo Student Test Negative, and Basketball Team Turned Away from Hotel

By YITZCHAK CARROLL and  
ELISHEVA KOHN

*Editor's note: This article was initially published online on March 6.*

An instructor in the Isaac Breuer College (IBC), an undergraduate Torah studies school within YU, tested positive for coronavirus, the men's basketball team was turned away from their hotel, several students remain in self-quarantine, and President Ari Berman held another conference call with the student body, as the coronavirus scare in YU continued this week.

Rabbi Reuven Fink, who teaches two courses at IBC, has tested positive for coronavirus, according to an overnight tweet and email announcement by President Berman. The rabbi leads the Young Israel of New Rochelle — the synagogue attended by the YU parent and student who contracted coronavirus earlier in the week — and has been in self-quarantine since earlier in the week.

According to the university's tweet, students of Rabbi Fink were "recommended as a precautionary matter to self-quarantine until further notice." University officials told The Commentator that they immediately reached out to all students in Rabbi Fink's classes upon discovering that he had tested positive.

Following instructions from the New York City Department of Health and an infectious disease specialist, university officials informed Fink's students that they no longer need to self-quarantine, since Fink was asymptomatic and contact was merely casual when he held class on Tuesday. President

Berman announced via email that "individuals who have been in contact with an asymptomatic person who has tested positive for COVID-19 virus do not need to be placed in quarantine."

On March 5, prior to Rabbi Fink's diagnosis, President Berman announced in a conference call with the student body that the two students who were transported to Bellevue Hospital early Wednesday morning by FDNY ambulances — including a roommate of the infected student — tested negative for COVID-19, as did the self-quarantined Cardozo student who interned for the father's law firm. As of March 6 approximately ten male students are still in self-quarantine on campus, according to university officials. One female student who is experiencing symptoms has been tested for coronavirus and is awaiting results while in self-quarantine.

The YU men's basketball team, who traveled down to Maryland for the NCAA Division III tournament, was turned away from the Doubletree by Hilton Baltimore-North Pikesville hotel upon arrival on March 5. Head Basketball Coach Elliot Steinmetz (SSSB '02), a practicing attorney, alleged discrimination. "I made it very clear to the hotel that it's discrimination," Steinmetz told the Associated Press. "I basically said to them: 'Do you have a checkbox on your website that says that you've been in an area with suspected coronavirus?' And they said no. So I said: 'Is it just for the guests of Yeshiva University?' And they said yes. I told them that that's called discrimination." As of the time of publication, neither YU Athletics Director Joe Bednarsh, nor

Associate Athletics Director Greg Fox, responded to The Commentator's inquiries.

A Hilton spokeswoman told The Commentator that the hotel is independently owned and operated, and as such, the global brand had no involvement in the decision. A spokesperson for the local hotel denied discrimination, and said that hotel management based their decision to cancel YU's reservation on the university's cancellation of events and classes through March 10. The hotel also noted that "a significant portion of the hotel ownership is held by individuals of the Jewish faith," and that they assisted the team in relocating to another hotel in the area at no additional cost. The group is now staying at the Lord Baltimore Hotel.

Due to a coronavirus outbreak in Maryland, the NCAA decided to hold the first two rounds of the Division III men's basketball tournament slated for this weekend at Johns Hopkins University— including YU's game against the Worcester Polytechnic Institute Engineers — without spectators. The game, which was initially slated for 1 p.m., has now been moved to 2:20 p.m. per a tweet from YU Athletics, though no explanation has been provided as of the time of publication. An earlier tweet had stated that tip-off was postponed to 2:00 p.m.

Shabbat and Purim programming on both campuses has been cancelled. Students will be given individually-wrapped, pre-prepared shabbat meals to take up to their rooms, though minyanim will be held on the Wilf Campus for those who are not in self-quarantine. Senior Director of Student Life Rabbi Josh Weisberg encouraged Beren students who are feeling well to attend *minyanim* at

Adereth El, a nearby synagogue, since all Shabbat programming, including *minyan*, has been cancelled on the Beren Campus. Beren and Wilf students who had already paid for Shabbat meal tickets this week will receive free tickets for a future Shabbat meal on campus.

Families have baked various goods and desserts for students who will be on campus for the weekend, and have also offered to host students for both this upcoming Shabbat as well as Purim. Berman observed that "the spirit" on campus was "really strong," and praised the "overwhelming offerings of support and help" from the greater community.

"I think the situation at Yeshiva has been well-handled," said Dr. Don Weiss, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's director of surveillance, on the student body conference call. A team of 30 university officials, led by Senior Vice President Josh Joseph, has been coordinating with City health officials to oversee YU's response to the outbreak. President Berman said that he expects classes to resume on Wednesday, March 11.

The university also held a "community-wide call" featuring various faculty members on March 5, including RIETS *Semikhah* Director Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz, Azrieli Professor David Pelcovitz, Azrieli Dean Rona Novick and Mount Sinai-South Nassau Infectious Diseases Chief Rabbi Dr. Aaron Glatt.

President Berman told those who partook in the conference call on March 5 that he will continue to "over-communicate" with the community as the situation unfolds.

## NEW P/N GRADING SYSTEM, continued from Front Page

ments. Stern College for Women (SCW) and Yeshiva College (YC) students may choose the P/N option for any course that is not a requirement for their major, with no limit on the number of such courses. Courses graded P/N will fulfill graduation requirements.

Honors courses marked P/N will still count towards Honors requirements for SCW students, according to Cynthia Wachtell, Director of Stern's S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program. YC and Syms Honors students did not receive any information from university officials regarding how the new P/N policy affects their Honors classes.

Previously, for courses at both the Wilf and Beren campuses, the P/N grading system could be applied to only one course each semester that was not a requirement for any major, minor or core, with the P/N form due weeks before the end of the semester. This semester, not only are students able to see their final grades before making a decision on whether to use the P/N grading system, but classes that count towards general requirements may be eligible for P/N grading as well.

The new P/N policy was announced following a change.org petition started by student Daniel

Ferber (SSSB '20), which was circulated around to the YU community on social media. The petition appealed to the YU administration to "make all classes have the option of being pass/fail and yet still count for their respective major/minor/concentration requirements." As of the time of publication, the petition has over 1,200 signatures.

Ferber expressed satisfaction with the new P/N policy, commenting that he thinks it will have positive implications for Syms students like himself. "I do feel that it addressed student concerns in a way that will ease the stressful environment without sacrificing our serious approach to classes," he said.

remained canceled until virtual classes began Monday, March 16, on the video conferencing application Zoom. According to the most recent update from President Berman, all classes will continue to be held online through the rest of the Spring 2020 semester.

"I'm really happy about the new P/N policy," said Adina Passy (SCW '21), a pre-med student. "I had planned my classes with the intention of needing the grades from this semester to boost my GPA. Additionally, it's amazing that they will give us the chance to see the grades before deciding if we want to P/N."

CJ Glicksman (YC '20), Vice President of Yeshiva College

all, and many are upset that the policy does not prove more helpful to students who are struggling under the circumstances."

According to Glicksman, many YC students are dissatisfied with the new P/N policy because it "exclusively helps students taking core classes, and those only talking major classes are totally unaffected by the policy change," since all major requirements are excluded from eligibility.

According to Dean Wasserman, the new Syms P/N policy was drafted in collaboration with Syms student leaders. In an email to the Syms student body, Dean Wasserman emphasized his "deep appreciation" for the stu-

Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts, urged all SCW and YC students to view the new P/N policy as a "safety net" and not a "substitute" for academic effort.

But some students insist that the new policy does not go far enough. "Yeshiva College's P/N policy was an opportunity to remedy the disadvantages that students are facing in this pandemic, but it has failed to do that on two fronts," explained Sruli Fruchter (YC '22). "First, any issues a student is facing that warrants the P/N policy to cover minor and core classes should definitely cover major classes, too. Second, by making the P/N policy optional, students who genuinely need to 'opt-in' are at a serious disadvantage compared to students who did not."

Fruchter explained that some students are at a severe disadvantage during this unique situation, whether they are self-quarantined in a noisy home or forced to adjust to being in a different time zone than their peers. "Every person's home offers myriad challenges, and they vary person-to-person," said Fruchter. "This is wartime, and the P/N policy should have been responsive to this reality — similar to what Columbia University did. I am thoroughly disappointed with the P/N policy, as it wholeheartedly fails to level the playing field for all students."

*Under the new policy, which was announced to the undergraduate student body on Monday, March 23, students will have the option at the end of the semester to choose to keep their letter grade or — subject to certain restrictions — opt for a P/N mark on their transcript instead.*

The petition emphasized that in light of the pandemic, transitioning to this model would help reduce stress. In the "reasons for signing," commenters echoed the sentiment that their academic skills and abilities are hindered during this trying time and that they cannot perform as well in online classes.

Classes were first canceled after it was announced on Wednesday, March 4, that a YU student tested positive for COVID-19; they

Student Association (YCSA), expressed misgivings regarding whether the new policy will actually benefit students. "There are a lot of complications that are introduced by allowing students to take classes for P/N credit, so it is certainly a greatly appreciated gesture that the administration is being so accommodating," he acknowledged. "That being said, I have spoken to no students who find that the policy will actually help them at

dent leaders who helped draft the new policy. To "further ensure that everything is clear," a town hall meeting for Syms students was hosted on Tuesday, March 24 at 8 p.m., by Deans Wasserman and Strauss, along with Assistant Administrative Dean Debra Pine.

Acknowledging that "choosing P/N is a serious academic decision with implications beyond YU," Dean Karen Bacon, the Mordechai D. Katz and Dr. Monique C. Katz

## Macs Defeat Penn State Harrisburg in Second Round, Advance to DIII Sweet 16

By CHANA WEINBERG

*Editor's note: This article was initially published online on March 9.*

With a 102-83 defeat of Penn State Harrisburg on Saturday night, Yeshiva men's basketball punched its first-ever ticket to the NCAA Division III Sweet 16. Yeshiva has now won 29 games in a row, the longest active streak in the country.

This first pod of the tournament was played before an empty gym at Johns Hopkins University as a precaution over the spread of the novel coronavirus. Though no one was in the stands, the game was reportedly streamed on 31,000 devices in front of an estimated 200,000 fans.

"It means everything," said team co-captain Gabriel Leifer (SSSB '21) about the historic win. "We knew that after we lost in the conference finals last year ... that this year was going to be a big year for us ... we knew we had to make this year something special."

In the second round game, Yeshiva continued its offensive attack shooting an otherworldly 65% from the field with five players scoring in double figures, but Head Coach Elliot Steinmetz (SSSB '02) was confident that the team's offensive performance was a result of their trusted motion offense.

"Offensively, it was just more of the same of what we've done all year," Steinmetz said

after the victory. "These guys shared the ball, found the guy who was open and we were able to shoot a high percentage and get a 'W.'"

Guard Ryan Turell (SSSB '22) followed up his career performance of 41 points on March 6 with 30 points in the second round game. He shot 11 of 15 overall and was a perfect 3 of 3 from behind the arc. Turell's lanky 6'7" frame allows him to post-up under the basket. Coupled with his sharpshooting ability, this makes him nearly impossible to guard.

The Macs' offense is built to work with the players who are playing well during each specific contest. They are among the top in the country in assists and understand that on any given night, another player can stand out. Players such as forward Caleb Milobsky (SSSB '21) and guard Eitan Halpert (SSSB '21) have had such games during the Macs' historic season. The ability to capitalize on breakout performances supplements the Macs' consistent brilliance on offense and makes them a formidable foe for any DIII tournament team.

Simcha Halpert (SSSB '20) and Leifer, two of the Macs' constants, once again showed up on Saturday night. Halpert scored 21 points on 4 of 6 shooting from beyond the arc. Leifer scored 10 points, dished out 10 assists, pulled 20 rebounds and added three blocks, getting his fourth triple-double of the year.

"We try to focus on whoever is feeling it," Turell said postgame. "We are trying to run

an offense. It doesn't matter who gets the ball that night, who is scoring. Whoever is scoring, we hit him."

"It's all about the next guy coming up and just staying together and trying to accomplish what we set out to do," added Leifer about the team's chemistry.

*Yeshiva has now won 29 games in a row, the longest active streak in the country.*

Another large part of their win was the extreme point differential in the paint. Yeshiva's 54 points in the paint nearly doubled Penn State's 26 paint points. Paint points came mostly on Yeshiva's ability to take advantage of the defense on backdoor cuts to the basket. Team spark plug Ofek Reef (SSSB '23) used his athleticism to get to the basket, scoring 16 of the Macs' 54 paint points on 7 of 8 shooting.

Though the lopsided score at the final buzzer hid it, the first half of this contest was incredibly close, with 15 lead changes. In the opening 20 minutes, neither team led by more than 7 points, when Yeshiva scored on a fastbreak layup by Eitan Halpert. Penn State's largest lead of the game was 4.

A knock on Yeshiva this tournament is their free-throw shooting percentage, which has taken a significant dive since the Macs

started the tournament. After shooting an overall 73% from the charity stripe this season, the Macs are shooting free-throws at a 68% rate in the first two games of the tournament.

"It certainly looked harder today with how we shot it," said Turell about the challenge of taking free throws in a quiet, spectatorless gym. "We always yell and try to psych each other out at the free-throw line [during practice]. I guess we've got to be quiet now."

The spread of the COVID-19 virus has also impacted the team off the court as they were turned away from their Maryland hotel on March 5 because the hotel was reluctant to host the team after a YU student tested positive for the virus earlier last week. Additionally, tip-off for the first round game was pushed off an hour and twenty minutes after a Yeshiva professor tested positive. The team waited in their new hotel until they were cleared to play.

Coach Steinmetz told d3hoops.com that the team will not return to campus "largely for optics," as they try to play the next round without complications. All Yeshiva classes have been canceled until Monday.

"It's all about the brotherhood that we've formed," said Turell of his team's ability to overcome adversity. "It doesn't matter what gets thrown at us, we're together, we're a unit."



Ryan Turell pulls up for a mid-range jumper in front of empty bleachers at Johns Hopkins during the Macs' 102-83 victory.

JOE BEDNARSH

*PANDEMIC ENDS MEN'S BASKETBALL, continued from Front Page*

Statistically speaking, the team had an easier time making a shot than missing it in their first-ever tournament wins, shooting at least 60% from the field and 53% from three-point range in each game. Ryan Turell (SSSB '22) led the way with a combined 71 points on 77.4% shooting, including a career-high 41 points in the Round of 64. 2018-2019 MVP of the Skyline Conference Gabriel Leifer (SSSB '21) added a monster 10 points, 20 rebounds and 10 assists triple-double in the Round of 32 as well. The 6-foot-5-inch power forward's fourth of the season, he grabbed the outright

lead in triple doubles among Division III this season over Nate West of LeTourneau University, who had three.

Key sixth man Ofek Reef (SSSB '23) described the team's reaction to the cancellation of the tournament as "[a bit] surprised, but we all saw it coming." Reef called the leadership of several upperclassmen crucial to helping the younger players process what had just occurred. "Simcha [Halpert], Dani [Katz], Kevin [Bokor], Sammy [Mandel], Tyler [Hod], and Bar [Alluf] showed great leadership in helping us put this behind us and keep progressing over the next couple years. At the end of the day, we proved ourselves as a nationally ranked team ... We'll take this time off to get in the gym to work

on our game before the new season starts."

The members that Reef referred to will have already played their last game for the school. Seniors Halpert, Katz, Bokor, Mandel, Hod and Alluf all brought energy and were crucial for the Macs at various points in their careers. Halpert, Katz and Hod played big minutes in the school's biggest games ever.

Halpert in particular enjoyed a rather illustrious career as a YU Maccabee. Over his four year career, the 6-foot-3-inch guard from Los Angeles has a 50-40-90 season (50% FG, 40% 3PT, 90% FT) to his name (the 2018-2019 season) and was named Skyline Conference Rookie of the Year (2016-2017), Skyline All-Conference First

Team (2017-2018, 2018-19) and Skyline All Conference Second Team (2019-2020). Halpert will graduate with a total of 1,845 points and will go down as the 2nd highest scorer in the school's 64-year history, finishing 26 points behind all-time leader Yossy Gev's 1,871 ('02).

The Macs will end the 2019-2020 season with their record 29-game winning streak intact and an unequivocal claim as the best team YU has ever fielded, while the Macs went from unranked to 13th in the Division III rankings, the NCAA's winningest team (96.7% win percentage). In their brief exposure to a different level of competition, Yeshiva blew out its opponents.

*COMMUNICATIONS FAILURES, continued from Page 2*

the epicenter of the COVID-19 in the United States, and when only one meal has been offered to-go from the cafeteria each day.

The university should issue all students at

least partial housing and meal plan refunds for the past few weeks and full refunds for the rest of the semester, but more importantly, administrators should have already notified students of its plans to refund them. Instead, students have been forced to wait for weeks, in doubt about the status of their own money, while university administrators decide their fate behind closed doors without even giving

them the courtesy of an email updating them on what is taking so long.

If the coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything, it is that forthright, honest and proactive communication are the key to weathering a perilous storm and preventing students from worrying or needlessly panicking. The university has not lived up to this standard thus far, and only through a

complete about-face in its approach toward communication can it learn from its mistakes. Moving forward, YU officials should learn from the past and adopt policies of proactive communication to ensure students are kept informed of crucial developments that directly affect them.

# After Haphazard Rollout, Security Updates to Include Alumni Restrictions and Shabbat ID Requirement

By AVI HIRSCH

*Editor's note: This article was initially published online on March 1.*

New security policies, which include restrictions on which buildings alumni may enter as well as a new requirement for students and other visitors to carry ID cards when entering YU buildings on Shabbat, will go into effect on March 15, according to a recent update to YU's website. As of the time of publication, students, alumni and other members of the YU community have not been formally notified of these upcoming security updates.

The website now includes a section detailing a list of locations on the Wilf and Beren campuses that alumni will be allowed to visit following the implementation of the new policies. At the moment, security guards allow alumni to enter all YU buildings on the Wilf Campus and all buildings except the dormitories on the Beren Campus. But absent from the new list of locations are all dormitory buildings on both campuses. The Rubin Shul, Morgenstern Hall *beit midrash* and the Sephardi *Beit Midrash* are all located in dormitory buildings and are absent from the list; Fischel *beit midrash*, also in a dormitory building, is on the list of locations open to alumni. Other locations seemingly no longer open to alumni are Furst Hall and Belfer Hall, and the only locations listed on Beren Campus that alumni will be able to visit are the library and dining hall.

According to the updated website, the Furman Dining Hall, which is located in Rubin Hall, will remain open to all alumni, and the Max Stern Athletic Center, located in the same building, will remain open to male undergraduate alumni only. It is unclear how or whether security will enforce the restriction on alumni entering the dormitory rooms also located in Rubin Hall.

All alumni will have to carry new alumni identification cards with them when entering any building on campus. Alumni who wish to access any location not open to them or any location without the new alumni ID card will require the same "daily visitors pass" as any other visitors, which according to the website will require a staff sponsor and "may be limited to only certain buildings and times, and certain purposes."

New visitor policies also include special identification cards for spouses of alumni and students, and those who wish to attend *minyan* regularly — in the Glueck or Fischel *batei midrash* only — can apply for a Minyan ID Card, which "will need to be approved by both Rabbi Menachem Penner or Yosef Kalinsky and University Director of Security," according to the website.

In addition to the new alumni and other visitor restrictions, the new policies indicate that all students and visitors will be required to carry identification with them on Shabbat. "All holders of valid Yeshiva University ID Cards wishing entry to the campus buildings and synagogues during the Shabbat and Holidays will be required to present their ID Cards to the Security Officer," the website states. "All visitors will be required to present their valid government-issued photo IDs, Minyan IDs or Alumni/Alumni Spouse/Student Spouse IDs to the Security Officer." The website also links to a "Shabbat ID policy ruling," a *halakhic* ruling from RIETS *rosh yeshiva* Rabbi Herschel Schachter permitting the carrying of ID cards on Shabbat within the *eruv*.

Yeshiva College alumnus Daniel Shlian

(YC '17) lives near YU's Wilf Campus in part due to the presence of YU-run *minyanim* — some of which take place in locations that will soon be limited to current YU students only. "Tefillah be-tzibbur is a crucial component of my religious life," explained Shlian, "and these changes are making me profoundly distressed about my current living situation."

"In addition," Shlian added, "it's important to highlight that there are only two facilities near campus with standing women's sections throughout the week: Rubin and Morg (in fairness, an ad hoc *mechitza* is consistently available in Glueck). Restricting access to these locations means, essentially, that women in the community are being told they are only welcome in shul on Shabbat, which is extremely distressing."

Shlian explained that in October of last year, he had spoken with administrators including Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky and Chief Facilities & Administrative Officer Randy Apfelbaum regarding these issues, and left the meeting with the impression that the prior points would be addressed. "I remain hopeful that some changes will be put into place," concluded Shlian, "but am disappointed that the new policy made it onto the official YU website prior to any communication of minyan relocations or additions."

Sy Syms School of Business alumnus Etan Neiman (SSSB '17), who also lives in Washington Heights, was similarly concerned about the upcoming changes. He explained that he recently met a student in a YU dormitory lounge to counsel him as part of YU's new MVP program. With the new policies set to take effect in the coming weeks, he worried that he "will soon be burdened in helping further students should this published policy ultimately go through."

"The Office of Alumni Affairs has been working in concert with YU's security office to ensure that the interests of alumni are protected, while understanding that the safety of our students is of the highest priority," explained Director of Alumni Affairs Dina Burkat in a statement to The Commentator. "Alumni will maintain access to all non-resi-

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*The long and troubled rollout of the new policies, with no formal communication from YU, has spread confusion among alumni regarding when the new restrictions will be implemented and what exactly they will entail.*

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dential spaces on campus, and minyan times/locations have been added and adjusted in order to accommodate the new regulations."

The rollout of the new security protocols has been haphazard, beginning with some alumni claiming that for several hours on Sunday, Aug. 25, security guards had prevented them from entering YU dormitory buildings despite no such policy being in place. Several days later, the Shenk Shul sent an email to subscribers informing them that "starting this shabbat, August 30, YU will be initiating a new security policy requiring photo ID to enter every YU building, including the Shenk Shul" and linking to the ruling of Rabbi Schachter. Shenk Shul Shabbat newsletters beginning that week and continuing until this past week's newsletter have included the new Shabbat ID requirement, but according to sources the requirement has been rarely and inconsistently enforced.

In late October, the listing of *minyanim* on YU Zmanim was updated with a message warning students that since alumni will no



Morgenstern Hall

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longer be allowed in dormitory buildings, late night *maariv minyanim* that used to take place in the Morgenstern Hall *beit midrash* would be moved to the second floor of Glueck. These *minyanim*, which take place between 10:30 p.m. and 12:30 a.m. weekday nights, were then moved once again to a room in Zysman Hall, which prompted a negative reaction from female *minyan*-goers, as a *mechitza* was not readily available in the new location.

Even after these *minyanim* moved, however, the new security protocols that had seemingly prompted the location changes did not go into effect. But despite the fact that no new protocols were yet in place, YU's website was updated no later than early January with an early version of the new visitor policies,

higher-ups do not effectively communicate new policies to security guards, which adds to a sense of frustration."

No later than Feb. 18, a few weeks after the updates were removed from the website, they were back online, this time with an "Effective March 1, 2020" heading. No later than one week after this, the date was updated to reflect the current expected rollout date of March 15.

The long and troubled rollout of the new policies, punctuated by a lack of formal communication from YU, has spread confusion among alumni regarding when the new restrictions will be implemented and what exactly they will entail. "Since the rumors started trickling in last August about a partial 'alumni ban,'" explained Neiman, "I have been increasingly frustrated and confused by a lack of formal communication to alumni."

Shlian was similarly frustrated by communication problems regarding the new policies. "[A]lumni, to my knowledge, have not been made aware of even the general contours of the policy as it stands now, let alone specifics," he said. Regarding the new alumni ID cards, he added that "at no point were alumni made aware of the new card requirements via any formal process by the university."

Regarding the lack of communication to alumni, Burkat explained, "Our plan has always been to communicate the new policies with alumni in the weeks before they went into effect, and our communication plan was adjusted to reflect the new March 15 implementation date. We still plan to make sure alumni are apprised of the new policies this week, which will give frequent alumni visitors nearly 2 weeks to obtain their new ID's, a procedure which only takes a matter of minutes."

As of the time of publication, Apfelbaum did not respond to The Commentator's requests for comment on the new security policies.

"Universities should celebrate when an alumnus is on campus, not actively cut back on their access," Neiman asserted. "This entire experience has been upsetting and will strongly factor into any involvement with YU's fundraising and community."

## Men's Basketball Coasts to its First NCAA Tournament Victory

By Chana Weinberg

*Editor's note: This article was initially published online on March 7.*

The YU men's basketball team won their first-ever tournament game as they dominated the Worcester Polytechnic University (WPI) Engineers by a score of 102-78, bringing Yeshiva to a 28-1 record on the season going into the Round of 32.

WPI could not stop the Macs' offense as they won their 28th straight game — the longest active streak in NCAA Division III. However, the biggest story of the day was sophomore guard Ryan Turell (SSSB '22). The Skyline Player of the Year dominated the game on offense from start to finish.

Turell scored a career high 41 points on 13-16 shooting from the field, 7-9 from behind the arc and 8 of 10 from the free throw line. During his offensive deluge, Turell also broke

in place of Bar Alluf (SSSB '20), Eitan Halpert (SSSB '21) played a strong first half for the Macs, grabbing two steals and scoring 9 points in the half. Eitan, the younger brother

the floor to hit two out of four three-pointers and driving to the basket for an overall 6-9 shooting night.

Overall, the Macs shot over 60% from the field and 53% from downtown, an incredible feat, not far from their regular season average of 52% and 40% shooting, respectively. The Engineers shot an impressive 46% from the field, but their slow start and inability to stop the Macs' offensive deluge put them in a hole from which they could not recover.

Due to a coronavirus outbreak in Maryland, spectators will be barred from attending the second round game as well. On March 6, The Commentator reported that YU's team was turned away from the Doubletree by Hilton Baltimore-North Pikesville hotel on March 5 upon arrival.

*The winner of the Yeshiva-Penn State Harrisburg Round of 32 matchup will take on either nationally ranked No. 3 Randolph-Macon College or The College of New Jersey in the third round, next weekend as per YUMacs.com.*

the program record for most points scored in a season. The Macs' relentless offense scored 51 points in each half, as WPI got hot too late in the game to come back.

Starting for the first time since November

of the Macs' second all-time leading scorer Simcha Halpert (SSSB '20), finished with 14 points and four rebounds, and tied the team high with eight assists. The older Halpert scored 20 points during the game, spreading



The Macs defeated WPI 102-78 in a gym with no spectators.

YUMACS.COM

## YU Student Tests Positive for COVID-19, Wilf Classes Cancelled

By YITZCHAK CARROLL  
and AVI HIRSCH

*Editor's note: This article was initially published online on March 3.*

One of the children of the Westchester man confirmed to be New York's second coronavirus case is a Yeshiva University undergraduate male student, according to an email and text message alert sent to the university community on Tuesday, March 3.

The student is currently quarantined with his family and has not been on campus since Thursday, Feb. 27, according to university officials. The New York Post reported that the YU student is currently experiencing symptoms of the virus.

In the alert message, which was sent to YU's student body and staff at 2:27 p.m. and posted on the YU website, a university spokesperson reassured students that the

situation is under control. "We are working closely with, and following the recommendations of the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) and the Office of Emergency Preparedness and Response and other government agencies to take every necessary precaution to ensure the safety of our community," the statement said.

Two close contacts of the student that tested positive for COVID-19 have been transferred to Bellevue Hospital for testing, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio tweeted on March 4. He stated that "City disease detectives are on campus to identify close contacts of the student and connect those individuals to testing immediately." De Blasio explained that YU is working alongside the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to "to take every necessary precaution to ensure the safety of students and the community."

The alert noted that "the

University is disinfecting all relevant common areas," and "all University functions and classes are continuing to operate as usual" until further notice. Salanter Akiba Riverdale (SAR) Academy in Riverdale, which a sibling of the YU student attends, as well as SAR High School closed Tuesday, March 3, as a precautionary measure. Westchester Day School in Mamaroneck and the Westchester

to contact with the Westchester COVID-19 patient's law firm. The Cardozo student is reportedly experiencing no symptoms.

Some students expressed concern about YU's ability to handle this situation. "I can't even trust YU elevators! How can I trust them to handle an incurable disease?" commented Jonathan Malek (SSSB '22), referring to recent elevator malfunctions on campus.

*The alert noted that "the University is disinfecting all relevant common areas," and "all University functions and classes are continuing to operate as usual" until further notice.*

Torah Academy in White Plains also closed "out of an abundance of caution."

According to the email, a Cardozo student is currently in self-quarantine "as instructed by their doctor," a precaution due

"It's definitely concerning. I immediately contacted my parents to figure out a plan just in case the virus comes to YU," said Shira Levitt (SCW '21). "I have definitely thought about not going back to campus as a precaution but I am

not sure if missing midterms is a smart idea."

In a press conference, Mayor Bill de Blasio said, "Remember, the vast majority of those who get the virus, show little or no symptoms — it's the 20% that get more sick and a smaller percentage that are at real risk." The mayor added, "This is an evolving situation and we don't know what we will find. If we need a bigger response, we will do it. We are not near an emergency declaration."

"[W]e urge you to follow the CDC's guidelines on hand-washing and sanitary practices that prevent the spread of viruses," the university concluded in its email to the student body. "If you feel you have symptoms, contact your doctor or call 311."

*Elisheva Kohn contributed to this story.*

# Beren and Wilf to Remain Closed Through Purim, Berman Addresses Concerns Via Conference Call

By ELISHEVA KOHN

*Editor's note: This article was initially published online on March 4.*

Following the confirmation of a COVID-19 positive YU student, President Ari Berman addressed concerns regarding the virus on a conference phone call with the Yeshiva University community on Wednesday evening, March 4. Dr. Don Weiss, Director of Surveillance for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), participated in the conference call as well.

At least 1,200 people called in to receive updates on the situation on YU campuses. Following the phone call, Berman sent a summary of the information covered in the phone call to the YU community via email, and the latest update was posted online.

Berman announced that all in-person undergraduate and graduate classes and events are canceled on both the Beren and Wilf campuses until after Purim, March 10, including the university's planned Purim *chagigot* as well as the annual Red Sarachek yeshiva high school basketball tournament. Yeshiva University High School for Boys (MTA), which is located in Washington Heights, will be closed as well. Cardozo School of Law will continue to operate as usual. Earlier today, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo stated that the YU Wilf Campus would be closed through Friday.

Dormitories, *batei midrash* and food services will remain open and daily *minyanim* on the Wilf campus will continue, though Berman discouraged students from congregating in common areas, including the *beit midrash*. Midterms will be suspended, and faculty will be in touch with students when classes resume, Berman said. Optional classes will be available to students online. "All common areas on the Wilf and Beren campuses will undergo a "deep cleaning," according to Berman.

"These precautionary steps," Berman said, "will allow us to work with city agencies and other professionals to best prepare our campuses and ensure the uncompromised

safety of our students, faculty and staff."

According to Weiss, coronavirus tests may be available on campus in the near future. Weiss declined to address the well-being of the two YU students who were taken to Bellevue Hospital to be tested for the virus earlier today by FDNY emergency medical technicians, citing the confidential nature of their cases.

*These precautionary steps," said Berman, "will allow us to work with city agencies and other professionals to best prepare our campuses and ensure the uncompromised safety of our students, faculty and staff."*

"There were two students in the university sent to the hospital today," explained CJ Glicksman (YC '20), a resident advisor (RA) on the seventh floor of Rubin Hall, the floor on which the student confirmed to have COVID-19 resides. "One was sent because of extended contact with the infected student. The other was sent because he was feeling sick. The latter did not have contact with the

infected student. As far as I have heard from housing, security, and the YU administration, neither resident is likely to have the virus. They were taken to the hospital as a precautionary measure, just in case."

"Students on campus seem to be very on edge at the moment," added Glicksman. However, Glicksman urged his fellow students not to panic, emphasizing that "YU

and the DOH are obviously doing whatever is possible to contain the situation, and venting frustrations at YU can only be detrimental."

Berman encouraged students to "continue with their normal lives," maintaining that panic is a "key risk" and that students should approach the situation "with calmness."

Some students were dissatisfied with the way the university has been communicating

with the student body regarding the current situation on campus. "The university is not being completely transparent with us," said a resident of the seventh floor of Rubin Hall, commenting on the condition of anonymity. "I understand their concerns about inciting hysteria by telling this to the whole student body, but order comes secondary to our safety ... I am going home to my family and only learned now that I need to be self-quarantined," he said. "My asthma makes me highly susceptible and puts me in greater danger. We need better communication because this is unacceptable."

The student was told by his RA that students who were in close contact with the patient should be self-quarantined. "I hope these concerns are overprotective, but that's not a risk we should be willing to take," the resident added.

Concluding his email, Berman promised to continue to communicate with the YU community as the situation further unfolds.

*Yitzchak Carroll contributed to this story.*



Media presence at the Wilf Campus on Wednesday, March 4

THE COMMENTATOR

## Turell, Leifer Lead Men's Basketball's Awards Haul

By MITCH GOULSON

The NCAA Men's Basketball Division III awards were announced on March 24, as Macs Head Coach Elliot Steinmetz took home the Coach of the Year Award, senior Gabriel Leifer (SSSB '21) made 4th Team, and sophomore Ryan Turell (SSSB '22) made 1st Team. The #13 Macs were set up for a thriller in the Sweet 16 against #3 Randolph-Macon, but as the team's bus pulled into their hotel in Ashland, Virginia, news broke that the NCAA Tournament was canceled due to the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Dave McHugh of D3Hoops.com specified the criteria for Coach of the Year in this abbreviated season as a combination of "what you did on the court, what you did as a program, and what you have done overall." Steinmetz and his Macs not only garnered national

recognition as they reeled off a program-best 29 wins in a row, but they also tallied their first-ever wins in the Division III tournament this season. "They [YU], among others, had a legitimate chance to win the national title," McHugh said.

In talking to McHugh, Steinmetz discussed the team's reaction to the cancellation. "We're competitors," said Steinmetz. "And we wanted to

attorney in addition to his role as the Macs' head coach.

Leifer, the 2018-2019 Skyline Player of the Year, led D-3 in triple doubles (4) while averaging 16 points, 14 rebounds and 7 assists. He turned up his play when the games mattered most, notching 10/20/10 triple doubles in both the Skyline Conference Championship and the Tournament's Round of

to add to it next year, his final season at YU.

Turell ascended from 2018-2019 Rookie of the Year to 2019-2020 First Team All American. He shot 64% from the field and 46% from three point range, fueling YU's single-season points record with 646. After he eclipsed 1,000 points faster than any YU player ever had and ended the season with

history) and 30 points against WPC and PSU, respectively. Turell hit 10 out of his 12 threes on his way to a 77% field goal percentage in those games. Many were eager to see if he could sustain those mind-boggling percentages against a top-three team in the country when facing Randolph-Macon, but COVID-19 quashed those hopes.

Regarding his reaction to the award as well as his goals for next year, Turell commented, "It's great if you're a senior, so as a sophomore it's pretty exciting! But at the end of the day ... we're chasing letters, not numbers. The only thing I got on my mind for next year is a National Championship."

Coach Steinmetz and stars Leifer and Turell will be back next year, as the team will look to justify their #13 ranking and prove that their season was not a fluke.

*"At the end of the day ... we're chasing letters, not numbers. The only thing I got on my mind for next year is a National Championship."*

—  
Ryan Turell (SSSB '22)

see if we could go beat Randolph-Macon, the best defensive team in the country. It wasn't enough for us to just say we didn't lose." Steinmetz, a Sy Syms School of Business alum in his sixth season as YU's head coach, works as an

32. Leifer grabbed 412 boards and dished 199 assists this season, both of which set YU single-season records. Leifer already owns the YU record for career assists (408), and the 6-foot-5-inch power forward from Lawrence, New York will look

1,190 for his career, he may blow past the all-time YU scoring record, held by Yossi Gev ('02) with 1,871 points.

In the school's first-ever tournament games, Turell scored 41 (the 4th highest single-game score in YU



## YU to Close Through End of Week as Coronavirus Cases Increase

By YITZCHAK CARROLL

*Editor's note: This article was initially published online on March 8.*

Classes will be canceled at Yeshiva University through at least Sunday, March 15, The Commentator has learned, as the coronavirus continues to spread in New York.

On March 6, a Sy Syms School of Business professor told their students that they were diagnosed with the virus. Rabbi Reuven Fink, a professor in YU's Isaac Breuer College (IBC), tested positive for the coronavirus last week, the university announced in a tweet past midnight on March 6.

An email sent by YU later in the afternoon confirmed class closures through the end of the week at both the Wilf and Beren Campuses, as well as the positive coronavirus diagnosis of a Syms professor. The email also noted that two additional students who were recently tested did not have the coronavirus, but noted that "in the event of further cancellations, we are preparing for the contingency of online classes."

The Syms professor who tested positive attended last week's AIPAC Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., including an event for YU alumni and students. "At that conference, I now know that I [shook] someone's hand that has now tested positive," the professor

wrote. The professor went to get tested last week, and the results came back positive for coronavirus. As a result, the professor will remain in self-quarantine for 14 days. "I have the mildest of flu-like symptoms," the professor said, adding that no students have been exposed, as the professor has not been on campus since prior to their exposure to the virus.

On March 6, just minutes before Shabbat, AIPAC announced in a tweet that "at least two Policy Conference attendees from New York have tested positive for the coronavirus." The Washington D.C. Health Department said in a statement that "there is no identified risk to conference attendees at this time" as the two AIPAC participants with the coronavirus

were asymptomatic during the time they were in the nation's capital.

The university previously announced that classes and events would be canceled through Purim. News of the continued closure until Monday, March 16 was initially told to resident advisors and student council presidents. As of the time of publication, the university has not informed the student body of this update. It was not immediately clear whether the university plans for in-person classes to resume next week, or if online classes will take the place of campus-based lectures.

Classes have been canceled since Wednesday, March 4, due to the diagnosis of a student with the coronavirus.

## Brooklyn College Volleyball Athletes Kneel During Israeli Anthem at YU Home Game

By ELISHEVA KOHN

*Editor's note: This article was initially published online on March 3.*

Two Brooklyn College athletes knelt during the recital of the Israeli national anthem at a game against the Yeshiva University men's volleyball team on Feb. 23 in the Max Stern Athletic Center (MSAC) on the Wilf Campus.

Later identified in social media posts as Omar Rezika and Hunnan Butt, the two Brooklyn College athletes can be seen kneeling during "Hatikvah," the Israeli national anthem, in a video that was posted online by a YU student who was in the crowd. Rezika and Butt did not kneel during the U.S. national anthem. Traditionally, the U.S. anthem is followed by the Israeli national anthem at major events at YU, including sports games.

"Brooklyn College strongly condemns all forms of Anti-Semitism and hatred. The two students who knelt during the national anthem did not refuse to shake hands with players from the other team," said a spokesman for Brooklyn College. "Their kneeling is protected by the First Amendment."

In 2016, NFL player Colin

Kaepernick protested against racial injustice in the United States by kneeling during the U.S. national anthem. Since then, taking a knee during a national anthem has been widely regarded as a gesture of protest.

In response to a tweet by Chovevei Zion, a conservative Jewish organization, that claimed Brooklyn College's basketball team had "displayed unsportsmanlike behavior at game" and "refused

wished to remain anonymous, Brooklyn athletes neither cursed at YU students nor did they pick a fight. The YU volleyball athlete told The Commentator that he was troubled that the video was being spread online, "especially with the inaccuracy that the posts had. Pages were retweeting it with captions that were wrong and made YU look bad for not sticking up for its students."

The incident at the volleyball

published in various news outlets such as the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the New York Post and The Guardian.

In response to The Commentator's inquiries about the incident at the volleyball game, President Ari Berman remarked that it was "unfortunate that some members of the opposing team disrespected Israel's national anthem." He noted that YU is the "only university" that recites "both

Conference Championships in the MSAC. Akiva Poppers (SSSB '22), Chief Content Officer of MacsLive, told The Commentator that this was the first time he had witnessed this order of the national anthems at a YU sporting event. The anthems were also played in this order at the Skyline Conference semifinals and finals games.

The Commentator reached out to eight members of the YU men's volleyball team to comment on the incident, all but one of whom declined to comment. One of the athletes maintained that they were "told not to speak to anyone about the matter" and another explained that "the school has it handled on their take of the incident." When asked about the matter, YU Athletics Director Joe Bednarsh declined to comment, adding that he doubted anybody would be willing to speak to The Commentator about the incident.

The YU Athletics Department, YU Volleyball Head Coach Dennis Mente, Brooklyn College Volleyball Head Coach Lia Briffa, Rezika and Butt did not return The Commentator's request for comment.

*According to a member of the YU men's volleyball team who wished to remain anonymous, Brooklyn athletes neither cursed at YU students nor did they pick a fight.*

to shake hands after game, began cursing the Jewish players, & tried picking fights," YU Athletics' official Twitter account commented, "Your tweet is not accurate. Please rest assured that if anything like that should ever occur we would handle it through the proper channels." Chovevei Zion later clarified that they were referring to the volleyball team, not the basketball team, but did not address the rest of the tweet.

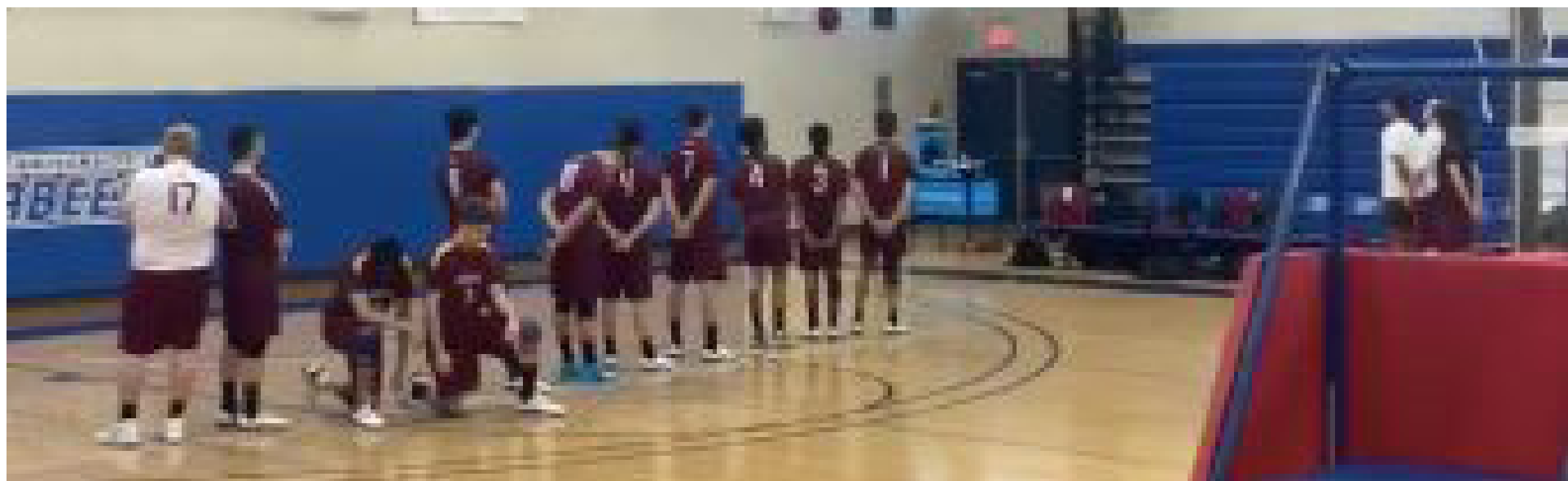
According to a member of the YU men's volleyball team who

game sparked controversy among YU students and the greater Jewish community. The initial video of the incident posted on Facebook has been shared over 100 times. Facebook users who commented on the video called the incident "disappointing" and "appalling." Video footage of the incident was also shared by numerous pro-Israel social media pages such as StandWithUs, United With Israel and StopAntisemitism. The incident was first covered by the YU Observer, and later reports were

the American and Israeli national anthems before every athletic competition and major event."

"Nothing makes me prouder to be an American than living in a country where our religious freedom, our zionism and our commitment to our people will never be impeded and always be prized," added Berman.

Two days after the incident occurred, the Israeli national anthem was played prior to the U.S. national anthem at the quarterfinal basketball game of the Skyline



Two Brooklyn College students kneeling during the Israeli national anthem

## In the Wake of the Virus, the Macs Give us Hope

By **MAYER FINK**

It has been a rough, crazy and confusing week for students of Yeshiva University. Only last Sunday, I was sitting in the Max Stern Athletic Center watching the Macs win the Skyline Conference and head to the NCAA Division III Tournament for only the second time in school history. While reading articles about this historic run, I felt fortunate to be a part of Yeshiva University and anticipated further joy and excitement for our institution.

I was wrong.

On Tuesday I heard reports of someone in the Jewish community who contracted the coronavirus; at the time, it was reported that his son, who attends YU, was showing symptoms of the virus. At first, I didn't think that these reports would result in anything serious — certainly not the cancellation of classes and Purim festivities. By Wednesday morning, the student was confirmed to have tested positive for coronavirus and all undergraduate classes and events were canceled through March 15 (initially March 10). Everyone on campus Wednesday morning was not only worried for themselves — taking

additional hygienic precautions for their own safety — but worried for the family that was affected by the virus, spending much time praying for their safety. That afternoon, I fled across the George Washington Bridge back to my hometown — others were not as fortunate.

Initially, there was a lot of uncertainty. How long would we be told to stay home? How long is YU going to be shut down for? Would the coronavirus continue to spread to more communities, leaving devastation in its wake? Through all the tension I remembered that the Macs were set to play in Baltimore on Friday. Would the game also be affected by the virus?

allowed to attend any of the weekend's games in the Goldfarb Gymnasium, regardless of whom they supported. Through all this, I received an update that Rabbi Reuven Fink (no relation) — who gives two classes at the Isaac Breuer College (IBC) and is the rabbi of the Young Israel of New Rochelle — tested positive for the virus. The fear grew denser throughout the Orthodox Jewish community.

On Friday afternoon, I heard that the Macs' game got moved from the scheduled 1:00 p.m. start to 2:20 p.m. I suddenly suspected that the game wouldn't happen at all — fortunately, they played amidst the uncertainty and doubt. After days of ten-

The week began with a Macs victory and ended with a Macs victory.

That Shabbos was quiet for me. I didn't go out much and I can't imagine many did. Nobody in shul shook hands, everybody went for the valued Purell hand sanitizer, and the theme of every Shabbos speech and casual conversation was about the virus.

I found out on Saturday night that the Macs would face Penn State-Harrisburg. The Nittany Lions pulled off an upset victory over Johns Hopkins on Friday night. However, after a struggle in the first half that saw 15 lead changes, the Macs proved too much for the Nittany Lions and won their 29th game in a row by 19 points, earning a spot in the Division III Sweet 16. Yeshiva University continues its quest to win its first national championship in school history.

Before the coronavirus scare, we rallied around the Macs as a symbol of pride for our institution. Now we look at them as a symbol of hope. As a university that seems to not have a day go by without a negative news story, it's nice to finally see positive headlines. Sports have little impact on our day-to-day lives, but we can occasionally rally behind and take pride in a team that represents Yeshiva and gives us hope.

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I found out Thursday afternoon the team was getting the paranoid treatment expected for a university in which a student tested positive for the virus. The DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Pikesville refused to host the team for the weekend. No fans were

sion and fear, I was watching the first NCAA Division III Tournament game being played in an empty basketball gym. The Macs put on a spectacular performance, winning their 28th game in a row by a score of 102-78 as Ryan Turell scored a career-high 41 points.



Ryan Turell slamming down a basket as the Macs progress to the Sweet 16

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

*Editor's Note: The following set of articles presents a prospectus by Dr. Samuel Belkin, president of Yeshiva University, in the aftermath of a ban on the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society and its functions. In his prospectus, Dr. Belkin explained the reasoning for the ban, outlined the goals of Yeshiva College, the administration's attitude towards extracurricular activities and the definition of synthesis. Today, the students and the administration of YU are faced with many similar issues to those outlined in Dr. Belkin's prospectus.*

## From the Archives (December 14, 1944; Volume 10 Issue 4) — An Open Letter from Y.C. Council to Dr. Belkin

By **YESHIVA COLLEGE STUDENT COUNCIL**

*Editor's Note: The following letter was presented to Dr. Belkin by a committee appointed by Student Council at a special meeting held on Thursday evening, November 30. Dr. Belkin had previously banned all dramatic activities in the College. The scheduled Varsity Show was to be permitted, however, on the condition that no tickets be sold. A reply in the form of a prospectus by Dr. Belkin will appear in the next issue of The Commentator.*

The Student Council has decided that no Varsity Show is to be held this year, under the conditions you have deemed requisite for its presentation. This decision was guided by a desire to maintain not only the letter but also the spirit of your action in banning all dramatic activities. With respect to the Varsity Show, yet another consideration was involved: the fact that this is a war year.

Our decision, as you can readily see, has placed us in a somewhat precarious position. We have given up, without a struggle, that which has been a part of the Yeshiva College student body's activities for many years; an

activity, too, which was eagerly awaited and enjoyed by the great majority of students and faculty. Our action affects not only this year's student body, but that of future years. We have done this as partners in a bona fide relationship which exists between the Office of the President and the students.

You, as the principal partner in this relationship, should give us, and with us all future student bodies, an assurance that this curtailment is a final one, which will not extend to any other activities. In this capacity too, we should like you to clarify certain other and larger issues which are involved, implicitly or explicitly, in your decision. Once you, as President of the whole institution, have seen fit to pay particular attention to one of its principal, there are still more pregnant matters involving that same part, which, we feel, deserve your fullest consideration.

### Function of College?

These major problems can all be subsumed under the heading: What is the function of the college with respect to the Yeshiva? We have had many definitions of synthesis, but, apparently all were meaningless; for here that which has, in all times, been considered as an almost curricular part of any college program, dramatics, has been removed. Does this mean an abandonment

of the ideal of synthesis, or at least an abandonment of it in that guise in which it has appeared since the foundation of the college? All too frequently has synthesis been trotted out before the world as that which distinguishes us from any other institution. If the experiment has failed, let us know that it has failed; and let a new and perhaps stronger ideal take its place.

Then, too, we feel that even in the past the college's position in theory was never realized in fact. The level of scholarship in the Yeshiva studies is seldom approximated in the college studies. Nor can the norms of knowledge prevalent in other American universities be our standards. The American educational scene is such that one would fear to affirm anything but the barest minimum of knowledge possessed by the holder of a baccalaureate degree. Yeshiva need not accept this bare minimum as its standard, thus bowing down to the "idols of the market-place," when it can produce a type of scholarship which is not to be readily found elsewhere.

This can certainly not be brought about in the present surroundings. The removal of philosophy from the list of requirements and the need for more intensive courses in Jewish philosophy (not apologetics) are two apparent gaps. There are more than

can be pointed out. There is much room for improvement in the numbers of the college faculty. Entrance requirements might also be raised for all students who seek admission to the Yeshiva College. Nor should the need for competent advisers be forgotten. A determined effort in this direction would raise the place of the Yeshiva College to a position which its youth denies it.

### Education in Ideals

We believe, however, that the educational activities of an institution of this sort are not fulfilled when it has trained its students alone. The Orthodox Jewish public must also be educated in ideals which it has understood but imperfectly. Is it not possible that these same groups who oppose dramatic presentations will oppose the very existence of a college? Did not basketball, for example, undergo a scurrilous and misinformed attack at the hands of a widely publicized Anglo-Jewish journal? Are we to subscribe to the opinions of the misinformed, and mold our actions as they would will; or are we to educate the misinformed?

But, at the cost of these larger discussions, the actual position of extra-curricular activities must not be forgotten. We seek a clarification of these major issues, and a positive assurance with respect to the minor issues.

## From the Archives (December 14, 1944; Volume 10 Issue 4) — Definition Needed

By **ALLEN MANDELBAUM and THE COMMENTATOR GOVERNING BOARD OF 1944-5**

This issue of The Commentator contains a letter from the Student Council of the Yeshiva College to President Belkin. The immediate occasion for this letter was the banning of all dramatic activities in the college. The

issues it deals with, however, have needed clarification for a long time. Confusion has marked the mind of the students in the past, and this new ruling has done nothing to lessen that confusion. The President now has an opportunity to clear up, once and for all, whatever has been imprecise and vague.

Much of this confusion has resulted from the lack of definition of terms which we have been taught to think of as basic. Synthesis has been the most maltreated. The result

has been that we have all used these terms as if we were in accord as to their meaning when, in reality, we were all airing but private notions.

Once these axioms have been recognized, we shall be able to judge and act in a consistent manner, certain that what we do is in keeping with what we say, and assured that our position is a valid and solid one. Given these ideals, we must not deviate from them, nor be swayed by the tides of ignorance which

groups in that body call the "public" may set in motion. We shall, without fear, demand of our critics that they do not take exception to standards which they do not only fail to embody, but fail to understand.

Dr. Belkin's reply to this letter is eagerly awaited. Given a comprehensive prospectus and a well-defined program we may feel confident that if we are to stand, we shall know where we stand.

## From the Archives (January 4, 1945; Volume 10 Issue 5) — President Belkin's Prospectus

By **DR. SAMUEL BELKIN**

1. Yeshiva College is not a secular college in the same sense as any other American college, for the college is primarily a **Yeshiva** college and, therefore, when any problem arises that pertains to activities whether they are extracurricular activities of the entire student-body or activities of the individual student, one must judge such activities from the Yeshiva viewpoint. Every college permits and often encourages certain activities of a student-body, either because they have their value from the standpoint of physical education or intellectual gymnastics, or as a form of expression with a view of their usefulness in later life.

2. Since I have been associated with the Yeshiva and the College I objected to Dramatics as an extra-curricular activity

for the following reasons: First, Dramatics is not an activity revealing or reflecting the personality of the **traditional Yeshiva man**. Second, we have no desire to develop students who will use Dramatics as a form of expression in life after they have left the four walls of the Yeshiva. Talents which we do not want our students to use after they leave the Yeshiva, we cannot encourage in the Yeshiva. Third, Dramatics more than any other of the students' activities caused a great deal of **bittul Torah** and even disturbed the academic studies. Finally, through its publicity it has given a wrong stamp on the nature and essence of the Yeshiva, and Yeshiva men. My objection to Dramatics for the last nine years are well-known to the students, administration, and particularly to the Dean of the College to whom I voiced my disapproval in my earliest association with the Yeshiva College. I am glad that the

student-body saw fit to remove it from the extra-curricular activities.

### The Yeshiva Man

3. Above all you must remember that you cannot consider yourself a Yeshiva man in your actions the first half of a day, and a College man in your actions the second half of a day. In all our activities we must bear in mind that we are Yeshiva men, and whatever is not befitting the dignity of a Yeshiva man is not befitting to the College man. The institution, as a whole, cannot be departmentalized lest we create a split personality. The Yeshiva ideology must guide the entire life of the student. I am sure that the student-body understands that fully.

4. We are not opposed to any extra-curricular activities such as they exist now, but in every activity the dignity of the entire institution and particularly the Yeshiva must

be the first consideration. We have no intention of curtailing extra-curricular activities as they stand now. There is nothing wrong in playing a game of basketball or any other of the physical or intellectual sports; on the contrary they are to be encouraged, but **with whom we play** may sometimes be of great significance for the meaning of the institution and what may seem excellent "publicity" to some members of the student-body may prove the opposite to the institution in its entirety. All your clubs may render good service to the student-body but the persons you sometimes invite to address you may merely misrepresent the essence of our institution. It is for this purpose that I have appointed the Inter-Departmental Faculty-Student Committee on Extra-Curricular Activities so that no unnecessary blunders be made. This

Continued on Page 12

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

Attend  
Musical

# The Commentator

Official Undergraduate Newspaper Of Yeshiva College

Give  
Blood!

VOL. XX.

NEW YORK CITY, THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 1945

No. 5

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3. Above all you must remember that you cannot consider yourself a Yeshiva man in your actions the first half of a day, and a College man in your actions, the second half of a day. If this were the case then our entire experiment would be a failure. In all our activities we must bear in mind that we are Yeshiva men, and whatever is not befitting the dignity of a Yeshiva man is not befitting to the College man. The institution, as a whole, cannot be departmentalized lest we create a split personality. The Yeshiva ideology must guide the entire life of the student. I am sure that the student-body understands that fully.

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reveals our sincere confidence in our student-body, and I am sure that you will live up to our expectations.

5. If Dramatics has been removed then it does not mean the "abandonment of the ideal of synthesis" but on the contrary it rather emphasizes that our activities must be in accordance with the Yeshiva ideology which is the real meaning of synthesis. On other occasions I have defined our concept of synthesis in very clear terms. We prefer to look upon science and religion as separate domains which need not be in serious conflict and, therefore, need no reconciliation. If we seek the blending of science and religion, and the integration of secular knowledge with sacred wisdom, then it is not in the subject matter represented by these fields, but rather within the personality of the individual that we hope to achieve that synthesis. We shall create a real synthesis if our approach to our lives in general, to our activities in particular will be judged from the Torah viewpoint and only when our secular knowledge will be used for a higher purpose, for a Yeshiva mode of living. Only then shall we create an ideal personality and unifying principle in pursuit of knowledge. It is, therefore, our duty not to secularize the Yeshiva, but make the Yeshiva the guiding principle of our lives.

6. The Yeshiva College, and the other departments will continue to grow, but the Yeshiva will always remain the guiding spirit. As the leading Jewish institution in the world to-day, we shall always have critics. It has always been my policy, however, that while all the periodic criticism leveled against us by some outsiders are not necessarily true or significant, and often false, still we must not assume that because the criticism comes from outside sources therefore it must necessarily be wrong. We should rather constantly re-examine our acts and endeavor to correct and improve them for the future of Orthodox Jewry in America depends upon you and that is a great responsibility.

### Growth of The College

7. The fact that certain courses were removed from the required list, and freedom of choice in electing courses is given to the student-body shows the immense growth of the College, and its liberal spirit. In the early days of the College, primarily due to financial difficulties, we lived on a "borrowed faculty", and they were few in number. The College had to adjust the student program and limit the courses of the College so that it might fit the hours of the particular teacher. In the early days of the College, students used to complain that they were not given the opportunity to select courses but the courses were forced on them, and their complaints were justified. Since the Executive Committee which consisted of Dr. Churgin, myself and Dr. Isaacs, chairman, came into existence in 1939 we worked with the main goal in mind of developing our own faculty and not live on "borrowed time", and since Dr. Isaacs became the Dean of the College, the College is acquiring more and more mature stature with its own faculty, a greater number of courses, as well as more convenient hours so that the student-body may have the freedom to choose a great number of their courses. Furthermore, along this progressive line we may receive greater accreditation in the academic world. For this purpose we have in the last few years more than doubled the budget of the College. We are still making all efforts to enlarge our faculty, and add more fundamental courses.

The Commentator archives

THE COMMENTATOR

### BELKIN'S PROSPECTUS, continued from Page 11

is not a "censoring" Committee but one which will be mutual understanding reach agreements satisfactory to all concerned. In fact, the student-body of the Yeshiva College has greater freedom of expression than students of secular colleges. I am rather proud of this fact because it reveals our sincere confidence in our student-body, and I am sure that you will live up to our expectations.

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I believe that our student-body is improving in quality, and in fact we cannot accept half the number who eagerly apply to enter our school. Finally, we are not interested in curbing the activities of the students, but it certainly is our duty to guide the life of our students.

## Bioethics in Practice

## Assisted Suicide — Physician or Executioner?

By ASHER JUNGER

“First do no harm.” It is the mantra drilled into the brains of young medical students everywhere. They are taught that as future physicians, they will be responsible to care for human life and their primary priority must be to preserve and protect people at all costs. This includes taking action when required, as well as refraining from taking action when necessary. The philosophy is simple and effective: Every action taken by a doctor must be done with the intent of improving the patient's condition and saving their life.

Medical professionals are taught to think scientifically and objectively. They focus on the practical, observable aspects of life and aim to improve people's health using the latest technology and medicine. There is a reason doctors are taught this science-based mindset starting at a college age. As a New York Times article put it, “For generations of pre-med students, three things have been as

certain as death and taxes: organic chemistry, physics and the Medical College Admission Test, known by its dread-inducing acronym, the MCAT.” This is not random; science is taught because it is effective at producing the desirable outcome of saving lives. There are many forms of alternative medicine available, which are less science-based. Not surprisingly, WebMD cautions against these forms of medicine, stating that while these forms of treatment “sound reasonable and promising... they may or may not be backed up by scientific evidence.”

If doctors are trained to think scientifically in order to achieve the goal of saving lives, what then is the rationale behind physician-assisted suicide? Is it not antithetical to everything they are being trained to do? Do we qualify the practice of saving lives by saying it only applies when the doctor and patient think it ought to apply? Is medicine simply another corporate enterprise where the consumer chooses to purchase healthcare from the provider? These are the important

questions that aspiring physicians should be asking.

MedicineNet defines physician-assisted suicide as “The voluntary termination of one's own life by administration of a lethal substance with the direct or indirect assistance of a physician.” There was a time when people were not so divided over this debate. Suicide was thought of as a terrible, unfortunate event, and the concept of a doctor assisting a patient's suicide was widely thought of as immoral and illegal. In 1885, the American Medical Association strongly condemned medical euthanasia, calling it an attempt to make “the physician don the robes of an executioner.” Of course, there were still proponents for euthanasia, but this did not reflect a mainstream view. In 1937 Nebraska senator, John Comstock, introduced legislation to Congress calling for the legalization of physician-assisted suicide for the first time in U.S. history. A decade later a committee of 1,776 physicians organized to show support for medical euthanasia. While support for assisted suicide was becoming

more mainstream, most people still vehemently opposed its apparent moral absurdity. In the 1950s the World Medical Association voted to condemn assisted suicide under any conditions. At the same time, polls emerged showing that the majority of physicians do not support physician-assisted suicide, and that only 36% of Americans supported its legalization. It was only in the 1990s, after the “Right To Die” movement started gaining popularity, that people's views started to shift. The California State Bar becomes the first major group to support physician-assisted suicide and polls found that more than half the country supported it as well. Currently there are over 15 countries (including the U.S. in some states) which legalized physician euthanasia to varying extents. As of 2017, 73% of Americans support it.

So what changed? How did support for this issue more than double in less than a century? 70 years may seem like a long time for an issue to evolve and gain popularity, but when one considers what is at stake — life and death — it is

shocking that it only took a couple of decades to sway public opinion on this matter. But public opinion has changed regarding many issues in our current climate. The way we view sex, drugs, money, power, technology, education, religion, fame, family and friends has all changed drastically over the last few decades. Society today operates in a fundamentally different manner than it did a century ago. I am not condemning modernity, nor am I claiming that we should revert back to our old ways. On the contrary, the argument against physician-assisted suicide is only strengthened in light of the technological developments we have had, which enable us to save so many more lives than ever before. I am simply claiming that when it comes to questions regarding life and death, the stakes are so high, and we must carefully examine what is moral and what is not.

Death With Dignity, a non-profit organization which promotes

*Continued on Page 14*



Support for physician-assisted suicide has increased in recent decades.

### EMPLOYEE BENEFITS, continued from Front Page

a 166% and 113% increase, respectively. The annual out-of-pocket maximum (including deductibles) was \$3,500 or \$8,750 with Empire Blue for an individual or family, respectively, but in 2020 rose to \$6,750 or \$13,500 with Oxford Health; this increase is over 92% and 54%, respectively. University employees under Aetna are offered the same rates as before.

Co-pay costs for specialist office visits, inpatient housing, outpatient surgery and diagnostic screenings have risen, too. Costs for primary care visits and preventive care have essentially stayed the same. Tele-doc, urgent care and rehabilitation therapy are no longer covered under Oxford Health. University employees, as opposed to those from the high schools, have seen minimal to no changes under Aetna.

Retail and mail-order prescription drugs are divided into three tiers: generics (tier 1), preferred (tier 2) and non-preferred (tier 3). The costs for retail prescription drugs under Empire Blue's EPO plan were \$7.50, 20% (\$60 maximum) and 40% (\$120 maximum), respectively. Oxford Health charges 30% after deductibles for all three tiers. Mail-order drugs under Empire Blue are

\$15 for tier 1 and 20% (\$120 max) for tiers 2 and 3. Here, too, Oxford Health charges 30% after deductibles for all three plans. University employees under Aetna have the same offers as before.

#### Premiums

Premium costs vary depending on four employee-statuses: Empire Blue classified them as Employee, Employee +1, Employee +2 and Family; Oxford Health categorized them as Employee, Employee + Spouse, Employee + Child(ren) and Employee + Family. As with the medical plans, Empire Blue and Oxford Health will be compared between the EPO plan.

Empire Blue's premium costs were dependent on an employee's annual salary range. For example, someone who earns between \$35,000-\$44,999 will not have the same rate as someone earning \$250,000-\$399,999. In contrast, Oxford Health has universal premium rates, solely based on one's employee status, as delineated above.

Two salary ranges were selected to compare what an employee's premium costs were under Empire Blue and are under Oxford Health: \$185,000-\$204,999 and \$65,000-\$84,999.

For Empire Blue, in the same employee status order listed above, high school employees earning between \$185,000 and

\$204,999 with paychecks on a semi-monthly basis would have premium costs of \$84.04, \$207.48, \$227.58 or \$316.68. This same employee is paying significantly less under Oxford Health: \$82.11, \$164.21, \$139.58 or \$234.00, depending on an employee's status as mentioned earlier. At face value, these figures are financially better than what Empire Blue was offering, and this is true

university employees now have premium rates of \$46.85, \$95.70, \$120.26 or \$160.37, these numbers increasing by slightly more than 2.9% per status.

#### Additional Changes

The previous life insurance plan for employees under Empire Blue incorporated options for the employee, his/her spouse

	Empire Blue (2019)	Oxford Health (2020)	Aetna (2020)
Employee	\$45.49	\$82.11	\$46.85
Employee + 1 / Employee + Spouse	\$92.92	\$164.21	\$95.70
Employee + 2 / Employee + Child(ren)	\$116.76	\$139.58	\$120.26
Family/Employee + Family	\$155.70	\$234	\$160.37

for a high school employee with an annual salary of around \$200,000.

The average high school teacher at Yeshiva University earns between \$38,000 to \$87,000, according to PayScale. Therefore, comparing a high school employee earning \$65,000-\$84,999 under Empire Blue and Oxford Health is a good indicator of the practical change in premium rates. An employee in that salary range had premium rates of \$45.49, \$92.92, \$116.76 or \$155.70 under Empire Blue. Oxford Health's universal premium rates are \$82.11, \$164.21, \$139.58 or \$234.00, respectively, raising Empire Blue's figures by over 80%, 70%, 19% or 50%, respectively.

The premium rates of university employees covered by Aetna are still grouped by annual salary range, but the costs have minimally increased. With the ranges of 185,000-\$204,999, university employees are now paying \$86.56, \$213.71, \$234.41 or \$326.18; these prices rose around 3% per faction. In the salary range of \$65,000-\$84,999,

and child. Under Oxford, a life insurance plan is limited to the high school employee and does not extend to his/her family, but university employees covered by Aetna have the same options as before.

High school employees have also seen their 403(b) retirement plan match reduced to a maximum of 3% of their salaries. For university employees, it will remain a 7% match for employees earning up to \$62,000, and a 4% match for employees earning above \$62,000.

Along with these cuts in financial employee benefits, the high school faculty in MTA and Central has decreased by 12.5% (8 positions) and 10.7% (6 positions) since 2018, respectively.

Multiple university officials including Vice President of Communications Doron Stern, MTA Head of School Rabbi Joshua Kahn and Director of University Benefits Jane Gonzalez did not respond to The Commentator's inquiries regarding these changes.

	Empire Blue (2019)	Oxford Health (2020)
Base Contributions	\$250/500	N/A
Annual Deductible	\$1,500/\$3,750	\$4,000/\$8,000
Annual Out-of-Pocket Maximum (Includes Deductibles)	\$3,500/\$8,750	\$6,750/\$13,500
Retail Prescription Drugs Tier 1 - Generics	\$7.50	30% after deductible
Retail Prescription Drugs Tier 2 - Preferred	20% (\$60 max)	30% after deductible
Retail Prescription Drugs Tier 3 - Non-Preferred	40% (\$120 max)	30% after deductible
Mail Order Prescription Drugs Tier 1 - Generics	\$15.00	30% after deductible
Mail Order Drugs Tier 2 - Preferred	20% (\$120 max)	30% after deductible
Mail Order Drugs Tier 3 - Non-Preferred	20% (\$120 max)	30% after deductible

	Empire Blue (2019)	Oxford Health (2020)	Aetna (2020)
Employee	\$84.04	\$82.11	\$86.56
Employee + 1 / Employee + Spouse	\$207.48	\$164.21	\$213.71
Employee + 2 / Employee + Child(ren)	\$227.58	\$139.58	\$234.41
Family/Employee + Family	\$316.68	\$234	\$326.18

### ASSISTED SUICIDE, continued from Page 13

enacting legislature in support of assisted suicide, makes the claim that, "The greatest human freedom is to live and die according to our own desires and beliefs." At first glance, it seems to be a pretty morally sound philosophy. It encourages freedom of choice, which is an important value to a modern democratic society like America. Upon deeper analysis, however, this philosophy logically falls short.

It is important to understand that the ability to choose is not an inherent virtue. Choice and freedom to choose are great things when they pertain to morally sound choices. Choosing a profession, a community, which flavor ice cream to eat, these are choices that do not infringe on moral dilemmas. Whether one chooses to live in New York or California, eat chocolate or vanilla ice cream, those are equally acceptable choices from a moral standpoint. Therefore every individual should be free to make such choices for themselves and infringing on an individual's right to make such choices is wrong. As a society, we begin to limit people's choices when one or more of the outcomes is morally wrong. We do not grant people the freedom of choice when it comes to rape, murder and theft. This is because those are not choices with two

equally virtuous outcomes; rape is wrong, consensual sex is right. In this sense, it is a logical shortcoming to base the reason for supporting physician-assisted suicide, solely on the fact that it is a choice. Establishing euthanasia as a choice does absolutely nothing to promote the morality of the issue. If having a doctor end a patient's life is not morally acceptable, then choosing to engage in this practice does not help make it a moral.

From a legal perspective, the claims for assisted suicide stand on shaky ground. In 2005 a Japanese man named Hiroshi Maeue used the internet to connect with three people who consented to having Hiroshi strangle them. The victims had consented to being killed, but Hiroshi was still sentenced to death. If choosing to die makes the act of homicide okay, why then was this man sentenced to death? His victims consented to their murders. Surely according to the proponents of physician-assisted suicide, consensual homicide should be legal. If the basis for physician-assisted suicide, as claimed by the Death With Dignity movement, is that people ought to be able to choose the terms of their own death, then Hiroshi Maeue should be innocent, not a murderer.

The difference between assisted euthanasia and the case of Hiroshi Maeue is obvious. Assisted suicide discusses cases of terminally ill people experiencing great amounts

of pain, while the story of Hiroshi Maeue is a rare and disturbing murder case. But the point of the Hiroshi Maeue story demonstrates something very powerful; consent does not confer morality to murder.

Even if there was a way to somehow circumvent the moral issues pertaining to physician-assisted suicide, there is an even greater issue at hand. Granting people the right to terminate their own lives represents one level of moral corruption. But the euthanasia lobby wants physician-assisted suicide to be a mainstream treatment option. If medical euthanasia became legal across the board, and it became commonplace for patients to choose if and when they wanted to end their lives, eventually doctors would be forced to engage in these practices. As medicine becomes more industrialized, doctors increasingly work for large medical corporations. When operating under the authority of such a corporation, doctors become subject to their rules and practices. If physician-assisted suicide becomes a mainstream treatment option, all of the big hospitals will eventually offer this service. This will result in doctors being forced to engage in physician-assisted suicide or else risk losing their jobs. Forcing doctors to engage in practices which they regard as immoral is wrong. Doctors who oppose euthanasia (as they should), should not be forced to act against their moral

inclinations just because society decided to ignore moral reasoning.

Aside from moral, legal and logical issues with assisted suicide, there is the intuitive argument that life is precious and deserves to be treated accordingly. In an interview, an anonymous physician discusses this aspect of assisted suicide, saying, "Patients facing a terminal illness often experience a wide range of emotions, including hopelessness, depression and fear. The desire for suicide before a natural death likely indicates the patient is afraid of what is to come or doesn't view his life as having value." Death is scary and filled with unease and emotions. Presenting patients with the option to end their lives validates it as a legitimate solution to dealing with one's issues.

The physician continued saying, "Every human being is terminal; at some point all of us will die. Suicide eliminates the 'what if' possibilities that may occur: The discovery of a new treatment or cure, the realization of an incorrect diagnosis, or the opportunity to have one last kiss or touch from a loved one." Essentially he is making the argument that death is permanent; there is no going back. Once someone's life is over there is no more possibility of choosing to undo it. If life does not seem worth living at the moment, surely it is worth living for the possibility of improvement. As Phil Donahue once said,

"Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem."

All things considered, there are many reasons for young medical professionals to consider being opposed to physician-assisted suicide. On the most basic level, it is antithetical to everything they are taught as physicians. It would be a shame to spend a decade studying the science of saving lives, and end up being responsible for death. When considering euthanasia, doctors should consider all of the moral parameters to the issue before deciding to support it. It is also important to consider the consequences of being on the wrong side of this issue. If euthanasia is, in fact, morally acceptable then by not engaging in it, the doctor failed to provide the best possible medical treatment for their patient. If, however, physician-assisted suicide is immoral, like I propose it is, then engaging in it makes a doctor guilty of murder. The distinction may seem semantical, but it is not. When Roman gladiators tore people apart for sport, it was acceptable in the eyes of the law, but that did not make it any less of a murder. Similarly, if society adopts the practice of physician-assisted suicide and decides it should be legal, that does not make it any more morally acceptable. Physicians should turn to logic and reason when deciding their stance on an issue as sensitive as physician-assisted suicide.

## The Daily Wiz: Spreading Wisdom Across the Globe

By DANIEL MELOOL

“Stop existing and finally start living!” This memorable line is featured in the introduction to every video released on the new social media page that has taken Yeshiva University by storm. Almost everyone in YU has come across a video from The Daily Wiz, whether they discovered the channel through flyers around the campus, subscribe to the channel on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok or get them from The Daily Wiz’s WhatsApp group. The question still remains: just what is The Daily Wiz, and who started this movement?

The Daily Wiz was created by Eli Jonah Karls (SSSB ‘22), a 20-year-old student from Montreal, Quebec. In an interview with The Commentator, Karls related how he admired social media for the ease of accessibility and “exponentially powerful influence that a video can

social media, Karls wasn’t exactly sure how he would execute the process.

During his first year studying in Israel, Karls sought to find a way to make Torah more accessible. “It’s not fair that there is an entire Jewish Nation, and an entire

unreliable way, which led people to conclude that the Torah was an outdated work which is not practical or relevant to their lives. And that is when The Daily Wiz was born. Through the reach of social media platforms, Karls spreads the wisdom of the Torah in a way that shows that it can be as relatable today as it was when it was first given at Sinai.

Karls describes The Daily Wiz as “a thought-provoking daily series of wisdom that is relatable, impactful, and inspiring.” When asked how he decides what messages to spread in his videos, Karls answered, “I always search for wisdom that I can use to better my life. Whenever I speak to any successful

professional, they always give over their knowledge and understanding of life, and I always write it down.”

Karls named Rabbi Noach Weinberg, the founder of Aish HaTorah, Rabbi Moshe Lazerous, co-founder and *rosh yeshiva* of Derech Ohr Sameach, and Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, the *mashgiach* of Ponevezh Yeshiva as people who are his lifelong inspirations. Karls said he will forever be a student of theirs as their teachings have left a lasting impact on him. “They didn’t just teach their wisdom,” said Karls, “They also lived it.” Lastly, but certainly not least, Karls named his father as his premier role model. “My father didn’t just teach me the right thing to do, he exemplified it.” The accumulation of advice over many years from various professionals, *rebbeim*, and his father is what makes up The Daily Wiz library.

Karls acknowledges he hasn’t reached the tip of the iceberg of what there is to learn. “I’m not an expert, I might never be one, but I will always be a student of wisdom,” explained Karls. “My father always reminds me that if I want to be successful, I should heed the words of Gordie Howe: ‘You have two eyes and one mouth, keep two open and one closed. You never learn anything if you’re the one talking.’”

While Karls works four hard hours every day to publicize his wisdom, he explained that putting out inspiring videos is only part of his mission. “The ultimate goal of The Daily Wiz is to transform social media platforms into an impactful and inspiring source of relatable wisdom that people can access at their fingertips, anywhere in the world and at any time they want,” he said. He hopes that more people will regularly post their own inspiring and life-changing thoughts. “I believe that wisdom can be found anywhere it is searched for, and in everyone,” Karls explained. “We are taught in *Pirkei Avot*: ‘Who is wise? He who listens to everyone.’ Social media is a powerful tool, and I want everyone to realize that they can have a huge impact on people through sharing ideas that they find encouraging.”

Karls has been a source of inspiration to many people around the globe, and his influence is still growing. Since the release of his first video on Jan. 28, The Daily Wiz has amassed over 25,000 views across all its videos. The most popular channels are the Instagram and Facebook pages where each video averages 1,200 and 1,400 views respectively. His most popular video thus far was a Facebook post that received 3,500 views. However, according to Karls numbers aren’t everything. “When I reached my first milestone of 10,000 views, it was certainly exciting. However, I had to remind myself that whether it was 10,000 views or 10 views, each one is a soul, and to that there is no measure,” he mused.

“I believe that wisdom can be found anywhere it is searched for, and in everyone.”

—  
Eli Jonah Karls

have in a matter of seconds.” The power of social media propelled him to create his own platform. While his goal was simply to positively influence people through

world, that doesn’t have access to the infinite wisdom that the Torah has to offer,” he repeatedly told himself. Karls believed that the Torah was generally taught in an



The Daily Wiz has recently reached 25,000 total views.

ELI JONAH KARLS

## We are the Tired, the Poor, the Huddled Masses

By JOSH LEICHTER

An old anecdote told about the relationship between President Ronald Reagan and Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill is that regardless of the heated debates they would have about policy, when the clock struck 6 p.m., they were simply friends. From this, we find a guide to life in our heated times of political tribalism: No matter how argumentative we get, how rough our discourse can be on both sides of the political spectrum, at the end of the day we are just friends, just Americans. And yet, in an era of "gotcha journalism" and viral videos, the clocks no longer strike 6, nor do they stop. We constantly see the tweets and breaking news flashes notify us of new updates to the storyline of the never-ending seasons of "America: The Series."

To many, this tedious narrative has been an exhausting experience and we wonder if there will ever be an end to it. We seek a return to that normalcy that we once recall, to self-correct back to a status quo that existed for the longest of times. A time when we debated policy, not personality and when political attacks were about why their policy was the right one for the country, not nicknames best suited for the box of an action

figure. And I wonder sometimes, where did that go? Where did the times go where we did not shun our friends or family based on how they voted in an election and when we could sit at a table together on Thanksgiving and not all grab the carving knife in frustration? It's a desire to return to those Norman Rockwell days where you would go for a stroll down Main Street and walk past an array of

The crave we have is one of more nuance, beyond cheap slogans, campaign pins and red hats. Because those of us that have taken the time to learn from our country's past and to accept it for both the glory and the flaws know what it is that we stand for: a belief that we don't belittle the opinions of others, but rather lend them our ear in exchange for theirs. For each of these individual liberties

never sit in. To me, this sums up the beautiful history of our country, which was not founded on the beliefs of forced collectivism, rather developed it along the way. We see this through the pioneers that crossed the country and the communities that they built throughout each state that boosted people up and never put them down. It's the idea that community members would rally alongside one another in support of a cause they cared about that served as the very nature for the birth of this country.

We once referred to this country as the shining city on the hill, yet take a look around and tell me what you see. The luster of the once-glistening metal wonders we built has faded away. We littered the streets and parks with the empty bottles of Kool-Aid we have all chosen to drink. Some prefer the blue and some prefer the red, but at the end of the day, it makes no difference to the discourse that we have fostered because the flag bleeds the same. It's sad to say it, but that city that once stood tall and unwavering is no longer one of golden opportunity. It's become a mausoleum of a bygone era none of us even remember anymore. So let's lower the flags to half mast for the time being in mourning but let us pray that one day, we'll light Liberty's torch and the city will shine anew again.

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*Where did the times go where we did not shun our friends or family based on how they voted in an election and when we could sit at a table together on Thanksgiving and not all grab the carving knife in frustration?*

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those old Mom and Pop stores. Dare I say that it's a desire to truly make this country great again, though those who claim to best understand our country struggle to understand what made it great in the first place. It is not ripping a copy of a State of the Union speech nor is it ridiculing political rivals by pointing out frivolous externalities due to an inability to debate a policy issue. No, that's not the return we should seek. Because that is never what made our country great nor will it do us any favors in the long run.

we have been granted in this land of golden opportunity should not become distorted by selfish desires of betterment at the belittlement of our fellow community members. We work on ourselves and yes, we are all entitled to a life full of liberty and the pursuit of our own happiness, yet why should we ignore our communities for a short-term gain. To quote a proverb from Ancient Greece, the forebearer of our modern democratic system, a society grows great when old men plant trees whose shade they know they shall



"It's a desire to return to those Norman Rockwell days..."



## From the President's Desk

### A Time To Be You

By **ZACHARY GREENBERG**

With the school closures on March 4 and 5 for both campuses, which eventually evolved into what will be at least a month-long break, many of us were left with a single question: Now what? As of this last week, classes have resumed, shiurim are thriving and *Good Shtick! With Zack* has given us some entertainment and the routine is slowly setting in. As the weeks ensue, I am confident that we will have mostly adapted, or at least gotten used to this newfound setting. However, lack of social interactions, minimal productivity and too much family time is really what might be bogging us down during this challenging period. I wanted to offer several suggestions which I hope may help you, dear readers.

On a personal level, be yourself. During school, I often find that it is

hard for me to find time for doing what I enjoy due to so much else going on. Now, with all the extra down time, is the chance to work on the novel you've been wanting to write, watch TV shows and movies you've been putting off, read books you've wanted to read or listen to shiurim or podcasts that you enjoy. This is a great time to spend the next few weeks having fun and rediscovering your interests.

and *rebbeim* who you enjoy speaking with. In a time of much isolation, it is imperative to go above and beyond to speak with other people outside your household. At the same token, it is a great time to connect with your family. Setting up a weekly family movie night can be an amazing way to bond together. My family recently purchased a Roku, which has Disney+, Netflix and Hulu. That much con-

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to complete, why not take the time to work on it. Maybe consider intern-terning virtually. Start that blog you always wanted to do. Write that fantasy book you never had time to write. Start small, get started and see where it can take you. I had always wanted to start my own video channel, and *Good Shtick! With Zack* is turning out to be a very fun way for me to do so. I love sharing my thoughts, meeting new people, and doing good shtick, and this show encompasses all of that!

This can be a period of a lot of loneliness and frustration. However, it can also be a great opportunity for you to explore your true self. In a few years, many of us will have jobs and families to support and focusing on just you will be much harder. Now is the time to kick back, relax, learn something new and enjoy being you.

*This can be a period of a lot of loneliness and frustration. However, it can also be a great opportunity for you to explore your true self*

Socially, it's critical to stay in touch with your friends and role models. Reconnect with classmates you haven't talked to in several weeks. Start group video chats with your friends. Join the whereverYU-are Whatsapp group and tune in to online games and shows. Set up one on one time with teachers

tent should cover us through the virus.

Physically, get outside and exercise. I don't care if you're in shape or out of shape, everyone needs to be active. Whether that's going on a run outside to get some fresh air, using the treadmill, the elliptical, weight lifting, Insanity with Shaun

due to their parks closures. With the new streaming service and the parks opening back up, it should easily regain its \$130 within a few months after the virus.

Lastly, in terms of productivity, being action-oriented is the best way to feel productive. If you had a goal for a project that you wanted

## The 2019-2020 Macs: Our Champions

By **JEREMY KOFFSKY**

One night in the Rubin dormitory I wandered down the stairs to the gym and saw a basketball game going on. Intrigued but not fully interested, I sat down to talk to the two or three friends I saw in the stands. We chatted and did not pay much attention to the game. Then in a split second, something developed on the court and the conversation was silenced. The Macs were running a breakaway and Ryan Turell tossed an alley-oop pass to Ofek Reef. We rose to see; our adrenaline pumped. We watched Ofek jump high into the air near the hoop as Ryan tossed the pass. "AWWW" yelled the slightly disappointed — but mostly awed — crowd. Though he missed the dunk, I thought to myself, "Did you see how high Ofek jumped?" No longer was I focusing on the test I had the next day, I was simply in awe.

That moment epitomized the transcendent nature of the 2019-2020 men's basketball season. The Macs made your Tuesday nights wondrous. After I watched a few of these games, I no longer

coincidentally wandered into the gym, I marked them on my calendar. I couldn't miss one. I couldn't miss Gabe Leifer's defense and overall control of the court. I couldn't miss Turell's expert shooting or the Simcha Halperts' threes. I couldn't miss the first 10 minutes of the game when it felt as if Macs were picking apart defenses and creating the right shots, effectively ending the game before it even started. The Macs were nothing short of masterful.

religious backgrounds, overcame their differences and put their team above it all. They passed the ball to each other incessantly. They were role models of *middos*, and played the other teams with respect.

Three weeks ago, when our university was shut down because a student tested positive for coronavirus, the Macs were surging at the perfect time. The country was not yet shut down, we were scared and did not know how long the situation would last, but Friday

warriors of the Chanukah story, in a time where many Jews were in crisis, the Maccabees stood up and showed us we would endure despite the hardships that lay in front of us.

As the dust settles on the season we should not look at how it ended — a cancelled trip to the Division III Sweet 16 — rather, we should try our best to remember the good times: the Skyline semifinal where after Gabe took control after we lost the lead and we pulled out the victory; yelling and screaming together at the Skyline championship game and the 29 game winning streak. We should remember the work all the players and coaches put in and the hope they provided us in this dark time.

Obviously, there is disappointment with the season being cut short. We all wanted to see how far this could have gone. Could they have put it all together to win four more times? Though that question lingers, the season is over, leaving us hanging in the air like Ofek on that Tuesday night when he jumped to catch the pass from Ryan. We stand in amazement, waiting to see if the shot will go in, if they could go all the way, if they

could outlast the entire Division III and shock the world.

But the world pressed paused but perhaps that's for the better, because the 2019-2020 Yeshiva University Maccabees were never meant to land back on the hardwood of reality. They were never meant to follow the normal rules of basketball tournaments and winning streaks.

The season ends in that glorious paused moment where Ofek jumped. The team was stopped mid flight in the Sweet 16. The dunk was a magical thing, we knew that it probably wouldn't have worked out but there was a moment where the conversations halted and the awe was wondrous. We knew the Macs probably wouldn't have won the next tournament game and three others after that. But it's not about the finality of the shot missing or going in, it's about the awe and joy brought in that shot, and all the shots that did go in.

We will never know how far they could have gone, but now the 2019-2020 Macs will be perpetually suspended in the middle of an awesome dunk, always our champions.

*The world pressed paused but perhaps that's for the better, because the 2019-2020 Yeshiva University Maccabees were never meant to land back on the hardwood of reality.*

The men's basketball team represented the best of what Yeshiva University had to offer. While students sometimes demur the functionality of certain aspects of the university and feel divided on so many issues, the Macs were something we could all cheer for. The players, despite coming from all over the country and with varying

and *motzei shabbos* March 6 and 7, we tuned in to the Macs games. We saw their incredible teamwork on the biggest stage in school history. We were shown that though we couldn't be there to watch — the host Johns Hopkins University barred fan entry — and though we wouldn't have class for a while, we could still thrive. Just like the

## How Israel's Lack of Urgency Exacerbated the Spread of COVID-19

By **ARYEH SCHOENBRUN**

A little over two months ago, in expectation of spending Shabbos at a friend, I splurged and bought for myself and his family a copy of *The Economist*. I don't generally read the overpriced trumpet of capitalist, bureaucratic sterility, but as my friend's father works for a bank, I thought it would befit the visit.

Leafing through the countless

pages of boring topics, a short piece caught my attention. A new virus had been detected in Wuhan, China, and it had begun to worry local authorities. It had not yet been identified, but it looked similar to SARS, and it was affecting humans. I read in anxious anticipation, but owing to the piece's benign, small heading, I decided to ignore my natural instinct to panic. Who knows, I convinced myself, it's probably nothing.

Later that week, news broke

on the novel coronavirus and my instincts proved right. The virus was spreading, it was deadly, and it was bound to interrupt the lives of billions of people. As the WHO upgraded their classification of the outbreak from local to epidemic to pandemic, we stood in awe at the undeniable might of such a small monster that has apparently brought the mighty powers-at-be to their knees. We now just enter the panic that will surely surround us for at least the next few months.

Only God knows what lies in store for humanity.

However, as we can surely mutually corroborate, our current state does not much surprise us. We waited a while for the virus to reach us, it took some time, but we all intuitively feared the worst, we all knew that it would eventually reach us.

Our economies are too intertwined, our lives too global, our borders too porous, and our sensibilities too subdued. We could not

panic in time, since we ought not panic, however, now that the virus has reached our own localities, we must panic. We looked on as the Chinese fought the virus for over a month, as Japan and South Korea struggled to maintain stability, but we didn't take the necessary precautions, we did not prepare: we did not close our borders.

*Continued on Page 18*

*ISRAEL'S LACK OF URGENCY,  
continued from Page 17*

I write to you from Israel, a country that has garnered criticism from its European counterparts for its panicked, chaotic response to the virus. We were one of the first to self-quarantine, we shut out tourists from affected countries, we conscientiously adhered to our now-daily issued protocols and epidemiological bulletins (tracking the whereabouts and possible contamination points of countless sick individuals), but even we failed in containing the virus. Compared to America's response, we excelled in our expedient willingness to sacrifice and solidarity, but we failed as well — it just didn't matter.

As thousands of Israelis hunkered down in self-quarantine, tourists and travelers continued to pour through our gates at Ben Gurion airport, carrying the virus and infected their loved ones, their handlers and random passersby. Three weeks ago, a large group of religious pilgrims from Korea paid a visit to the region, visiting virtually every large population center in Israel and the West Bank before falling ill, but, alas, such a situation repeated itself time and again for another two weeks. A group of Greek tourists, then Americans, Europeans, etc., came to visit and left having spread the virus to more locals. Ironically, tourists had come and infected locals while Israelis, having returned from abroad, subjected themselves to two weeks of quarantine. We had done our part, but we could not win against the endless onslaught of bedeviled, irresponsible foreigners. Bethlehem was quarantined first and a few days later chaos erupted. Flights were cancelled, tourists and Israeli travelers got stranded, a country fell in disarray.

The Shin-Bet has requested a special license to track our movements, in order to more precisely administer court-ordered quarantines (which are increasingly hard to enforce on account of the escalating virus figures), and we are bound to quickly lose other basic freedoms. We cannot pray together, work together or eat together. We cannot hug or kiss. We cannot live. We have been reduced to the bare minimum of life: food, sleep and internet.

If our leaders had acted promptly, and not waited until the virus had already begun to propagate, such measures would most likely have been deemed unnecessary. From the onset of this plague, back in January, our leaders had the full gamut of political power and control to enforce a blanket ban on non-essential travel to affected areas, and globally. Instead of heeding the calls of frightened experts, our leaders allowed for the free movement of tourists and businessmen, even as the situation escalated in the Far-East. We were informed of sporadic cases in the West, mostly all travelers from abroad, but we didn't pay heed to the anxiety-provoking warnings of the WHO. We continued to allow individuals to fly in and out of our country for non-essential purposes, and have just begun to pay the price for this stupidity.

Some of the blame falls on those who decided to fly into harm's way in the midst of an uncontrolled, ballooning situation in Asia. Europe had not yet reached epidemic levels, however, ignoring an explosive situation in China did not fare well for us. I often ask myself why anyone would decide to fly out of their home country, knowing that they may become the harbinger of calamitous death and suffering. Would anyone not care enough about their fellow citizens that they should obnoxiously and pigheadedly take the chance that they may infect loved-ones and the general population. Was it really worth it?

Clearly, they were not entirely to blame. The government, sensing no immediate threat, childishly allowed for such a situation to transpire. Without an official advisory, travelers could not refund their tickets. Our leaders' silence equally assuages the fears of the many travelers who would have been willing to forego their vacation abroad. If they haven't yet issued a warning, the situation must be under control. Additionally, the government's silence reassured those with moral qualms. As long as the advisories remained lenient, the travelers, many of whom thoroughly patriotic veteran soldiers, could pass on their guilty conscience to their irresponsible leaders. If the rules provide, they supposed that they could not be criticized for their egotistical behavior.

This false sense of security, fostered both by government inaction, blinded by momentum and bound by the inflexibility of a morbid economic system that values short-term gain over long-term stability combined to create this man-made, artificially-induced crisis. We had time enough to act, we could

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*Compared to America's response, we excelled in our expedient willingness to sacrifice and solidarity, but we failed as well — it just didn't matter.*

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have shored up our defenses and stayed put. Instead, we stubbornly, cavalierly, powered on through the tumult, praying to our false gods and actively repressing our natural instinct to quarantine on a national scale. China may be responsible for their original lackluster response and their much-too-liberal approach to the disease producing "wet markets" that have spawned SARS and now coronavirus, but they, unlike our leaders in the "free world", took rapid action against the virus and now appear to have survived their epidemic with minimal casualties. If our leaders had worked in tandem with Chinese authorities and taken preventative measures back in January, we would not have to worry about a global pandemic here and now.

We could not resist the bait. Panic had gripped China, she faltered economically. Western countries and companies saw a

golden opportunity to gain ground on Asia. Yes, we depended on China for much of our production train, but we also had the ability to reinvest in local infrastructure and industry. China would recuperate, we surmised, but we didn't know how long she would suffer. We had time to stage an economic comeback. Ironically, China now seems to have won the economic bout, and to a great degree. Cases there have stabilized while they now skyrocket around the world. She will quite soon regain her economic footing, leaving Europe and the West in the dust. She will begin to turn to her domestic markets while still maintaining her global industrial dominance, punishing her foreign buyers for their irresponsibility and neglect.

Additionally, this crisis serves the ends of global capital. Chaos, panic and instability, while nominally landing large blows on global markets, will eventually allow for those with money to consolidate and monopolize their investments (0% interest rates will ease the process). Average middle-class workers stand to lose much of their sav-

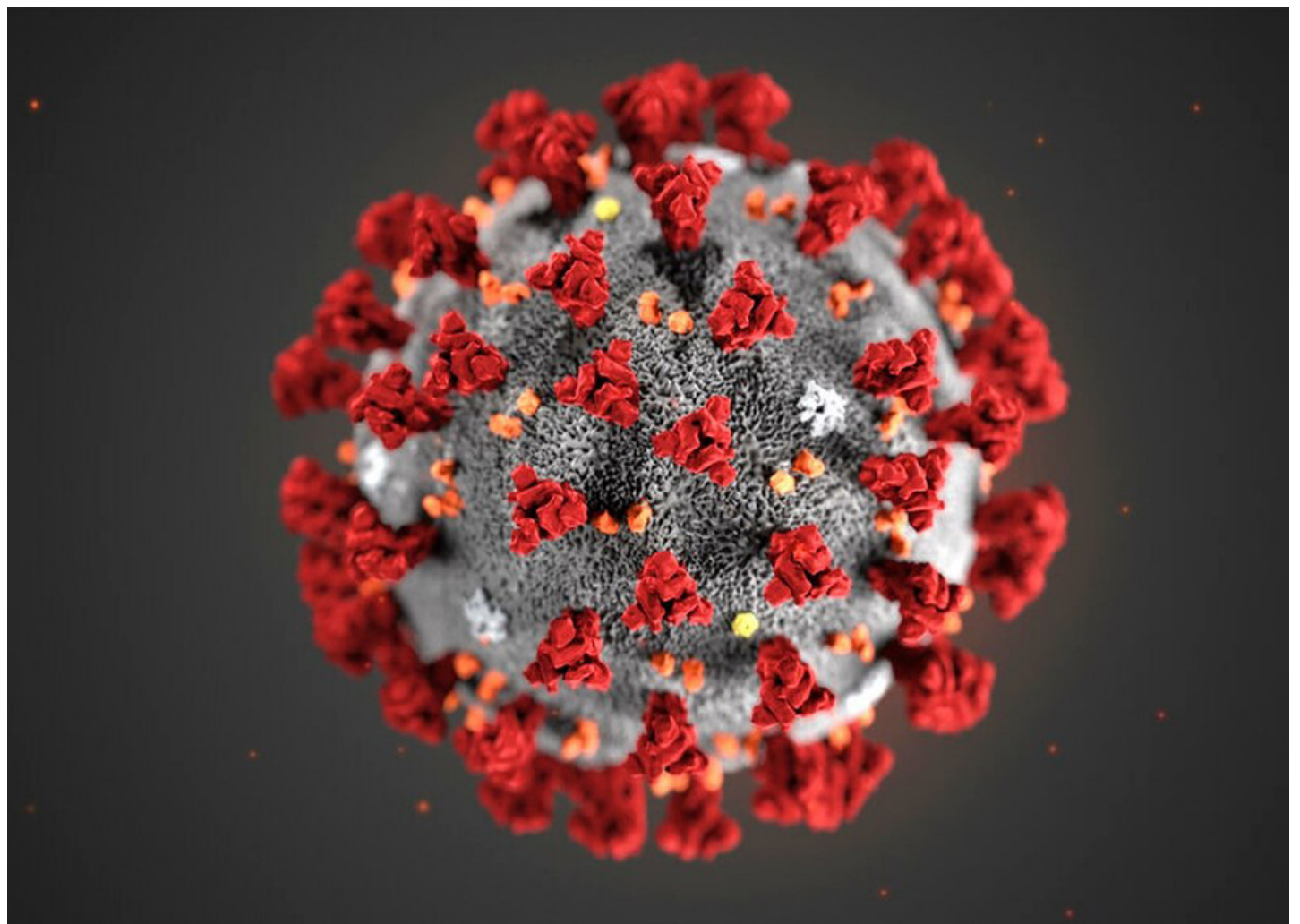
ings in the coming months. They may need to dip into their pension funds in order to deal with the indefinite period of unemployment that awaits them. In addition, the psychological trauma caused by such panic, uncertainty and instability will only serve to further weaken the middle class. These workers, who have been educated to believe in government, democracy and justice, will have nothing to protest against the "natural disaster" that has befallen them. They will have seen the disaster as an act of god. Most of them will never consider the notion that it was intentional.

On the books, our governments have acted fairly responsibly. They've sealed off our borders and tracked disease levels. They've issued travel warnings and warned us against sneezing in public and hugging our friends. Even Trump, has acted, perhaps out

of duress and pressure from experts, according to and beyond global expectations. He angered Europe when he decided to close our borders and, to be fair, much of the burden of response falls upon local authorities, city and state governments. Israel too has seemingly taken a strong stance against the infection. And even in Europe the leaders have woken up to the dire situation. France and Italy have called for nationwide quarantine, Germany, Spain, Austria and others have closed their borders indefinitely and have limited non-essential travel. But, as we all know, everything has come in response to severe outbreaks, and unfortunately not in advance.

Something about this calculated delay, this unnerving sense of dread, of momentary hope then the grief recognition of setback after setback, of feeling protected, then having chaotic hell unleashed before your very eyes, of having to constantly monitor the situation, of having to forego any previous engagements, meetings and personal matters, reeks of serious political malpractice. I have no reason to believe that our leaders acted wholeheartedly out of concern for our safety. In fact, they have addressed such accusations and have fully admitted to their unholy allegiance to the esoterica of the global economy. When we should discuss the eventuality of hundreds of millions of potential deaths, what occupies us, and our leaders, remains the stability of our financial markets.

I do not claim that businessmen and political leaders invested in the production of this new disease. However, I believe that were it not for their stubborn insistence on market stability, and their eagerly opportunistic avarice in exploiting chaotic situations, we would not need to deal with such a widespread pandemic. Jet-set tourism, as a manifestation of today's overly globalized economies, has thinned our natural defenses and left us vulnerable. If we don't act to roll back our international travel habits, if we do not begin to limit our global mobility, we risk exposure to far worse pathogens and pandemics. We may not get another warning.



The virus was spreading, it was deadly and it was bound to interrupt the lives of billions of people.

# I Hate the Distance, But I'm Better Because of It

By **SRULI FRUCHTER**

Seated at a midnight black folding table with my laptop balanced on its edge, I faced my professor and 15 classmates on a Zoom Video Communications window tab, each person enclosed in their own rectangular box. Organized like a neatly compacted Tetris game, a mix of blank stares and curious expressions were plastered on my screen, substituting for the circular formation we usually assumed. Throughout the commencing hour and 15 minutes, I hastily toggled between the mute and hand-raising buttons to engage in our class discussions, ensuring my participation did not disrupt the facade of a real classroom's decorum.

Amid the coronavirus pandemic spreading across the globe, this has become the indefinite reality of my college experience.

After a student and Isaac Breuer College professor tested positive for the coronavirus in early March, Yeshiva University closed Beren and Wilf campuses through

Purim, later extending that closure through the beginning of our Pesach break on April 3. Since March 16, in an effort to minimize social gatherings and the risk of exposure, our academic classes have been operational through Zoom's video conferences, coined as "distance learning."

me and my friends; those spurts of interruption became a platform for my meaningful interactions in a long day of academics. My spacious classrooms in the Belfer, Furst and Glueck buildings made for lucid learning experiences, allowing me to retain my focus on the day's lesson.

is conducted over my laptop, and I find myself exerting equal amounts of energy trying to concentrate on the fuzzy video of my professor as I do trying to absorb the day's lesson.

The struggle for reconciliation with these difficult circumstances is not limited to my individual experiences; within the greater YU community, there are some burdens we endure together.

Consider the postponement of YU's Chag HaSemikhah, the cancellation of our YU Purim celebrations or the NCAA's devastating announcement that the Division III tournament would not continue, abruptly ending the No. 13 Maccabees' greatest season ever. We face these unprecedented times together, whether that's directly via "The Official YU Meme Group" or indirectly through our mere identity in the YU community.

The distance is hard — exhausting, even. Between the loneliness, adjustment and safety precautions, we face enough internal struggles as we do external.

Nevertheless, it seems like we have drawn some sort of purpose

from the coronavirus pandemic, whether that be through critical self-reflection or spreading love and generosity to those in need. Initiatives of communal convergence like a virtual *kumzitz* or grocery shopping for those in isolation have bettered us. The thirst for connection and the willingness to offer support have been found through YU's administrators, rabbis, professors and students. Our *batei midrash*, classrooms and campuses remain closed, but our hearts have never been opened so wide before.

This, of course, is not to ignore the rising threats that coronavirus poses, but rather it is to find the light hidden within this time of darkness; as my *rav* from Yeshivat Orayta, Rav Nuriel Aaron, shared with me: "We cannot ask *lamah* (why) something happens, rather we must ask *limah* (for what purpose) something happens, what can I do with it."

I hate the distance the coronavirus gave us, but I am better because of it.

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*Our batei midrash, classrooms and campuses remain closed, but our hearts have never been opened so wide before.*

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While adjusting to the limitations of this safety precaution, I am forced to reckon with the absence of the routine I took for granted.

I recall countless mornings packed into Zysman Hall's Room 101 for *Shacharit*, the dark, evergreen-colored carpet eclipsed by rows of oakwood desks, as my fellow YU students and I stood enthralled in the early morning *tefillah*. Furman Dining Hall's thrice-daily meals fostered necessary social interactions between

Now, however, I must fumble through the challenges engendered by this coronavirus reality.

My mornings are silent and still, commenced by my individual *tefillah* in my cream-colored dining room, devoid of the camaraderie that a *minyan* provides. Following my adapted, video conference Beis Medrash Program (BMP) morning, I prop myself beside my kitchen table for lunch, joined by whichever of my siblings are operating on a coordinating schedule. Class



Wilf Campus

## Embracing Our New Reality Through the Lens of Inclusion

By **ARIEL WERNICK**

Back during campus life, doing anything was a journey. Whether it was walking to class, going to davening, entering the library or washing your hands in the bathroom, you experienced interactions of all different types. They said school wasn't canceled; rather it would become virtual, but in virtual school all I do is open my computer and suddenly class has already started, then class ends and the screen turns off. Can this really still be considered school? From the short experience we have had so far, it seems the university can recreate classes online, but in order for it to make up for what we are missing without campus life, we might need to put in a little extra effort ourselves.

On the last day of classes at the Wilf Campus, I spoke at an event in the Sky Caf organized by Yachad called "Perspectives on Inclusion" where I was asked to share my perspective on inclusion as a sibling of a person with special needs. A main focus of my discussion was about my brother's experience being mainstreamed in a typical classroom. Sitting among friends, old, current and newfound, I spoke about the goals of my brother's schooling. I explained that for him there was never an expectation to get an A or to be able to understand all the information that was being taught. He sat in a typical classroom to be able to feel like part of a group, to be able to join in the conversation and to learn how to interact

with peers using proper social etiquette. I described that by growing up alongside my brother I was heavily influenced by his perspective of what school was and it gave me a great appreciation of what it means to be part of a class in school.

Immediately after that event, I returned to my room and for 24 hours and sat in self-quarantine waiting to hear about test results that would determine if I would be put into quarantine due to "direct-contact" with the novel coronavirus. At midnight

switching to online schooling for the next bit of time and I started to get worried because I realized I only brought home two pairs of pants and three shirts. A day or a week off from school is nice, but having to switch to online classes for the unknown future was not something I enjoyed thinking about.

Online classes might be the only option right now, but let us not mistake it for being a substitute for what it means to be in school. The conversations shared during meals with friends are often some of the

our best friend but could still benefit from someone reaching out to them. Imagine a person who may not have the strongest friend group, before he was able to sit in a classroom and join in the pre-class conversations; he could feel he was amongst a group. A person was able to sit at an empty seat at lunch and easily make his way into a social situation. Think of those who you would wave to as you pass in the hallway but would not typically text to hang out with; you no longer have that interaction. A person could work out in a gym with others around him, or sit in a library or a *beit midrash* and learn alone but he still had the comfort that other people were around.

As we continue to indefinitely sit behind our screens, scattered across the world, we should do our best to keep in touch with our friends over the phone, keep group chats active, and share our daily experiences with others. As we do this I think we should try to think a little bit about the topic of inclusion. Think of those who it might be harder to reach out to and try to keep up those relationships as well. Maybe there are ways to organize groups outside of classes to discuss material but keep invitations public and inviting, or possibly you can have a virtual lunch table and eat lunch with friends. It could be cool to find ways of saying hello to university staff both for our sake and for theirs. Things definitely aren't the same in this virtual world of distance, but hopefully with open eyes and a little creativity we can all make the best of the situation together.

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*It is important to not only keep our relationships with close friends strong, but to also think about those who might not be our best friend but could still benefit from someone reaching out to them.*

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the next day, upon learning my friends had tested negative, the hallway on the floor of my dorm filled with the few residents who had not yet gone home and we celebrated what appeared to be relief from uncertainty. School had already been canceled through the weekend so I decided to take advantage of vacation and boarded a plane home to LA for the weekend.

I intended to be home for a short visit, but then it was announced that YU would be canceling all in-person classes until Pesach, (it has since been announced that in-person classes are canceled for the semester). Suddenly it seemed like every school was

most insightful and enjoyable moments of my day. A seder in the *beit midrash* is not a true seder without side conversations with *chavrutot* and the other guys sitting nearby. Long hours in the library are more successful when other people are around, pushing me to continue working while also being available to shmooze when I might need a quick break. These interactions are what gave my days spirit, encouraged me in my work and often are what contributed most in bringing meaning to my days on campus

It is important to not only keep our relationships with close friends strong, but to also think about those who might not be



Furst Hall on Wilf Campus

# The Cartel, Coronavirus, and Combustibles

By YAAKOV METZ

The effects of pandemic concerns on the global economy spread just as fast as the virus itself. As the impact and the severity of the virus was realized, global markets responded accordingly. In less than the span of a month, U.S. markets dropped around 30%. The recent economic decline can be attributed to a number of factors stemming from the coronavirus, such as public uncertainty about the strength of the market, or recession fears, but the most direct and measurable cause to its decline is the price of oil. The largest and most significant market drop was the change in the value of oil which plummeted around 60%, the largest fall this century. In just one day, the price of oil fell nearly 25%, depleting the value of Earth's oil reserves by \$20 Trillion, or just over \$2,500 per person globally.

The omnipresence of oil within the global economy affects everyone's day-to-day living such as how people get to work, how food is processed, and how goods are delivered. On a larger scale, oil is contentious for the dependence it creates on hostile, energy rich nations, and the magnitude it has on climate change.

Additionally, oil is unlike other commodities. Hot dog buns, umbrellas, and shoelaces are all sold in a free market. Oil is not. In order to understand how this quasi-monopoly originated, one must go back to 1960s Baghdad when a band of countries with a plethora of oil reserves, asked themselves the fundamental question: why are we competing against each other and driving oil prices down when we can limit production and sell at a higher price?

The answer to this question was the formation of a cartel known as the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, or OPEC. A cartel is an association of manufacturers within a specific industry that coordinate production with the intention of driving up prices. This practice, although very prevalent in America during its early years, no longer exists because it is highly illegal. The reason the OPEC cartel can exist is because these countries are not bound to American law. In fact, most of the countries within OPEC are largely located in the Middle East and Africa and have a government-controlled oil market. This powerful stronghold on the global supply of oil allowed once economically negligible countries to become overnight global powerhouses. With no end in sight to the cartel's rein, OPEC kept on pumping oil at their controlled rate with no real challengers to their stronghold.

That was all until about a decade ago, however the advent of fracking allowed the U.S. to earn the title of the world's largest oil producer. The new contenders in this rapidly changing market dented OPEC's market control over oil and transitioned a once heavily cartel-controlled commodity into a freer market. OPEC, bruised and

battered, looked for one final hail mary pass to reinvigorate their cartel, and it was none other than Russia that agreed to be inducted as the newest member. Russia is a massive player in the production of oil, with nearly half of its national budget coming from oil and gas revenue and producing the third most amount of oil only behind the

This caused the price of oil to nosedive more than it already had, marking it as the largest fall in oil prices in this century.

Luckily, the economic implications of this fall in oil prices will most likely have no long term effects. When the coronavirus subsides, restrictions to businesses and travel will be lifted, the demand of

*Oil is unlike other commodities. Hot dog buns, umbrellas, and shoelaces are all sold in a free market. Oil is not.*

U.S. and Saudi Arabia. Russia, and 9 other non-OPEC nations joined OPEC to form the aptly coined "OPEC+" or the "Vienna Group." This increased the supercartel's control of global oil supplies from 35% to 55%. In November of 2016, OPEC signed an agreement with its then non-member nations to limit oil production, causing prices to increase over 40% until May of 2018.

The agreement signified OPEC+'s victorious rebound, and as long as there was production coordination among the 24 countries, OPEC+ would forever cement its tight grasp on the world economy of oil. Most economists saw the day of OPEC+'s fall and the day the world runs out of oil as one in the same, but nobody could've predicted OPEC+'s inner turmoil that may have changed the fate of oil forever.

China imposed strict quarantine policies which limited travel and shut down businesses – effectively stopping the flow of oil to the world's largest oil importer. As other countries soon followed their own form of China's disease prevention policies, the global demand for oil further decreased more than it had during the 2008 financial crisis, and prices began to fall.

This issue strikes OPEC at its core and led to an emergency meeting in Vienna with the original 14 countries. Their objective was simple: cut back oil production by 1.5 million barrels per day until the end of this year in order to stabilize prices. Shortly after the initial proposition the plan was proposed to the newly recruited 10 countries, but most importantly Russia. The meeting did not go as smoothly as the previous day's plan, with delays and hostility from the Russian envoy. The pent-up aggravation eventually blew up with the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak walking out of the meeting and telling the OPEC+ countries to "...Pump at will."

A successful cartel is built on two principals, as many countries as possible (a large market share) and the discipline to curtail production. As Novak walked out of that meeting, both these conditions followed. In the following days the two most influential countries of OPEC+, Russia and Saudi Arabia, now competitors, followed Novak's advice and ramped up production in a market that was already experiencing diminishing demands.

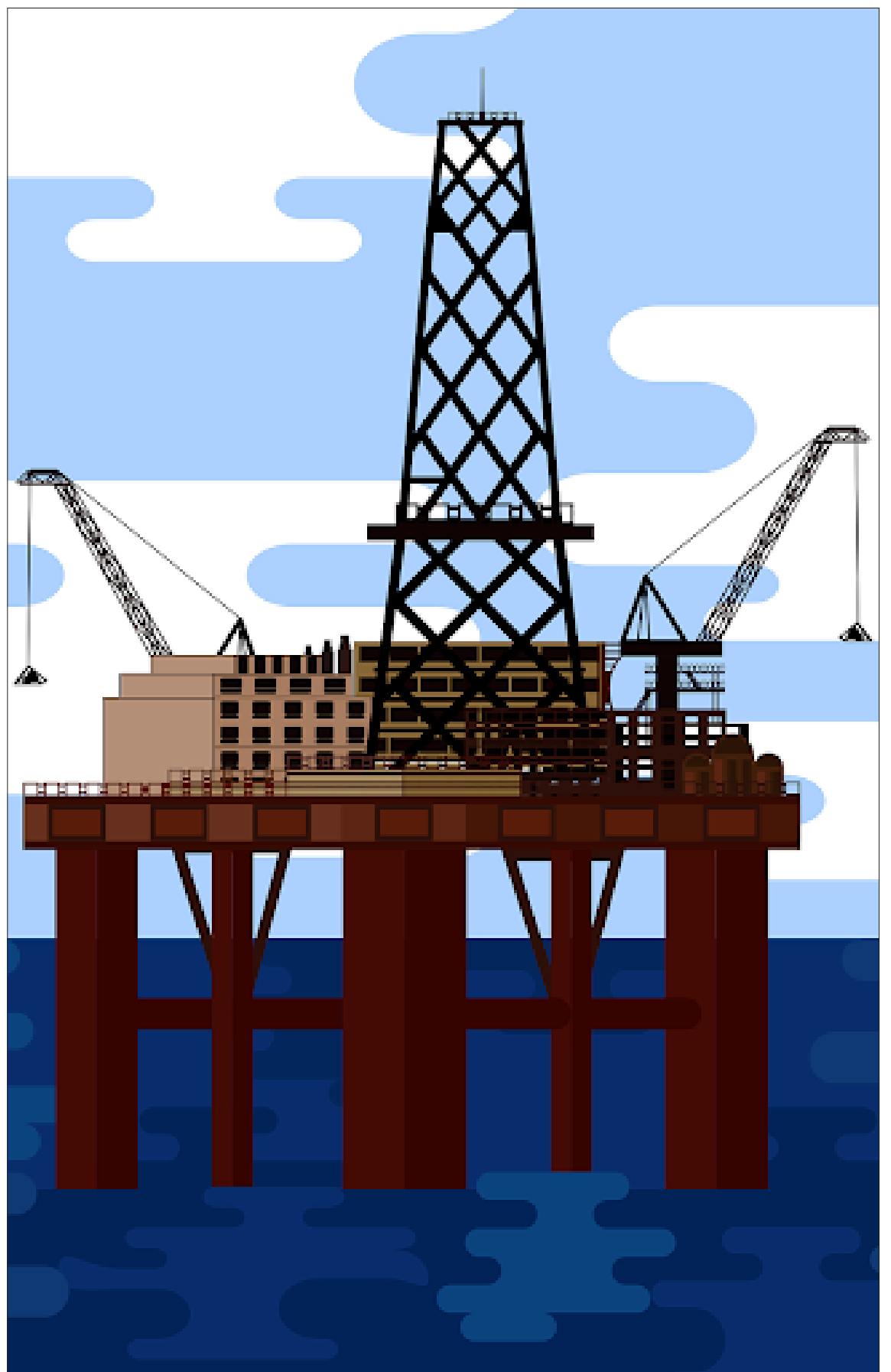
oil will return and prices will rise. As for the short-term economic effects, consumers of oil, such as factories, travelers, and China will all benefit from the low price of oil. If this were to happen a decade ago,

prior to the introduction of fracking, low oil prices would have been a valuable economic stimulus for the U.S. It is important to mention that this price change isn't entirely bad for the U.S., because consumers of oil will still benefit as they would have before the U.S. became a global player in the oil industry. However, now that the U.S. is the world's largest oil producer, all the oil producing states will take a significant hit. People that rely on the tax dollars from oil to build schools or roads, the oil businesses themselves and related businesses will be impacted severely.

Many U.S. oil companies, especially small businesses, took out loans to get a piece of the rapidly growing U.S. fracking market, which means that many of the companies producing oil within the U.S. are operating while in

debt. If the price of oil goes down enough to push profits into the red, companies that already owe money will not be able to operate at a loss even in the short run. Many jobs may be lost, with layoffs already ramping up and James Bullard, the President Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, predicted that the U.S. unemployment rate may hit 30%.

The geopolitical effects of the coronavirus which began in Wuhan, lead to the indecision of the world's most powerful cartel in Vienna and affects mom and pop oil businesses in Texas. This complex pattern of dominoes demonstrates just how intertwined oil is with our everyday living and affords people the opportunity to see how valuable this limited commodity really is.



The global oil industry was the pandemic's first victim