

THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

VOL. LXXXVI

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2021

ISSUE NO. 8



The Yeshiva University Maccabees men's basketball team competed on Feb. 13 in their first game since March 7 of last year. Story on page 4.

YU ATHLETICS

YU and Montefiore Announce New BA/BS-MD Program with Einstein for High School Students

By **ELLIE GOFFMAN**

YU President Ari Berman and President and CEO of Montefiore Medicine Phillip Ozuah signed a new agreement launching a joint YU-Albert Einstein College of Medicine BA/BS-MD program for high school graduates, according to an announcement made by YU on Jan. 19.

The new program, which is set to begin in 2022, will enable students to complete their undergraduate degree and continue directly into medical school at Einstein. Students apply for the program in their senior year of high school and are accepted to both schools, eliminating the separate application process usually necessary to progress from an undergraduate college to a medical school. This follows similar types of programs at other universities, such as the Sophie Davis Biomedical Education Program at the CUNY School of Medicine.

"I have enjoyed working with Dr. Ari Berman to lay the groundwork for

an exciting new chapter for Montefiore Medicine, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Yeshiva University," Ozuah told The Commentator.

According to YU's press release, this program is intended for "highly qualified high school graduates ensuring their path to an excellent medical education and an impactful career in health care." Additionally, the press release noted that YU and Einstein established a "task force to study the creation of additional joint academic and career-related programs in the fields of health-care and health sciences." Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman commented, "This new era opens up potential for additional educational and research initiatives for our students."

Some current pre-med students, like Yona Berzon (SCW '23), were impressed with the program. "This seems like such a brilliant program and an obvious choice for high schoolers who are serious about medicine," she said. Berzon, who is disappointed

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Lee Seguin Named Wilf Campus Director of University Housing and Residence Life

By **SRULI FRUCHTER**

Lee Seguin was named the new Wilf Campus director of University Housing and Residence Life (UHRL), a position temporarily filled by Senior Director of the Office of Student Life (OSL) Rabbi Josh Weisberg after Jonathan Schwab, the previous director, left YU in November 2020. Weisberg announced this update to Wilf students via email on Feb. 9, also noting the addition of Michael Altares and Rabbi Hershel Hartz, two other new staff members to UHRL and OSL, respectively.

With a Bachelor's of Science in marketing management from Thomas College and currently pursuing a Master's in mental health consulting at Manhattan College, Seguin comes to YU with over 10 years of experience working with college students. In June 2011, he started as the coordinator of student activities & residence life at Bates College until June 2014, according to his LinkedIn profile. Two months later,

in August 2014, Seguin began as an assistant area coordinator and graduate assistant at College of Mount Saint Vincent, assuming several other positions there until August 2019, finally being promoted to be an instructor & academic advisor through December 2020.

"I'm very excited to be joining the YU community, and even more excited to be working with the Housing & Residence Life teams across the University as we work to support our students during their time at YU," Seguin told The Commentator. "I'm privileged to be joining a team that's driven to provide our students with a comfortable and safe environment that allows our students to be successful in their academic goals and spiritual growth."

Aside from Seguin, former Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies Michael Altaras was named assistant director of UHRL. Altaras graduated from the Sy Syms School of Business in 2016 and received his Master's in Digital Media from the

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Commencement 2021 — A Chasm of Uncertainty

By YOSEF LEMEL

As the academic school year winds down and the COVID-19 pandemic lingers, there are many questions that remain unanswered, perhaps rightfully so. After all, even with the rollout of the vaccine, there is uncertainty and controversy regarding when, if any-time, society will return to “normal.”

I hope and pray that the normalization will occur by Pesach; at least a month of maskless college with aspects of student life — such as large Shabbos meals with *talmidim* sitting side-by-side and singing *z'miros* — allowing for maximal attendance and participation is a utopian ideal. Perhaps that hope is in vain. However, if there's a way to get real college life back into Yeshiva while adhering to the necessary health regulations, the university administration should draw up the plans. If possible, graduating seniors should leave on a high and optimistic note and first-year students should have a taste of what college life entails under

consisting of everything happening on a 13 inch screen in my living room. I got into my cap and gown five minutes beforehand and simply watched the pre-recorded proceedings instead of being in a crowd with friends, joking around and cheering when hearing our names called by the Provost to be awarded our degrees.” I had very similar thoughts to this student. From my experience, commencements might generally be termed as ... well ... “boring,” but 2020's was particularly boring, in a more impersonal manner; virtual events tend to lend themselves to such experiences. My fear is that the passionless virtual format will be repeated this year.

Indeed, one student created a petition to postpone the Spring 2020 graduation to Fall 2020 in anticipation of conditions that would allow for an in-person ceremony. Over 500 individuals — students, parents, siblings — signed on to the petition. As it turned out, health conditions would likely not have been ideal for a ceremony in the fall, yet graduates displayed admirable

and administrators present at each location. Perhaps there could be a location for Teaneck students, one for those in Five Towns, another one for Monsey residents, etc. While I would prefer a single large outdoor graduation to this alternative, anything would be better than a fully virtual experience.

Last year, 10 graduates in Monsey were actually lucky enough to attend one such ceremony on Associate Dean Shoshana Schechter's front lawn and receive fake diplomas from Vice Provost Chaim Nissel. One attendee said, “It was a uniquely touching experience and I give my warmest thanks to all those who planned it and made it possible.” Indeed, while the administrators involved should be commended for their efforts in making the day of some Monsey graduates, hundreds of other graduates did not receive the same treatment.

This year, the university should provide an in-person graduation experience. While some of the suggestions mentioned in this article may fall short in certain aspects of the average

There has been scant communication from the university administration regarding graduation and in what manner it will be conducted.

normal circumstances.

This brings us to commencement exercises. There has been scant communication — notice the trend? — from the university administration regarding graduation and in what manner it will be conducted. As I asked in my first editorial, “Will my class have an in-person commencement ceremony or will we be forced to relive another virtual celebration?” Almost eight months later, the question remains unanswered.

Students pay a \$150 fee to graduate — on top of all the tuition and expenses shoveled into the university machine; yet, in exchange, there has so far been no communication from the university or a demonstrable effort to collect the sentiment of students regarding the graduation ceremony. The purpose of graduation, in its general pomp and ceremony, is to leave students with a positive lasting impression of university life, allowing them to part with the more tasteful aspects of their college experiences. In the long term, the reinforcement of positivity towards their alma mater may prompt alumni to donate to the university. It would be sensible policy for the university, at the very least, to ask the students what they want their graduation ceremony, given the circumstances, to consist of.

In my last editorial, I called last year's graduation “pitiful.” It was — perhaps not due to the efforts of the administration, but because of the unfortunate situation everyone was stuck in, with a sense of dislocation resulting from the fully virtual college experience. As one graduate described it, “The entire ceremony was two dimensional,

hope for such to be the case.

This semester is different. In the Spring 2020 semester, *all* students were spread over the globe, virtually attending classes; it was an impersonal experience that culminated in an impersonal graduation. Now, however, we have experimented with in-person experiences during the COVID-19 era. Students regularly attend in-person *shiurim* and classes — however limited they may be. Indoor dining, with the allowance of two students per table, will now resume. The Gottesman Library — excepting the infamous fourth floor — and *batei midrash* have operated as centers of actual human interaction. For those who elected to return to campus this semester, there are some aspects of university life that are personal in nature. The culmination of personal experiences must not be an impersonal one.

A function in Madison Square Garden, as is the usual fare, may be impracticable given the uncertainties of the current health situation. I would suggest that the university consider an outdoor ceremony. There is no shortage of large grassy fields around the tri-state area where this could work. In fact, Yeshiva University High School for Boys (MTA), my alma mater, held an outdoor ceremony last year. I understand that the university has a much larger population than the high school, but there certainly must be ways in which an outdoor ceremony could be feasible. An alternative, for example, to one large outdoor ceremony would be to have in-person livestreams in multiple locations with various faculty

graduation, they would be highly preferable to another virtual “ceremony.” It would behoove the powers that be to consider various options aimed at maximizing the student experience. Additionally — and I cannot emphasize this enough — graduates must be effectively communicated with through every step of the process. Simple acts of outreach, making students feel like their opinions are worth anything of value, would go a long way.

Commencement exercises are primarily conducted for the sake of the students and their families. For faculty and administrators, a graduation ceremony is just one of many they will attend. The student, on the other hand, is offered a sense of finality in the culmination of their college experience. Their families are offered the pride of seeing the symbolic transition of their loved ones to their next stage of life. There's a fair case to be made that their opinions regarding this experience should be respected and count for something.

And for God's sake, if the worst happens and there indeed is a virtual ceremony, I ask the university to not enable a stream of emojis to constantly bombard the presentation — especially during the serious, more sacrosanct, portions. Or, at least, get the students' opinions on it!

THE COMMENTATOR

2020-2021

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 86 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

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

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

Visit us online at
www.yucommentator.org.



1 YUNMUN: Lightning Round

1 day, 2 Secretaries General, 12 hours of intense computer staring, 16 Committees 71 YU undergrad staff members, 350 delegates, and 0 cookies to be found.



2 Stomping Out That Stigma

Looking forward to the event of the year with the best club at YU — Active Minds. #TheCommieDoesn'tCountAsAClub



3 StuCo Trivia Night

TMW the Commie team slays the competition. #insync



4 Indoor Dining

My my my, the tables and submarine chairs have (re)turned!



5 The Big Thumbs Up

Getting the mark of approval from an OG Commie truly means a lot, @KGB.



6 The Cat Attorney

Wouldn't class be so much more interesting if we all used cat filters too?



7 Receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine!

And spending the way there trying to figure out what bracha to say on the shot. Machloikes Rav Willig and Rav Schachter.

7 UP by Zahava Fertig 7 DOWN

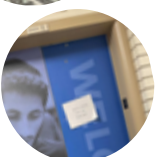
\$10 Million 1

Little do Facebook commentators know how much Slack Commentators enjoy their ramblings.



Furst Elevators are Broken 2

Shocker there.



When 2020 Gives You Lemons 3

Wondering what a 2021 Super Bowl commercial would look like. *shudders*



\$150 Graduation Application Fee 4

Honestly, we'll all be getting unemployment benefits anyway so let it be free. #recession



Mi Shenichnas Adar 5

Marbim B'Masks #DoubleMasking



OSL 6

Tied at last with IT for the easiest department to work with.



Anyone else wondering what bagpipe guy is up to nowadays? 7

Hope he's warm.



Macs to Compete on Feb. 13 in First Game Since March 2020

By ALEXANDER WILDES

This article was originally published online on Feb. 13, 2021.

The Yeshiva University Maccabees men's basketball team will be competing on Feb. 13 at 8:30 p.m. in their first game since March 7 of last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic first broke out on campus. The Macs will compete against Manhattanville College at Kennedy Stadium in Purchase, NY.

Yeshiva University created many guidelines for student-athletes to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, including having teams practice in two separate pods and mandatory testing twice a week, the latter of which is required of all students on campus. Additionally, due to the proliferation of COVID-19, there is no set schedule for their season; the Macs' first three games have already been postponed and a few others

were removed from the official schedule.

Last year's basketball season prematurely ended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the team was nearing the end of a long bus ride to Virginia following their advance to the DIII Sweet 16, the NCAA announced

get better every day and we just look forward to the opportunity to [compete] with other teams whenever it works out. Tournament or no tournament, we try to win every single day, whether it's a game or a practice."

This year will not only be different for the

"We are competitors. We try to get better every day and we just look forward to the opportunity to [compete] with other teams whenever it works out. Tournament or no tournament, we try to win every single day, whether it's a game or a practice."

Elliot Steinmetz, Maccabees Coach

that all tournaments would be canceled, leaving the season unfinished. Last year, the Macs boasted a 29-game winning streak, the longest in the team's history.

"We are competitors," Macs Coach Elliot Steinmetz told The Commentator. "We try to

players, as New York State guidelines state that there cannot be any fans at games. This change may affect the home-court advantage that the Macs have, as Ryan Turell (SSSB '22), starting guard on the Macs, said, "The Macs fans are the best in college basketball

...The energy they bring to the team is infectious. We feed off their energy, and it's a big reason we were undefeated at home last year."

MacsLive will be consistently broadcasting this year's season, using their new equipment that was donated in November 2020, which will enhance the broadcasting capabilities from last year.

"Despite the limits of COVID 19, and thanks to the extremely generous donations we received this summer and the hard work of the athletics department and our staff, MacsLive is in a position where it can take advantage of its improved equipment to give fans an experience that is as close to attending the games as possible," commented MacsLive Vice President of Content Roey Herzfeld (SSSB '22).

Gabe Leifer (SSSB '21), captain of the Macs, told The Commentator, "[We will] play with the deck of cards we were dealt, and as a competitive player, you always play to win."

LEE SEGUIN

Continued from Front Page

Katz School of Science and Health, according to Rabbi Weisberg's email. Additionally, Rabbi Hershel Hartz, who graduated from YU and received his Master's from the Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, as well

seven months. In August 2020, former Assistant Director of UHRL Natan Bienstock left YU, followed by Schwab in November 2020. One month later, OSL Student Life Coordinator Avi Schwartz departed to serve

YU for the last 14 years — will be stepping down in the coming weeks. Stone could not be reached for comment as of publication.

Student leaders expressed excitement about working with the new staff. "I'm excited for the new YU staff and wish them the best of luck," Yeshiva Student Union President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB '21) told The Commentator. "I hope we'll do great things this semester and they'll have successful careers beyond that."

"Lee and Michael have been very welcoming additions to the team," said Head Resident Advisor (RA) Yonatan Raskin (YC '21). "They both bring logistical skills that the team has been in need of and have allowed the RAs to focus on what we do best: Supporting and assisting our residents."

"I'm very excited to be joining the YU community, and even more excited to be working with the Housing & Residence Life teams across the University as we work to support our students during their time at YU."

Lee Seguin, Wilf Director of UHRL

as *semikha* from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, was hired as the Wilf Campus program manager in OSL.

These new hires follow a flurry of departures from UHRL and OSL over the past

as co-director in the Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus at Rutgers University. The Commentator has also learned that OSL Director of Student Events Linda Stone — who has worked at



Lee Seguin

MANHATTAN COLLEGE

MONTEFIORE

Continued from Front Page

the program did not exist when she applied to college, also believes that this program will "draw more students in who may not otherwise attend YU."

Most of the details of this new program — such as how selective the program will be, eligibility for admissions, requirements that will need to be maintained once admitted and what happens if a student decided to drop out — still need to be worked out. Botman shared that "additional information on the program will be available in the coming months."

This partnership marks a significant renewal in YU and Einstein's partnership, which faltered in 2015 when YU turned over the leadership of Einstein to the Montefiore Health System.

Founded by YU in 1953, Einstein was created at a time when access to medical schools was generally restricted for Jews. Since its starting class of 56 students in 1955, Einstein has conferred 8,749 MD and 1,606 PhD degrees, and is currently ranked No. 40 in "Best Medical Schools for Research" and No. 43 in "Best Medical Schools for Primary Care." In 1963, Einstein first established its affiliation with Montefiore Medical Center, which became Einstein's university hospital and academic medical center in 2009. However, it was not until February 2015 that

YU announced the transfer of ownership of Einstein to the Montefiore Health System, in order to eliminate a massive deficit from the university's financial statements. The medical school was estimated to account for two-thirds of YU's annual operating deficits,

which reached \$100 million at the time of the announcement.

The agreement between YU and Montefiore was finalized on Sept. 9, 2015. Details of this transaction remained unclear at the time, as YU and Montefiore Health

System declined to share any financial details of the deal, but documents obtained by The Forward show that YU transferred hundreds of millions of dollars in assets to Montefiore, including real estate and a portion of its endowment.

While financial and operational control of Einstein transferred over to Montefiore, which already operated Einstein's university hospital, YU continued to be the degree-granting authority until 2019, when the New York Board of Regents granted Einstein independent degree-granting jurisdiction. As of publication, it is unclear how, if at all, the announcement of this new program will affect the YU-Einstein partnership going forward.

However, in an email sent to the student body on Feb. 4, Berman wrote, "This exciting new chapter in our relationship with Einstein further establishes opportunities for our students to attend and benefit from the incredible world-class research of our affiliate medical school."



Montefiore Medicine President Philip Ozuah (left) and YU President Ari Berman (right)

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

YU Indoor Dining Set to Resume at 25% Capacity Beginning Feb. 12

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

This article was originally published online on Feb. 8, 2021.

Indoor dining at dining halls on the Wilf and Beren campuses is set to resume on Friday, Feb. 12 at 25% capacity after they were first closed on Dec. 14 due to New York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo's ban on indoor dining in New York City. Cuomo announced via Twitter on Jan. 29 that NYC restaurants can reopen indoor dining at 25% capacity beginning Feb. 14. He later pushed up the reopening date to Feb. 12.

The same rules that were in place for dining at YU before the ban — such as signing in and out of dining halls, social distancing and wearing masks except when seated and eating — will once again be in effect, according to YU Department of Dining Services Director Samuel Chasan. Students are also asked to limit their time in the cafeterias to 20 minutes to make room for other students. Shabbat dining services will also follow the protocol applied prior to the indoor dining shutdown.

"Several locations will be used on each campus to allow small groups to eat together

in a socially distanced manner," Chasan said. "We at the University Dining Services are so glad that once again students may eat together even if in a more limited fashion than in pre-COVID days."

Cuomo said in his tweet that the reopening of indoor dining is dependent on "if positivity rates hold." At the time of Cuomo's

"We at the University Dining Services are so glad that once again students may eat together even if in a more limited fashion than in pre-COVID days."

Sam Chasan, Department of Dining Services Director

original ban of indoor dining on Dec. 14, COVID-19 cases in New York were at a 6.8% positivity rate. Currently, the number of cases is steadily declining. However, in his update of New York regulations on Jan. 27, Cuomo stated that "the new strains are a real concern, and the COVID threat is not over."

Recently, there was a spike in COVID-19 cases for undergraduate students, and quarantine spaces reached their maximum capacity. At the date of publication, since Jan. 30, there have been four positive cases with four students in isolation and 16 in quarantine, according to the NYS COVID-19 Tracker.

Flex dollars — which allow students to spend a limited amount of funds on caf cards at university-partnered restaurants — have been reimplemented for the spring semester, after a hiatus during the Fall 2020 semester. According to the YU's Dining Services, students are discouraged from taking part in the restaurants' indoor dining facilities.

"Even when indoor dining restrictions are lifted, we ask that you do not utilize the establishment's limited seating. As students can only sit one per table, doing so would cause harm to their livelihood."

Chop Chop and Lake Como Pizza — restaurants that accept payment with the YU Caf Card — will not be opening indoor dining on Feb. 14, while Tiberias will resume indoor dining on that date; Kosher In Midtown and Burgers & Grill have not yet decided whether to open indoor dining or not.

Students expressed excitement about indoor dining restarting. "I am very happy

indoor dining is coming back," said Jeremy Koffsky (YC '22). "It was a big part of why the Fall semester was really nice because it's really the only time you can let your guard down and talk to friends on campus."

"I think the reopening of indoor dining is very beneficial for our school. It enables our meals to be properly regulated, ensuring that students are able to eat with their friends in a safe manner," said Leeba Sullivan (SCW '22). "I also just want to say how much I appreciate all the hard work the school and specifically the dining staff has put in to making this the best experience possible for all the students on campus."

"Last semester was a really tough time for the dining staff. No one knew what Governor Cuomo was going to enforce next, so everyone was on their toes," shared Jacob Linder (SSSB '22), the Wilf Student Life Committee dining liaison. "A ton of students asked me when the dining room was going to be opened again and I'm glad to say that we now have a date!"

As of the time of publication, Yeshiva University has not publicly announced to students that it will be reopening indoor dining options.



Gov. Cuomo announced on Jan. 29 that NYC restaurants can reopen indoor dining at 25% capacity beginning Feb. 14.

YOSEF LEMEL

New Engineering Labs Built for Both Wilf and Beren Campuses, New Digital Arts Lab for Wilf Campus

By **SAMMY INTRATOR**

Yeshiva University is building two new engineering labs on both Beren and Wilf campuses — the latter of which was already completed — and a new digital arts lab on the Wilf Campus, The Commentator has learned. The new labs were funded by the Margaret and Leo Meyer and Hans M. Hirsch Foundation.

The Wilf Campus' engineering lab is located on the 13th floor of Belfer Hall. The engineering lab on the Beren Campus will be on the fifth floor of the main classroom building at 245 Lexington Avenue. The new labs will be open to all students taking lab-related courses and will have new equipment, such as 3-D printers, laser cutters and electronics. The labs will feature many tools useful in making projects and will contain storage space for projects. The university intends to complete construction of the Beren lab by Fall 2021.

The Margaret and Leo Meyer and Hans M. Hirsch Foundation is a private foundation based in Tuckahoe, NY, and founded in 2011. The organization is a non-profit and provides funds for many Jewish causes in Manhattan, Staten Island and Boston. As of 2020, the foundation earned \$160,450 in revenue and had \$3.9 million in assets. Previously, Yeshiva University secured a \$100,000 grant from the foundation to help build a kitchen in one of the student dormitories. Susan Meyers, a senior philanthropic advisor at Yeshiva University, did

not respond to The Commentator's inquiries regarding the amount of the donation for these new labs.

According to Dr. Edward Berliner, the chair of the Engineering Department on the Wilf Campus, "the administration is placing an emphasis on STEM and increasing the

engineering opportunities in particular."

Daniel Weiss (YC '23), a pre-engineering and physics student, remarked, "I'm very excited for this opportunity. As a pre-engineering and physics student, this opens up a lot of new doors and opportunities for me. I'm delighted to see what this new lab has

to offer me and my classmates."

When asked about the project, Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon said, "these spaces will be used by the physics and art departments as well as for special projects. We are planning to further expand our engineering options as well."

In April 2020, Stern College for Women art students protested YU's decision to relocate space from the art floor on the eighth floor of 215 Lexington Ave. for the Katz School's new cybersecurity master's program. After students' artwork was damaged in renovations over the summer, the administration apologized for the "miscalculation," but continued construction.

"Having a new lab makes teaching easier in that I can spend less time trying to figure out technical glitches and more time on teaching students," said Prof. Esther Schwartz, who teaches multiple graphic design courses at YU. "YC's graphic design department has come a long way in the past few semesters and there seems to be a real interest in it. So far we've had full intro classes every semester and two full intro classes last Fall. I think it's great that YU is investing in a department that the students clearly want."



WILF CAMPUS

Yeshiva University is building two new engineering labs on both Beren and Wilf campuses — the latter of which was already completed — and a new digital arts lab on the Wilf Campus.

YU Career Center Receives \$10 Million Donation, Renamed 'Shevet Glaubach Center for Career Strategy and Professional Development'

By **SRULI FRUCHTER**

This article was originally published online on Feb. 10, 2021.

Drs. Felix and Miriam Glaubach donated \$10 million to the YU Career Center, which will be renamed the Shevet Glaubach Center for Career Strategy and Professional Development, to "promote long-term student success in jobs and careers," according to a YU press release.

The center will operate under a new model with a "more personalized approach and long-term, big-picture career strategy" for students. The press release explained this approach will help students "develop a sharper, more lasting sense of who they are" and their professional aspirations, in addition to aiding in job placement. As per YU's website, 93% of 2018 graduates had "post-graduate destinations" within six months of their graduation.

"Much of the gift is focused [on] endowment, which will name the Shevet Glaubach Center in perpetuity," Career Center Executive Director Susan Bauer told The Commentator. "The majority of the \$10 million will be invested into the university's endowment which will produce a % return that will largely invest and grow areas of the center and increase our abilities to enhance the Center for both campuses. This will fund additional programming, personnel and other professional development initiatives to help our students prepare for great jobs and impactful careers."

"We feel that a gift to name the Career Center at Yeshiva University is the most impactful investment we can make," Dr. Felix Glaubach said. "By helping Yeshiva University students to have successful careers we will enable them to be future leaders of Yeshiva University, the Jewish community and leaders in the USA & Israel."

He added, "The highest form of charity is enabling others to support themselves, we look forward to graduates of the Glaubach Career Center at Yeshiva University becoming business leaders and philanthropists in their own right."

"The highest form of charity is enabling others to support themselves, we look forward to graduates of the Glaubach Career Center at Yeshiva University becoming business leaders and philanthropists in their own right."

Dr. Felix Glaubach

This donation follows new developments from the Career Center over the past year. In February 2020, the Career Center launched YU-MVP, a program that seeks to directly

connect YU students with alumni in various fields in a similar fashion to LinkedIn. According to Bauer, YU-MVP had 192 student-users in August 2020 and 417 by the end of December. She also noted that 41 students who graduated in 2020 became alumni mentors on YU-MVP.

This past December, the Career Center also introduced students to Jobscan, a tool that helps users improve their resumes to match desired job openings. Bauer said, "The Center has only received positive feedback from those who have used Jobscan."

"The Shevet Glaubach Center for Career Strategy and Professional Development is not a career center from yesterday," Bauer said. "It is focused on today and tomorrow — bringing new technology, new employers, new internships and jobs, and exciting opportunities for student leadership development into the career preparedness strategies for all Yeshiva University students."



YOSEF LEMEL

The center will operate under a new model with a "more personalized approach and long-term, big-picture career strategy" for students.

Latkes v Hamantashen

It's one of the great debates of our time: Latkes or Hamantashen? As we approach the festival of Purim, The Commentator is looking at both sides of this heated debate. Below, two of our editors, Jared Scharf and Netani Shields, debate this perennial question.

The Case for Hamantashen

By JARED SCHARF

I do not wish to demean the widespread merriment and value of the latke. The latke, like the hamantash, is a cultural and ritualistic delicacy; both are a *sine qua non* to their respective holidays and both contain a rich history spanning several centuries. However, for reasons relating to geometry, Kabbalah, self-esteem, diversity, Jewish identity and olfaction, I must propound the hamantash's superiority to the latke.

Firstly, a latke is round while a hamantash is triangular; a triangle is geometrically stronger than a circle and is more useful in measuring angles. Additionally, one can not draw a perfect circle, while a perfect triangle can be simply made by making all three sides of the triangle equal.

For reasons relating to geometry, Kabbalah, self-esteem, diversity, Jewish identity and olfaction, I must propound the hamantash's superiority to the latke.

The three corners of the triangle can be seen to represent *Chabad*, the three cognitive foundations of the *Sefirot*, emanations of Hashem. Additionally, they may represent some of the Sefirot and their anthropomorphic counterparts, for example, *Chesed* [kindness], representing the right arm, *Gevurah* [strength], representing the left arm, and *Tiferet* [beauty], representing the torso). The hamantash represents kabbalistic perfection, as two extremes, *Chesed* and *Gevurah*, are balanced through the emanation of *Tiferet*. Balance, a quality thoroughly mentioned by Maimonides in his Code of Law (*Hilchot Deot*) is a significant value emphasized in Judaism, and is manifest in the hamantash. Dissimilarly, the

latke is round; one should not, like the latke, be in circles, aimlessly spinning without progressive direction. Rather, one should be balanced, able to take two extremes and utilize them appropriately; the hamantash represents this value, as it maintains a perfect balance of filling and dough.

The hamantash is stronger than the latke not only qua geometrical perfection, but also qua self-esteem. The etymology of "hamantash" is derived from the Yiddish word for "pouch," and the moniker "Haman." As Purim celebrates the day in which ancient Jewry defeated its enemy, Haman, the ritual of eating a pastry named after Haman indicates the Jewish philosophy of devouring the enemy; Haman tried to destroy the Jews, and now the Jews ingest him. Contrarily, the latke destroys the Jew, as the oil and carbs acquired via consumption are detrimental to one's digestive system and metabolism. The hamantash is a reminder to use the enemy, the weakness, as a catalyst for growth and productivity, and in this case, for consumption productivity.

Perhaps most importantly, hamantashen taste better. Additionally, unlike the latke, there are many varieties of hamantashen, including, inter alia, apricot, raspberry, chocolate, strawberry, prune, grape, date, apple, poppy seed, peanut butter and if you're feeling ambitious, halva.

The process of making the latke requires grating, the act of peeling away layers of the potato and stripping it of its identity. Furthermore, the subsequently unrecognizable potatoes are mixed with salt, eggs and oil, until its identity has been recreated. The latke represents assimilation. The hamantash, however, absorbs new content within its three geometrically perfect and kabbalistically evocative corners. The hamantash maintains its identity, its form, while allowing in just the right amount of flavor to enhance it, no different than the philosophy of *Torah Umadda*.



The hamantash has several qualities that help it rise above latkes.

PIXABAY

The Case for Latkes



PIXABAY

The latke has several qualities that help it rise above hamantashen.

By NETANI SHIELDS

Who are we to judge which food, latkes or hamantashen, is "better"? Each deservedly occupies a place on the tablecloths of our past, present and future. That being said, latkes are infinitely better than their doughy adversary. Here's why.

What elevates any dish over another is obviously the possession of superior flavor. Latkes are salty, fatty and filling and perfect for an elegant entrée — such as Spiced Potato and Carrot Latkes — while also being able to be a superstar side-dish. Anytime you have a fried potato dish it's going to be a "direct ticket to Flavortown," as Guy Fieri would presumably say. Saturated in oil in the best way possible, there's a reason this treat is eaten for eight straight days; they're simply tasty.

The thing is, it's not that the humble potato pancake is packed with flavor while lacking in the texture department. Every possible texture group is actualized with latkes. The potatoes are creamy like mashed potatoes. They are crunchy like a potato chip. And finally, they are greasy like the tater tots of childhood. The heterogeneity of textures is akin to *Am Yisrael* [Nation of Israel]; different personalities come together to create something better than the sum of its parts.

Latkes are also perfect vehicles with which to be flexible and adaptable. How are latkes when paired with sour cream? Awesome! How are they when dabbled in applesauce? Totally rad. They are delectable when the potatoes have been processed by being blended into a paste, and they are equally unctuous when the potatoes have first been shredded into strips before cooking. Latkes are like people — meaningfully unique in how they choose to express themselves.

I'm not denying that hamantashen can be delicious. Raspberry, chocolate and apricot are some of my favorite flavors. But unlike latkes, which I have proved are good in all contexts, hamantashen are

wholly reliant on whatever filling is being highlighted. Did we all suddenly forget that a poppyseed hamantash tastes bad and will also cause one to fail a drug test?

The potato pancake is a celebration of the *pach shemen* [jar of oil] that was miraculously found after ancient Greeks defiled the *Beis Hamikdash* [Holy Temple]. In other words, the dish hearkens back to one of our fondest memories as a nation. What are hamantashen? They aim to mimic the likeness of the maniacal Haman, who wished to commit genocide because Mordechai boldly refused to bow down to him. And even though the intention with the pastry is to make fun of the would-be fascist, people don't really consider that when eating hamantashen; they associate the taste with the name, whose etymology finds itself rooted from one of the darkest figures in our history. I don't know about you, but inadvertently memorializing genocidal figures leaves a bad taste in my mouth. Literally.

I think that one particularly potatoey piece of foodstuffs is the obvious choice for which one is superior.

So while, at the end of the day, both dishes are great, I think that one particularly potatoey piece of foodstuffs is the obvious choice for which one is superior. Celebrate what you know is best. Celebrate latkes.

All-Star, Coach, Convert: Amar'e Stoudemire Speaks to YU

By JONATHAN LEVIN

This article was originally published online on Feb. 4, 2021.

Amar'e Stoudemire, former NBA all-star and current coach, spoke to Yeshiva University students virtually on Wednesday evening, Feb. 3. In the Q&A moderated by Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB '21) and VP of Clubs Jared Benjamin (YC '21), Stoudemire discussed his career, conversion and life as a religious Jew.

According to YSU, which organized the event, the Stoudemire event had been in the works since late September. There was no official speaker fee; instead, Stoudemire asked student councils to make a donation to his Diversity University program, which aims to increase dialogue between Black and Jewish students on college campuses.

The event generated much excitement and was attended by over 125 students and faculty. After answering a few questions about his early career and sharing an insider's perspective on many developments within the NBA, Stoudemire began to speak about his journey to Judaism.

Stoudemire played in the NBA from 2002-2016, primarily on the Phoenix Suns and New York Knicks. He was named rookie of the year and went on to play in six all-star games. After leaving the league due to knee issues, he moved to Israel to learn Torah while also leading Hapoel Jerusalem (which he now co-owns) and Maccabi Tel Aviv to victory in the Israeli basketball championships. He has since undergone an Orthodox

conversion to Judaism, released a line of wines and has engaged in activism aimed at bridging Jewish and African American communities. Currently, Stoudemire works as an Assistant Player Development Coach for the Brooklyn Nets, where he recently made headlines for not working on Shabbat.

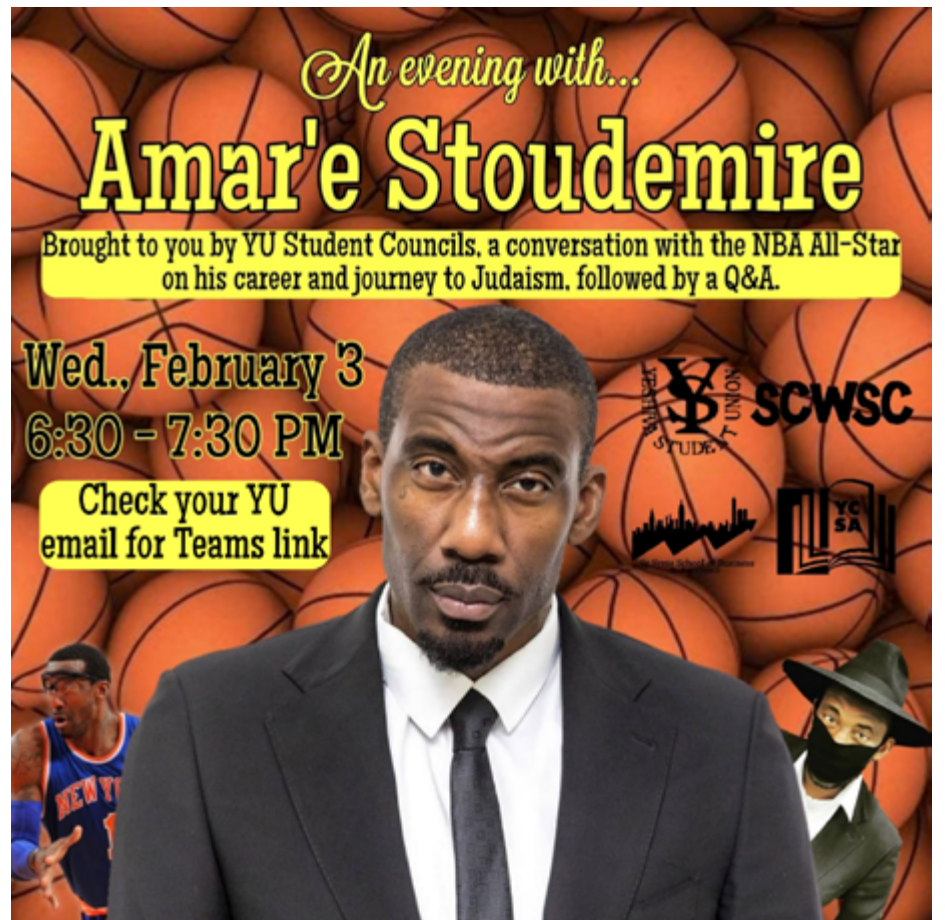
Stoudemire said that his interest in Judaism was sparked when he was a kid and his mother said that the family should "keep the laws of Moses." As a teenager, he began learning more about the religion, and continued to do so as a player in the NBA. After leaving the NBA, he studied at Ohr Sameach, a yeshiva in Jerusalem, and later at a yeshiva in Bnei Brak. Last year, he completed his conversion process and returned to the United States. On the advice of his "rebbe," he has taken the Hebrew name "Yehoshafat."

When asked what aspect of Judaism resonated with him most, Stoudemire answered "being able to connect with Hashem... being connected to Hashem in a way where my *neshama* [can] continue to grow."

The event lasted a full hour, and Stoudemire loosened up as the conversation went on. "I'm not a gefilte fish guy," he quipped. "I love the concept... keeping you from *borer*, separating on Shabbos. But the taste... not my deal." Chulent is a different story. "If it's made properly with a little extra spice, then we're good to go." Comparing playing defense on Shaquille O'Neal to the struggles of Talmud study, Amar'e joked that "when you're guarding Shaq, you just have to do your best. When you're learning Gemara, you gotta do more than your best."

"There [are] going to be times when the yetzer ha'ra is gonna come after you, there [are] gonna be times that maybe you'll be a little bit confused, but the ideal is to always keep your mind focused on Hashem."

— Amar'e Stoudemire



A poster for the event.

YESHIVA STUDENT UNION

In a response that is sure to get many at YU excited, Stoudemire teased the possibility of coaching the Maccabees Men's Basketball Team or teaching a class at Yeshiva. "There is always a future with enhancing any program, so I would not rule that out at all," he said. He also congratulated the Macs for their success in the NCAA tournament last year.

In closing, Stoudemire left attendees with a piece of advice. "The idea is always to stay strong... There [are] going to be times when the *yetzer ha'ra* [evil inclination] is gonna come after you; there [are] gonna be times that maybe you'll be a little bit confused, but the ideal is to always keep your mind

focused on Hashem. Never disconnect from Hashem and you'll always find the correct *derech* — the correct path. So never get discouraged, stay with it, stay strong and keep pushing forward."

Many students who attended the event were enthusiastic about Stoudemire and his religious journey. Said Noam Miller (YC '24), "It was incredible to see how someone who 'had it all' found Hashem and connected to Torah."



NBA All-Star Amar'e Stoudemire, spoke to Yeshiva University students virtually and discussed his career, conversion and life as a religious Jew.

YESHIVA STUDENT UNION

Breaking Down Wilf Student Government Spending for Fall 2020

By NETANI SHIELDS

This article was originally published online on Feb. 3, 2021.

Triggered by a new constitutional amendment passed in last spring's elections, the Wilf Campus Student Government (WSCG) has released their semester expenditures to the public. Sent over the WSCG WhatsApp group in early January, the data includes the amounts that Yeshiva Student Union (YSU), Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY), Yeshiva College Student Council (YCSC) and the men's Sy Syms School of Business Student Council (SYMSSC) spent and contributed towards club events and other student activities throughout the Fall 2020 semester. The Beren Campus student government organizations do not publicly release their expenditures.

The Commentator combed through the many spreadsheets so you don't have to, and is here to break it down.

SOY's total spending reached \$14,129.63. Their most costly operation was the annual Chanukah sale, totalling \$5,639.50, although much of that expense was made back in revenue. The majority of SOY's expenditures went towards enhancing religious life on the uptown campus; they spent roughly \$9,000 on incentives to encourage students to stay in for shabbos, including free and discounted meals and Eichler's gift cards. "It is an honor for SOY to be able to run programs which create a strong learning environment on campus," remarked President Akiva Poppers (SSSB '22) in a recent Commentator article.

YSU spent \$12,914 this past semester, with the organization focusing its monetary efforts primarily on social events. Comedy Night, which featured headliner Mark Normand, and Chanukahfest, a co-ed carnival-esque party held in Furst Hall, are listed as the two most costly efforts taken on by the council, at \$2,477.50 combined. When asked to comment, YSU President Zachary Greenberg (SSSB '21) emphasized this approach, saying "from the Joey Chestnut Q&A to the hybrid virtual/

in-person Comedy Night, virtual concerts with Simcha Leiner and John King to a virtual hypnotist show and the in-person Chanukah Fest, all [were] fantastic events [that] took place this fall semester."

"The Wilf Campus Student Government has released their semester expenditures to the public... The Commentator combed through the many spreadsheets so you don't have to, and is here to break it down."

YCSC used \$2,940.96 over the course of the semester to sponsor diverse events and initiatives, such as \$100 towards a virtual Family Feud night and \$150 on a "Combatting Anti-Semitism During the Pandemic" seminar. SYMSSC only spent \$825 the entire semester, and although their document notes that "21 events were run by Syms (Wilf) clubs this semester," all the money went towards general expenses, such as \$30 for a donut giveaway.

The different groups often collaborate and split costs on events. For example, for a YU talent show this past semester, all

the councils are listed as having split the \$140 cost evenly. When it came to buying Chanukah decorations to adorn campus, SOY covered 60% of the cost, at \$366.13, and YSU took care of the remaining 40%,

for \$244.09.

Perhaps because of the intense limitations that come with a global pandemic, none of the student organizations even came close to reaching their maximum budget allotted by the Office of Student Life. SOY spent 38% of their \$28,644 budget, YSU a little more than 30% of a \$42,960 budget, and YCSC a paltry 20% out of \$15,000. SYMSSC was the most frugal of all, dishing out only 5.5% of their \$15,000 allotment! This is due to the fact that most events were conducted over Zoom, where speaking fees are generally cheaper. Plus, for virtual social events,

councils were usually able to run something for free.

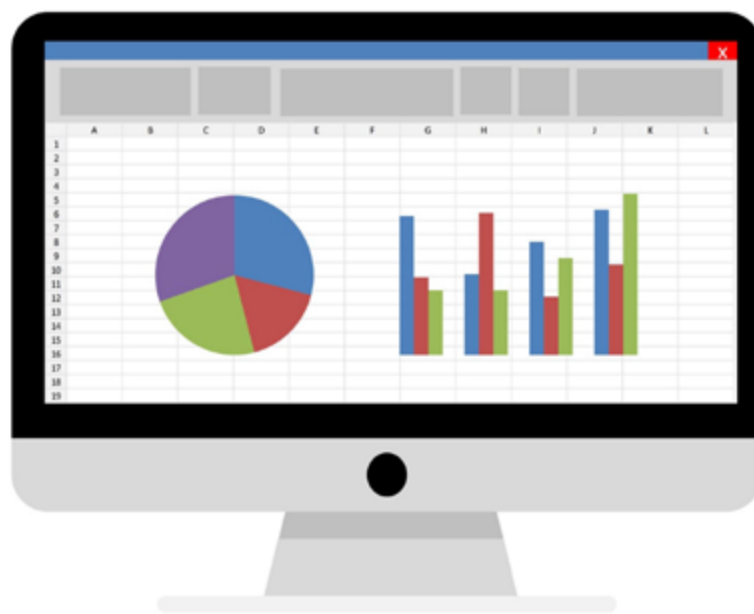
On Feb. 3, Senior Director of Student Life Rabbi Josh Weisberg told members of student government that the extra money from the fall semester will be rolled over to the spring semester, according to Poppers.

Another form details some 82 active Yeshiva University clubs and the events they hosted along with the pricing. Clubs receive their event funding from the aforementioned student councils. But this past fall, most clubs didn't request funds for their events at all. The Networking Club, Israel Club, Menswear Club and the JP Dunner Political Science Society all fall into this category. Despite being four of the most popular clubs on campus, they found guest speakers who chose to volunteer their time, rather than charge a hefty fee. A large number of clubs chose to not host a single event all semester long, at least not in an official capacity.

The single most expensive event of the semester was the Simcha Leiner concert in December, which set back YSU, SOY, YCSC and SYMSSC a combined \$5,000. The Beren Campus' Torah Activities Council and Stern College for Women Student Council also chipped in, but the amount they contributed is not publicly available.

The importance of these forms might be easily overlooked by most, but the numbers are more than just numbers. For a student body as small and close-knit as YU, transparency is something to be cherished. Likewise, it's pleasing to see that some of the most successful and creative events of the past semester, like the Syms Virtual Happy Hour, were quite cheap.

The coming light at the end of the long coronavirus tunnel brings many opportunities for the new Spring semester. More students have returned to campus housing and are expecting social outlets. "I would like to remind the club heads that we are eager to work with them to run events and provide them with funding for whatever they need," expressed Greenberg.



The Wilf Campus Student Government has released their fall semester expenditures.

PIXABAY

Yeshiva University's Political Transformation: Students' Political Leanings From the '30s to the Present

By YOSEF LEMEL

Author's Note: The methodologies used in the various polls mentioned in this article vary. The author considers them — while not necessarily a completely accurate reflection of student body sentiment — a relatively good indicator of trends through the decades. All polls taken prior to the 1960 election were of the Yeshiva College student body; Stern College for Women and the Sy Syms School of Business were established decades after Yeshiva College.

To say that the current student body of Yeshiva University leans in a conservative political direction would be an understatement. A poll conducted by The Commentator for the 2020 presidential election found that 60% of students would vote to re-elect Donald Trump compared to only 23% who indicated support for Joe Biden — compare this to the national numbers in which Biden received around 51% of the vote and Trump received 47%. However, the staunch support for the Republican Party shown by Yeshiva's

student body wasn't always the case.

To my knowledge, the earliest records of student political affiliation at Yeshiva date to 1935, the year The Commentator was founded. The Commentator published the results of a questionnaire featuring the senior class. When asked what economic system they preferred, a third of seniors stated their approval for socialism and another third advocated for the implementation of a Communist society. (One might wonder whether the founders of the "Commie" were themselves "Commies.") In the following year, all but five of the graduating class stated that they would vote to re-elect the Democratic nominee, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to the presidency in the 1936 election and indicated strong favorability for "government ownership of the means of production," a textbook definition of socialism.

Following the 1936 election, The Commentator published an editorial hailing Roosevelt's victory as "a vindication of progressive democracy in its hour of crisis" and released an obituary for the Republican Party "after a lingering illness" in the very same issue.

The enthusiasm for Roosevelt continued

through his tenure. The student body repeatedly indicated nigh-unanimous support for progressive politicians and The Commentator continued its praise of Roosevelt. After Roosevelt's death in the middle of his fourth term, Yeshiva held a memorial in Lampport Auditorium in his honor; Dr. Samuel Belkin, the second president of Yeshiva, called Roosevelt the "first citizen of the world, master of his own destiny and one who used his own physical misfortune for better and greater leadership." The Commentator published an entire special issue in commemoration of Roosevelt's passing, featuring an editorial and various reflections of faculty and administrators reflecting on Roosevelt's life and times.

The predominantly liberal perspective of the student body continued after Roosevelt's death. A student poll in 1948 found large support not for the Democratic Party, but rather for the Progressive Party and its eventual presidential nominee, Henry A. Wallace. While the editors supported Wallace's policies, The Commentator editorial board eventually urged students to support the Democratic nominee, Harry Truman, as a "duty" to the spirit of liberalism. "Support

of a Liberal splinter-party candidate serves only to advance the political fortunes of the more conservative of the leading contenders, a purpose to which we can hardly subscribe," the editorial board wrote. Truman ended up defeating the Republican nominee, Thomas Dewey, in an upset win for the Democrats.

Political enthusiasm then centered around the personage of Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic nominee against Dwight D. Eisenhower in both the 1952 and 1956 presidential elections. Stevenson polled 92% of students in polls conducted for both elections. Additionally, 69.8% of students thought Stevenson would win in 1952 and 24% thought the same in 1956; he lost to Eisenhower by landslide margins in both elections. In 1953, Stevenson received an honorary degree from the university at a special convocation marking the 25th anniversary of Yeshiva College (YC). Student leaders were even granted the opportunity to pose for a photograph with the politician and shake his hand.

Stevenson's popularity at YC continued in 1960 when he outpolled John F. Kennedy for YC students' choice for the Democratic

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POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS
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nomination by two votes; Kennedy went on to win the nomination and faced Richard Nixon in the presidential election. For every six YC students who supported Kennedy in the lead-up to the general election, one student supported Nixon — 86% of students supported Kennedy. Likewise, at Stern College for Women (SCW) 87% of students favored Kennedy, though the vast majority couldn't vote (note that 1960 was the first election in which data is available regarding SCW voting trends). After his assassination, The Commentator described Kennedy as a “statesman who fought for peace, justice, and liberty.” The editorial continued, “Though death is mighty and dreadful it cannot kill an idea, it cannot kill a hope. A bullet can kill a man, it cannot kill a democracy. Nor can death triumph over the ideals that President Kennedy died for. These only we can kill.”

In anticipation of the 1964 election, around 90% of YC students — around the same percentage that supported previous Democratic candidates — indicated support for Kennedy's successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, when he ran against Barry Goldwater, a descendent of Polish Jews. One author of a letter to The Commentator was “appalled” by the uniformity of opinion demonstrated by the poll. “I suspect that in Yeshiva's intellectual atmosphere many students are being led, like donkeys, by their noses. Conformity seems to have become the vogue,” the writer expressed. For supporters of both candidates, foreign policy was stated as a major policy issue of importance; the poll was taken in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis and when the Cold War seemed close to getting hot. The Commentator editorial board called Johnson “an efficient and productive leader,” extolling his assumption of the presidency after Kennedy's assassination, while characterizing Goldwater “a man surrounded by an air of doubt and confusion” representing “a far-right philosophy foreign to American tradition.”

Support for Johnson was affected by his Vietnam War policies. At first, the Vietnam War received broad approval from the Yeshiva student body. In 1966, a delegation led by the student council president to the White House presented a petition “in support of the policy of the President of the US regarding the war in Vietnam.” “It is essential that the President be backed by national unity so that all aggressors or would-be aggressors, be they the Communist North Vietnamese, the Red Chinese, or the Nasserites of Egypt will be duly warned that the US can make their ‘wars of liberation’ extremely unprofitable,” the petition read.

However, just two years later, Johnson's execution of the war was not looked fondly upon by students. As the Commentator editorial board noted after Johnson announced his intent to not pursue re-election, “Lyndon Baines Johnson is generally found to be a poor President ... most students object to his foreign policy ... Some students felt their expectations were not fulfilled in this country and that they would gain by leaving the U.S.... We can only note with pleasure the graceful exit of Mr. Johnson from the department of the presidency and wish him well in all future endeavors.”

In the lead-up to the nominations of the 1968 election, YC students who were polled preferred Eugene McCarthy — an anti-war Democrat — to Hubert Humphrey, Johnson's vice president and the eventual nominee. Notably, in the same poll, Nelson Rockefeller — a Republican — received over 100 votes from students, perhaps indicating the beginnings of a shift in student political support to the Republican Party. The Commentator eventually endorsed Humphrey over Nixon, primarily due to Humphrey's displays of “friendship for Israel,” with reservations over his position

vis-à-vis the Vietnam War.

The 1972 election saw the first wave of support of YC and SCW students for the Republican Party. While 87.8% of YC students polled in 1972 stated that they supported the Democratic candidate in 1968, 50.8% of respondents indicated support for Nixon in 1972; his Democratic opponent, George McGovern, only received 22.2% of student support. Additionally, 47.1% of SCW students supported Nixon versus 24.1% for McGovern. A decisive factor in the 1972 elections was most probably the perception of the candidates' respective views on Israel. 81% of YC students stated that they agreed more with Nixon's views on Israel than those of McGovern. As one writer put

Chants of ‘Bush! Bush! Bush!’ amplified as the incumbent's electoral votes mounted steadily. A triumphant aura slowly permeated the lounge.

it, “Of course, President Nixon is not a saint. Yet, despite his minimal support from Jewish citizens in the 1968 election, he has given Israel more military and economic aid than all the previous administrations combined.” Nixon ended up winning the election with 60.7% of the vote and 49 states. Neither The Commentator nor the Observer endorsed a presidential candidate in 1972, a break with precedent; to my knowledge, neither editorial board has endorsed a presidential candidate since 1968.

There is much less data available for the 1976 election as there is unfortunately a large gap in Commentator archival material during that time period. Observer archives show, however, that 51% of SCW students supported Jimmy Carter and only 12% supported Gerald Ford, Nixon's successor after his resignation. Thus, there seems to have been a temporary shift in support back to the Democratic Party, while not as lopsided as Democratic support in elections of the '30s through the '60s.

The 1980 presidential election, which pitted Ronald Reagan against the incumbent Jimmy Carter, further demonstrated the shifting political opinions of the student body. In the run-up to the election, around 100 Yeshiva students participated in a demonstration against Carter at a speech of his in Queens, particularly displaying dissatisfaction with his support for an undivided Jerusalem. One heckler shouted, “Jerusalem is Jewish ... Why do you lie to us?” The Commentator reported at the time that “Mr. Carter, his face turning red and his smile tightening, commented that, although

even a minority has a right to speak up, it should listen to what he had to say.” One student writer, perhaps reflecting a larger sentiment, said that Jews “must immediately cease their sheepish following of their Democratic shepherds, for as in 1940, when Jews worshipped Roosevelt, he turned out to be a silent partner to Hitler's final solution of deceit, deception, and despair ... The horrible prospect of Carter's re-election would greatly endanger our vital interests as Jews and as Americans.”

A dormitory resident described the pre-election fervor at YC: “Signs posting slogans in support of Reagan and in denunciation of President Carter abound everywhere in the dorm. Many Yeshiva students have un-

dertaken to campaign strenuously for the G.O.P. ticket, while many others have attended demonstrations heckling Carter.” While there is no concrete data for YC, a poll of SCW students found overwhelming support for Reagan when compared with Carter; in fact, more students indicated support for the Independent candidate, John Anderson, than Carter.

Broad support for Reagan at Yeshiva continued throughout his presidency. Julius Berman — a current Yeshiva trustee and uncle of President Ari Berman — stated that “President Reagan is the ‘strongest’ friend that Israel has in Washington.” The Commentator praised the Reagan administration for strengthening strategic cooperation with Israel. Clearly, Reagan's Middle East policies were a major factor in the new-found student support for the Republican Party. In 1984, Reagan received the support of 64% of YC students; he ended up winning 525 electoral votes and 58.8% of the popular vote in the general election.

Both Reagan and his vice president and successor, George H.W. Bush, received honorary degrees from Yeshiva in 1986 in honor of the university's centennial. Bush garnered 70% of YC and 53.2% of SCW student support in 1988. However, four years later, Bush only received 3% of SCW student support; his 1992 opponent, Bill Clinton, on the other hand, received 78% of support from SCW students. Israel was cited as a major factor in the choice of SCW students.

To my knowledge, from 1992-2004, there is no polling data available regarding the voting preferences of male students. Similarly,

I was unable to find polling data for SCW students in the 2000 and 2004 elections. Clinton remained popular with SCW students through his tenure, receiving 82% of student support in the 1996 elections.

Bob Dole, Clinton's 1996 opponent, who received a scant 16% support from SCW students, spoke at Yeshiva's 1994 Chanukah Dinner; The Commentator editorial board criticized the university for inviting Dole, citing what they perceived as his efforts to “thwart the pro-Israel agenda.” The board wrote that “YU honors should be reserved for those who have distinguished themselves as friends of our community—not those who have repeatedly taken aim at our causes.” At the dinner, Dole unequivocally said, “Simply put, we have no closer ally than Israel ... And there can be no doubt US assistance to Israel has advanced our shared interests and values in a region unfortunately not noted for freedom and democracy.” In balancing out the political scales, Yeshiva invited then-Vice President Al Gore, who eventually became the Democratic nominee in 2000, to the 1995 Chanukah Dinner during which he, in a white-knitted kippah, called for an increase of American troops in Eastern Europe. Gore's invitation received little, if any, blowback from the student body when compared to Dole.

There is little data on the 2000 election, but the fact that Joe Lieberman, the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, was an Orthodox Jew seems to have received attention from the Yeshiva student body at the time. Some writers stated that Lieberman did not accurately represent Orthodox Judaism, a common claim being that Lieberman publicly said that “Judaism has no ban on intermarriage.” Others defended Lieberman and expressed that voting for a ticket should not be based on such a factor. Then-Yeshiva President Norman Lamm weighed in on the issue in a Dorm Talk: He stated that Lieberman was not “running for religious office, though during the relatively short campaign Lieberman “already had more of an effect [on American Jewry] than two generations of rabbis.”

The 2004 election was filled with much political action and fervor among students. Members of the Israel club attended the Republican National Convention; Commentator editors at the convention got the chance to interview personalities such as Dennis Prager and Al Franken. The 2004 election also featured the first Morg Lounge election watch party, a continuing Yeshiva tradition. One attendee described the event: “Early on, chants of ‘Bush! Bush! Bush!’ amplified as the incumbent's electoral votes mounted steadily. A triumphant aura slowly permeated the lounge.” Bush went on to win re-election by a slim majority.

The 2008 election was probably the first that most current Yeshiva students remember, pitting Barack Obama against John McCain. Yeshiva hosted a Rock the Vote Concert and Café Night with “refreshments and tables full of election paraphernalia” in order to encourage students to vote. In addition, a debate was held between Democratic and Republican representatives in anticipation of the election; the cheering section for the Republicans was larger than that of the Democrats. 2008 also featured the first Commentator student poll with responses from students of both genders. 68.7% of students polled indicated support for McCain, while only 16.3% supported Obama.

Interestingly, when broken down by gender, there was a higher percentage of women who supported McCain — 74.5% — than men — 65.3%. Further, while showing



Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan, two politicians supported by a majority of Yeshiva students, who represented differing ideologies.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

A+ Professors

By DEBORAH COOPERSMITH

The coronavirus pandemic has been a difficult time for professors and students alike. YU professors quickly adapted and rose to the challenge by navigating through technological, interpersonal and Zoom-burnout difficulties. This article highlights only a few of these professors who had a profound impact on their students. Due to the personal nature of these entries, some have chosen to remain anonymous. The responses of seven students are provided below.

Noa Berman (SCW '23)

Major: Biology

Professor/Course: Dr. Daniel Hengel, English Comp.

"Dr. Hengel is a professor who really cares about helping every student grow at their own pace. I found him to be extremely kind and understanding. He is always very willing to listen to students' concerns and adjust the course accordingly.

"One day we were discussing a sensitive topic that I had previously written about in an assignment. He asked me to stay after class and simply asked if I was okay after that day's discussion. I was fine, but his sensitivity was incredibly touching."

Yair Shavrick (YC '21)

Major: Psychology

Professor/Course: Dr. David Lavinsky, Global Shakespeare

"As I was going through a tough time, Rabbi Willig constantly checked up on me. He made sure I was handling it well and staying healthy. He even brought me cookies on Erev Shabbos, which was the first time I met him in person."

Mitch Goulson, (Sy Syms '23)

"Through the elegant dissection of Shakespearean texts, Dr. Lavinsky inspired me as a professor, individual and academic. He displayed professionalism to the highest degree, showed a mastery of the literature and had the attention of the entire class in the palm of his hand. He is a professor worth taking over and over, as he is compassionate,

educated, scholarly, refined, honorable, well-mannered and put-together."

Anonymous (YC '23)

Major: Psychology

Professor/Course: Dr. Jenny Isaacs

"Dr. Isaacs is a passionate professor on top of being a kindhearted, supportive person.

"Dr. Isaacs ran the Being LGBTQ in an Orthodox World Panel this past December and took her time to explain to my class how important it was that we attend. As a closeted gay student in her class, I immediately felt safer and seen knowing that here was a professor who I could talk to and get support."

Mitch Goulson (Sy Syms '23)

Major: Accounting

Professor/Course: Rabbi Simcha Willig, Ethics

"Rabbi Willig is a great person who is kind, generous, funny, and caring, and a good teacher.

"As I was going through a tough time, Rabbi Willig constantly checked up on me. He made sure I was handling it well and staying healthy. He even brought me cookies on Erev Shabbos, which was the first time I met him in person."

Anonymous (YC '21)

Major: Finance

Professor/Course: Prof. Brian Trimboli, First Year Writing

"Professor Trimboli inspired me because

he was genuinely teaching to make us more successful people. It was obvious that he cared about every student and did everything he could to help us succeed. He was a great teacher, but even more than that, he truly cared about his students. He would space out his assignments so that they wouldn't coincide with midterms and overwhelm

us. He would stay incredibly late on campus for people who needed office hours. I remember one time he had brought some non-kosher food to eat, and before class he checked with us to make sure that it was not disrespectful to our religious beliefs for him to eat that food in front of us. That respect and sensitivity he showed us is something that I will never forget."

Jonah Goldstein (Makor '21)

Major: Culinary

Professor/Course: Dr. Stephen Glicksman, Psychology

"Dr. Glicksman is kind, helpful and encouraged me to keep learning psychology with him. He made me want to learn more. I like him and he's the best professor."

Yael Evgi (SCW '21)

Major: Political Science

Professor/Course: Dr. Jonathan Cristol, Weapons of Mass Destruction

"Besides for his interesting and thought-provoking lectures, Professor Cristol is one of the most understanding and attentive professors I've had in Stern College. When I had COVID in early March 2020, he was so caring and helpful regarding the assignments I had due.

"He is incredibly knowledgeable, understanding, friendly and detail-oriented.

"Professor Cristol is so knowledgeable with the subject matter he teaches that class is an incredible experience. He has really cool stories since he's seen so much of it first hand. In our Weapons of Mass Destruction class, he showed us pictures of him speaking about this topic at international conferences."

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YESHIVA UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Continued from Page 10

strong support for the Republican candidate, 57% of students indicated disapproval of the performance of the Bush administration; it must be emphasized that the poll was conducted at the beginning of the Great Recession.

Fast-forward to 2016. There was no shortage of Commentator articles about the election, ranging from evaluations of Trump's lack of tact and decency to the scandals that surrounded Hillary Clinton through the election. A Commentator poll — which I consider to be methodologically flawed for reasons outlined by another writer — found that 37% of students supported Trump while 27% supported Clinton.

Current Yeshiva students may be familiar with the controversy surrounding the 2016 election party in the Morg Lounge. Amidst the chants of "Lock Her Up," one Stern student reported that she was confronted with jokes about sexual assault. One student from the South was prominently wearing a Confederate flag at the event. Rabbi Kenneth Brander, then-vice president of Yeshiva,

stated that "that the Confederate flag and the reprehensible immoral ideas it often symbolizes are entirely incongruous with our foundational Jewish values." The student said he saw the Confederate flag as a symbol of his community, the South, and not as a symbol of racism. "I know that there is not a single racist bone in my body," the student said. The display of the flag prompted much debate and discussion on campus.

Since the 2016 election, there were two polls taken of the Yeshiva student body, one of the 2018 midterm elections and one regarding the 2020 presidential election. Both polls found that students in the Sy Syms School of Business were more conservative than YC and SCW students. Prior to the midterm elections, Trump's approval rating among students was at 48%; that figure rose to 54% before the 2020 election. 60% of students polled in 2020 indicated that they would vote for Trump versus only 23% for Joe Biden. Most students also indicated disapproval of court-packing, abolishing the Electoral College and the Black Lives

Matter movement. Only 33% of students approved of Trump's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic; meanwhile, 68% of respondents approved of Trump's economic policies and 70% approved of his foreign policies. The percentage of students who think the country is heading on the wrong track dramatically rose from 2018 when it was sitting at 40% to 63% in the 2020 poll.

A common trend across the various polls taken at Yeshiva is that a candidate's perceived policies towards Israel correlate with their support from the student body. In 1996, for example, even after Yeshiva students' support shifted to the Republican Party in the '80s, student support for Dole faltered after he was perceived as being an anti-Israel candidate. Other examples of a candidate's policies regarding Israel affecting their student support include Richard Nixon in 1972 and Ronald Reagan throughout his presidency. Indeed, most recently in 2020, the importance of Israel in politics has not changed; 92% of students stated that Israel was an important factor for their choice in

who to vote for.

The political leanings of the Yeshiva student body has shifted dramatically since the '30s. While, decades ago, Communists had a large presence at Yeshiva, the YU College Republicans, at present, is one of the largest clubs on campus; if one were to use the WhatsApp groups of the College Democrats and Republicans as an indicator of popularity, the College Republicans have around twice the amount of participants as the College Democrats (161 versus 81). Indeed, Yeshiva is an anomaly; the vast majority of college students in the country generally vote for the Democratic Party. While it may be difficult to conclusively explain the difference in voting patterns, I think a study of the perceptions of each party's policies towards Israel can offer some explanation. It remains to be seen how the political leanings of the student body will further develop and shift. For now, the student vote is entrenched in the Republican camp.

YU During the Pandemic: Perspectives from a New Student

By **ARIEL KAHAN**

Two months ago, I was sitting at an empty gate in Ben Gurion Airport thinking about the future. While I was reflecting on the great moments of the past year-and-a-half of yeshiva in Israel, I was also apprehensively pondering the start of my career at Yeshiva University. It was hard to envision life at YU because I knew it was going to be very different from the campus I visited in 12th grade; I remembered a packed *beis medrash*, a full lunchroom and crowded elevators. Needless to say, I understood that this was not the current reality in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many others who spent the fall semester at home were as curious as me about this new campus experience.

Fortunately, I think the experience has been overwhelmingly positive for most people. YU students have managed to stay happy and productive during the time period. I think the way Yeshiva University has come forth and made most aspects of college life work can teach us the importance of *hakarot hatov* and making the best of an unideal situation.

Every person I have met has been exceptionally warm and welcoming. The *rebbeim* have been proactive about introducing themselves and checking in to see how I am doing. I have enjoyed meeting the guys in my *shiur*. *Seder* and *shiur* generally allow for a lot of socialization (at a distance) because they are in person. Living in the dorms has also been a good experience so far. The RAs and residents try their best to make the most of the experience with the

resources possible. For example, we had a Dunkin Donuts breakfast that everyone on my floor enjoyed, providing a space for good bonding and fun experiences. The negative aspects have included the heat in the dorms, or lack thereof, and the constant mask wearing, even on the floor. However,

It is amazing how vibrant the campus is despite the challenges presented.

these complaints are minor.

Classes, for me, have been a mixed bag, however. My professors are engaging, and the content is interesting, but the experience is not the same over Zoom. There is a reason there was a big scramble to get a spot in the “in-person classes” this semester. For a multitude of reasons, it is much harder to focus on Zoom. Similarly, it is much harder to socialize and get to know people in your Zoom class. When, for this article, I interviewed a fellow student about why he likes his in-person classes better than his Zoom classes he said, “You just feel a sense of community. It is much more personable and you get to meet new people.” In general, people are trying to “get through” their Zoom classes in order to get to the parts of their day that they enjoy. It seems like everyone is looking forward to the day when all classes are in person again.

A lot is happening on campus every day. Many student-run organizations and extra-curriculars are active despite the challenges. The gym and workout room are basically open all day for student use. If a student has

a break between classes and wants to catch *mincha* or *maariv*, he is guaranteed to find a *minyana*. It is amazing how vibrant the campus is despite the challenges presented.

In terms of COVID-19, it is very clear that YU is trying its absolute best to make the experience as good as possible while

adhering to all the rules and regulations that they are required to follow. For example, ideally, everyone would do morning *seider* in the *beis*, together. However, under current conditions, this is not possible; learning in person in a different location with your *shiur* is a viable alternative that was implemented. While having the luxury of showing up to the gym on an ad hoc basis is preferable to the current situation, having to sign up in advance is not the worst thing ever. Yes, the constant testing is annoying, but it is necessary — and they provide good chocolate. Wearing masks all day was very tough at first, but is something to which I — and I think many others — have quickly adjusted. Students and faculty are trying to make the most of the unideal conditions. They understand that this is the best alternative.

I asked a fellow student who was home last semester whether he liked the campus experience better than being at home. His response was unequivocally positive: “Being on campus this semester has been a game changer compared to being at home. I’m really enjoying having in-person *chavrusas*,

shiur and classes. My productivity has skyrocketed being on campus. Overall, I’m really enjoying being in a campus environment with other guys.” Based on what I have seen, this tends to be the predominant attitude.

Living through this experience can teach us all important life lessons about *hakarot hatov* and making the most of a difficult situation. Often in life, we are so concerned with our stresses and what is not going quite right that we take for granted all the work that others are doing to ensure our success. We can be so worried about focusing on our Zoom class that we take for granted the hours of work our professors put in to making the class as easy as possible on a Zoom platform. We can be so bummed out about not doing morning *seider* in the *beis medrash* that we forget how much effort and logistics were required for YU to find a different location to accommodate every *shiur*. Going through this experience should teach all of us that we have to be thankful even when life is not ideal.

The same is true about making the most of this situation. It is important to recognize that just because something is not typical or ideal does not mean there is nothing to gain. There are still a lot of ways to gain and grow. We just have to do it in an atypical way.

Overall, I think YU students and faculty are doing a great job handling the situation they were dealt with. Both the faculty and students have contributed positively to this new experience. It is imperative that we keep up this trend. Hopefully in the near future, the context in which articles like this are being written will be a memory of the past.



Students returned to campus in the fall amidst the COVID-19 pandemic

The Case For and Against Impeaching Former Officials

By DANIEL MELOOL

This past week was the Senate trial against former president Donald Trump. The House of Representatives voted to impeach the 45th president after they accused him of inciting the riot that occurred at the Capitol on Jan 6. Uniquely, this was the second time President Trump faced a Senate trial. To date, only three presidents have ever been impeached, but Trump is the first to be impeached twice. Ultimately, the Senate voted 57-43 to acquit him. What made this trial even more unique was the fact that Trump was tried although he is no longer the sitting president.

Regardless of where one stands politically, it is certainly true that the latest impeachment trial was unusual. As such, various legal scholars attempted to resolve the question of whether a former official can face an impeachment trial. I take no position on the matter at hand, as both the arguments in favor and against the trial are valid. Instead, I will do my best to convey both sides of this debate.

Before diving into the arguments, it is important to understand the root of the debate. Trump was already impeached. The Senate trial concerned whether to convict him on the charges for which he was impeached and to remove him from office. In the debate, scholars focused on two factors: the text of the Constitution and historical precedents.

Beginning with the text, the main parts of the Constitution that address impeachment are Article I and Article II. The Constitution states in Article II, Section 4: "The President, Vice President and all civil Officers of the United States, shall be removed from Office on Impeachment for, and Conviction of, Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." Some scholars, such as Judge J. Michael Luttig, have argued based on this text that the trial was unconstitutional. The text refers to convicting the president rather than the former president. Furthermore, the text mentions the president in conjunction with the vice president and "all civil officers of the United States." Read together, the text is referring to convicting officials who are currently serving in government. Since Trump is no longer in office and is now a private citizen, the Senate no longer has the power to convict him.

Other scholars who argued against the Senate trial, like NYU Law Professor Richard A. Epstein, focus on the language the Constitution uses to refer to the president. The aforementioned text refers to "[t]

he President" in definite form. This is also true in Article I, Section 3 which requires that "When the President of the United States is tried, the Chief Justice *shall* preside." The fact that these texts use definite language indicates that the president being convicted must be the current president in office. After all, nobody refers to former presidents as "the President." It is only the current president that people speak of with definite language. Furthermore, Epstein's

Various legal scholars attempted to resolve the question of whether a former official can face an impeachment trial ... Many good arguments were put forth in favor of and against the proceedings.

point was bolstered by the fact that Chief Justice John Roberts did not preside over the trial as is mandated by the text which says that the Chief Justice "shall preside" when the person being tried is the president. Instead, the trial was presided over by Senate President Pro Tempore Patrick Leahy. The Chief Justice's absence adds to the doubt regarding the constitutionality of the trial.

So, there you have it, right? Not so fast. Scholars arguing in favor of the trial, like Stanford Law Professor Michael McConnell, point to another clause in Article I, Section 3 that shows the Senate is within its full right to convict Trump: "The Senate shall have the sole power to try all impeachments." These scholars argue that the key word is "all." Trump was legitimately impeached by the House of Representatives. Since the clause grants the Senate the power to try "all"

impeachments, it matters not that Trump is no longer in office. These scholars agree that the text of Article II, Section 4 appears applicable only to sitting officers. However, it does not grant the Senate's power to try which comes from Article I, Section 3. The power granted to the Senate to try impeachments is not granted with reservation.

A further argument can be made from another clause in Article I, Section 3 that describes the Senate's power to conduct an im-

peachment trial. That clause stipulates that "Judgment in cases of impeachment shall not extend further than to removal from office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any office of honor, trust or profit under the United States." This clause requires that an official convicted of impeachment must be removed and disqualified from holding office in the future. The argument goes that this clause actually requires the Senate to make *two* separate decisions: first, it must decide to remove the officer, then it must decide to disqualify them from holding federal office in the future. Historically, the Senate has voted to disqualify only three of the eight officers that it voted to remove. If the vote to remove comes first, the vote to disqualify that follows is necessarily being done to a former official. Therefore, the Senate trial was legitimate. Although it was not able to

remove Trump since he is out of office, the Senate could have voted to disqualify him from holding office in the future through an impeachment trial.

Moving to the historical record, it is evident that impeaching a former official is not unprecedented. In 1797, the House voted to impeach Senator William Blount of Tennessee after he was caught taking part in British plot; the Senate subsequently voted to expel him. The Senate then held an impeachment trial after he had been removed from the chamber. There is also the example of Secretary of War William Belknap who was charged with corruption in 1876. The House was set to vote on his impeachment, but Belknap submitted his resignation before the vote could commence. However, the House held the vote anyway, voting in favor of impeachment. The Senate then held a vote to convict him, but no article of impeachment received the necessary two-thirds vote.

Both of these cases certainly lend credence to the trial, but there are points to dispute on each of them. In the case of Blount, the Senate did not believe he could face impeachment charges since he was a legislative officer as opposed to a "civil officer." As such, the Senate dismissed the case on jurisdictional grounds. Since Blount served in the legislative branch instead of the executive branch, his comparison to Trump is incongruous. The case of Belknap is a better comparison to the latest circumstances, but his case had a similar outcome to that of Blount. Belknap was impeached due to his accepting bribes for contracts, which occurred after he had resigned from office. Nevertheless, jurisdictional questions were again raised in the Senate. Ultimately, none of the articles of impeachment against Belknap received the necessary votes due to doubts about the Senate's jurisdiction. Notably, Trump was impeached while he was still in office, unlike Belknap who had resigned. Still, the Senate doubted its jurisdiction over a former official.

The latest impeachment trial has certainly caused a stir among both sides of the political aisle. For the first time in history, a former president faced an impeachment trial. Many good arguments were put forth in favor of and against the proceedings. Regardless of where one stands politically, I encourage everyone to carefully consider all the arguments regarding the constitutionality of the latest impeachment proceedings.



The Capitol Building

PIXABAY

India to Ethiopia; Persia to America: A Review of Esther in America

By JOSH LEICHTER

When thinking about iconic narratives in Tanakh, it is easy to point to the Book of Esther as one of the most accessible. From the royal festivities to the scheming villains to the fairytale ending, it's a story so many of us have familiarized ourselves with since childhood. What we may overlook, however, is the way that the story of Esther has impacted the formation of the United States, something a new book edited by Rabbi Dr. Stu Halpern seeks to correct.

Compiling a collection of essays from leading rabbinic and academic scholars, "Esther in America" begins by focusing on the early days in the New World when Puritanical pilgrims came from England, before going on to conduct an examination

of how Megillat Esther touched both Jewish-American culture and the cultures of other communities that help make up "The Great American Melting Pot." This book, published by Maggid Press in conjunction with YU's Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, is the 15th that Halpern has edited or co-edited. His other edited works include the popular "Mitokh Ha-Ohel" series, which features articles from YU rabbis and profes-

What we may overlook is the way that the story of Esther has impacted the formation of the United States, something a new book edited by Rabbi Dr. Stu Halpern seeks to correct.

sors, and the "Derashot Ledorot" series, a compilation of essays based on the sermons of Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm.

A meaningful section of "Esther in America" that stood out to me was "Emancipations and Proclamations." It devotes itself to showing how Esther influenced African Americans and President Lincoln during the Civil War. In one of my favorite essays there titled "Lincoln, Esther and the Rav: A Study in Scholarship," Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik — a professor at YU — compares the political approaches of

Esther and Lincoln. While both Esther's and Lincoln's advisors sought to act quickly and bravely to solve their problems and rally

their people, Rabbi Soloveichik argues that Esther and Lincoln distinguished themselves as leaders by understanding when is the right time to act and speak up. To quote Rabbi Soloveichik, "... a sweeping moral vision is necessary but not sufficient; what is also required is the ability to proceed in a way that those goals can be attained" (pg. 95). This idea, while specifically referring to Lincoln in the chapter, can also be taken as an important message for anyone that seeks to accomplish something in life: sometimes success lies not in the idea itself but in ensuring a strong and effective implementation.

In one of the closing chapters of the book which focuses on presidential politics and the Megillah, there is an entertaining and highly informational essay written by Dr.

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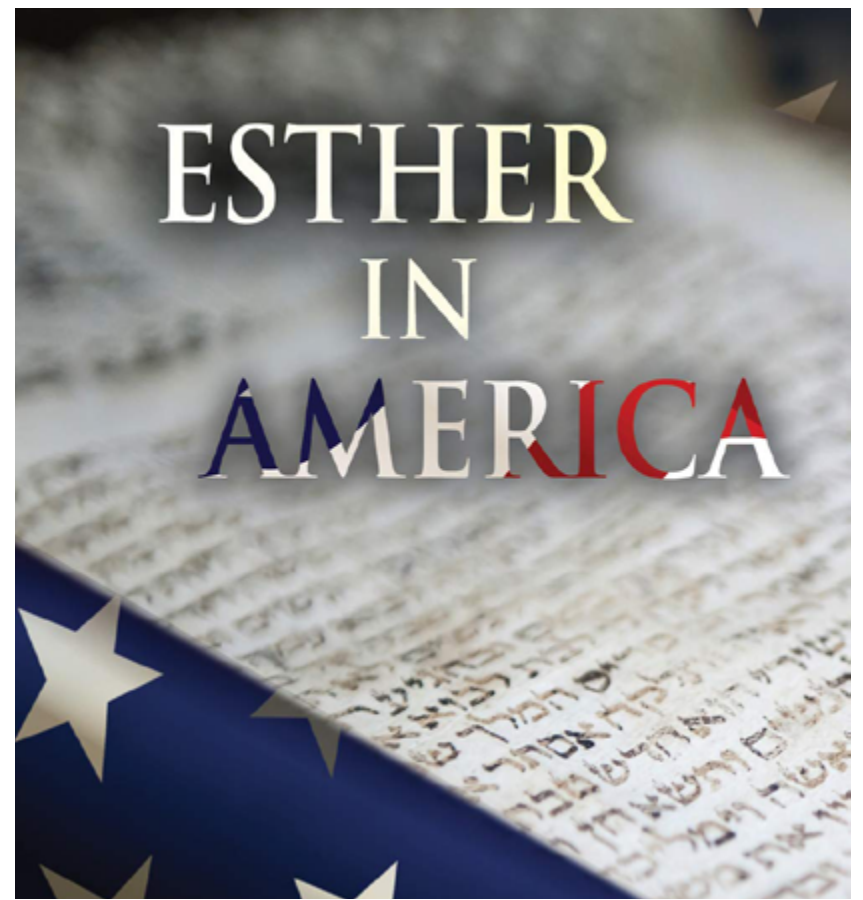
ESTHER IN AMERICA
Continued from Page 13

Tevi Troy on how various first ladies viewed themselves as Esther, in that they were not given any formal duties other than ceremonial roles, yet were still able to access their spouses at more regular rates than actual cabinet members. The position in which many first ladies found themselves also contributed to how they were viewed when taking on advocacy roles on social issues, and how they viewed their respective president's advisors. For example, Troy points to the hostility between Nancy Reagan and Donald Regan — Treasury Secretary and later Chief of Staff to Ronald Reagan — as a modern example of Esther's imploring Achashveirosh to get rid of Haman. While not a beat-for-beat reenactment of the story, their frequent clashes highlight how prominent figures in the White House often tried to carve out their own legacies by looking at Biblical heroes like Esther.

For those that prefer another, less politically philosophical approach to the impact that Esther had on America, an entire section of the book is devoted to cultural influences of the Megillah. This section focuses on how children's book authors, filmmakers and artists took liberties with the narrative to either cater to a wider audience or come up with their own unique stories. In the chapter

discussing Esther's appeal to artists, images are included that spotlight the variety of styles that developed in the American art world. From the more classical approach that William Rimmer took in 1847, reminiscent of the European depictions of scenes from the Bible, to the considerably more abstract and colorful homages of artists like Abraham Rattner (whose painting *Song of Esther* hangs in the Whitney Museum in New York City) and Archie Rand, the impression of Esther's fame in American popular culture is clear and powerful.

A great advantage of "Esther in America" is its variety of sections which offer a sampling of the vast scope of the history of the country. Because of this range, readers are bound to find a handful of essays that speak to them the most. Additionally, given that each chapter is self-contained and written by a different author, one only needs to devote a short amount of time to learning something new and interesting. As we head into the month of Adar and begin our preparations for the holiday of Purim, readers can be left feeling excited and appreciative of the fact that they can share new insights on Megillat Esther with their friends and families thanks to Rabbi Dr. Stu Halpern.



"Esther in America" book cover

MAGGID BOOKS

Letter to the Editor

A Response to Rabbi Blau

To the Editor,

As I read the first half of Rabbi Blau's most recent article, "Orthodox Jewry and President Trump," I found myself in complete agreement with the author's message. This concurrence does not come easily, as I voted for Donald Trump in both 2016 and 2020. However, Rabbi Blau is absolutely correct that President Trump's behavior during his last two months in office was irresponsible, unacceptable and demeaning to the office to which he had been elected.

Rabbi Blau is also on target that President Trump's claim of election fraud has been categorically disproven by numerous courts, many of which are officiated by conservative judges. President Trump's attempt to pressure the Republican Governor and Secretary of State of Georgia to somehow find 12,000 votes to make him the state's victor, was unethical and shows that, with regards to the most recent election results, the 45th president is delusional.

Then of course, there was the notorious and unforgivable behavior that led to the riots at the Capitol, in which President Trump incited a crowd of supporters towards violent behavior that tragically led to multiple deaths, injuries and possibly sowed a distrust of the democratic process that could adversely affect how future election results are handled by the losing party for years to come.

At the time of my writing this, President Trump has already been impeached. It is my hope that he will be convicted by the Senate and that the Senate will then vote to bar him from running for office ever again.

I say this even as I agree with most of his policies as president and bemoan the fact that his successor will likely try to undo many of his great successes. But his actions during the twilight of his presidency have, in my opinion, disqualified him from serving in public office, and therefore, I found myself supporting Rabbi Blau's assessment in the first half of his well-written piece.

However, there are three points Rabbi

Blau made in the latter part of his article, to which I feel the need to object.

He states "As a notorious abuser of women and frequent liar, Trump's personal behavior and crudity should have turned off religious people. Clearly, his personal qualities are irrelevant to a major portion of Orthodox Jewry."

For the past five years, Orthodox Jewish Trump supporters have been the target of criticism from other Orthodox Jews for overlooking President Trump's character flaws. As an Orthodox Jew who cast his vote for the 45th president in both of his races, I fully acknowledge that I overlooked his boorish behavior due to liking the great majority of his policies and finding the alternative offered by his opponents unacceptable.

What is aggravating is that this very same sentiment, namely, someone who regularly lies and has engaged in multiple sexually inappropriate behaviors, could easily be applied to politicians on the Democratic side, most notably, President Bill Clinton. Yet, many Orthodox Jews still voted for him. In fact, a prominent Orthodox Rabbi has been very open about his friendship with President Clinton and has even written a book on the topic that is sold every year at the YU Seforim Sale. Of course, this continuing support requires that one overlook his numerous extra-marital affairs, his committing perjury and having his Arkansas law license suspended for five years, hardly behavior that the Torah would condone.

Yet, I do not recall Rabbi Blau or any other Orthodox rabbi who has questioned the morality of supporting President Trump, demanding that this rabbi cut off ties with the 42nd president or that the YU Seforim Sale stop selling his book. This strikes many of us as hypocritical, and leaves us to wonder if the criticism leveled at those in the Orthodox community who voted for President Trump is truly based on a concern for ethics and morality or is it more attributable to a partisan animus?

The article continues by stating, "When the runoff Senate election in Georgia resulted

in victories for a Black and a Jew, for non-Orthodox Jews this stirred memories of Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King marching together. For many Orthodox Jews, who associate Blacks with crime and riots, it only meant that the Democrats would control the Senate and that the crime and riots would continue."

This is a highly unfair assertion that greatly shortchanges the thought process of Orthodox Jews. The more likely explanation for many Orthodox Jews not supporting "a Black" (Raphael Warnock) running for office, was due to the many documented cases of him making anti-Israel and anti-Semitic remarks. For Rabbi Blau, a devoted Zionist, to *not* be disturbed by now Senator Warnock's despicable comments regarding Jews and Israel, is puzzling. For him to instead imply a racist intent on the part of Orthodox Jews who did not support Senator Warnock, is offensive.

Thirdly, the piece asserts, "On issues facing the general society, Orthodoxy has almost nothing to say." The implication is that many in the Orthodox Community are too focused on their own needs and do not care enough about the needs of the broader world.

However, if there are issues that directly impact Orthodox Jews, why shouldn't we try to advocate with public officials on our behalf? It seems that every other group, be it religious, racial or ethnic, attempts to petition the government to enact laws which will be to their benefit. So are the needs of Orthodox Jews any less important? While obviously we should care about other citizens of the world and attempt to fulfill the dictum of Tikkun Olam, and of course, our self-advocacy needs to be legal and ethical, as long as we heed those guidelines, why is it wrong to use our best efforts to ensure that our own brethren are taken care of?

Furthermore, the article's implication is that only the ideas of President Trump's opponents are conducive to helping people outside of the Orthodox Community. In reality there were ideas supported by the

Trump Administration and championed by the Orthodox community but which also helped numerous individuals in the broader community as well.

One such example is school vouchers. This is something that Orthodox Jewish groups favor as it can help parents pay for the rising costs of a yeshiva day school tuition. Indeed, the recent Trump administration and great majority of Republicans favor this policy. But it *also* helps minorities such as African-Americans and Hispanics as it allows parents in those communities to send their children to the same great private schools that Democratic politicians like President Obama were able to send their children, as opposed to the failing public schools they are currently trapped in. This is merely one example of a policy that benefits both Orthodox Jews as well as other minorities. So the accusation that Orthodox Jews do not care about broader society is flawed, as many of these preferred laws advocated by Orthodox Jews actually benefit a wide array of people across various races and ethnicities.

All Torah Jews should be repulsed by President Trump's actions towards the end of his presidency. We should criticize them and not try to find ways to excuse them. However, this criticism of personally flawed politicians should not be limited to members of one particular party, but rather, should be meted out to any ethically challenged government official regardless of their political affiliation. Additionally, we in the Torah community never have to apologize for withholding our support for a political candidate due to their espousing anti-Semitic and anti-Israel views. Lastly, let us not make the mistake of only viewing one political party as having a monopoly on policies that help the greater society. Rather, let us be open to the possibility that the party of Lincoln may also have ideas that can prove beneficial to those in need.

Noah Pollack (YC '11)

When The GameStops

By YOAV ZOLTY

It almost seems incredible that Reddit, the social media platform, was the cause of so much turbulence in Wall Street these past few weeks, and the deterioration of the popular trading app Robinhood's reputation. Yet, that is precisely what happened over the

decided to join in on the rising wave of these stocks. Over the course of three days, they caused several hedge funds to lose billions, most notably Melvin Capital and Citadel.

To buy these stocks, most of these at-home, "little-guy" investors were using an app called Robinhood, an app that's proclaimed message is to democratize Wall Street. Robinhood accomplished this by

and hard, going from around \$350 to around \$60 per share over a weekend. Investors, with the WallStreetBet forum serving as a ready echo chamber, quickly called a foul play, claiming that Reddit was in league with the hedge funds to hurt the little guys.

With well-known figures such as Elon Musk and Mark Cuban pointing fingers at Robinhood, as well as politicians from both sides of the political aisle, such as Representative Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ted Cruz, demanding an investigation, the reputation of Robinhood seems to be in tatters. The SEC has even decided to launch an investigation into Robinhood, saying, "The Commission will closely review actions taken by regulated entities that may disadvantage investors or otherwise unduly inhibit their ability to trade certain

securities." It also doesn't help when the CEO of Robinhood, Vladimir Tenev, interviewed on CNN, gave very evasive answers as to why they prohibited trading the Gamestop stock.

The Robinhood App, previously having a close to five-star review on Google Play and the App Store, over the course of one weekend was bombed by over 275,000 users giving it a one-star review. It seemed that Robinhood, instead of doing as its namesake, giving to the poor, was actually doing the opposite, taking from the poor. Robinhood has promised to become more transparent and to do whatever it can to repair its image, even going so far as to spend \$5 million for a Super Bowl ad. Ultimately, only time will tell if Robinhood will be able to rebuild its reputation and once again become the trading app for the little guys.

The Commission will closely review actions taken by regulated entities that may disadvantage investors or otherwise unduly inhibit their ability to trade certain securities.

past two weeks with a massive, unexpected surge in prices for stocks in Gamestop, AMC and others.

The story starts with an innocent post on Reddit's popular Wall Street Forum, WallStreetBets, by user Keith Gill about his stock holdings of Gamestop, which, at the time, were valued at around \$50,000. He went on to say that he thought the stock was actually undervalued, that he would continue to buy more, and (this is the important part) that several hedge funds had decided to short it. This was more than enough to convince the users of WallStreetBets, who self-described themselves as "the good guys," to pile in on buying Gamestop stock, raising the stock by almost \$400, almost a 2000% increase, hoping to hurt the hedge funds in retaliation for their perceived crimes in the 2008 crash. They also decided to raise the price on other stocks that they believed the hedge funds had shorted, such as AMC and Nokia. Regular investors, realizing the massive short term gains that could be made, also

making it easy to open an account, making the app as simple as using any social media platform and charging no commission. However, what most Robinhood users do not realize is that when they click to buy or sell a stock, the process is a lot more complicated than just having the money leave or enter their account. There is a lot of background financial plumbing that is involved. When a transaction occurs, Robinhood itself goes to their brokerage firm and utilizes its own capital to pay for that transaction. Then, when the deal is approved and finalized three to five days later, the funds are taken from the user's account. For all this to work, Robinhood must maintain a minimum amount of funds.

Due to the volatile and fast-paced nature of the Gamestop trading, Robinhood quickly found itself unable to be able to pay for all transactions involving that stock. Robinhood, facing a demand to pay over \$1 billion, decided to unilaterally ban all further buying of Gamestop and other volatile stock. With this ban, the price of Gamestop fell fast



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These past weeks were marked by high market volatility in certain stocks like Gamestop fueled by the rise of small time online investors.

Understanding Bitcoin

By AARON ERBER

Cryptocurrencies, specifically Bitcoin, have created quite the buzz over the past decade, especially this past week with Tesla purchasing \$1.5 billion worth of it. Yet the focus has mainly revolved around the price. Since Bitcoin's inception in 2009, created anonymously by a man or group under the name "Satoshi Nakamoto," owners of Bitcoin have seen extreme returns. However, what actually is Bitcoin, and what value, intrinsically, do they possess?

On an overall level, Bitcoin is a decentralized currency, which means that there is no overarching authority watching over or influencing and maintaining its price — it is not the subject of a corporate power's policies.

Because Bitcoin is peer-to-peer, a transaction of Bitcoin doesn't go through a financial institution. In order to compensate for the lack of an authority that will back the currency and the authenticity of transactions, Bitcoin uses many advanced technological methods to ensure the securitization of each account, transaction and overall network.

Bitcoin is fully digitized and stored in a virtual wallet on a device such as a computer. Each user must create a secret key that serves as their own personal "digital signature." A secret key is the equivalent of a physical signature or password. This secret key is then paired with a public key that, as the name implies, is public. The private key/public key connection is vital to the security of accounts.

When a user creates a private key, a public key is automatically generated that

corresponds to a private key through a method known as "hashing." Hashing associates a long string of numbers and letters with the private key. The most important concept with hashing is that it's nearly impossible to know what the private key is based on the public key. For example, suppose someone makes their private key

are seen by miners who are incentivized to create a block in the blockchain. Creating a block requires solving a complex mathematical problem that uses up a significant amount of computing power. Once a miner completes it, others will verify its correctness, the miner will be rewarded fractions of a bitcoin, and a block will be added to the

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An inside look at the inner workings of bitcoin and its blockchain

"password." The generated public key might be "21HE9932To8L". It is crucial for the system that no one can determine the private key from the public key — someone cannot deduce that "21HE9932To8L" means "password" — the reason being that if it could be deduced, anyone can sign a transaction in another person's name using their private key. Now, creating a system that functions in such a way that cannot be reversed engineered (public key converted to private key) requires a lot of mathematics and use of computer power, yet Bitcoin has been able to achieve this through its cryptography and the use of the elliptical curve.

Now that the users are secure, the Bitcoin network needs to ensure that transactions are secure and that there is trust in the overall network between all of its users. This is where the blockchain comes into play. The blockchain is a ledger open to all users that stores a history of transactions. Each "block" in the blockchain represents a certain amount of transactions. When a user wants to use their Bitcoin and make a purchase, they must send out a request. These requests

blockchain with the original request and completed transaction. Every user can see each transaction and which public keys are associated with them. When a new block is added to the chain, all of the content of the previous block is used to create a formula for generating the next block. This creates dependency as each block is linked to the previous one. Therefore each successive record created makes it increasingly difficult to hack the blockchain, as it would require the entire chain to be hacked, which would entail using an absorbent amount of computing power in a short amount of time i.e. before the next block is created.

Bitcoin is extremely mathematical, but on top of that, it relies heavily on its user population. The way it was created was to the point that the more Bitcoin is used and trusted, the more secure it becomes. It uses people's self-interest and their strive for money to ensure the future of its worthiness. More recently, Bitcoin and its community have been seeing increasingly more attention and demand which has increased its price to all-time heights.

How Much Do NBA Players Really Earn?

By ALEXANDER WILDES

The NBA world was completely shaken up when the news broke that James Harden, a Houston Rockets mainstay, was being traded to the Brooklyn Nets. Most NBA fans debated the merits of the trade for the individual teams, though very few realized the monetary impact the trade had on Harden himself. Due to the relocation, Harden will be living in New York City, which unlike Texas, has a very high tax rate. It is estimated that, due to the trade, Harden will lose an estimated \$13.5 million in taxes more over the next few seasons playing in New York. Therefore, Harden's takeaway from his contract has gone from just over \$80.5 million in three seasons to under \$67 million out of his \$133 million contract. To put it in perspective, Harden went from taking home 60.52% of his contract to 50.3%, or over a 10% drop, just from getting traded.

After seeing just how different Harden's net gain was based on the different cities he plays in, the fundamental question follows: How much money do NBA players really make?

Firstly, focus needs to be shifted to what reductions players would have to pay from their salaries. The most simple reductions are federal, state and city taxes. Just about

every NBA player falls into the highest federal tax bracket, paying approximately 37% of their salaries to the government. However, local taxes differ greatly based on the state and city in which the player's team is based, as some states have no income tax, while California, the state with the highest income tax, may require its citizens to pay up to 12.3%, in addition to federal taxes. The

to the Brooklyn Nets than he did with the Rockets.

A similar type of income tax that is almost exclusively used with athletes is the jock tax. The jock tax is used for people who spend time working across multiple states; they will be taxed differently based on where they play. When playing in states like Texas that have no income tax, there is no jock tax

(NBPA) does not allow agents to take more than 4%.

The last reduction made to NBA player salaries is towards their 401k accounts. The highest contribution anyone can make towards their 401k is \$19,500, and I would assume that no player would have any trouble giving up that amount, especially since the NBA matches that amount up to 140%.

Now that the exact quantity of reductions has been explored, it is important to consider what the average NBA player actually makes.

In the 2020-21 NBA season, the average player makes \$7.916 million. If 37% (\$2.93 million) is taken away for federal income taxes, 3% (\$237,000) for both jock tax and agent fees and \$19,500 for 401k contributions, the amount left is \$4.4925 million, or 56.43% of the starting salary. This is what the average player will have to pay if they played in Houston, where there are no city or state taxes. However, if this average player plays in a market with state and city income taxes, such as Los Angeles, the take-home number for the average player could be a lot less.

As we can see, while many NBA players want to play with certain players or specific teams, choosing to do so can cost them millions of dollars. Now, that only leaves us with the question: Should NBA players choose to play based on where they will earn the highest percentage of their salary?

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same holds true for cities; some cities, like Houston, have no income tax, while other cities can force players to give up another chunk of their salary.

James Harden is a case in point. When Harden previously played in Texas, he played in a state that has no state income tax. However, when he was traded to the Nets, he would most likely fall under the highest state tax bracket of 8.82%. Furthermore, when Harden played in Houston, he did not have to pay any city income tax, but due to his trade, Harden will have to pay NYC's taxes, which will fall under the highest tax bracket of 3.867%. Harden must pay almost 12.7% more of his contract due to his trade

collected. Therefore, in this case, playing in a home city that has state taxes is beneficial, as there are more places that, when visited, have no income tax, resulting in a lower overall jock tax. It is still much more economical to play in a home city that has no income tax, though, according to figures on Bloomberg, players pay on average 3% of their salaries to the jock tax, which can be shrunk by 1% or so if a player plays in a home city with a state tax.

Another reduction that needs to be accounted for regarding players' salaries is agent fees. Generally, NBA players pay about 3% of their salaries to their agents, as the National Basketball Player's Association



Salaries may not be as high as they seem.