

# THE COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva University

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ISSUE NO. 11

## NYC Vaccine Site Opens on Wilf Campus as NYS Eligibility Expands

By YOSEF LEMEL

*This article was originally published online on April 7.*

A New York City vaccine site, offering the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, opened on Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus on Wednesday, April 7 following the expansion of vaccine eligibility to all New York residents or workers above the age of 16 on Tuesday, April 6.

The site is located in Weissberg Commons — on the ground floor of Belfer Hall — and will be available to the public through June 2021, according to an April 5 email from the university announcing the site's opening. The times of operation are from 9:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday and 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday; the location will be closed for Shabbos and Jewish holidays.

"As part of our mission, we are always looking for ways to help the community at large, especially during these unprecedented times," expressed President Ari Berman in a statement to The Commentator. "This includes opening our campus to the city's historic COVID vaccination effort and contributing to greater vaccine access and health equity for Northern Manhattan residents."

The April 5 email, which first notified



Belfer Hall, where the vaccine site is located

YOSEF LEMEL

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## Hedi Steinberg Library Set to Undergo Renovations Over the Summer

By RIKKI KOLODONY

The Beren Campus' Hedi Steinberg Library will be undergoing renovations, which are expected to begin and be completed this upcoming summer, according to Paul Glassman, director of Scholarly and Cultural Resources, and Edith Lubetski, head librarian at the Hedi Steinberg Library.

As per Glassman and Lubetski, Hila Stern, an architect and designer of Tel Aviv University, is in charge of redesigning the Hedi Steinberg Library. A new research instruction lab, which will be subdivided, will be included in the redesign. The lab will act as a classroom for the use of essential on-site research instruction. It will be open to the entire Beren Campus. The lab can be used as a group study room when it is not in operation by classes and there will be newly-renovated group study rooms with flat-screen TVs and improved screen-sharing technology. There will also be new support and information desks, carpeting,

lighting, as well as a range of seating options, including lounge seating.

"The reimagined space will greatly benefit student learning," said Rina Krautwirth, a research and instruction librarian at the Hedi Steinberg Library. "I feel that redesigning the reference desk will provide the students with enriched access to reference services [and] I expect that more students will use the library because of these changes."

The reconstruction is being paid for by a \$250,000 grant from the State of New York's Dormitory Authority (DASNY), as per Glassman and Lubetski. DASNY is the state government's financial and building regulator. DASNY invests in, plans for, and builds health and education programs that support inclusive, long-term communities.

Glassman proposed the renovation design plan to Assembly Member Nily Rozic's office before submitting it to DASNY liaison, Jon Greenfield of Government Affairs. The renovation will most likely begin in the summer of 2021, he said, pending approval

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## YU Planning to Eliminate In-Person Hebrew Programs, Move to Completely Asynchronous Model Beginning in Fall 2022

By SRULI FRUCHTER

*This article was originally published online on April 14.*

Plans are in motion to eliminate the in-person, undergraduate Hebrew programs and move them to a completely asynchronous model beginning in Fall 2022, The Commentator has learned.

"The work to move our Hebrew language courses online is designed to improve our students' academic experiences in Hebrew language," explained Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Selma Botman, who first proposed the changes in the early weeks of Spring 2021.

She added that this was "[i]nformed by feedback from students who have taken Hebrew language online here at YU" and the new model will "provide students with greater flexibility in completing the

coursework and managing their busy academic schedules."

Botman charged Dr. Aaron Koller, coordinator of the Wilf Campus Hebrew Language Program, and Dr. Zafira Lidovsky-Cohen, chair of the Stern College for Women (SCW) Hebrew Language & Literature Department, with developing a fully online Hebrew program for Fall 2022. Koller and Lidovsky-Cohen have already contacted a course designer recommended by Botman about her proposal. Botman has not been in direct contact with Hebrew faculty about these plans.

"[T]here are many bridges to be crossed and uncertainties to be resolved before specific plans can be finalized," Koller said. At this point, it is unclear how many, if any, Hebrew faculty will be rehired after Spring 2022.

In the current model for Wilf Campus, based on a placement test taken before

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Rabbi Dr. Bernard Rosensweig z"tl

Ending the Agunah Crisis

Where Will We Be For Commencement '21?

Hasty Highlights

# FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## President Berman, What Happened to Being the “World’s Premier Jewish Educational Institution”?

By THE COMMENTATOR EDITORIAL BOARD

“By offering in one institution a comprehensive, integrated educational program that produces the Jewish leaders of the next generations ... Yeshiva University is the world’s premier Jewish educational institution.”

These words were spoken by President Ari Berman in his 2017 investiture speech, along with his other high praises of YU as “an institution for the Jewish community and the broader society.” He lauded YU for what it had done and would do for the Jewish community and the world at large. Now, however, in contrast to this optimistic vision, we fear the future is dark for YU. It is failing its students and the community as a *Jewish* institution.

This decline and fall of Jewish studies at YU goes back to at least 2015, when the Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) changed its policies to scrap the traditional Jewish studies course load, including Jewish History and Bible. Four years later, in 2019, Yeshiva College (YC) scrapped the requirement for students to take an “Intro to Bible” course, causing a plummet in enrollments of a course necessary for a well-rounded Jewish education. Professor Moshe Bernstein, a longtime Bible professor at YC, said at the time that the new requirements are “but one more manifestation of a watering-down of the Yeshiva College liberal arts education.”

Now, YU has expressed several other manifestations of this neglect.

In Spring 2021, the YU administration dissolved YC’s Jewish Studies Department — the largest department at YC — and moved Jewish History and Jewish Philosophy professors into the History and Philosophy departments, respectively. Lingered faculty were pushed into the newly-formed Bible, Hebrew, and Near Eastern Studies Department. The Commentator recently learned that Jewish Studies adjunct professors at Stern College for Women (SCW) — without any warning — were told via email that they would not be rehired for Fall 2021.

Then, we discovered that YU was planning to eliminate its in-person Hebrew programs for Wilf and Beren students and move them onto an online, asynchronous model beginning in Fall 2022. Even before this happened, Biblical Hebrew was eliminated from the Wilf Campus program in its Spring 2020 updates. The university’s own outdated website celebrates that “The Hebrew language has long nurtured the national identity of the Jewish people,” but clearly that is not

a convincing enough reason to sustain the Hebrew program with normal, in-person classes.

For a university that prides itself on being the flagship of Modern Orthodoxy, these changes speak volumes as to where YU’s priorities lie, and Jewish studies are not among them.

Of course, this is not the only discipline taking the backseat at YU. Indeed, liberal arts departments are also feeling the brunt of faculty cuts and feelings of second-class status from the university. However, can *Yeshiva* University honestly say its Jewish curricula were meant to be treated as if they are just another academic specialty?

*If YU does not stop its onslaught on Jewish studies — decimating the university’s Hebrew program, cutting its faculty and limiting course offerings — we fear that it will meet the point when Jewish studies will be completely forgotten.*

Jewish studies are struggling to survive with an ever-declining pool of faculty and academic class offerings, and YU is continuing to suffocate them. We are calling on YU to stop toppling its Jewish studies academics and start focusing its efforts on revolutionizing them, a feat that can be made possible by following two steps:

First, the university ought to stop treating Jewish studies as disposable and start viewing their existence as a fundamental component of YU’s identity. Could we imagine YU liquidating the undergraduate Torah programming and *batei midrash* under any circumstances?

Second, instead of scrapping courses and disbanding departments, the university should invest its time and resources in figuring out what isn’t working and seeking to remedy it — not with a cheapened, “easier” program, but with something that enriches our academic experience in a meaningful way while still addressing university concerns.

Provost Botman reasoned that an online Hebrew program would “improve students’ academic experiences,” giving them “greater flexibility in completing the coursework and managing their busy academic schedules.” The irony is that this argument wasn’t

convincing enough to stop the university from moving the course drop date without a “W” five weeks earlier than usual, a change students were vocally against.

The administration may think it fair to presume that the average student wants a lighter mandatory college workload with “greater flexibility.” Perhaps that is the case, unfortunately, but why would the university endorse that? We need a Jewish studies curriculum that challenges us and hope YU has not given up on its mission to be “the world’s premier Jewish institution,” a statement that does not imply mediocrity.

At this point, these suggestions can only remain general, as the university has shied away from concrete explanations for its actions. If specifics are needed, however, then here are a few: Keep the Hebrew program in-person, re-hire adjuncts of SCW’s Jewish Studies Department and bring back a revamped Intro to Bible requirement to YC.

In December 1991, The Commentator learned that the university was planning to shut down the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. In response, over 1,000 students signed a petition and hundreds showed up to protest, marching to President Lamm’s office and demanding the university reverse its decision. “Jewish School, Jewish Studies!” they chanted. Facing heavy pressure, the university eventually reversed its decision.

If YU does not stop its onslaught on Jewish studies — decimating the university’s Hebrew program, cutting its faculty and limiting course offerings — we fear that it will meet the point when Jewish studies will be completely forgotten. Now is not the time for YU to backtrack on its mission to be the foremost university for Jewish students across the globe.

President Berman himself participated in the protests to save graduate Jewish studies at Revel. This time we ask that he make an effort to save undergraduate Jewish studies. As he concluded in his investiture, “Join us in our journey. Be a part of history, as we maximize our potential, write a new chapter in the Jewish story and work to make a lasting impact on the history of all of humanity.”

*Editor’s Note: For an article to be designated under the byline of “The Commentator Editorial Board,” a minimum of 75% of editorial board members, including the editor-in-chief, are required to give their assent. This editorial received unanimous support from the editorial board.*

## THE COMMENTATOR

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*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.*


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[www.yucommentator.org](http://www.yucommentator.org).



- 


1

SWAG DAY!!!!

Either you're in Syms, on a sports team, or straight out of the 1960s. But hey, it's Swag Day so no complaints here.
- 


2

YU COVID VACCINATION CENTER

Friends don't let friends push off getting vaccinations.
- 


3

Yiddish Comes to Duolingo

"*Lemel* means a (little) lamb."
- 

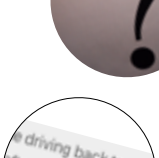
4

White Button Down Shirts

Rinse, Lather and Repeat. With Shabbos, Double Rosh Chodesh, Yom Zikaron, Yom Ha'atzmaut, and Shabbos I sure hope everyone has more than one white shirt.
- 


5

Free Food, You Say?

A little rain couldn't stop our individually packaged and wrapped BBQ or a game of giant checkers this Yom Ha'atzmaut. All is well as long as you don't sing along with the *chazan* during *Tefillah Chagigit*.
- 

6

Anonymity

Sometimes it seems like I can write whatever I want here because a large portion of our readers still think that Elisheva/Elli/Lizzie Kohn has been writing this column all year. Feel free to prove me wrong.
- 

7

"To the Heights" Rides Groupchat

Avoiding the train at all costs ... but also don't want to spend a fortune on your parent's credit card. And who knows, maybe one of your next Uber buddies will be your or a friend's bashert. (Can anyone bring a small package for me???)

7UP


by Zahava Fertig

NMODL

- Accellion CYBERHACK

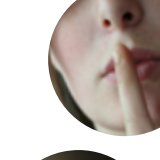
THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING.

1


- Conflicts of Interest?


Knowledge is power and right now, I feel very powerful ...

2


- Honors Senior Thesis Nightmare

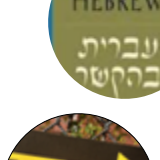
Only 25 pages you say? Yikes ...

3


- HEST Unrest


That moment when Rav Goldwicht gave a 10 minute speech at the *tekes ma'avar* entirely in Hebrew on the same day The Commentator published the plans for all Hebrew Language classes to be taught asynchronously and virtually by Fall 2022.

4


- StuCo Election OPEN SEASON!


Petitions or essays, raffles and WhatsApps. Pass those donuts around cuz there's gonna be dramaaaaaa.

5


- Deeply Rooted, Forward ... Focused?

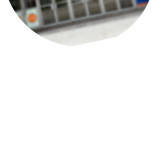
It's grammatically awkward and a lot less catchy than *Torah Umaddah* but at least it's easier to remember than all five of the *Torot*.

6


- 39 Days until Commencement

May 26, where will you be?

7



### HEBREW PROGRAM Continued from Front Page

their first semester, students take either one, two or three semesters of Hebrew in a stream-lined process through courses numbered 1010, 1020 and 1030. Those who score exceptionally high on the exam take one semester of an advanced Hebrew course, marked as 1040. This system went into effect in Fall 2020.

Beren students must also complete a placement exam to enroll in Hebrew courses, and depending on their score, they take one, two or three semesters of Hebrew. Depending on how high their score is, students can be exempted from the Hebrew requirement altogether.

Hebrew Department faculty were dismayed at the news of the university's plans and have little confidence in the success of an asynchronous Hebrew program. "I will say that this decision is a sad one for the students of YC [Yeshiva College] and SCW," said Prof. Lori Linzer.

"When I began teaching at YC about 8 years ago," she said, "I was impressed with the level of customization that was available to students in their morning programs and their Hebrew programs, and it was clear that this personal touch and individualized approach set YU apart from other campuses. Now this distinguishing feature of the YU experience seems to be evaporating, and its offerings are starting to look a lot more like an online university."

Prof. Aliza Schachter, who also teaches at

YC, felt strongly about the current Hebrew program. "What I can say, with confidence, is that the current model of learning Hebrew in the Men's undergraduate programs has been exceptionally successful," she said.

Schachter noted that while students begin their requirements at various levels, the current program "empowers students to engage more fully in the Jewish texts they now study in the Yeshiva and will continue

*"I will say that this decision is a sad one for the students of YC and SCW."*

Prof. Lori Linzer

to study throughout their lives," also enabling them to "to understand their daily *tefillot* [prayers] and interact with their Israeli brethren."

Both professors also stressed the importance of learning Hebrew in an in-person classroom environment, which could not be achieved online. "So much of the learning that happens in the Hebrew classroom, whether on Zoom or in person, happens in real time, through genuine interactions," Linzer explained. "Our classes are not lectures — they are almost entirely interactive — with students answering questions, conducting dialogues, or collaborating in many other ways."

Linzer added, "I don't think you will be

able to find anyone who can credibly argue that the asynchronous model is a better model for teaching Hebrew language. I'm just sad that we have reached the point at which this fact is beside the point."

In January 2021, the Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish Studies at YC was dissolved, and the Department of Bible, Hebrew, and Near Eastern Studies was formed, which now includes the Hebrew

program. SCW still retains its Hebrew Language & Literature Department, as it operated in previous semesters.

Some students, like Ozzie Jeselson (YC '23), felt conflicted about the potential changes. "I've been taking Hebrew classes since my middle and high school years, and I very much understand the importance of them being face-to-face," he said, adding that "Taking Hebrew this semester online came with a bunch of problems, one of them being having to type vs. write your answers for exams."

However, based on Botman's explanation of how this could help students, Jesselson commented, "I'm relieved knowing that I'll have more time in my day to make room for

other plans."

Others were adamantly against the university's plans. "My worst fear when YU began offering asynchronous courses during the pandemic is that they wouldn't end when the pandemic did," remarked Zach Ottenstein (YC '22), who has not yet begun his Hebrew requirement. "People choose YU for its relatively small and personal classes in all subjects. However much it may be in the university's interest to move the [Hebrew] program to an asynchronous model, I am personally opposed."

Jocelyn Cohen (SSSB '23), who has only taken Hebrew online, felt similarly about online learning. "I believe it is very important to have synchronous classes when learning a language," she explained. "It's all about conversation. It is very hard to have dialogue when there aren't two sides to the conversation."

"Over the past year, due to [the] COVID-19 pandemic we have worked closely with our faculty to adapt courses to virtual settings and have been able to establish a strong Hebrew language course in an asynchronous format," Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon told The Commentator. "This is still in development and any updates on plans for Hebrew language classes in fall 2022 will be announced during the spring 2022 timeframe."

### BEREN LIBRARY Continued from Front Page

from Greenfield's office, so there will be no need for a temporary space for students during that period.

The Hedi Steinberg Library was last renovated in 2016. The renovation was limited to the first floor of the library, and it included the conversion of a periodical room into group and individual study rooms. The upcoming renovation will be similar to the Wilf Campus' Mendel Gottesman Library renovation, which began in 2015 and ended in 2017, in terms of updated software and

new study rooms.

The library staff appears to be very optimistic regarding the renovation. "I am looking forward excitedly to the implementation of the renovation," Lubetski said. "The new look should be very welcoming and attractive. The added classrooms [and] study rooms will be a wonderful addition [and] we expect the students to be very happy with the changes."

"I'm thrilled with the grant from the State of New York which will allow the University

Libraries to create an optimal space in the Hedi Steinberg Library dedicated to helping students," Glassman told The Commentator. "We believe the results will be a comfortable and flexible environment that supports individual and group study-and student success."

Students seem to be delighted with the future renovation as well. "YU has been making a lot of changes lately ... that some people approve and some disapprove," Amalya Teitlebaum (SSSB '23) expressed. "However,

you cannot find a single person [who] would disapprove of the incredible renovations of the library. I personally can't wait to see it after it's completely renovated!"

"The library definitely gives more...of an older feeling," Jacqueline Rabi (Katz School of Science and Health '24) told The Commentator, "a new renovation [will] give more of a fresh feeling...[and] is a great route to take given that change is always for the better."

### WILF VACCINATION SITE Continued from Front Page

students about the opening of the site, noted that the university "is only providing space and has no part in the operation" of the site; rather, it will be operated by Centers Urgent Care "on behalf of New York City." YU set up separate entrances and exits from the site, which are monitored by security officers to "maintain the safety and security of the campus."

Berman credited the site's establishment to the university's "partnership with Mayor Bill de Blasio's office, Assembly Member Carmen De La Rosa and Congressmember Adriano Espaillat, as well as Eric Goldstein and the UJA who are helping coordinate" outreach to vulnerable populations, including Holocaust survivors.

Appointments at the site, and at other NYC locations, can be scheduled through the online NYC Vaccine Finder or by calling 877-VAX-4NYC. YU's vaccine site is one out of 25 sites that allow for New Yorkers who are 75 or older to walk in and receive the vaccine without scheduling an appointment.

Some students were happy to hear that a vaccine site will open on campus. "I think that this arrangement has great potential to create a bond between Yeshiva University and the rest of the wider Washington Heights community and will benefit the YU student body greatly by providing them convenient access to vaccination," said Zachary Ottenstein (YC '22).

Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel told The Commentator that the

university still requires the participation of vaccinated students and staff in the COVID-19 monitoring program through their taking bi-weekly rapid tests. "We are continuing to work with our medical director and NYC and NYS health and safety protocols, and if there are any updates to our policies we will share [them]," he said.

Although more students will now be able to receive vaccines, the university currently has no plans for altering its virtual commencement ceremony to an in-person format, according to Aliza Berenholz Peled, senior director of events and brand experience, citing NYS COVID-19 guidelines as the rationale.

COVID-19 cases have been steadily decreasing in NYC. As of the time of publication, NYC Department of Health statistics put the number of confirmed cases in the past week at 17,498, down from a weekly average in the past month of 19,573. Over 4.5 million doses have been administered in NYC; 37% of the adult population have received at least one dose and 23% are fully vaccinated.

"We are extremely privileged to be able to partner with the City at the Yeshiva University vaccination site in order to keep the community safe from this challenging pandemic," stated Centers Urgent Care CEO S. Scott Orlanski. "Centers Urgent Care is in business to provide the best possible care for the community and providing this vaccine is a vital effort that we are proud to be a part of."



Inside the vaccine site

YOSEF LEMEL



# Rabbi Dr. Bernard Rosensweig, Longtime YU Professor, Passes Away at 94

By YOSEF LEMEL

*This article was originally published online on March 31.*

Rabbi Dr. Bernard (Berel) Rosensweig, a former professor of Jewish History at Yeshiva University for 38 years, passed away on Thursday, March 25 at the age of 94.

Born on Oct. 26, 1926, Rabbi Rosensweig grew up in Toronto, Ontario. In his early years, he learned secular subjects at Clinton Street Public School and Harbord Collegiate in the mornings and Jewish studies at Yeshiva Torah Chaim in the afternoons under the tutelage of Rabbi Avraham Aharon Price, one of Toronto's leading rabbis.

In 1944, when Rabbi Rosensweig was 17, he came to New York City to study at Yeshiva College (YC). "The idea of this combination of learning Torah and getting the kind of education that you want ... overwhelmed me," he later reflected. "It wasn't easy for me to come. It was the Depression. We had no money. But I made it."

At YC, Rabbi Rosensweig learned in the *shiurim* of Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes, the "Lomza Rav," and Rabbi Dovid Lifshitz, the "Suvalker Rav," after which he transferred to the *shiur* of Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "the Rav," who was a primary mentor to Rabbi Rosensweig throughout his life. He graduated YC in 1947 and continued his studies at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan

Theological Seminary (RIETS) in the Rav's *shiur*. Other students in the Rav's *shiur* at the time included Rabbi Dr. Sol Roth, Rabbi Dr. Moshe Tendler, Rabbi Binyamin Walfish and Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, the latter of whom was Rabbi Rosensweig's roommate for three years.

Rabbi Rosensweig received *semikha* from the Rav in 1950, a master's from the Bernard Revel Graduate School (BRGS) in 1967 and

and their Application," "The Origins of Ashkenazic Jewry in Germany" and "The Thirteenth Tribe, The Khazars and the Origins of East European Jewry." He also authored a book studying the transformation of Ashkenazic Jewry in the 15th century titled "Ashkenazic Jewry in Transition."

After teaching at Queens College for a few years, Rabbi Rosensweig taught classical, medieval and modern Jewish History at YC,

*"I feel very much a part of what I teach, no matter what level or what time period."*

Rabbi Bernard Rosensweig

a doctorate from BRGS in 1970. He first served as rabbi of Bais Yehuda Synagogue and Congregation Shaarei Tefilah in Toronto and eventually, when he moved to Queens, as rabbi of Congregation Adath Yeshurun in Kew Gardens. He also served as vice president, financial secretary and eventually the president (1978-80) of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA), the largest Modern Orthodox rabbinical organization in North America.

Over the decades, Rabbi Rosensweig penned articles on various topics for Tradition — a journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought regularly published by the RCA — including "The Hermeneutic Principles

the James Striar School and the Isaac Breuer College from 1976 to 2014. He also helped create and administer the Jewish History AP exam for high school students. Then-YU President Norman Lamm conferred an honorary doctorate on Rabbi Rosensweig in 1994 at YU's 63rd commencement ceremony.

In honor of Rabbi Rosensweig's retirement in December 2014, YU held a tribute for him, attended by around 100 friends, relatives and colleagues. "I love teaching Jewish History to the boys in Yeshiva College," Rabbi Rosensweig reflected. "I feel very much a part of what I teach, no matter what level or what time period."

At the tribute, Rabbi Bernard Rosensweig's

son, Rabbi Dr. Michael Rosensweig — a *rosh yeshiva* at RIETS and *rosh kollel* of the Beren Kollel Elyon — stated that his father was "able to be part of the *beis medrash*" while being able to "take that passion and those values" and "translate them as a professor in the college and elsewhere." He added, "I can't recall a single self-conscious moment when he's had any difficulty with any of these hats. That's an amazing legacy."

"Rabbi Dr. Bernard Rosensweig not only taught Jewish history, he lived Jewish history. His outstanding work as a rabbi, educator, scholar and communal leader profoundly impacted generations of students and our community as a whole," President Ari Berman told The Commentator. "As a devoted student of the Rav, he exemplified the core values of our community and leaves behind a family and legacy that continues to inspire."

Rabbi Rosensweig's wife of 61 years, Miriam Rosenberg-Rosensweig, passed away in December 2010. They are survived by their five children, Marilyn Amar, Josh Rosensweig, Judah Rosensweig, Rabbi Michael Rosensweig and Sharon Gottlieb, in addition to many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was buried in the RCA section of the Eretz HaChaim Cemetery in Israel on Friday, March 26.



Rabbi Rosensweig spoke at a tribute held in his honor in 2014.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

## RIETS Hosts Community Yizkor Program in Memory of COVID-19 Victims

By GILAD MENASHE

*This article was originally published online on April 13.*

The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) held a community Yizkor program on Thursday, April 1 in remembrance of the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic and Jewish leaders that have passed away within the past year. The event took place over Zoom and attracted over 130 attendees.

The event was planned by Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future (CJF) Community Programming Director Rabbi Dov Winston, CJF Dean Rabbi Yaakov

Glasser and RIETS Dean Rabbi Menachem Penner. Rabbi Glasser, Rabbi Penner and CJF Senior Scholar Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter each spoke during the program.

Rabbi Glasser served as the moderator of the event. "For so many, there were empty

seats [at the seder table] of treasured and beloved loved ones," he noted in his opening remarks. Rabbi Glasser continued saying that, metaphorically, "for the larger *seder* of the Jewish People there were tremendous voids created by the loss of some of the most

prominent leaders of our generation."

Rabbi Schacter was then introduced and discussed the recovery from a loved one's passing. He said, "While we fully acknowledge that we will always remember [our loved ones]... we still try to move forward."

After a short video was played in memory of many of the Jewish leaders that the Jewish community lost, Rabbi Penner spoke, echoing Rabbi Schacter's thoughts. "Through us, the lives of those who are lost are continued," he said. "They are judged every year based on what they really accomplished, which was not the limited amount that was done during their lives but the amount they

*"Our Yizkor event was an opportunity to mourn and reflect together, as a YU family. Especially at times of crisis, that extended family is critical for our emotional and religious well-being."*

RIETS Dean Rabbi Menachem Penner

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## Leading NYC Mayoral Candidates Speak to YU via Student-Organized Virtual Forum

By ELISHEVA KOHN

This article was originally published online on March 23.

Four leading Democratic NYC mayoral candidates — Kathryn Garcia, Scott Stringer, Ray McGuire and Eric Adams — participated in a virtual forum on Monday evening, organized by the Yeshiva University Political Action Club (YUPAC) and the J.P. Dunner Political Science Society, to discuss various issues ahead of the June NYC Democratic primary election. Former presidential candidate and current NYC mayoral frontrunner Andrew Yang was expected to partake in the program but canceled mid-event.

According to YUPAC Co-President Meir Lightman (SSSB '22), the organizers reached out to all NYC candidates who were polling above 1% — those who had a “viable chance” of becoming mayor — to invite them to the forum, as directed by the university. “YU is a non-profit,” Lightman explained, which is why the organizers had to “set a barometer and invite all the leading candidates” to avoid supporting one candidate over another. According to Lightman, the student organizers worked with the Office of Student Life and Jon Greenfield, director of YU’s Office of Government Relations, to plan the virtual forum.

The event started with opening remarks from Lightman and McGuire, the only candidate who arrived at the forum on time. Stringer joined shortly thereafter, followed by Garcia, who arrived around 20 minutes late due to traffic and apologized at the forum, and Adams, who signed on a few minutes before 7 p.m., which is when he was slated to join.

McGuire spoke about his “long-standing relationship with the Jewish community,” particularly Hassidic groups and the Agudath Israel of America, and how NYC has provided him with many opportunities despite his background. “I had a great education ... a lot of debt and I had no money, and this city has been great to me,” he said.

After congratulating the YU Maccabees on their successful season, Stringer spoke about his upbringing in Washington Heights, and how he plans on tackling the long-term effects the COVID-19 pandemic had on the city, which he said are “akin to the Great Depression.”

Following a round of brief introductions,

students asked candidates various questions relating to the relationship between the Jewish community and public officials, inequity in Washington Heights, hate crimes in the city, funding for private schools, Jewish school curricula, the Boycott Divestments and Sanctions (BDS) movement, NYC partnerships with Israel and many other issues.

Both McGuire and Stringer, the only candidates present at the time, addressed the uptick in hate crimes targeting the Jewish and Asian-American communities in NYC. “Hate is on the rise,” acknowledged Stringer, who attributed parts of the phenomenon to former President Donald Trump, who he said “legitimized hate and white supremacy.” McGuire spoke about Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel’s civil rights activism and his collaboration with Martin Luther King Jr. Combating hate crimes, he said, would be his “highest priority.”

“We need to be supporting all of our schools, regardless of whether or not they are public or non-public,” said Garcia — who had joined a few minutes earlier — in response to a student question about funding for private schools. The two other candidates present at the time — McGuire and Stringer

— agreed; McGuire emphasized that “every educator should have access to equitable sources of funding,” and Stringer talked about his experience bringing kosher and halal food options to NYC’s public school system.

Regarding the equivalency in instruction at Orthodox private schools, Garcia maintained that “parents need choice,” and that authorities should “not try and enforce and shove requirements down people’s throats.”

McGuire, Garcia and Stringer all condemned the BDS movement. “I reject the BDS movement and believe it is anti-Semitic and anti-Israel,” said Garcia. Similarly, Stringer said that he “doesn’t support” the BDS movement, which McGuire also “absolutely and full-heartedly” renounced.

Shortly after Adams tuned in to the forum and Stringer left to attend another campaign meeting, a student asked the candidates whether they would pledge not to run for the presidency while mayor. McGuire, Adams and Garcia said yes and added that they also wouldn’t run for any other office.

The candidates also addressed various other issues relevant to the upcoming election; Adams promised to appoint deputy

mayor of youth engagement, Garcia spoke about the need to “have interfaith conversations,” and collaborate with Israel’s tech industry, McGuire discussed the “systemic inequalities that exist in healthcare, in education” in Washington Heights, home to the Wilf Campus and Stringer addressed how he would improve the COVID-19 vaccine distribution in the city.

The event concluded with a “lightning round,” in which the candidates revealed their favorite Yiddish word (McGuire’s was “*tachlis*,” Garcia chose “*shlep*” and Adams opted for “*mazal tov*” after a pause), as well as other light-hearted tidbits of information.

Yang’s expected attendance was only confirmed the day before the forum took place, and students were disappointed to hear mid-event that he canceled. “I was shocked by the announcement that Mr. Yang canceled. It took a lot to get him confirmed, so I was surprised,” said Yael Evgi (SCW ‘21), the vice president of YUPAC.

Members of YUPAC did not release the number of people who participated in the end, though Lightman reported that over 300 people had signed up to attend in advance. Several journalists reporting on the greater NYC area also tuned into the virtual forum, according to various Twitter threads.

Some mayoral candidates mentioned during the event that much campaigning ahead of the primaries in June and the general election in November has been taking place virtually due to the pandemic. Just a day before the forum with YU, Garcia met with YU High School for Boys (MTA) via Zoom.

“The forum took many hours of planning over two months by over a dozen students and shows that YU students can accomplish anything and garner the attention of politicians, community leaders, and journalists from across the city with hard work and determination,” Alex Friedman (YC ‘22), co-president of the J.P. Dunner Political Science Society, told The Commentator.

Evgi said, “Overall, the event was successful at educating the YU community about the top polling NYC mayoral candidates regarding their political stances and what they plan to do.” Charlie Kramer (YC ‘23), who tuned in Monday evening, shared a similar sentiment. “It was so great seeing candidates take the time to come to YU, and share their campaign visions,” he remarked. “Thank you to the YUPAC and Dunner society presidents for leading such a successful event!”



A screenshot of the virtual forum that took place on March 22

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY POLITICAL ACTION CLUB

### YIZKOR PROGRAM

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accomplished after.”

The program then continued with the recital of two chapters of Tehillim for the remembrance of those who passed away from COVID-19. The chapters were recited by Rabbi Mark Karasick and Rabbi Tyler Pere, whose father Rabbi Joseph Karasick and whose grandfather Rabbi Moshe Kwalbrun, respectively, passed away this past year due to COVID-19. During the recital, names of deceased loved ones — submitted by attendees before the program — were displayed on the screen.

In a statement sent to The Commentator, Rabbi Schacter elaborated on his thoughts from the event. “Memory is central to Judaism,” he said. “The root *z-kh-r* in Hebrew means to ‘focus on this,’ ‘make this important,’ and to do so through action. We need to live our lives, proactively, in accordance with the values that animated the lives of our loved ones who died. In this way, they will live on and be remembered most meaningfully. *Tehei nishmatam tzerurot*

*be-tzeror ha-hayyim* [May their souls be bound up in the bond of eternal life].”

Students were appreciative of the speeches. “The event was really special,” shared Rivka Barnett (SCW ‘21), who attended the program. “I thought it was really powerful when Rabbi Schacter and Rabbi Penner emphasized that we should be comforted because *we* are the ones who can continue the legacy of those who are not with us anymore.”

This program follows another YU initiative related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was launched this past March. YU developed a website with the purpose of educating its students and the general public on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. According to their website, the site functions as “a repository of the lessons learned in teachable moments that will continue to guide us for the rest of our lives.”


“Our Yizkor event was an opportunity to mourn and reflect together, as a YU family,” Rabbi Penner reflected on the event. “Especially at times of crisis, that extended family is critical for our emotional and religious well-being.”

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Rabbi Menachem Penner

Rabbi Yaakov Glasser, Rabbi Menachem Penner and Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter each spoke at the community Yizkor program.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY



# Course Drop Date Without a “W” Moved Five Weeks Earlier in 2021-22 Calendar

By JARED SCHARF

Yeshiva University moved the course drop date without a “W” five school weeks — not including the three weeks of Sukkot break in the fall — into each semester for the 2021-22 academic year, a date five weeks earlier than in past years, according to the academic calendar that was released on Thursday, April 7. The student body was not notified by the university administration about these changes nor about the calendar’s release.

The course drop date without a “W” is the last day of the semester that students are able to withdraw from a class without a “W” appearing on their transcript. In past years, this date was typically after midterms, about 10 school weeks after the semester began. Students who wanted to withdraw from a course after that date would need to obtain permission and would receive a “W” on their transcript. Now, that date has been moved up by five weeks to October 18, two weeks before midterms begin.

“The withdrawal date was moved up as part of a previously planned change to the 2020-21 academic calendar but was delayed due to COVID,” University Registrar Jennifer Spiegel told The Commentator. “Our withdrawal deadlines are now in line and consistent with our peer institutions’ academic calendars.” Spiegel did not respond to The Commentator’s inquiries regarding which institutions she was referring to.

In a statement to The Commentator in Spring 2020, Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Dr. Karen Bacon similarly said, “Our academic policies are

based on what is considered best practice in higher education while taking into account local conditions. Some time ago we reviewed our withdrawal from course policy and realized it was not consistent with best practices and needed to be reevaluated.”

*“Our withdrawal deadlines are now in line and consistent with our peer institutions’ academic calendars.”*

University Registrar Jennifer Spiegel

When the Fall 2020 calendar was released to students after Spring 2020, the drop date without a “W” was changed to be only four weeks into the semester, nearly three months earlier than in prior years. After student backlash, the university changed the drop date to its expected time on Dec. 2.

In addition to the “W” drop date change of the 2021-22 calendar, reading week — the days before final exams designated for studying — will be shortened from five to four days for Fall 2021 and from five to three days for Spring 2022.

“We are introducing study days instead of reading week this year in preparation for finals,” Spiegel explained. “These days are completely non-instructional and allow students to prepare for their upcoming finals. This change allows our calendar to meet the required number of instructional hours as well as maximizing the full content of courses and also does not impact scheduled breaks in the semester.”

According to Special Assistant to the Provost Timothy Stevens, colleges that are provided with federal financial aid must

have at least “750 minutes of instruction and 1,500 minutes of student preparation for each credit hour awarded” He explained that “YU class schedules provide evidence” to Middle States — the organization that ensures that accredited institutions adhere

to the minimum standards — “that YU fulfills its obligation to provide sufficient instruction in its courses.”

The calendar also indicated that there will now be five days of “remote instruction” between Rosh Hashanah and the day after Simchat Torah — from Sept. 10 until Oct. 4. The university has not made any formal announcements about the format through which classes will be taught next year.

Spiegel said that the academic calendar committee met with student leaders before the calendar was released to get their feedback on this year’s academic calendar. Student leaders had the opportunity to express their thoughts regarding the changes to the calendar.

Commenting on the meeting, Yeshiva College Student Council Vice President Jonah Chill (YC ‘22) said, “I appreciated that the YU administration not only discussed the upcoming academic calendar with students, but also that they listened to students’ input and incorporated it into the calendar.”

Other student leaders were still frustrated with the changes. Baruch Lerman (YC ‘22),

Yeshiva Student Union sophomore representative, expressed, “While I understand that some of these changes may have been necessary in order to keep our accreditation as an institution of higher education, I wish the university would send out an email explaining the changes and why they were made instead of just uploading the calendar to the website and allowing us to discover them ourselves.”

Lerman added, “If you don’t feel confident enough in your decisions and your reasons for making them to send us an email explaining them, then maybe those decisions were not the right ones.”

Some students felt positively about certain changes. “I think it’s smart that YU is planning on having remote instruction in between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur,” said Ellie Berger (SCW ‘22). “Since we had class at the same time this past year I had assumed that it would be the same next year, and the fact that they’re making it remote allows for out of towners or people who want to travel for the chagim to do that and have the flexibility to do their classes from wherever is convenient for them. They are taking the benefits of Zoom school and using it to our advantage.”

Other students were particularly upset about the drop date change. “In all my semesters at YU thus far, I had the comfort of knowing that I could wait until after a midterm to drop a course,” said Abie Jacobs (SSSB ‘22). “Now that the comfort has been removed, I will not have much time to gauge whether a class is right for me or not. I’ve been happier about other things.”



Yeshiva University moved the course drop date without a “W” five school weeks earlier than in past years.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY



## Dr. Mordecai Katz, Major YU Benefactor, Dies at 88

By RAPHI SINGER

Dr. Mordecai D. Katz, a major benefactor of YU's Katz School of Science and Health, passed away on Thursday, March 19 at the age of 88. Katz, along with his wife, Dr. Monique C. Katz, donated \$25 million to form the Katz School in 2016.

Katz was vice-chairman of the Yeshiva University Board of Trustees and a trustee of YU for 25 years. Additionally, Katz was chair of the Board of Overseers of the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and a member of the Board of Overseers of the Azrieli Graduate School. In 1993, Katz was awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters from YU for his commitment to championing its work.

"Dr. Katz was a committed philanthropist whose generosity and leadership have transformed Yeshiva University and the Jewish world," President Ari Berman told *The Commentator*. "Together with his wife Dr. Monique C. Katz, the Katzes have long been extraordinary champions for our community. He led by example, always looking

for ways to spread our Jewish values and ensure great success for our students."

After graduating from Talmudic Academy — an earlier name of Yeshiva University's High School for Boys — in 1948, Katz attended the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn where he received a bachelor's degree in 1952. He then received a master's degree in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1953 and a master's degree in industrial management from

vice president of the entire corporation.

Katz then decided to enroll in law school and received a juris doctorate from New York University in 1978. Upon graduation from NYU Law, he was an associate for three years at Fried, Frank a major New York City law firm, before leaving to become a private investor with a home office in order to be able to spend more time with his family.

The Katz School offers graduate degrees in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, bio-

offered 50% tuition scholarship and guaranteed admissions to a masters degree, if they meet eligibility requirements.

"Mordecai Katz was singularly admired for so many reasons," Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon said. "He was a man of moderation in his personal life, but passionate about his commitment to family, to Jewish education and to the State of Israel. Dr. Katz was an exceptionally gifted problem solver who was invaluable in helping to position Yeshiva University for the future."

"Dr. Katz was an optimist," shared Paul Russo, dean of the Katz School. "As we talked through strategies for the Katz School of Science and Health, he saw only the possible and the pathway to make it happen. He had just a few guidelines for the school: it should be built on excellence and be sure to add in Jewish values wherever you can. I am personally grateful for the chance to have worked with him."

Katz is survived by his wife, Dr. Monique C. Katz, and his four children, Rachel Katz, Michael Katz, Gail Katz and Debra Katz, and grandchildren.

*"Dr. Katz was a committed philanthropist whose generosity and leadership have transformed Yeshiva University and the Jewish world."*

President Ari Berman

Polytech Institute in 1961.

From 1963 to 1967, Katz was the director of corporate planning at Kollsman Instrument Corporation, an aircraft instrumentation manufacturing corporation. Katz was also president of Kollsman Motors, a subsidiary of Kollsman Instrument from 1967 to 1970, then becoming promoted to

tech and health, digital media and fintech, and associates degrees in management or liberal arts. The school also contains a "pathways" program, designed for undergraduate students to enroll in a bachelor's program at Yeshiva College upon successful completion of an associate's degree; additionally, graduating Yeshiva University seniors are



The Katz School was formed in 2016.

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## Minyanim Return to Beren Campus for the First Time Since Pandemic Began

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

This article was originally published online on April 16.

A Rosh Chodesh *minyan* took place on the Beren Campus on Monday, April 12, and the Shabbat *minyanim* on Beren are returning, starting this week on April 16 and 17. These mark the first *minyanim* on the Beren Campus since the COVID-19 pandemic shut down campuses in March 2020.

Roughly 40 students from the Beren Campus attended the *minyan*, which took place in the Lea and Leon Eisenberg Beit Midrash in Stanton Hall and was organized by Beit Midrash Committee (BMC) President Sarah Berman (SCW '22) and Torah Activities Council (TAC) President Nina Siegel (SCW '21).

Before Rosh Chodesh, an email was sent to Wilf undergraduates informing them of

the *minyan*, so Beren students could have the minimum of 10 men, and 12 students signed up to attend. Isaac Breuer College Representative Baruch Lerman (YC '23) was also involved in helping recruit men for

*Commentator* why he decided to join. "When covid hit, it was frustrating when there were no *minyanim* going on and you had to *daven* every single day in your house," he said. "When I was finally able to *daven* with a

involved in making this possible," said Yael Laks (SCW '22). "It really uplifted my Rosh Chodesh experience!"

When asked if there will be a Rosh Chodesh *minyan* again next month, members of BMC responded that it is "unlikely" since Rosh Chodesh Sivan — the next Jewish month — will take place during finals and recruiting men from the uptown campus to come during that time may prove challenging.

Stern College for Women (SCW) will be returning to its pre-COVID system of holding three *minyanim* on Shabbat every week by hosting volunteer male undergraduates at the Hilton Garden Inn in midtown and providing them with free Shabbat meals. The upcoming Shabbat *minyan* was organized by the Office of Torah and Spiritual Life, the Office of Student Life and TAC

*"It's an invested value of the university, saying that this is something important to us, that the women's campus should have a minyan each shabbat to collectively daven together as a tzibur would."*

Rabbi Jacob Bernstein

the *minyan*. The men were given a complimentary breakfast of bagels, cream cheese and Dunkin Donuts coffee after the *minyan*.

Shai Rosalimsky (SSSB '23), one of the students who came to Beren to be a member of the *minyan*, shared with *The*

*minyan* it was the best feeling, so I kind of know what the girls are going through and I was like, if I can help them make a *minyan* then why not go for it?"

Students expressed their appreciation for the *minyan*. "I want to thank all the people

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# Hackers Steal YU Students' and Employees' Personal Information in Accellion Security Breach

By SRULI FRUCHTER

This article was originally published online on April 1.

Hackers recently stole Yeshiva University students' and employees' personal information — including Social Security numbers and financial information — in a data security breach of Accellion, Inc., a third-party vendor used by the university to securely transfer files. The university's Information Technology Services (ITS) emailed students on Thursday, April 1 that they are investigating the "data security incident."

Several institutions, including Stanford University and the University of Maryland, were also affected by the Accellion breach. The Stanford Daily reported that hackers leaked Social Security numbers, emails and financial information of Stanford community members. Hackers threatened to release some universities' data unless they paid a ransom of \$10 million in bitcoin.

The Commentator has confirmed that the personal information of three YU students

was posted online and is publicly visible, including banking information, home addresses and two Social Security numbers. As of publication, the students were not personally contacted by the university aside

*"It is kind of scary that I got these to my YU email address while ITS is doing maintenance work on the internal YU systems though"*

Baruch Lerman (YC '23)

from the general email sent to students.

According to its website, Accellion is a "private cloud solutions company focused on secure file sharing and collaboration." Vulnerability in the California-based company's file-sharing application allowed an unauthorized party to steal "certain university files, some of which may have contained personal information," ITS' email said. The university has since taken the platform

offline. The email added that "this incident is limited to the Accellion application and there has not been any unauthorized access to Yeshiva's computer systems."

The email warned that the unauthorized party has contacted members of the YU community and that recipients should not "respond, open any attachments, or click any links." It also urged that such contact should be forwarded to [infosec@yu.edu](mailto:infosec@yu.edu).

The Commentator obtained an email received by students from the hackers with the subject line, "Your personal data has been stolen and will be published." The return address was different for each email received by students. Some alumni, whose personal information was compromised from the breach, told The Commentator that they have not received any communication from YU on the matter.

"If you received this letter, you are a customer, student, partner or employee of Yeshiva University," the email began. It went on to say that "the company has been hacked" and its stolen data will be released. "We inform you that information about you will be published on the darknet" — followed

by a link — "if the company does not contact us." It concluded, "Call or write to this store and ask to protect your privacy!!!!"

Baruch Lerman (YC '23) told The Commentator that, on the morning of Tuesday, March 30, he received over 3,500 emails from the hacking parties in his spam folder. "There were several that claimed they were from the 'Yeshiva Online Security' from some random email address," he said. "A bunch [were] from 'CLOP RANSOMWARE TEAM' and a bunch that said I went to Stanford University. I've been getting more since then though the amount has definitely thinned a bunch."

He added, "It is kind of scary that I got these to my YU email address while ITS is doing maintenance work on the internal YU systems though." On March 26, ITS emailed students that it is conducting "scheduled maintenance" for Self-Service Banner, a portal for students' course registrations.

Dr. Van Kelly, a Computer Science professor at YU, said that "The most alarming claims in the news seem to be, at least partly,

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## BEREN CAMPUS MINYANIM RETURN Continued from Page 8

and is scheduled to take place in the Koch Auditorium with *mincha*, *kabbalat Shabbat* and *maariv* on Friday night and *shacharit*, *mincha* and *maariv* on Shabbat day. The *minyanim* are to take place every Shabbat for the rest of the semester and will consist of men both from the families of the Shabbat guests and students from the Wilf Campus.

"I think it's so exciting that Shabbat on the Beren Campus slowly feels like it's transitioning back to what it was, while also incorporating the Shabbat experience we've worked hard to create up until this point," said TAC VP of Shabbat Eliana Feifel (SCW '21).

Since students returned to campus this fall, Kabbalat Shabbat took place in the Koch auditorium without a *minyan*, and Beren students were encouraged to attend Congregation Talmud Torah Adereth El located on East 29th Street for *minyan* during the day.

"While we're grateful to the 29th Street Shul for consistently opening their doors to us, we recognize how important it is for the Beren community to

enjoy a student-centered *minyan* of our own on campus," said Associate Dean of Torah Studies and Spiritual Life Shoshana Schechter, who will be one of the guests on the Beren Campus this coming Shabbat and was very involved in the *minyan*-planning process. "We know the students have missed the opportunity to attend *minyan* on campus, and have been patiently waiting for the time that *minyan* can return."

"It was incredible having a *minyan* this Monday morning for Rosh Chodesh. Somehow everyone felt closer together despite the distance. Even though we couldn't sing, it was a semblance of normalcy. It should continue and I'm hopeful for this Shabbat," shared Lizzie Janssen (SCW '22). "Though I love Adereth El with all of its history, it will be nice to be in our own *beit midrash* with Rabbi Bernstein running the show."

The push among SCW students for *minyan* to return to Beren Campus reflects their attitude over recent years. The weekly Shabbat *minyan* currently being reinstated was originally launched in the Fall

2016 semester by TAC and the Shabbat Enhancement Committee. Additionally, prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, a weekly Tuesday *shacharit minyan* on the Beren Campus was established in February 2020.

"One of the major components to building community is to have opportunities for the community to *daven* together," shared Beren Campus Rabbi Jacob Bernstein. "It's something that has been wanted by students, by us, by faculty. A lot of people have wanted this to come back, we just needed to get the right point in which we were capable of doing so in a way that was safe."

Rabbi Bernstein added, "it's an invested value of the university, saying that this is something important to us, that the women's campus should have a *minyan* each shabbat to collectively *daven* together as a *tzibur* would."

YU has not held a *minyan* on the Beren Campus since the COVID-19 pandemic first affected the community in March 2020, though many students returned to campus in October 2020 and *minyanim* on the Wilf Campus resumed at that time.

The reestablishment of *minyanim* on the Beren Campus is made possible by the recent expansion of COVID-19 vaccine eligibility in NYS, which now includes everyone aged 16+. In addition to the *minyanim*, students on both campuses now have the opportunity to sign up to eat meals with a group of up to six people instead of the usual socially distanced seating that has been in place since the start of the Fall Semester. According to the Shabbat sign up email, if someone in the group tests positive for COVID-19, everyone who sat in that group will be required to quarantine.

"This decision is part of our ongoing efforts to continue to evolve and evaluate how best to create a robust Shabbat experience that is both safe and enjoyable for our students, and complies with applicable legal guidelines," Schechter said about the *minyan*. "We are looking forward to this next stage of returning to normal."



Approximately 40 students attended Beren's first Rosh Chodesh *minyan* since the beginning of the pandemic.

MINYAN ATTENDEE



**ACCELLION SECURITY BREACH**  
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on statements from the hackers themselves; these would not be expected to be entirely truthful.”

Kelly added that concerned students should follow ITS’ guidance in forwarding all

communications from hackers to infosec@yu.edu, and if students have concerns about identity theft, they should visit the Federal Trade Commission’s website, which lists steps to securing “finances against hackers.”

“Ensuring the security of university-related information is one of our highest priorities and the University is approaching the matter with the utmost seriousness,” ITS said in concluding their email.

“We appreciate your patience as we take the necessary steps to resolve this incident. We will provide further updates as they become available.”

*This is a developing story.*



MICAH PAVA

Accellion, a third-party service used by YU, was breached by hackers.

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## How We Can End the Agunah Crisis

By TAMAR JANUS

For over a decade, Chava has been waiting for her *get* — a Jewish writ of divorce — from her legal ex-husband Naftali, who continues to keep her chained to a dead marriage. Chava married Naftali in 2006, and after four years of experiencing relentless abuse, she picked up with her two children and left. Although a *seruv* — an order from a *beit din* for the community to ostracize him — has been issued, Naftali has made no attempts to give Chava a *get*, thus preventing her from moving forward with her life. For years, Chava suffered in silence as she struggled to raise her two kids as a single mom with a meager income. Recently, Chava has started sharing her story on social media, and her case has garnered widespread support.

*Even if you think you will never need [the prenuptial agreement], by normalizing this document, you can play a part in making sure someone else never ends up in the horrible situation of being an agunah.*

Across our communities, there are hundreds of *agunot* — chained women — whose husbands refuse to give them a *get* because their husbands want to use it as leverage to gain a better divorce settlement, as a mechanism to retain control, or simply because they want revenge. Whatever the reason,

*get* refusal should never be accepted, and our community must stand together to oppose this manipulation of Jewish law and to support our most vulnerable members.

To seek help, many *agunot* turn to ORA: The Organization for the Resolution of Agunot, a leading organization tackling the *agunah* crisis. Working within the parameters of Jewish and civil law, ORA explains how they work to help each *agunah* attain her *get* in a timely manner through “*agunah* case advocacy, early intervention programs, and educational initiatives for *agunah* prevention.”

However, rallies and advocacy efforts only work as a post facto response. The best way to protect individuals and end the *agunah* crisis is for couples to sign a document known as the Halachic Prenuptial Agreement. There are many misconceptions about the halakhic prenup and how it works, so let’s start from the beginning.

Originally drafted and approved by Rabbi Mordechai Willig, the halakhic prenup is an agreement that a couple signs before marriage that consists of two clauses. First, the couple agrees that in the case of *get* refusal, they will adjudicate their case in front of the Beth Din of America, of which Rabbi Willig serves as Segan Av Beth Din. This way, if an issue arises, the couple already knows who to turn to.

Second, the couple agrees that in the event that either a husband or wife refuses to participate in the *get* process, the recalcitrant party must pay the other party \$150 a day. The \$150 a day is not a punishment or a coercion mechanism; it’s simply the enforcement of a *halakhic* obligation that a husband must support his wife (Rambam, “*Hilkhos Ishut*” 12:1-2). The prenup tells a husband that if he wishes to withhold a *get*, he must continue to support his wife until

the marriage is terminated. Likewise, if a woman refuses to accept the *get*, she must pay her husband \$150 a day because the husband is losing out on the support that his wife usually provides.

Importantly, as a legally binding arbitration agreement, the *halakhic* prenup can be upheld in civil courts. Thus, while a civil court can’t order a husband to deliver a *get*, it can compel the parties to honor the agreements made, appearing before the Beth Din of America and paying the proper amount of money each day.

As CEO of ORA, Keshet Starr, Esq. told The Commentator, “the Prenup is extremely effective because it is binding under both civil and Jewish law, holds people to a positive standard, and encourages a *get* early on in a divorce, before animosity rises and parties become entrenched in their positions.”

So far, the *halakhic* prenup has proved highly effective in preventing *get* refusal and has been upheld in civil case law.

So, why doesn’t everyone sign it?

While some couples don’t sign it simply out of a lack of knowledge, others argue that because divorce and *get* refusal is such a sad and unlikely possibility, they simply don’t want to discuss it. After all, who would want to talk about the possibility of divorce with the person you plan to spend your life with? This is comparable to a person who decides not to buy insurance or who overlooks genetic testing before starting a family. The sad reality is that sometimes in life we have to plan for things that are hard to think about, and the *halakhic* prenup should not be excluded from those plans.

Moreover, most people think that they will never need to use the *halakhic* prenup. Honestly, they are probably right. While most people won’t end up needing it, the reality is that *get* refusal happens. Even if

you think you will never need it, by normalizing this document, you can play a part in making sure someone else never ends up in the horrible situation of being an *agunah*. You’re not saying that you G-d forbid think this will happen to you, but rather you are making a statement that you love and respect your partner no matter the situation, and you are making a commitment to each other that the *get* will never be used as a weapon. Most importantly, you are helping create a standard of safety and respect in our community, where we stand up against *get* refusal and domestic abuse and make sure each individual is protected.

The rabbis and leaders of our communities are doing their part to spread the word and normalize the *halakhic* prenup — the most effective tool we have to combat the *agunah* crisis. In 2012, 21 *roshei yeshiva* at Yeshiva University signed onto a *kol koreh* urging its leaders and students to use *halakhic* prenuptial agreements at every Jewish wedding. And, in 2019, the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) launched their “I Support the Use of a Halachic Prenuptial Agreement” campaign, garnering 150 signatures from rabbis around the world.

However, the real work needs to be done by us — young people who are taking the first steps toward building marriages and families. You can play a role in helping end the *agunah* crisis by taking small actions such as mentioning the prenup to friends, signing it yourself or signing a postnup if you’re already married. If we want to see a Jewish community built on respect, dignity and Jewish values, we need to spread the word about the importance of the *halakhic* prenup and make it an established standard in our community.



The halakhic prenup can allow many women to become free.

UNSPLASH



# Operation Torah Shield — 30 Years Later

By YOSEF LEMEL

In a video shown at Yeshiva University's 2021 *tekes ma'avar* for Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut, Rabbi Elie Mischel described how in 2003, when Saddam Hussein threatened to bomb Israel, YU sent 100 students to Israel on "Operation Torah Shield" to volunteer with the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), sing and dance in vulnerable *yishuvim* and to show that the Jewish people "weren't afraid." "I felt the pride of Jewish nationhood, a certain fearlessness and strength that was different from our normal experience here in America and in exile," reflected Rabbi Mischel.

The 2003 trip was modeled after an earlier trip in 1991, also called Operation Torah Shield, in which over 400 people were sent to Israeli yeshivas in the midst of the Gulf War through a trip organized by YU students.

As The Commentator reported at the time, an anonymous philanthropist "was becoming increasingly disgruntled with TV programs depicting hundreds of Jews leaving Israel." He therefore decided to charter a Jan. 15 flight transporting Yeshiva students on heavily subsidized tickets "to counteract Israel's sinking morale."

In the week leading up to the flight, during finals season, \$50 tickets to Israel were distributed by student leaders and snatched up by eager students in the dorms, reserving an entire plane in a few hours with hundreds of others being placed on waiting lists. *Rebbeim* were able to travel free of charge. The money accrued from ticket sales was used to pay for clothing distribution to poor Russian immigrants to Israel and other charity endeavors, in addition to

the transportation costs for the passengers once they were in Israel.

The trip was almost canceled prematurely; to make it a tax-deductible transaction, the money for the trip needed to be funneled to El Al through a non-profit. Yeshiva declined to act as the non-profit since the administration was afraid that the dangers the trip posed might have resulted in a major

could not have gone," explained one student.

After a long flight, the passengers arrived in the Holy Land where they began to excitedly dance on the airport tarmac and kiss the ground. "When we got off the plane, people dropped their bags and were dancing; everyone just started dancing," recalled Barry Gelman.

Program participants were immediately

*"When we got off the plane, people dropped their bags and were dancing; everyone just started dancing.."*

Barry Gelman

lawsuit, potentially resulting in an auction for Belfer Hall to pay off damages. Indeed, before the trip, organizers, apprehending potential liability claims, handed out flyers to students informing them that the "U.S. State Department has issued a travel advisory urging people to stay away from the middle east including the State of Israel." In the end, the trip was saved by American Friends of Yeshivat Ateret Cohanim, a yeshiva in the Muslim Quarter of the Old City, which acted as the necessary non-profit.

Over 200 individuals canceled their planned flight to Israel with Operation Torah Shield allowing for the replacement of their spots with people on the waitlist. After word spread through the Modern Orthodox community, around 25% of the flight consisted of passengers who were unaffiliated with Yeshiva who were charged \$100 per ticket. The reasons for the cancellations varied. Many had legitimate fears of terror attacks. Others were pressured by family members to stay. "I was going to go, but honoring my parents took priority. When I saw how concerned my parents were, I realized that I

greeted by then-Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, among other Israeli officials. "*Atem chelek mimenu* — you are part of us," Netanyahu told the visitors. Reflecting on Netanyahu's words, a student said, "I think Torah Shield proved to ourselves and our families that any danger to the Israelis is a danger to us, and that we identify with their pain."

Once in Israel, visitors stayed at 15 various Israeli yeshivas. Some provided medical and food assistance. Others spent most of their time learning Torah. One student expressed, "By learning, I helped more than giving out food to old people or anything else. There is nothing like learning in Eretz Yisrael."

Soon after Operation Torah Shield was in full throttle, on Jan. 18, the Iraqi government fired Scud missiles into Israel in an attempt to drag the Jewish state into the war, during which visitors to Kerem B'Yavneh watched the missiles fly through the air. Students often were forced to run to shelters in response to air-raid sirens. Some thought that Armageddon was nigh.

The goal of the trip was to provide moral support to the Israelis, which was certainly accomplished. The visitors stayed resolute through their visit and returned with feelings of growth, in a spiritual sense. As one visitor put it, "Davening in yeshiva, in Israel, there was so much *kavanah*. Watching my friends pray was inspirational. Miracles were going on. Scuds were landing without exploding."

Around a month after Operation Torah Shield commenced, the Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) organized a forum named "Operation Torah Shield II," featuring Rabbis Norman Lamm, Zevulun Charlop and Meir Goldwicht in the Zysman *beis medrash*, to look at the Gulf War in retrospect and find meaning in its events for Israel and the Jewish people.

President Lamm, along with other students of Yeshiva, took action in 1948 during the Israeli War of Independence, developing munitions for the young country. "We are following the same tradition as 43 years ago," he said at the forum. "But now we are not called upon the physical side of the equation but rather to exercise our spiritual strength. That was the purpose of our trip (Operation Torah Shield), and that is the purpose for tonight."

Wednesday's *tekes ma'avar* was Yeshiva's biggest in-person event held since February 2020. Speeches were made, candles were lit, songs were heard, all in the spirit of standing strong and unified with the State of Israel. Currently, we thankfully live in an era during which peace deals are more common than Scud missiles. However, there is always the danger of terror on the horizon. Students must ask themselves what they will do when Israel is plunged into danger. What actions will you take to provide aid in times of necessity?



Operation Torah Shield in 2003

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY



We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

Shifting Priorities

By **DANIEL MELOOL AND ELISHEVA KOHN**

Transitioning to remote learning and dealing with new health and financial concerns that were spurred by the pandemic have prompted students to reevaluate their priorities with regards to their families, course load and other areas of life. The Commentator collected a few reflections by current students on how the pandemic

*"I took things for granted before Covid."*

Malka Gorbunov (SCW '23)

has shifted their priorities.

**Ezra Emerson (SYMS '23)**  
**Major: Marketing**

In terms of my top three priorities, my wellbeing is one, then what classes and work I have each day to do is second, and to have some socializing time is my third. Before the pandemic, they were not as significant to me as they are now, so yes, they definitely have changed. I watch a lot of TV now, which is not good. Also, Instagram and stuff like that take up more than it should. Zoom makes school feel painful.

**Yosef Rosenfield (YC '21)**  
**Major: Music**

After the pandemic started, my priorities became school-related commitments, family matters and musical pursuits. Before the pandemic, I was in a dormitory, so my family matters were not as big a priority. I was also the starting right fielder for the Yeshiva

Maccabees baseball team. My focus has definitely shifted from strictly schoolwork to "extracurricular" editorial positions that I occupy. However, I cannot in good faith attribute that shift to the pandemic. What the pandemic has shifted, though, is my time management. I began job hunting over winter break and had to pause my search given my insane workload this semester. It has thus not affected my performance as a student, but rather vice versa. I have also found dating to be a more difficult pursuit during the pandemic than before, but that difficulty has forced me to concentrate on my heavy workload and ultimately preserved my wellbeing (whereas trying to date — even without a pandemic — with so much on my plate would likely have taken a toll on my wellbeing). Having had my introverted personality fueled and strengthened by the effects of the pandemic, I am finding myself even less willing to participate in social activities or at all engage with people outside my family.

**Malka Gorbunov (SCW '23)**  
**Major: English**

My priorities include: getting out of the house more, keeping up with schoolwork and living healthy. Before the pandemic, all three were easier. I also prioritized people less at that time than I do now. My focus can't shift much from school because it takes much more effort now than before. It does take more time, as there are less options. It takes time away from schoolwork. I am not dating currently, but socializing has become very difficult, especially for someone who's an introvert by nature. It's become virtually impossible and life gets very isolated. I took things for granted before Covid.

**Baruch Lerman (YC '23)**  
**Major: Biochemistry and Psychology**

Family, pursuing a career in medicine and Judaism are my top three priorities in life right now. Before the pandemic, they were the same — family, medicine and Judaism. They haven't really changed; though I have become closer to my family

due to living at home. I'm still very focused on school, so that hasn't changed much. I am not concerned about getting a job yet, so that hasn't been affected by the pandemic. Dating is definitely more difficult now, and has had a detrimental effect on my mental health from not being able to see people face-to-face.

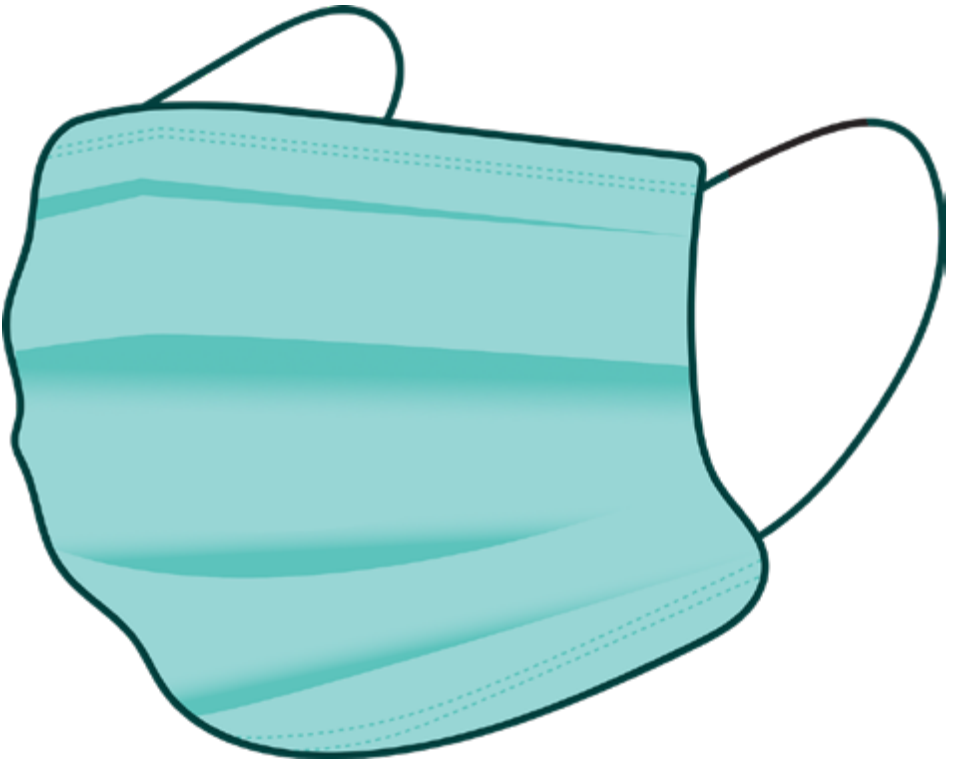


Illustration of a surgical mask

PIXABAY

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

(April 29, 1996; Volume 60, Issue 13) — Mir Yeshiva's Escape Chronicled at Yom Hashoah Program.

By **COMMENTATOR STAFF**

*Editor's Note: Yom Hashoah was recently commemorated on April 8. Below is an archive discussing the Mir Yeshiva's tremendous escape during WWII, which was chronicled at Yeshiva University's Yom Hashoah program in 1996.*

The Mir Yeshiva's wartime travels from Poland to Vilna to Vladivostok to Kobe to Shanghai, and its remarkable deliverance from the hands of Hitler and Stalin during the dark days of the Holocaust, are topics which justify years of intense study. But Rabbi Marvin Tokayer, a witness to and participant in that community's miraculous

1941 escape, was able to cogently convey that remarkable sequence of events to 200 captivated YU and Stern students last week as the featured speaker of a highly successful Yorn HaShoah program.

Rabbi Tokayer, a YU and RIETS alumnus and former chief rabbi of Japan, animatedly depicted the people and places that saved thousands of Jewish lives at the somber gathering held in Weissberg Commons on Tuesday evening, April 16. In a room decorated with horrifying posters about the Holocaust, he maintained that the litany of forged passports and exit visas, and the inexplicable actions and inactions of Soviet and Japanese officials, saved enough Torah scholars to educate and rejuvenate the next generation of American and Israeli Jews, a function which may have saved world

Mir Yeshiva's Escape Chronicled at Yom Hashoah Program

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

The Mir Yeshiva's wartime travels from Poland to Vilna to Vladivostok to Kobe to Shanghai, and its remarkable deliverance from the hands of Hitler

Jews, a function which may have saved world Jewry. One of those scholars, MYP Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Simon Romm, attended the program.

Rabbi Tokayer spoke glowingly of one rabbe's passionate trip through the

The Commentator Archives

THE COMMENTATOR

Jewry. One of those scholars, MYP Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Simon Romm, attended the program.

Rabbi Tokayer spoke glowingly of one rebbe's passionate trip through the streets of Manhattan and Brooklyn to raise thousands of dollars for trans-Siberian train fares one Friday and Shabbos. The students were especially amused by Rabbi Tokayer's description of the shtetl community's often-rocky acclimation to its strange, new world, including an episode in which the Mir's two top rebbeim were summoned to what was probably the Pearl Harbor planning desk in Tokyo.

Rabbi Tokayer's remarks were preceded by brief remarks from Zachor Committee Chairman Jason Buskin and YCSC Vice-President Dov Simons and a candle-lighting ceremony. The program was rounded out with a recitation of Keil Maleh Rachamim by YCSC President Josh Fine.

Some students remained after the program's conclusion to screen a new, Oscar award-winning documentary on Anne Frank, which is now showing in theaters.

*[Rabbi Tokayer] maintained that the litany of forged passports and exit visas, and the inexplicable actions and inactions of Soviet and Japanese officials, saved enough Torah scholars to educate and rejuvenate the next generation of American and Israeli Jews, a function which may have saved world Jewry.*



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Bible / Battle Poems of the Bible  
**PROF. AARON KOLLER | 11 – 12:40 p.m.**

Talmud / The World of the Aggadah:  
Legends and Lore of the Talmudic Rabbis  
**PROF. STEVEN FINE | 6 – 7:40 p.m.**

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# Commencement 2021: Where Will We Be?

By ZAHAVA FERTIG

The 2021 posters and flags seem to be taunting the graduating Class of 2021.

I vividly remember each time I'd visit my grandparents' and great grandmother's homes, I'd marvel at all the framed pictures hanging on the living room walls or sitting on top of the piano. There I'd see younger versions of my grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and cousins each smiling for their professional graduation photo while donned in their university graduation cap and gown.

As my own graduation is speedily approaching, I remember those pictures and I feel cheated. Will the picture I took in front of a green screen in the Morg Lounge mean anything significant if there was no commencement or momentous occasion or actual celebration connected to the tremendous achievement of having completed an undergraduate degree?

Graduation means different things to different people. There will always be someone who doesn't care about graduation, but there are so many people who really do. Graduation is when we take the time to reflect on how far we've come from day one of our compulsory education to investing in ourselves and in our education passed what is required. Graduation is a time to remember all of those times we crammed late into the night before a test, hours spent in the library and days where we thought we'd never get to this point. It is a time to stop, recognize and celebrate that we have something valuable about ourselves to be proud of.

As a third-generation Orthodox, female college graduate, graduation is not just about me. It is about my family, my parents and my grandparents. It is an opportunity for them to *shep nachat* and be proud of what I've accomplished, but also for them to see what they've accomplished too by helping me get to this point in my life.

For my roommate, a first-generation college graduate, graduating from Yeshiva University is magnanimous. It is a symbol for herself to see how far she has come and everything that she has gone through, in

guidance from our medical director, we came to the conclusion that we could not have an in-person event attended by thousands of people." As a senior reading this email, I was so frustrated by the clear lack

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*As we come to commencement it is even more so important that we take the time to acknowledge that together as a class we had a uniquely different college experience that previous and future college students won't be able to relate to.*

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order to get to hold a college diploma with her first and last name on it.

For the Class of 2021, our college experience was normal one day and completely upturned within a 48-hour time period in March of 2020. No one could have imagined that we would not be returning to campus for the rest of the semester, let alone the many students who have still not returned, over a year later.

As we come to commencement it is even more so important that we take the time to acknowledge that together as a class we had a uniquely different college experience that previous and future college students won't be able to relate to. The Class of 2020 lost the last few months of their last semester on campus, however, they had more than two-and-a-half years of memories and experiences throughout college. As the state of the world begins to revert back to normalcy, albeit quite slowly, and more and more individuals receive vaccinations, the hope is that the Class of 2022 will not have to question whether or not they will be able to celebrate in person. G-d willing, it will be a given. But where does that leave the Class of 2021?

On March 11, 2021, an email arrived in my inbox and it felt like a slap across my face. The email from the provost's office stated that "Unfortunately, following the public health and safety guidance of New York City and New York State, as well as

of logic in this decision. Obviously, an in-person event with thousands of people was impossible, but we don't need thousands of people to be there. A live ceremony for just the graduates, some members of the administration and a keynote speaker is all that we need to have a meaningful commencement. Yeshiva University is a relatively small university. The graduating Class of 2020 consisted of a mere 705 students. Understandably, not every graduate will be able to get to New York in order to participate in person.

However, there is a large percentage of the class that would do anything to have the opportunity to put on their cap and gown, hear their name announced, receive their diploma, and smile for their parents and grandparents, with extended family and friends watching on a livestream.

While in May 2020, it was infeasible to have an in-person graduation, we have come so far in innovative ways to create a meaningful hybrid event in which there are people both present in person and virtually. An in-person graduation is very possible to organize if put to the task.

The *tekes ma'avar* that took place on April 14, commemorating Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut was organized as an in-person and virtual event in the Max Stern Athletic Center on the Wilf Campus. For me, it was glaringly obvious that it is possible to organize a large-scale event in-

doors. Why would it be any different than hosting a graduation, especially if it would take place outdoors in a park? While commencement would have a larger audience, even if it only included the graduates, it could easily take place outdoors in a park, football field or parking lot.

Students at Yeshiva University are tested for COVID-19 twice a week and every day more students are receiving vaccinations. Further, as of April 6, all New York residents above the age of 16 are eligible to receive vaccinations. With a vaccination site located in Belfer Hall as well as in many other locations across the country, it is not unreasonable to require PCR covid testing and/or proof of vaccination prior to an in-person event.

As of April 12, 2021, updated detailed guidelines by Governor Andrew Cuomo's office have been released, specifically with guidance for graduations and commencements. According to those guidelines, events with more than 500 guests can take place in a 20% capacity indoors. Proof of negative covid tests are required prior to entry. Yeshiva University already has a system in place keeping track of undergraduate students who are being tested twice a week. Special arrangements would not need to be made in order to ensure that the Class of 2021 is tested prior to an in-person event.

There were so many things that we needed to compromise on, that were just not possible to replicate virtually when we're just doing our best to maintain our sanity when everything around us seems uncertain. The Chanukah dinner that student leaders are invited to, *chaggigot*, club events, *Shabbatonim*, YUNMUN, event planning, networking, internships, fellowships and jobs are just some of the examples of opportunities we missed out on.

After giving my final speech in my speech communications class outlining why the Class of 2021 should have an in-person graduation, and listening to my classmates, almost all seniors, share my frustrations, I knew that the 25 of us could not be the only ones.

An email on April 13 announcing a graduate-only "viewing party" just added to the discontentment. If there are plans for a viewing party, why can't there be plans for a real commencement?

I deeply empathize with the graduating Class of 2020. They were robbed of closure. Their college experiences ended abruptly and unexpectedly and there was no end; it was just over. The Class of 2021, on the other hand, lost half of their junior year and then had to keep going, learning remotely, both remembering what there was before and being reminded on the daily how different everything is now.

Graduation can be the return to normalcy that we so desperately want. It can be a reminder of the first half of our college experiences and it will give us the closure the Class of 2020 lacked and the Class of 2021 craves.

There were so many experiences we lost this year. Graduation cannot become another thing that slips through the cracks. The Class of 2021 deserves to be celebrated in a safe and meaningful way. We do not want to be viewers at our own graduation. We want to be in it.

May 26, 2021: Where will we be?



The 2021 posters and flags seem to be taunting the graduating class of 2021.

AHARON NISSEL



# Biden, Bipartisanship and the Rise of Josh Mandel

By LEVI BOSHACK

During Game 1 of the 2020 World Series, an ad titled “Go From There” ran during commercial breaks. Voiced by actor Sam Elliott over a stripped-down piano version of the American national anthem, the ad spoke of unifying the country and working together toward common goals. “There is so much we can do if we choose to take on problems and not each other, and choose a president who brings out our best,” said Elliott, “Joe Biden doesn’t need everyone in this country to always agree, just to agree we all love this country and go from there.”

Joe Biden centered his presidential campaign around a promise to return to normalcy with an emphasis on unity, and it worked. Many moderates and even conservatives lent their support to him, looking to turn away from the vitriolic tribalism they were accustomed to seeing come out of DC during the Trump presidency. Joe Biden won the presidency with a margin of over 7 million votes nationally, despite Republicans doing better than expected down-ballot. Then Trump refused to accept the results, filing dozens of unserious lawsuits in an attempt to uncover voter fraud that wasn’t there. On the day Congress certified the results, he held a rally in DC which ended with his desperate supporters storming the Capitol in an effort to stop the certification results. Acts of tremendous heroism ensured that the death toll wasn’t higher than five and that the results were certified that night. Trump was impeached with bipartisan support a week before Inauguration Day for his role in the attempted insurrection.

The Biden administration and the Democrats had a tremendous opportunity to turn down the temperature in Washington. Biden had campaigned as a uniter who sought to find common ground with his ideological opponents. On Jan. 20, it seemed as if he was going to try to make good on that promise. “Let us listen to one another. Hear one another. See one another. Show respect to one another. Politics need not be a raging fire destroying everything in its path. Every disagreement doesn’t have to be a cause for total war,” said the president in his inaugural address. “And, we must reject a culture in

which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured. My fellow Americans, we have to be different than this.” In those moments, I really believed he meant it.

It’s been three months since the inauguration, and I still believe he meant it when he said it. I just don’t believe he’ll ever try to accomplish it beyond photo ops. Once the epitome of an establishment Democrat, Joe Biden finds himself out of step with his party. Washington Democrats no longer

passed and enacted without input from the minority party. With a slim 218-212 majority in the House and a 50-50 Senate, Dems don’t have a broad mandate, but they’ve been acting like it’s 2010. Photo op meeting with the GOP Gang of Ten? Check! Refusing to listen to their counteroffer and compromise, and instead choosing to pass a \$1.9 trillion COVID stimulus package with zero GOP votes, bypassing the filibuster by stuffing as much of it under the 50 vote budget

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*Congress is set up for compromise; the contradictory interests present within our country makes it unfit to be ruled by a slim majority.*

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respect institutional norms, now believing that the ends justify the means. On Jan. 21, it was reported that the Senate organizing resolution had hit a bit of a snag. With the Senate deadlocked at 50, Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell needed to agree to a power-sharing deal for control of committees and day-to-day floor procedures to officially transfer. The plan was to model the agreement after Trent Lott and Tom Daschle’s pact 20 years prior, but McConnell wanted a commitment from Schumer that Democrats wouldn’t invoke the “nuclear option” to bypass the legislative filibuster while in the majority. Schumer refused to agree, even though he knew he didn’t have the votes to actually bypass it. In 2017, 31 Senate Democrats signed on to a letter in support of the filibuster, urging McConnell to “join us in opposing any effort to curtail the existing rights and prerogatives of Senators to engage in full, robust, and extended debate as we consider legislation before this body in the future.” McConnell obliged, despite pressure from some Republicans and prodding from President Trump on several occasions. Just under four years later, just two Senate Democrats (Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema) were bold enough to give McConnell their word that they would vote against invoking the nuclear option.

In times of unified government with extreme partisanship, the filibuster is the only thing preventing legislation from being

reconciliation rule as the Senate parliamentarian would allow? Check! Decrying performance politics and divisive rhetoric? Check! Drafting and passing legislation pertaining to elections in the House that they know won’t pass the Senate to create a narrative? Check! Calling opposition to the bill racist? Check! Calling the filibuster a relic of Jim Crow and accusing its supporters of perpetuating white supremacy? Check! Creating a commission to study the Supreme Court and possible modifications to make it “fair” because you’re afraid they may not rule in your favor? Check!

I have been very clear about my opposition to Trump and the toxic divisiveness he brought out in everyone. He sowed distrust in our already-crumbling institutions, but more ominously, he caused us to sow it in one another. The actions of the Biden administration and congressional Democrats are toxic as well. As I said in a previous article, Trump didn’t come out of a vacuum. White working-class Americans felt ignored by DC politicians and religious conservatives thought no one was fighting cultural battles for them. Many young conservative voters have no memory of the “Morning in America” ads that led to landslide victories during the Reagan years. They don’t know about the grace George H.W. Bush showed to Bill Clinton in defeat. They’ve never heard about George W. Bush and John Boehner convincing Ted Kennedy to help fight the “soft bigotry of low expectations” by passing

the No Child Left Behind Act. To illustrate what goes wrong when one side refuses to work with the other, let’s skip ahead to 2022 and simulate the Ohio Senate race.

When a young conservative male in Marietta, Ohio hears the word “unity” or “bipartisan,” he thinks of John Kasich. When the kid hears that Rob Portman is retiring because legislating while in the minority has become impossible, he celebrates, because just like John Kasich, Portman isn’t a “fighter.” He doesn’t care that, unlike Kasich, Portman is actually conservative. He wants someone who believes the ends justify the means when it comes to standing up for his way of life. The way conservatives show they’re fighters is by “owning the libs.” So the kid then votes for Josh Mandel in the primary, a low turnout affair in which Mandel gains the upper hand by promising to rename the city of Columbus to the city of Trump, increasing his similarities with our 22nd and 24th president. When fact-checkers point out that Cleveland wasn’t named for Grover Cleveland, conservative media outlets accuse them of interfering by waiting until Mandel had won the primary before pointing this out. Mandel beats Tim Ryan in the general after Nina Turner loses the Democratic primary and runs as the Green Party nominee, splitting the Democratic vote. A maniac who was kicked out of an RNC meeting is now the Senator from Ohio.

Am I fearmongering? Maybe a little. However, if I told you in 2010 that Donald Trump would be elected president due to conservatives feeling left behind by the political establishment, you’d have a similar reaction to my apocalyptic vision of Ohio 2022. Mainstream Republicans and Democrats aren’t enemies. Democrats should work with Republicans who want to work with *them*, even if it means not getting 100% of the agenda passed. Congress is set up for compromise; the contradictory interests present within our country makes it unfit to be ruled by a slim majority. If Biden and the Democrats continue governing like they live in a parliamentary system, when the political pendulum swings back to Republicans, they’ll find people like Josh Mandel suddenly in charge.



President Biden's inauguration

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



# Why Democrats Should Keep the Filibuster

By JONATHAN LEVIN

In 2013, after blaming Republicans for blocking then-President Obama's nominees based on politically-motivated obstruction, Senate Democrats exercised the nuclear option, removing the Senate filibuster (which required 60 votes for confirmation) for all presidential executive and judicial (other than Supreme Court) nominees. While the nuclear option allowed Democrats to appoint Obama's nominees over Republican opposition, it also allowed Republicans to do the same when Trump became president. Additionally, using the 2013 nuclear option as a precedent, Republicans got rid of the remaining filibuster rules for Supreme Court nominees, allowing them to appoint three justices without any input from Democrats.

Recently, there has been renewed discussion about entirely removing the remaining Senate filibuster to allow President Biden to pass controversial legislation that otherwise wouldn't be able to pass the 50-50 Senate without bipartisan support. While many Democrats argue that the filibuster's time has passed and that it should be scrapped, such a decision would not be in the country's,

nor ultimately in the Democratic party's, best interests.

Removing the filibuster has adverse effects. Take judicial appointments, for instance. Now that nominees no longer need 60 votes to be confirmed, judicial appointees are likely to be at polar opposite sides of the political spectrum, and to be confirmed with little to no support from the other party. That is not something that would encourage public trust in our courts. Getting rid of the remaining filibuster, which would allow controversial and highly impactful legislation to be signed into law along party lines, would only sow further division in an already highly divided country. Ignoring a Republican reprisal — McConnell's threat of "a sort of nuclear winter" — Democrats will not only ensure the passage of their own agenda, but also a Republican agenda on a future date, when Democrats find themselves in the minority.

To be clear, the filibuster will not go away; both Senators Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ) and Joe Manchin (D-WV) (who also voted against the nuclear option in 2013), the two most moderate Democratic senators (Manchin's state, West Virginia, went to Trump by nearly 40% in November), said they won't support

efforts to remove the filibuster, thus ensuring its survival for the time being. Nevertheless, as long as the filibuster is blamed for the Senate's inefficiency, this conversation will come up again.

So, what's the solution? While some, like Senator Joe Manchin, support making the filibuster "more painful" to use (such as requiring senators to continuously hold the lectern to prevent a vote — something that President Biden supports too), that will not solve the problem. The issue isn't the filibuster, but rather the unwillingness of senators to work together; this is what Senator Sinema referred to when she said that "I think the solution is for Senators to change their behavior and begin to work together, which is what the country wants us to do."

The country has gotten further divided, and the Senate is a reflection of that. Both Democrats and Republicans, when they controlled the White House, have blamed the other side for obstructing their presidential nominees based on politics — an idea that holds at least some truth. Obama noted in 2013, before then-Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid exercised the nuclear option, how 30 of his nominees were filibustered in less than four years, compared to the 20 who

were filibustered in the previous 60 years. Similarly, McConnell blamed Democrats in 2019 for obstructing presidential nominees based on politics, saying that Democrats often delayed nominees for months before confirming them sometimes — unanimously.

The problems listed above only concern nominees, but there are plenty of other areas in the Senate that are not functioning as well as they used to be. Congress's approval rating, 36% on March 15 (which, believe it or not, is the highest it's been since 2009 — likely a result of both the stimulus bill and Trump's impeachment) is indicative of this. Furthermore, although Congress has historically received low approval ratings, the past decade has been its most brutal approval-wise since World War II, with its approval rating regularly in the teens and low 20s. This should give us pause. As Senator Sinema said, and as a group of 20 Senators from both parties are working towards accomplishing, our senators must step up to the plate and begin working across the aisle. Getting rid of the filibuster won't make anything better. Only Senators — by working together — can make our democracy work and restore public confidence in our Congress.

## Can NBC Be Redeemed?

By EFRAT MALACHI

March 10, 2021 — a chilled blue sky hovered above NBC Studios while an impassioned protest took place right outside. Organized by Allison Josephs, the founder and director of Jew in the City (JITC), a peaceful protest morphed into a Q&A event as a response to NBC's "Nurses" episode, "Achilles Heel." The episode included disturbing anti-Semitic rhetoric causing Jews to feel uneasy and even unsafe, so the record needed to be set straight. Josephs was the first to call attention to it across her online platforms, consequently garnering public disapproval toward the broadcasting company (and general media) often misrepresenting the Jewish community.

Proving it's not all talk, a group of Orthodox Jews led by JITC took it from the web to the streets. Priority was still given to uphold COVID-19 safety restrictions by limiting the quota of attendees, keeping six feet apart between individuals and handing out masks printed with "don't put words in my mouth." Taking the message further, Josephs and her team brought in life-size cutouts of fictional Jewish characters NBC had produced before to stand beside real Jews now, letting these wild representations

speak for themselves. The event encouraged people to stop by and ask questions, in person or via the livestream, about any Jewish topic since there was a lot to clarify.

"Backwards, extreme, judgmental, sexist.' These are words that too often come to mind when people think of Orthodox Jews and Judaism. Popular culture, including movies, books, and TV shows repeat these negative ideas about religious Jewish people and their lifestyle." This is only one part of JITC's mission statement. A portion of their work goes to reversing negative stereotypes

back and find their place, with the help of an initiative called Project Makom, established in 2014.

This wasn't the first time NBC had created Jewish caricatures based on false information and a far-fetched imagination. In "Law and Order: SVU's" "Unorthodox," the Haredi world was made to look dark and disgraceful. While every community has its struggles and shortcomings, the screenwriters here did not make it a point to highlight even the slightest positive aspect of an observant life. Instead, they focused solely on the more

depressing expressions of Orthodoxy.

Turning to Netflix, this echoes the mini-series released in 2020, titled "Unorthodox," which received mixed reactions from Jewish viewers. The writers for these shows seem to always be fascinated by the "un" and never the "orthodox." When a man or woman walks by wearing an obviously Jewish garment, another Jew can understand the background and beauty of it, but will a stranger to the religion comprehend the nuance?

One with insufficient insight who is taught to identify Jewish people and ideas through TV shows' inaccuracies will most likely be repulsed by them. In contrast, the true goal of Orthodoxy is not to come off as an alien-like or pre-historic people, as many outlets and headlines convey, but one with a higher code (as spelled out in the Torah) on how to live a most upright and uplifted life.

Explaining the intricacies of Orthodox living, as well as thanking NBC for pulling the episode from all digital platforms, were the objectives for the protest and were fortunately met. The rally featured ordinary Jews answering questions about their upbringing, beliefs, values and even fashion choices. Special thanks is due to the security team at the studio for overseeing the protest and allowing for our first amendment rights to be exercised: another reason to see the glass as half full.

Mendy Pellin, Chabad film director and comedian, came to show support along with students from Frisch High School and Jews from across the Orthodox spectrum to make a clear statement — we're just as human as the next guy; we come in every font, color and size. We can't be forced into a box made by the limited scraps of information some TV executives have. Therefore accessibility in education is crucial and this is why JITC has extended the invitation to meet with NBC for anyone who wants to learn more about Orthodox Judaism. The good news is our message has only improved with time and the press has been receptive to it. No one can control the decisions Hollywood makes but maybe small ripples can be made, leading to greater ones. Hopefully next time we stream our favorite drama or comedy we won't cringe at the depiction of a Jewish personality, but grin knowing they got it right.

*The writers for these shows seem to always be fascinated by the "un" and never the "orthodox."*

and associations about Orthodoxy through educational efforts and events. When the "Nurses" episode was released, it didn't just huff and puff, but it *blew* down Josephs' door. This was the perfect model to show for JITC's fight and work that began in 2007. Another portion of the organization's efforts goes to aiding Jews who fell out of Orthodoxy, due to unhealthy family life and poor education, and are looking to come

insular sect within Orthodoxy and stretched it to an extreme; we're not playing with Laffy Taffys — we're dealing with legitimate lives. Somehow it's always the man in a black coat, hat and beard that screams "Pick me!" to play as the suspected or convicted perpetrator. Either directors are ignorant, in which case they should educate themselves before depicting any person, especially wrongly, or are negatively depicting Jews intentionally (and irresponsibly) for the sake of higher ratings. Whatever route one takes, it falls at the expense of mistranslating and offending a people's sacred traditions. What's worse is that others who don't know better will take it as truth.

It's just a movie, but it's not. Once a TV series inspires attacks against a group based on race, faith, ethnicity, etc. then it's writers who have an obligation to apologize and promise to do better. You can't tell over someone's story if you know nothing about it. The misportrayals can be linked to the increase in Jews being targeted the past few years in NYC, LA, NJ and other states with a dense Jewish population. Evidence gathered by the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Program states that there were 953 "anti-Jewish" incidents and 1,031 victims in 2019 — the highest of all the religion-based hate crimes. Coming in second is the "anti-Islamic (Muslim)" crimes at 176 incidents. This is no surprise if people are fed what popular media channels serve — repeatedly dry and



On March 10 protesters rallied outside of NBC Studios in Manhattan over anti-Semitic portrayals of Jews in media.

JEW IN THE CITY



## Hasty Highlights

By WILLIAM MOGYOROS

Sports can have a tremendously positive emotional impact on us. I was raised as an avid fan of Villanova University's basketball team. I have a personal connection to the team as I grew up around the campus in Pennsylvania and even attended a summer camp run by the players and coaches. It was the 2016 March Madness Championship, and Villanova was caught in a tight game with North Carolina. The score was even with seconds to go, and my four younger brothers and I stood together as Villanova Point Guard Ryan Arcidiacono raced up the floor as the clock ticked down. He pitched the ball behind him to Kris Jenkins, who hit a three-pointer at the Buzzer to win Villanova's first championship in over 30 years. My house erupted, and pandemonium ensued as my brothers jumped for joy, tackled each other, and I may have even shed a tear or two. It was a moment that will always be a cornerstone of my childhood. Although not this exact sports moment, many can recall very similar personal stories. It is mystifying how much time and energy is invested into watching entire sports games, and yet it is sometimes only the memory of a highlight, a couple of seconds, that stick with us.

To capture the value in these moments that enchant consumers, a new player in the already competitive sports streaming industry has arrived. Buzzer, founded by Bo Han, the former director of live content at Twitter, was created based on the new reality of sports media as it shifts from television to social media. As Mr. Han recently stated to the WSJ, "Once the game is over, it's just a clip on Twitter, and that's a commoditized product." TV viewership in all major sports is rapidly decreasing. According to data compiled by Sports Media, regarding viewership in this year alone, "... golf's U.S. Open was down 42 percent. The Kentucky Derby: 43 percent. The Stanley Cup finals: 61 percent. MLB's division series were down

40 percent." This shift is especially apparent among the younger audience, a demographic which Buzzer aims to target. According to a recent study from Variety, 48% of NFL, 54% of NBA, and 58% of MLB fans between the ages of 18 and 34 say they prefer watching highlights of their favorite sports over the

entire game. As Han explained to the WSJ, "We want to make sure that we're giving access to Gen Z and younger millennial audiences, creating alternative formats that are already in line with their evolving consumption habits." This reliance on social media is not merely a passive fad but has resulted in

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The intersection of Gen Z and the sports world has primed Buzzer to disrupt the sports market deeply seated in tradition.

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leagues beginning to include highlight rights in their deals with media companies such as Warner Media's wildly popular Instagram account, @houseofhighlights.

To capture their share of this growing market, Buzzer has developed a seemingly promising strategy that has enabled them to recently secure streaming rights with the NHL and PGA Tour. The app aims to hook a consumer's attention by allowing viewers to have "live look-ins" — short clips of live game action, for just 99 cents apiece. Additionally, Buzzer executives also plan to send alerts for noteworthy sports moments such as a close game in the final two minutes. Mr. Han added that Buzzer would aim to reach viewers who don't have or can't afford to purchase traditional cable television, enabling them to expand the limits of sports media. Although Buzzer is a competitor to conventional Cable TV, ironically, they are also looking to partner with them. Aside from providing live clips, Buzzer provides links to streaming services that offer the whole game. In exchange for this, Buzzer collects a referral fee from the streaming services, thus resulting in a robust business model that allows Buzzer to leverage its own competitors. Additionally, Buzzer has also announced that it plans to integrate its app with sportsbooks and other betting apps. Buzzer attempts to latch the rapidly growing sports gambling industry, which according to Statista, has reached a market size of \$203 billion in 2020 and is projected to grow by \$134.06 billion during 2020-2024, progressing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of almost 10% during the forecast period.

By providing fans with the most captivating moments at just a click away and for less than a dollar, Buzzer has developed a business model tailored to today's sports fans by granting them the ability to access immediate excitement. Through this, Buzzer has positioned itself to become a significant player within the world of sports streaming.

## Amazon — Bookseller or Business Butcher?

By BEN SPANJER

Sports can have a tremendously positive eOn March 25, 2021, a Chicago-area bookseller filed a lawsuit directed at the "Big Five" publishing houses: Hachette, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Penguin Random House and Simon & Schuster. The plaintiff, Nina Barrett, who operates a bookstore called Bookends and Beginnings, also included Amazon in this lawsuit. The lawsuit alleges that these publishing houses are guilty of granting Amazon a designation called "Most Favored Nation" status. The lawsuit describes this status as "Anti Competitive provisions [that] ensure that no rival bookseller can differentiate itself

Journal, Amazon sells about 90% of all e-books and 50% of all paperbacks and hardcovers globally. This in and of itself is not a problem. One of the features of capitalism is that it is essentially boundless, and phenomenal success is a marker of being able to utilize the economy successfully. Jeff Bezos started Amazon out of his garage in 1994 and is now the richest man on Earth and the second-largest private employer in the world. This is a great success of capitalism. Why should it matter that Amazon is getting better prices and exclusive book releases? Isn't that just one of the benefits of economies of scale?

The problem is not that Amazon is getting good prices from these publishing houses. The problem is that these exclusive prices

playing field is not level, we have to talk to our customers all the time about why we can't match Amazon's pricing."

Additionally, the lawsuit alleges that not only are these publishing houses giving Amazon better book prices, but as a result of that, wholesale prices had to be kept artificially high in order to give Amazon those better prices. These artificially inflated prices make it even more difficult for small bookstores and booksellers to make profits on the then-even more inflated price of the books they sell.

These suits have worked out in favor of the plaintiff before. In a similar case involving the same "Big Five" book publishers and

Apple's iBook store, Apple lost and had to settle for around \$450 million. So there certainly is precedent for this lawsuit to be a success.

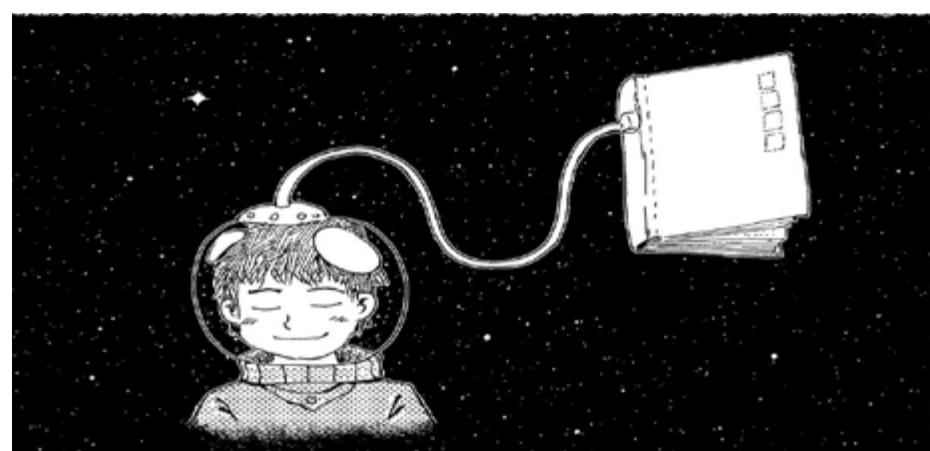
This lawsuit is a benchmark for how much power and privilege large corporations will be able to wield in the coming years, and will serve as a testament to how strong the anti-trust laws in this country are. The ramifications of the results of this lawsuit are broad and far-ranging. Consumers can only hope books can remain inexpensive without entirely removing booksellers and bookstores from the mix.

*The problem is not that Amazon is getting good prices from these publishing houses. The problem is that these exclusive prices have taken away Amazon's bookselling competitors' ability to compete.*

from, or otherwise compete with, Amazon on price or product availability in the sale of print trade books."

At this juncture, it is important to identify what exactly Barrett's problem is with Amazon. According to the Wall Street

have taken away Amazon's bookselling competitors' ability to compete. In an interview with the Chicago Sun Times, Barrett mentions that, "I, along with most independent bookstore owners in America, feel incredibly frustrated because we've seen that the



Accusations of unfair business practices are leveled at Amazon in a new lawsuit

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# Money in the Mail

By SHMUEL METZ

As you open the mailbox, plop onto the couch and gape at the \$600 check addressed to you from the U.S. Treasury, your mind begins to meander off to all of the latest merchandise you are now able to purchase. That blissful thought is abruptly met with a consideration that is of a broader and more global perspective. If everyone is receiving a stimulus check, won't that prompt the devaluation of all my personal capital and assets? You cash in the check, figure that this question is one for an economist and leave your house to buy the latest Nike shoes.

With widespread quarantining and the shutdown of a large majority of businesses due to the COVID-19 virus, March 2020 saw one of the most dramatic market crashes in history. In around four days, the Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) plunged about 26% and unemployment in the U.S. shot up as far as 20%. Like a defibrillator that jolts a heartbeat back at its normal pace, the heart of the economy needs to be shocked back to its initial rhythm. Hence, the CARES ACT,

signed into law on March 27, 2020, was the first stimulus check paid out to Americans totaling \$1,200 for those who qualified. The objective of this stimulus along with many other stimuli such as unemployment wages, loans to small businesses and direct aid to states, was to lower unemployment and encourage consumer spending on goods and services. The growth in revenue in industries and institutions and the increase in aggregate demand would generate a cycle of more income and higher levels of spending, creating more jobs.

In a paper published by Kellogg Insight based on the research of Scott R. Baker, R.A. Farrokhnia, Michaela Pagel, Constantine Yannelis and Steffen Meyer, Dr. Baker found that those who had \$3,000 or more in their checking accounts did not change their

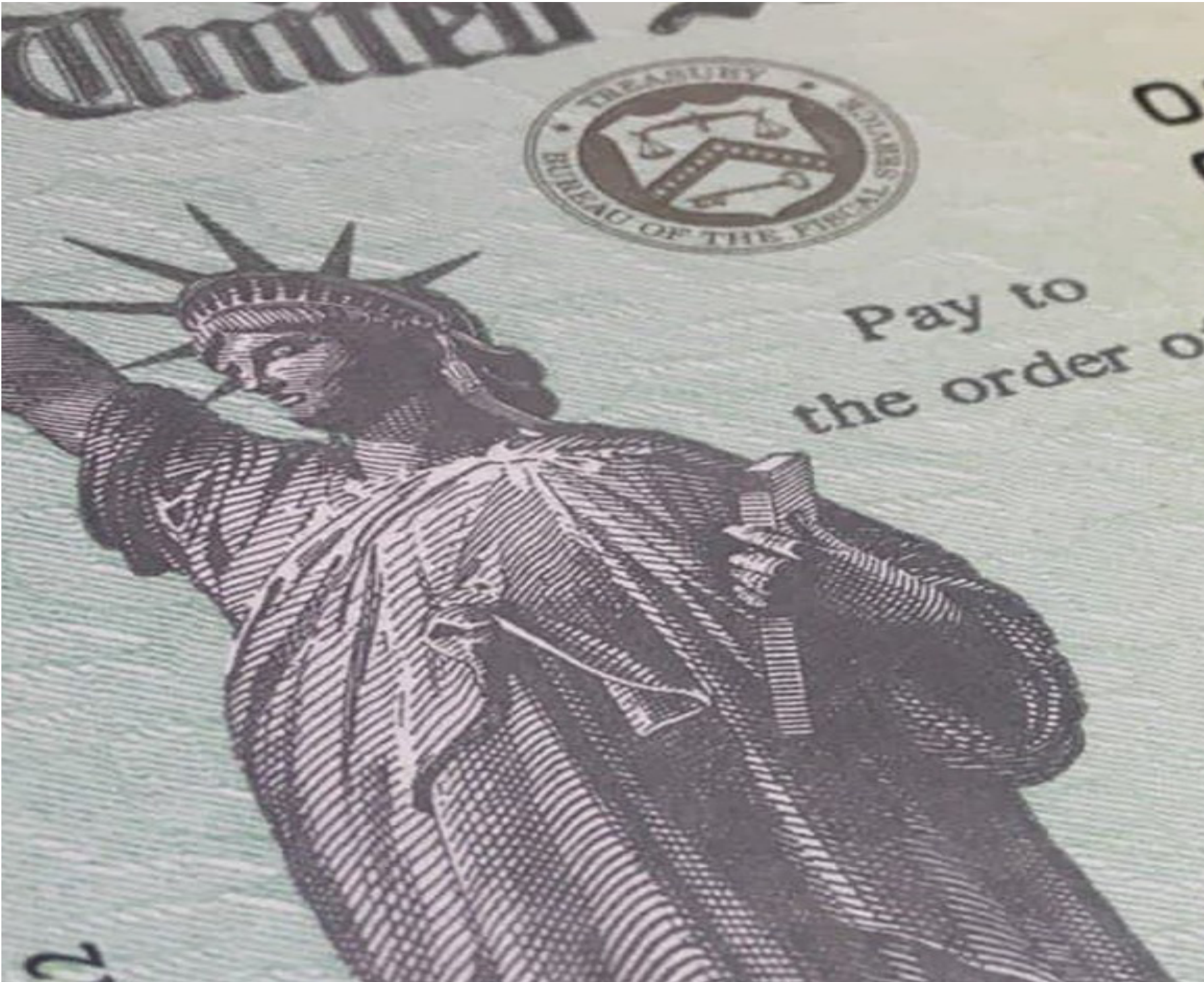
spending habits in response to the check while those with accounts containing \$500 or less, spent almost half of those deposits within 10 days, which had a marginal impact on the stimulation of the economy. Many factors, most notably the maintained closure of businesses and services during that time, contributed to the negligible impact. The next stimulus check however, ballooned the economy in a more effective manner. As part of the CARES ACT, phase two included a \$600 stimulus check received by most Americans in January. Following the second check, a surge in retail shopping increased sales by 5.3%, electronic sales by 14.7% and restaurants and bars even saw a 6.9% increase in sales.

The long-term effects on the economy with stimulus packages will most likely lead

to inflation, but that isn't all that bad. In "The Economic Consequences of Peace," John Maynard Keynes says that some inflation is healthy for an economy because it forces consumers to purchase goods and services immediately since they know the prices will rise in the future. Inflation also makes it easier on debtors, who can now repay their loans with money that is less valuable than the money they originally borrowed, although creditors will lose money.

Although the economy has more room to recover, the current plan for the U.S. to send out another stimulus check along with the current successes of the COVID-19 vaccine provides a concrete path to full reinstitution of America's once-thriving economy as well as the financial success and security to millions of Americans.

*Like a defibrillator that jolts a heartbeat back at its normal pace, the heart of the economy needs to be shocked back to its initial rhythm.*



Stimulus checks have been going out to US citizens for months.

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**Midtown** - fine art by Dassi Okun

**11.25.20** - a poem by Micah Pava

In constructing narrative  
out of the rainbow shadow  
show flowing thru this dome,  
I freeze fluttering moments  
on paper— I lose something  
of what was beyond  
articulation in each expansive  
moment. The tear swells  
up & drops down my cheek,  
a hot knife that glides thru  
flesh as butter will be spread  
on crunching toast in morning  
light elsewhere, far from here.  
I am far from everywhere  
& yet in your eyes, I am me.  
You are you in mine but  
it is a you that is only mine.  
If Hell is other people,  
I would assume it can be  
paradise as well.

**Realities and Individualities** - fine art by Chana Weiss

**Scarlet Dreamer** - a prose poem  
by Jacob Jablonka

I do not recall falling asleep, but here  
I am, all the same, in this world where  
the ground is scarlet and indistinct like  
an impressionist sunset, the people  
are sewn silent and gray, and the sky is  
nothing. From place to place I wander,  
never tiring nor waking. Alone and  
Quiet. Searching for the horizon dawn.

Amidst the wastes and muted masses  
there stands a single stone. Upon its face  
is thus engraved: O Scarlet Dreamer,  
who has stumbled so far, know that you  
will stumble on.



Submit your work at [yeshivaarts.com/submit](http://yeshivaarts.com/submit)