

THE COMMENTATOR

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Students Return to Campus With Nearly No COVID-Restrictions

By SEFFI JONAS

This article was published online on August 29.

Yeshiva University undergraduates returned to campus with nearly no COVID-restrictions on Wednesday, Aug. 25, when the fall semester began. Student council leaders and the Office of Student Life (OSL) organized the back-to-school programming.

Last semester, about 550 students lived on campus. Those students were required to wear masks and receive a negative PCR test twice weekly. For the 2021-22 academic year, students only needed proof of vaccination and a negative PCR test to return to campus, without further COVID testing. Unvaccinated students who were granted exception from the vaccine requirement have stricter guidelines.

Superstorm Henri, which made landfall on Sunday, Aug. 22, delayed moving into the dorms for some of the student body. Despite the storm, orientation commenced that same Sunday evening.

OSL provided students with several opportunities to do chessed during the first week back on campus. Students packaged kosher Rosh Hashanah packages for American military service members. During



Students at Beren Campus

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YU Faculty Council Calls for Mandatory Indoor Masking as Fall Semester Begins

By SRULI FRUCHTER

In an emergency meeting on Tuesday night, Aug. 24, the Faculty Council — a representative body of YU's faculty to include them in forming university-wide, academic policies — passed a resolution by a 12-2 vote calling for YU to mandate masks in all "indoor interactions," even for vaccinated individuals.

"Why not do everything we can for those of us with younger children or vulnerable family members, or faculty and students who might be immunocompromised?"

Prof. David Lavinsky

The resolution, which acts as a recommendation to YU and is not binding, thanked the university for requiring vaccinations for all students and faculty to return to campus but indicated that this was not enough. "We request that in accordance with the latest CDC guidelines and following our own Cardozo [School of Law] and Ferkauf [Graduate School of Psychology], a mask

mandate be set for all indoor interactions," the resolution said, "providing our students and faculty the same protection that is provided for the vast majority of students and faculty in the NYC area."

It added that the council will "support any faculty member who requires students to wear masks in their classes."

Before the council meeting on Tuesday, Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel emailed students, faculty and staff about YU's policy, signed by Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Selma Botman. "One of the remarkable things about being part of a values-based community, is that we are respectful and care about one another and the health and wellbeing of the entire community," the email began. "We understand that the new Delta variant is of concern for everyone, and we are working closely with our Medical Director and following guidance from New York State and New York City in order to navigate the uncertainty that it presents."

YU will not mandate masks, the email clarified, but it also indicated that students are expected to comply with faculty requests to wear masks in class, though they are not required to do so. It concluded that YU "will continue to evaluate this policy based on infection rates, as well as local and state guidance, and may revisit it as necessary."

Three days later, on Friday, Aug. 27, Associate Dean of Students Joe Bednarsh wrote in an email that three students — one from Beren and two from Wilf — tested positive for COVID-19; students and professors in their classes were specifically notified. He also said that exposed individuals who are fully vaccinated and remain asymptomatic do not need to take any action.

The Faculty Council's emergency meeting came after YU formally told professors of its current policy the day prior. On Monday night, Aug. 23, Botman and Dr. Robert van Amerongen, YU's medical director, spoke with faculty about the university's policy for the semester, who voiced their support for a complete masking requirement, according to professors who attended the meeting. Following this, faculty members reached out to Professors Abraham Ravid and David Cwitich — both chairs of the Faculty Council — who subsequently contacted the administration but did not hear back by Tuesday. "There was no immediate response and time was running out," Ravid told The Commentator. "At noon on Tuesday, with less than 24 hours left [until classes began], we decided to call a meeting of the council on short notice."

As of July 27, the Center for Disease

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Judge Denies Plaintiffs' Request Requiring YU to Allow LGBTQ Club While Case Continues in Court

By SRULI FRUCHTER

This article was published online on August 19.

Judge Lynn Kotler of the New York County Supreme Court denied the Pride Alliance and the other plaintiffs' request for a preliminary injunction on Wednesday, Aug. 18, allowing Yeshiva University to deny an official LGBTQ club from forming on campus while the discrimination case continues in court.

In April 2021, the Alliance, three former students and a current anonymous student sued YU for discrimination under New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL) for its continued refusal to allow an LGBTQ club for

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Alan Broder and the Hybrid Classroom

Rape and Rape Culture on the YU campus

Shopping in the Workplace

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

A Year of Possibility

By **SRULI FRUCHTER**

The future is like someone sitting at a kitchen table surrounded by empty seats, unassigned place settings and an open door. Who walks in is anyone's guess. Will they dine with Pain or Pleasure? Will Disappointment come and dominate the conversation, or can Something Better get a word in? There are no guarantees, only uncertainties.

The unknown is scary, and anything linked to the unknown is, by association, also scary. That's why it's so easy to be repelled by the idea of change. Change means different, and while different can mean better, it can also mean worse. For many, that's not a risk worth taking, and they'd rather avoid the kitchen table altogether. But that's a mistake.

As the world re-emerges in this post-COVID era, we are faced with a new realm of possibility, and that can be daunting. Naturally, there's an instinct to try and return to the way things were, to "go back to normal." This is especially apropos as we begin this year at YU. With two grades who have never experienced a COVID-absent year and another that only went through one such semester, we have, in many ways, a clean slate set before us. Any precedents for campus life, campus culture or academics are now the ghost of an old historical record, a remnant of what was, not what is. We are now the hosts of YU's kitchen table — we decide who joins us, and we

determine the rules of etiquette. This year is a year of possibility, but to make the most of it, we need to put in the work.

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is a year of
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Positive change is not made in a vacuum. It requires candid reflection and humble accountability, abilities that allow us to see where we were, where we are and where we want to be. In some areas, this process will not be too difficult. Take, for example, considerations about what improvements can be made in YU's Shabbos life, campus programming and academic opportunities. Understandably, practically everyone would warmly embrace those goals, and all that's left is the plan to follow through. In contrast, change in other areas will not come easily. In fact, it may not come at all, and if it does, it can be drastically damaging.

These areas are the "controversial" ones, the ones people love to read about but don't want to speak about, the gossip people adore but the exposés they abhor. We all know what falls into these camps: LGBTQ issues, sexual assault in our communities, administrative failures, etc. It's easy to see these topics as abstractions that make for good Facebook posts, but the reality is that these are real

issues happening in real time affecting real people. When it comes to seeking change in these areas, it's not easy. Here, change begins with difficult conversations and communal reckoning, things our community particularly struggles with. As a Jewish journalist recently told me, "People always care about airing our dirty laundry, but they rarely care about the dirty laundry itself."

These struggles are not unique to YU. At The Commentator, we are certainly not immune to our own serious failures and errors. Despite our best efforts and intentions, I have no doubt that there were times we hurt people, fell short in our reporting and allowed our egos to step in front of our Jewish values. Even so, I can say that we are always seeking to change — to improve, develop and grow.

Every institution, organization and society is rife with its own problems. The important distinction, however, is what they are willing to do to change. At YU, we must ask ourselves: What are *we* willing to do to change?

This year is giving us a gift we've never had before: pure possibility. The kitchen table is set, the guests are arriving and the menu is being prepared. What do we want to do next? The onus does not fall on one person; we need collective work, collective support and collective change. Now, we just need to be willing to embrace the opportunity.

THE COMMENTATOR

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*The Commentator is the student newspaper of
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For 87 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.

Read more at yucommentator.org



1 It's Good to Back
Those were the two longest weeks of my life.



2 Welcome!
Probably the highest rate of FTOCs since 1886. Who are all you people?



3 NFTs Skyrocket
Changing the world one jpeg at a time. Perfect for the test bank *mesorah*.



4 NCAA Nil Decision
NCAA players can now profit from their name, image and likeness. Somebody should start selling Macs t-shirts, or jpegs or something.



5 In The Heights
Meat grilling, hydrants busted, music blasting through the street ... yes, you're in the heights.



6 Brand New Target
181st and Saint Nicholas. Great for 1st dates and burning your allowance.



7 Big In-Shabbos
Shabbos is for the boys ... and the girls ... and I guess everyone?

7 UP by Raphael Alcibes DOWN

Trolling

We don't get summers off.

1



Olympics

Gold Medal for disappointments goes to ...

2



Dirtbikes

They're on X Game mode.

3



Governer Cuomo

Anyone else notice YU took down his posters? Are they stored in a vault with Robert Kraft?

4



Increased Caf Prices

I just hope I graduate before we're charged for spicy mayo.

5



Schottenstein Not Opened This Semester

I guess you can say YU #canceled it.

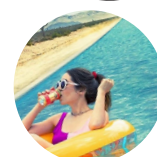
6



Summer Weather in Manhattan

There's nothing more refreshing than drips from an overhead AC.

7



RETURN TO CAMPUS
Continued from Front Page

the Welcome Back Bash and BBQ on Tuesday, Aug. 24, students were invited to swab their cheeks for The Gift of Life marrow registry. Students also cleaned Highbridge Park in Washington Heights.

On Wednesday, Aug. 25, Beren Campus Rebbetzin Penina Bernstein joined a team of Beren Campus spiritual leaders — which includes Beren Campus Rabbi Jacob Bernstein, Associate Dean of Torah Studies and Spiritual Life Shoshana Shechter and Director of Spiritual Life Mrs. Rachel Ciment — in a panel discussing questions about getting into the spirit of Elul and starting school. Rebbetzin Bernstein also gave a shiur in the Stern College Beit Midrash with free Carlos and Gabby's for students on Thursday, Aug. 26.

“The Panel this past Wednesday night was an incredible way to start off the year and energize each of our students for all the untapped potential that is to come,” shared Torah Activities Council (TAC) President Suzanne Rabinovitch. “TAC looks forward to continuing to provide meaningful Torah, Shabbat, and chessed opportunities to our entire student body this year, who’ve waited all too long to come together again and take part in what makes our university so unique.”

Free ice cream was distributed to all students and faculty on both campuses on the first day of classes. This was cosponsored by OSL, Office of Housing and Residence Life, HR, the Career Center, the Counseling Center, and student council.

Student council also provided additional back-to-school activities for students. Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) sponsored free cholent for students on Wilf Campus following the first Thursday Night maariv of the school year and Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) sponsored smoothies and coffee for Beren students on Thursday morning. On Sunday, Aug. 29, students from both campuses were invited to spend a Sunday touring New York City, with stops at Central Park and the zoo.

“This week was so fun!” Dalia Levin (SCW '25) told The Commentator. “I am making so many new friends and the atmosphere here is so exciting! I hope every week is as great and full of activities and opportunities as this week has been.”

“The sentiment I’ve heard from the student body has been overwhelmingly positive,” said Yeshiva Student Union President Elazar Abrahams. “Everyone has such hakaras hatov to YU for working hard to bring things back to mostly normal. I didn’t fully realize how much I missed this place until I was back in the packed shiur room and it felt like my friends and I hadn't skipped a beat.”

Campus life commenced as the Delta variant — a more contagious strain of coronavirus — surges across New York City. On Tuesday, Aug. 24, Vice Provost for Student Affairs emailed students, faculty and staff about YU's policy, signed by Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Selman Botman.

“We understand that the new Delta variant is of concern for everyone, and we are working closely with our Medical Director and following guidance from New York State and New York City in order to navigate the uncertainty that it presents,” the email said.

While YU's policy is not changing now, it told students they should listen to professors' requests to wear masks in class, although they are not required to do so.

It ended, “We will continue to evaluate this policy based on infection rates, as well as local and state guidance, and may revisit it as necessary.”

Shlomit Ebbin and Sruli Fruchter contributed to this story.

MASK MANDATE*Continued from Front Page*

Control (CDC) recommended that fully vaccinated individuals should wear masks in public indoor settings with “substantial or high” transmission, which, according to its COVID Data Tracker, applies to the New York County area. Recently, the CDC noted that the vaccine is less effective against the more contagious Delta variant.

Various New York City schools, including New York University and Barnard College, are mandating masks indoors for all students and staff this fall semester, regardless of vaccination status. Other institutions, such as the City University of New York and Columbia University, are only requiring masks indoors for unvaccinated individuals.

Many YU faculty members are scared about the university’s lack of a blanket mask mandate and the potential dangers they and their families face against the Delta variant.

Some professors, like Yeshiva College (YC) Psychology Department Chair Jenny Isaacs, fear returning to campus because of their vulnerable family members. “I have an unvaccinated small child and medically vulnerable parents,” she said. “I cannot access my office without using an elevator and can’t utilize them if anyone is not wearing a mask. I am offended that we are not following the current CDC guidelines for indoor masking, especially as a scientist. This is a grave mistake.”

Isaacs added, “I am only teaching live because I fear losing my job if I don’t.”

One professor from the Stern College for Women (SCW) English Department, who asked to remain anonymous to protect her students’ identities, told The Commentator on Friday that one of her students recently tested positive. “I have arranged to be tested on Monday,” she said. “In the meantime, I have to figure out how to limit exposure to my son, who is autoimmune compromised.”

Another professor, who spoke under the condition of anonymity, questioned YU’s rationale. “It’s tricky,” they said, “as



The Faculty Council held an emergency meeting Tuesday night, Aug. 24.

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for some reason YU believes that vaccination is [enough] protection, even though Israel shows it’s clearly not so. Especially for educators who got their vaccine relatively early ... No one has to choose between their livelihood and their (or [their] loved ones’) health.”

YC English Prof. David Lavinsky agreed. “Why not require a proven layer of protection, at a very small cost, that will ensure we can remain in-person for the rest of the term?” he asked. “Why not do everything we can for those of us with younger children or vulnerable family members, or faculty and students who might be immunocompromised?”

Prof. Rachel Mesch, chair of the YC English Department, felt similarly. “It’s been an incredibly stressful way for faculty to go into the new semester — especially those who have unvaccinated children or grandchildren, are immunocompromised, or live with someone who is,” she explained. “It

has also been extremely stressful for those who don’t have the protections of tenure and are worried about asking students to do something that has — unfortunately — been politicized.”

As a result, many professors — such as those in the Chemistry and English Departments — are asking students to wear their masks in class, and according to some professors, students are complying. “The students in my classes have all been cooperative,” Mesch said. “I know of some faculty who have had some pushback, but by and large the students have been kind and respectful.”

Still, some professors are upset that YU is putting them in this position at all. “The absence of a mask mandate for indoor settings also means that the burden of creating safe campus spaces falls on individual faculty, students, and staff members,” Lavinsky commented.

From the side of students, some are

trying to encourage others to make professors safe. Abigail Lerman (SSSB ‘22), the Sy Syms School of Business Student Council president for Beren Campus, told The Commentator, “In alignment with our Torah values, ‘if a professor asks students to wear a mask, I would urge everyone to be a mensch and comply with their professor’s request, even if there is not an official mask mandate.’”

Other students disagree with this approach. “The university mandated a controversial vaccine in order to return to normal life, but with professors requiring masks in their classes it takes us two steps back,” a YC student said under the condition of anonymity. “If a professor or student is uncomfortable, then they have every right to put on a mask, but forcing other people to wear masks based on their discomfort is just not how the real world works.”

LGBTQ CLUB*Continued from Front Page*

students. The same day, plaintiffs asked the court for a temporary, expedited decision — known as a preliminary injunction — to have YU recognize the club for Fall 2021 until the court comes to a complete, final ruling in the case at a later time.

Kotler wrote in her decision on this motion that the plaintiffs failed to meet the “heavy burden” for a preliminary injunction to be granted.

One factor necessary for the preliminary injunction to have been granted is that the plaintiffs must show a likelihood that they

will win their case. Kotler noted that, at this time, it is unclear whether YU is bound by NYCHRL, as the plaintiffs argue. YU contends that it is exempted from those laws because it says it is a “religious corporation incorporated under the education law” and not a place of public accommodation. “If that is the case,” Kotler said, “then plaintiffs do not have a claim under NYCHRL against Yeshiva for failure to officially recognize YU Pride Alliance.”

Kotler also said that compelling YU to permit the club through this motion would

“not maintain the status quo,” which she indicates is needed for an injunction to be granted. “Plaintiffs allege that Yeshiva’s refusal to formally recognize an LGBTQ organization has been ongoing for a decade,” she explained. “The relief plaintiffs seek would change the status quo.”

Previously, the defense asked the court to dismiss the case on the grounds that YU is not bound by NYCHRL, among other reasons. Kotler instead decided to move for a summary judgment which is a final decision by the court, based strictly on the law without

discussion of material facts, without a full trial. Oral arguments will be held virtually on Oct. 19 via Microsoft Teams.

“We are pleased with the ruling and the Court’s recognition of Yeshiva’s ‘proud and rich Jewish heritage,’” the university said in a statement. “We look forward to the additional briefing in the coming weeks and to the oral argument in October.”

As of publication, Katherine Rosenfeld, who is representing the plaintiffs, did not immediately respond to The Commentator’s request for comment.

News Briefs

Tenzer Gardens and Nagel's Bagels Reopen, RIETS Master's Program Delayed

By **JARED SCHARF**

Tenzer Gardens and Nagel's Bagels Reopen

Tenzer Gardens and Nagel’s Bagels, both of which are located on Wilf Campus, reopened for the Fall 2021 semester. Tenzer Gardens is an area that was previously used for barbecues, sports games and other student events. Nagel’s Bagels is an eatery located in Gleuck Center for Jewish study.

In early 2019, Tenzer Gardens first closed for reconstruction purposes. It was utilized for the first time since for the

Welcome Back BBQ on Aug. 24.

Nagel’s Bagels first closed when the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020. The university did not respond to inquiries as to why the location was closed for the previous semesters. Nagel’s Bagels resides adjacent to the Glueck Beis Medrash and the Heights Lounge.

RIETS MHL Degree in Rabbinic Literature Postponed

The Masters in Hebrew Letters (MHL) Program under Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), which

was supposed to begin for the first time in Fall 2021, will not be taking place this year, according to students who were enrolled in the program.

RIETS did not respond to comment on why the program was canceled and if it will be reinstated at a later point. According to Yeshiva Academic Institutional Repository (YAIR), 10-15 students applied to the Chaver program — a full-time or part-time learning program designed for Yeshiva University graduates to spend an additional year in Yeshiva before graduate school or working — or MHL program and all are currently enrolled in the former as of now.

YU Defends Decision to Reject LGBTQ Club and Receive Government Funding in New Court Documents

By SRULI FRUCHTER AND DANIEL MELOOL

This article was published online on June 3.

Yeshiva University is defending its decision to refuse official club status to the Pride Alliance — an unofficial, undergraduate LGBTQ club — while retaining its nonsectarian status, which allows it to receive government funding, in new court documents filed Friday, May 28.

Back in April, the Pride Alliance, several YU alumni and an anonymous student sued YU, President Ari Berman and Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel for discrimination under New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL) for rejecting the Pride Alliance as an official student club. They argued that, as a nonsectarian institution, YU is bound by NYCHRL and must approve the club or lose their funding.

The university is now arguing that an institution's nonsectarian status is solely determined through its admissions of students — meaning that it does not discriminate in admitting students. YU adds that, while not being a "religious corporation," it has always functioned as a religious entity, which exempts it from following NYCHRL that prohibits discrimination.

Referencing its *Torah Umadda* mission,

emphasis on "Torah values" and presence of religious services on undergraduate campuses, YU tried to demonstrate the "religious character" of its undergraduate programs in its argument to the court. Any government involvement in the university's decision with this club, YU says, would be an infringement

the plaintiffs, from her interview with The Forward. YU explained that the plaintiffs "hope that 'an establishment of a club really could change things' at [YU], including changing the 'people who are against the movement in the student body.'"

YU also believes that the plaintiffs' suit is

Any government involvement in the university's decision with this club, YU says, would be an infringement on their right to freedom of religion and would be "unconstitutional."

on its right to freedom of religion and would be "unconstitutional."

YU explained that it is "wholly committed and guided by Halacha and Torah values," which is why it rejected other student clubs in the past, such as a Jewish AEPi fraternity and a gambling club, because they appeared not "consistent with Torah values." After conferring with *roshei yeshiva* about the Pride Alliance, YU said that it could not give approval to the club for the same reason. Additionally, the university said that because it allowed LGBTQ events on campus, in addition to introducing LGBTQ-inclusive policies in September 2020, the Pride Alliance is not necessary.

"Plaintiffs want [YU] to 'make a statement,'" YU said in these new documents, quoting Molly Meisels (SCW '21), one of

misguided because they "cannot claim any legal injury" due to the club's denial, reasoning that there "cannot be irreparable harm when Plaintiffs do not even have a claim to vindicate." It also disputed that the alumni and student experienced any "irreparable harm" to begin with.

For their defense, YU, Berman and Nissel are being represented by attorneys Brian Sher, Samantha Montrose and Kenneth Abeyratne from Kaufman Borgeest & Ryan LLP. Sher is awaiting a response from the court for his request that YU be allowed the assistance of attorneys Willaim Haun and Eric Baxter of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty — a non-profit, legal and educational institute focused on preserving religious liberties.

When YU was first founded in 1897 as

"The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary Association," it was a sectarian institution that did not receive government funding. Nearly 50 years later in 1945, YU officially changed its corporate name to "Yeshiva University," still remaining a sectarian institution. In 1970, however, YU separated from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, which still remained a sectarian institution, and amended its charter to become nonsectarian in order to receive government funds.

"Yeshiva University cares deeply for and welcomes all of our students including our LGBTQ students," YU said in a statement sent to The Commentator. "We continue to be engaged in a productive dialogue with our Rabbis, faculty and students on how we apply our Torah values to create an inclusive undergraduate campus environment."

The university's statement concluded, "Ultimately, however, the central question this case presents is who is the ultimate arbiter of how Yeshiva University's religious values are applied on campus. On matters of religious belief the law is clear, Yeshiva University should be free to apply the multi-millennial Torah tradition we represent and hold sacred without government interference."

Katherine Rosenfeld, who is the lead attorney for the plaintiffs, told The Commentator that she will be filing a response to YU's memorandum with the court on June 7.

Avi Feder Takes Over as Wilf Campus Director of University Housing and Residence Life

By SEFFI JONAS

Avi Feder began his tenure as the new Wilf Campus director of University Housing and Residence Life (UHRL) on Aug. 2.

Feder is the fourth Wilf Campus director since November 2020, when Jonathan Schwab left the position. After Schwab's departure, Senior Director of the Office of Student Life Rabbi Josh Weisberg served as interim director of UHRL until February 2021, when Lee Seguin took over for just four months. As of publication, the university has not communicated Seguin's departure but notified students of Feder's appointment in an email on Aug. 23.

"I am fully confident that Avi — along with Assistant Director of Housing Michael Altaras — will truly accomplish great things for resident life this year"

Vice Provost for Student Affairs
Chaim Nissel

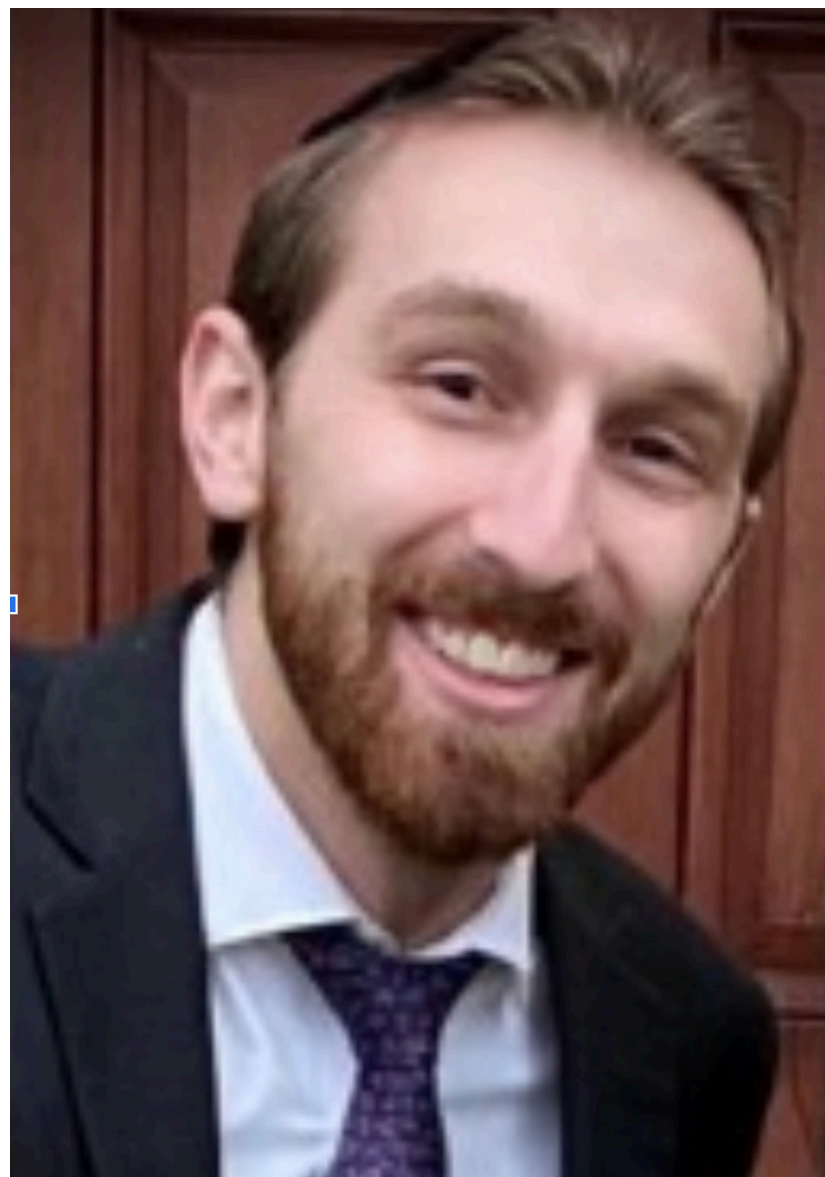
Following four years as Yachad's director of Volunteers and Advisor Engagement, Feder transitioned to this new role over the summer. Previously, he was the director of Dormitory Life and National Recruitment at the Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy,

YU's affiliate high school, from August 2015 to July 2017. Feder graduated from the Sy Syms School of Business in 2014 and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary in 2017. During his time as a YU student, Feder served as both a resident advisor (RA) and a head RA.

"I am excited to be back at Yeshiva as the Director of Residence Life, and particularly excited to welcome students back to campus very soon!" Feder told The Commentator. "I will be focusing my efforts on the Wilf Campus while working collaboratively with the staff from Beren Campus. Working closely with Michael Altaras and our talented group of RAs and Head RAs, we will continually enhance and improve the housing and resident life experience for all."

YU administrators expressed optimism regarding Feder's appointment. "In addition to Avi's strong background in Housing and his intimate understanding of the YU community, he is also a caring, approachable, and creative leader," Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel said. "I am fully confident that Avi — along with Assistant Director of Housing Michael Altaras — will truly accomplish great things for resident life this year."

Head Resident Advisor Mordy Blau (YC '22) also expressed excitement toward Feder's appointment. "Avi truly cares about the students and about the people that he works with," he said. "He really pushes us [resident advisors] to be our best and we're excited to see all that he has to offer to Yeshiva."



Avi Feder took over as director of UHRL on August 2nd.

AVI FEDER

Joe Bednarsh Assumes New Role of Associate Dean of Students, Greg Fox Promoted to Athletics Director

By SHLOMIT EBBIN AND ELLIE GOFMAN

This article was published online on July 15.

Former Director of Athletics Joe Bednarsh began the new role of associate dean of students on July 1, playing a larger part in the overall student experience. Greg Fox, the former associate director of Athletics, replaced Bednarsh as director, and Carly Moss was promoted from assistant Athletics director to the associate position.

"It will be a bittersweet for me not to be at the helm anymore, but I could not be more confident in a new leadership team than I am with Greg and Carly."

Associate Dean of Students Joe Bednarsh

On June 23, Bednarsh emailed Yeshiva University student-athletes to inform them of this change. The role of associate dean of students is a new position at YU, and the responsibilities include working to enhance communication with students and overall campus experience, as well as overseeing student health and COVID-19 monitoring. Bednarsh will continue to work with departments he previously was involved with — such as Athletics, Office of Student Life and University Housing and Residence Life — and will also begin working with additional departments across campus.

Bednarsh occupied the role of director of Athletics at YU since 2006 and has been working at the institution since 1991. He began working as a lifeguard in the Gottesman Pool, and he held every position in the department of Athletics since then. This past year, Bednarsh also worked as a member of the COVID-19 monitoring team.

During Bednarsh's time as director of Athletics, the women's athletics program expanded from three to seven teams, a full-time sports information director was hired, an assistant director specifically for women's sports was hired and full-time athletic trainers were hired for both campuses. Additionally, each of the fitness centers were refurbished and updated, and more facilities were acquired for Beren students' varsity games and practices.

"There are so many caring faculty, staff, and administrators with whom I've been lucky to work over the last 30 years," said Bednarsh. "I plan to bring that experience, institutional knowledge, and drive to work collaboratively with students to make real, lasting, and meaningful change that will better the experience of every student."

Bednarsh will continue to work closely with Vice Provost of Student Affairs Chaim Nissel in his new position. "I have worked closely with Joe for many years and am thrilled that he has agreed to accept the role of Associate Dean of Students and to take on these additional responsibilities," Nissel said.

Some student-athletes expressed their gratitude for how the Athletics Department was run under Bednarsh. "For the two years I've been in YU, Joe and Greg have been

amazing for YU's athletics program" shared Alon Jakobowitz (SSSB '22), a member of the men's basketball team. "I'm especially grateful for how hard they worked to make sure we had a season last year with all the challenges and complications we had to deal with. Joe did an amazing job with the Athletics Department these past couple of years and I'm excited to see what Greg has in store."

Fox came to YU five years ago as associate director of Athletics. Over those years, he was the administrator for eight sports and helped establish the YU Athletics Hall of Fame.

"I'm excited to take on this role," said Fox. "I've learned a great deal in my five years at YU as Associate Director under Joe Bednarsh. I'd like to take this knowledge and use my previous experience in Division I to achieve our wide-ranging department goals."

Like Fox, Moss also joined YU five years ago as assistant Athletics director. In August 2017, Moss earned the title of Athletics healthcare administrator. She is also currently the senior woman administrator and the only athletics administrator on Beren Campus. Moss is now responsible for YU's seven women's varsity sports and oversees the recreational and intramural opportunities for the university's female students.

Moss told The Commentator, "As there will be additional staffing changes within the department within the next few weeks, the exact responsibilities will continue to evolve as necessary."

"Contributing to the continued growth and success of Yeshiva University's athletics program is an opportunity that incites my passion for working with student athletes," added Moss. "I would like to thank both Greg Fox and Joe Bednarsh for the prospect to continue to grow the athletics department and enhance the student-athlete experience here at YU."

"It will be a bittersweet for me not to be at the helm anymore," Bednarsh wrote in his email to the student-athletes, "but I could not be more confident in a new leadership team than I am with Greg and Carly."

Fox shared with The Commentator his aspirations for the Athletics department. "This is a great time to be a Maccabee and I would like to see even greater numbers from our female and male student body participating on teams and experiencing all of the positives that come with that," he said. "Ultimately, we'd like to create a family atmosphere in which previous, current and future generations of YU athletic alumni know they have a second home here."



Greg Fox, Joe Bednarsh and Carly Moss (left to right)

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

YU Discontinues Most COVID-19 Protocols for Vaccinated Students, Employees Over the Summer

By SRULI FRUCHTER

This article was published online on June 22.

Fully vaccinated students and employees who submit proof of vaccination are no longer required to wear masks or social distance on YU's campuses over the summer, emailed Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel on Monday night, June 21.

These policy changes do not apply to unvaccinated students who must continue distancing and mask-wearing on campus. The Summer COVID-19 Monitoring Program — which requires on-campus students to test twice a week — will also only be in effect for unvaccinated students.

These developments come as the percentage of fully vaccinated New Yorkers above 18-years-old hovers around 60%. On June 15, New York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced that COVID-19 restrictions were lifted as 70% of adults received at least their first dose of the vaccine.

Regardless of vaccination status, Nissel noted in his email, YU still requires all students and employees returning to campus "for the first time" to submit a negative PCR test in advance. Other updates include the discontinuation of building temperature checks, the daily health self-assessment form and prior registration for athletic facilities.

YU's FAQ page for COVID-19 requirements includes details about submitting proof of vaccination and other campus protocol for the fall semester, but it is unclear if, and in what capacity, those guidelines apply for the summer.

Before this year's June Zman — a month-long period for Wilf students to attend optional *shuirim* — a WhatsApp message circulated among students that mask-wearing and social-distancing would be suspended only for fully vaccinated students on the first floor of the Glueck Beit Midrash. The message said that students were required to submit proof of vaccination, adding that "Rebbeim and others will be checking periodically to ensure that everyone is complying

with our policy."

According to the message, this "test run" was done at the behest of the university. As of publication, Nissel did not respond to The Commentator's request for confirmation regarding this.

"We hope to shortly announce our Visitor Management System will be open for full-vaccinated alumni to obtain the Alumni ID card," Nissel shared in his email. He also said that YU is reviewing its "Travel and Guest policies."

"In light of these developments, we continue to expect that we will be able to return to full capacity in the Fall for our classes, residence halls and other campus spaces," Nissel wrote to students. "As we get closer to the Fall semester, we will share with you our COVID-19 protocols for the Fall."

Students expressed excitement about this step in YU's return to pre-pandemic life.

"Since I have come to YU, it's really been an incredible experience being around the guys and just feeling the really warm atmosphere," shared Yosef Tropp (YC '24), who is

participating in June Zman. "Now as COVID restrictions are being lifted, I realize I only just saw the beginning of what is looking to be an incredible year to come with *limudei kodesh* and chol [regular and holy studies]. I'm just so excited to really feel what YU will be able to offer in the future."

"It will be so nice to go back to campus this fall with a sense of normalcy, assuming YU continues lifting these restrictions," said Sela Boord (SSSB '22). "Even though I am going into my senior year, this would be my first full semester on campus with no COVID restrictions. I am so excited to experience all that YU has to offer."

In late April, President Ari Berman emailed students that full in-person instruction will resume for Fall 2021. He added that all students and faculty will need to be vaccinated before returning to campus, excluding those with "medical and religious exemptions," though he did not elaborate what qualifies as such.

YU Partners in Learning Program in Memory of Donny Morris

By Yonatan Kurz

This article was published May 12.

Yeshiva University has partnered with several other organizations to create a three-part memorial program in memory of Donny Morris (YUHSB '20). Morris, who graduated from YU's high school last spring, was one of 45 who passed away in the Lag Baomer incident in Meron, Israel on April 30.

The programs consist of commitments to take on acts of self-improvement, complete cycles of Tanach, Mishnah and Gemara, and replicate different segments of Donny's Torah learning schedule; these three commitments will lead up to Donny's *sheloshim* — the 30-day period after one's passing. Yeshiva University High School for Boys, Yeshivat Sha'alvim, Naaleh High School

for Girls, the S. Daniel Abraham Israel program and Congregation Beth Abraham of Bergenfield, New Jersey also worked to launch this program. Morris was learning at Sha'alvim this year, and Congregation Beth Abraham is his family's local shul.


The first component of the program is the "Self-Improvement Initiative," which allows participants to commit to one of several acts of self-improvement to refine their character. These actions included arriving at shul five minutes before *davening*, refraining from speech while in the shul's sanctuary, starting the daily Chofetz Chaim program, initiating greetings with others and "calling a grandparent every day." As of publication, over 460 people have signed up to take on at least one of these initiatives.

The second part of the program is the *siyum*, where people can elect to learn a *daf*

Continued on Page 8

"We wanted to do something more/different than the classical learning mishnayos in memory for a sheloshim. We felt that the impact of Donny's petira was felt by the larger community and wanted to do something that anyone could participate in. We also wanted people to consider taking on a kabbalah/commitment to change something in their lives — after habituating for 30 days — so we came up with the self-improvement initiative."

Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, Dean for Undergraduate Torah Studies.



THE DONNY MORRIS Z"l Memorial Program

All of Klal Yisrael is mourning the loss of the 45 precious souls that were taken from us on Lag BaOmer. We are particularly pained by the loss of **Donny Morris z"l (Nachman Daniel ben ybl" c Aryeh Tzvi)**. Donny was known for his *middos*, sensitivity, passionate davening, and love of learning. Please join us in perpetuating Donny's legacy and participate in a unique self-improvement initiative and *siyum* in memory of Donny at his *Sheloshim* on Monday, May 24th (*siyum* details to follow).

Click here to sign up for learning and growth opportunities: donnyseder.com

Self Improvement Initiative

Please consider undertaking one of the following (on a daily basis until the *Sheloshim*).

- Arrive at shul 5 minutes before *Shacharis* begins
- Arrive at shul 5 minutes before all three daily *Tefillos*
- Refrain from any speech while in the shul's sanctuary
- Start the daily Chofetz Chaim program
- Greet 3 people before they greet you
- Smile at 3 people you do not know well


Siyum

- A *daf* of Gemara
- A *perek* of Mishnah
- A *perek* of Tanach

Donny's Seder

The "Donny's Seder" Learning Initiative seeks to emulate Donny's strong commitment to living a life of growth in dedication to *תורה* and cultivating the most refined *טובות*. This initiative seeks to fill the void that now exists following Donny's *petirah*. The goal of this project is to have as many people as possible take upon themselves to learn a *סדר* of *לימוד* on Donny's schedule - for Thirty Days.

May our self-improvement and study of Torah bring Donny an *aliyas neshama* and serve as a *nechama* for his family and all of Klal Yisrael.



CONGREGATION BETH ABRAHAM

DONNY MORRIS Z"l MEMORIAL PROGRAM

The program consists of three different commitments to replicate the life of Torah that Donny encapsulated.

Senior Class Nominates Professors and Adjuncts of the Year

By ARIEL KAHAN

This article was published online on June 3.

Yeshiva University awarded the Lillian F. and William L. Silber Professor of the Year Award to four professors across its three undergraduate schools, Yeshiva College (YC), Stern College for Women (SCW) and Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB). This year's award recipients were Professors Dr. Irina Catrina for YC, Alan Broder for SCW and Mark Finkel and Yitzchak Rosenthal for SSSB for women and men, respectively.

Adjunct Professors Akiva Rube and Rabbi Dovid Bashevkin were nominated for the Adjunct Professor of the Year Award for YC

and SSSB, respectively, an award that the university began giving to part-time professors in 2018. SCW does not have this award.

All of the awards are decided by undergraduate seniors in annual online votes that are administered by YU's Office of Institutional Research & Assessment in the spring semester, which took place this year on April 19. Results of the senior undergraduate vote were announced on May 3 for SSSB at the SSSB senior dinner, and on May 6 and 10 via a Zoom awards session for YC and SCW, respectively.

According to an email about the vote sent to YC students by Associate for Student Affairs Dean Fred Sugarman, one of the main purposes of the award is to "recognize the faculty who have provided the most

exciting classes during the past semesters." The Professor of the Year awards are endowed by Dr. William Silber, who graduated from YC in 1963, and his wife Lillian Silber. The awards also provide an honorarium of \$1,800 to each awarded faculty member.

Professor Catrina began teaching at YU in 2019 in YC's Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. When asked how she felt about receiving the honor, Catrina said, "This is not my achievement alone. First and foremost, the students are the ones who motivate me to continuously improve as a teacher, and second, I receive amazing support, help and guidance from everyone in the YU Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry."

Professor Broder is a clinical professor and chair of the Computer Science Department at SCW. Broder has been working at Yeshiva University since 2013 and was selected for the Faculty Award for Exceptional Educators in 2017. "It is a great honor to receive this award," Broder commented, "and it is a true privilege to teach such awesomely talented students."

A clinical associate professor of Management on the Beren Campus, Finkel teaches Principles of Strategy and Start-Up Strategy. Finkel has been teaching at YU since 2017 and was also grateful about receiving the award. "I am truly humbled to have been given this honor," he said. "I am indebted to all the smart and talented students I have been able to teach. Their positive *midot* and inquiring minds propel me to try to be a better teacher."

Professor Finkel's co-recipient from SSSB, Professor Rosenthal, teaches on the Wilf Campus and is a clinical associate professor of Information and Decision Systems; he has been teaching in SSSB since 2002. Rosenthal said, "The past year or two has been challenging in different ways for a lot of people, myself included. It was nice to be recognized by the students more, but the best feeling I get is when I hear back from students who have succeeded in their jobs and careers after graduation."

Professor Rube graduated from YC in 2018 and began giving lab sessions at YC in the spring of 2019. Rabbi Bashevkin, a YU graduate who received *semikha* from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, began teaching at YU in 2019 and now teaches public policy, religious crisis and rabbinic thought.



(Left to right) Professors Catrina, Finkel, Broder and Rosenthal

RIETS Launches First-Ever Master's Degree in Rabbinic Literature for Fall 2021

By JARED SCHARF

This article was published online on July 12.

The Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) is beginning its first-ever Masters in Hebrew Letters (MHL) program this upcoming 2021-22 academic year. The one-year program is open to men with an undergraduate degree and will offer an MHL with a focus in rabbinic literature.

The program includes two *sedarim* — sets of hours learning Torah — per day; students are able to join any Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) *shiur* for the morning and are offered various learning options for the afternoon and night, which are coordinated by RIETS *Rosh Yeshiva* Rabbi Daniel Feldman. According to the website, these courses will be covering “major *sugyot* [topics] in *Shas* [Talmud].” Additionally, a mandatory Friday class will discuss the development of the Oral Torah. Grades will be given through final exams and projects.

The program costs \$3,750 per student. Aside from an undergraduate degree, requirements for admissions also include an entrance examination and a personal interview. The application for the program is online.

“We expect a small cohort of students, as the details of the program emerged through the pandemic,” said RIETS Dean Rabbi Menachem Penner. “We hope that the program will expand significantly in the Fall of 2022.” Rabbi Penner did not specify the number of students, but Dr. Yuxiang Liu, director of Institutional Research & Assessment at Yeshiva University, noted that “some students in graduate programs usually register very late.”

The program was conceived this past winter from a series of meetings with RIETS' senior leadership and Board of Trustees, as part of YU's increasing efforts to encourage students to continue pursuing Torah learning after graduation, Rabbi Penner said. He explained that RIETS discovered it was authorized to offer an MHL and “thought that was a good *shidduch* [match].” Rabbi Yaakov Taubes, assistant director of RIETS programming, completed the necessary state approvals and paperwork through the New York State Education Department, and the program was officialized shortly after



RIETS will be initiating its first-ever MHL program this upcoming 2021-22 academic year.

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“We are most excited about this new initiative to extend the time our talmidim learn at Yeshiva as well as maximize their experience at RIETS. We also hope that these new degrees will bring new students to our beit midrash who have not yet had the privilege of a RIETS Torah education.”

Rabbi Menachem Penner

DONNY MORRIS Z"TL
Continued from Page 7

of Gemara, a *perek* of Mishnah or a *perek* of Tanach before Donny's *sheloshim*. Currently, nearly four cycles of all of *Shas* Mishnayos have been signed up for, along with three cycles of all of Tanach and almost all of *Shas* Gemara.

The last part of the program, titled “Donny's Seder,” is a learning initiative that consists of Donny's weekly Torah learning regimen and seeks to “emulate Donny's strong commitment to a life of growth in dedication to *limmud haTorah* and cultivating the most refined *middos tovot*,” and “fill

the void that now exists following Donny's *petirah* [passing away].” Options include *Daf Yomi*, *shnayim mikra*, Halacha, Navi, *mus-sar* and *divrei Torah* on the *parsha*, doing a weekly *chessed* [good deed], and calling one's grandmother.

“We are simply devastated and filled with tears at the tragic passing of Donny Morris Z"TL at the catastrophe in Meron, Israel last evening,” President Ari Berman said in a statement to the student body on April 30. “As a student of our Yeshiva and a son of a multigenerational YU family, Donny

Pesach.

Previously, the Chaver Program, a one-year learning program for post-graduate male students, was the only option for men to learn in Yeshiva University without being enrolled in the *semikha* program.

The MHL program is not for students in the *semikha* program and is only designed for students taking a year off after college graduation. The program was also designed for people studying for admission exams or working part-time. According to Rabbi Penner, a master's degree is beneficial to

students because it makes it easier for them to explain to potential employers or graduate schools why they are taking time off to learn Torah.

“We are most excited about this new initiative to extend the time our talmidim learn at Yeshiva as well as maximize their experience at RIETS,” Rabbi Penner shared. “We also hope that these new degrees will bring new students to our *beit midrash* who have not yet had the privilege of a RIETS Torah education.”

exemplified and lived by our values. He was known for his selflessness, his true love for learning and willingness to always help others in need.”

Morris's funeral took place on Sunday night, May 2, on *Har Hazeitim* in Israel, also known as Mount of Olives. His *sheloshim* will occur on Monday, May 24.

“We wanted to do something more/different than the classical learning mishnayos in memory for a *sheloshim*. We felt that the impact of Donny's *petira* was felt by the larger community and wanted to do something

that anyone could participate in,” Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, dean for Undergraduate Torah Studies told The Commentator. “We also wanted people to consider taking on a *kabbalah*/commitment to change something in their lives — after habituating for 30 days — so we came up with the self-improvement initiative.”

A global *siyum* for all of the learning will be held on June 1.

Wilf Director of University Housing and Residence Life Leaves YU After Four Months



Seguin left his role as Wilf director of UHRL.

MANHATTAN COLLEGE

BY SRULI FRUCHTER

This article was published online on May 14.

Wilf Campus Director of University Housing and Residence Life (UHRL) Lee Seguin left Yeshiva University after four months in the position, The Commentator has learned.

Seguin's initial appointment was announced to Wilf students via email on Feb. 9, and on Thursday, May 13, Assistant Director of UHRL Michael Altaras emailed Wilf resident advisors (RA) about his departure. As of publication, the university did not notify students about Seguin leaving.

"I am reaching out to let you know that as of today Lee will no longer be working with us at University Housing and Residence Life," Altaras wrote in his email to RAs. "I want to thank you for all your hard work and I know together we will finish off the year strongly, as a team." No explanation

was given regarding this news.

It is unclear whether Seguin was asked to leave or left on his own volition. His LinkedIn page no longer displays his role as director of UHRL.

"We do not comment on personnel changes," Vice Provost for Student Affairs Dr. Chaim Nissel told The Commentator. "We wish Lee well and appreciate all that he did. We are working closely with our housing team to ensure that our students have a successful end of the semester and for fall housing enrollment."

The university is currently searching for a new director of UHRL. Nissel added that "at this time we have not finalized our decision regarding merging housing director responsibilities for both [Wilf and Beren] campuses."

Seguin came to YU with over 10 years of experience working with college students. From June 2011 through June 2014, he worked at Bates College as coordinator of Student Activities and Residence Life. From

August 2014 through December 2020, he worked at College of Mount Saint Vincent in several roles, including associate director of Housing and Residence Life.

After former Wilf Campus Director of UHRL Jonathan Schwab left YU in November 2020, Senior Director of Student Life Rabbi Josh Weisberg became the acting director while the university sought a replacement. Seguin filled the new role a few months later.

Seguin is one of many university staff members to leave the university over the last 10 months, including Assistant Director of UHRL Natan Bienstock in August 2020, Schwab in November 2020, Wilf Campus Student Life Director Avi Schwartz in December 2020 and OSL Director of Student Events Linda Stone in March 2021.

As of publication, Altaras and Seguin did not respond to The Commentator's inquiries on the matter.

Two Wilf Hebrew Professors Resign as YU Ends In-Person Hebrew Program Next Year

BY SRULI FRUCHTER

This article was published online on Aug. 19.

Wilf Hebrew Professors Lori Linzer and Aliza Schachter resigned this summer due to the university's decision to end its in-person Hebrew program beginning in Fall 2022, The Commentator has learned. The new program will instead operate online — in an asynchronous format — and does not require the re-hiring of Hebrew professors.

Linzer and Schachter were set to teach three and four courses in the fall semester, respectively, and both professors are still listed to teach those classes on the MyYU student portal, which is used for course registration. As of publication, students enrolled in their courses were not notified by YU about either professor's resignation or about the university's plans going forward.

Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon told The Commentator that students will be contacted once the university "finalize[s] faculty assignments."

"Although it will not be possible to replace Professor Schachter or Professor Linzer in any real way," explained Prof. Aaron Koller, coordinator of the Wilf Campus Hebrew Language Program, "there are a good number of competent Hebrew instructors in the New York metropolitan area, and we are in discussions with a few of particularly high quality to staff the courses for this coming year."

All Beren Hebrew professors listed for courses on MyYU are expected to teach in the fall, according to Director of Hebrew Language and Literature Prof. Zafira Lidovsky-Cohen. She also told The Commentator that she will be working this semester to "lead the efforts to move the Hebrew program online" and will not be teaching Hebrew this fall.

Linzer and Schachter credited their resignations to the university's plan of ending the in-person Hebrew program.

"I was fully planning to return to YU in

the fall," Linzer said, "but one of the principals in Bergen County reached out to me unexpectedly [in early June], offering a Tanach position. YU has told its Hebrew teachers they will not be needed after spring 2022, so it made sense to pursue this opportunity, especially because Tanach is my passion." Linzer taught Hebrew at YU for over eight years.

Schachter, who taught at YU since 2010, was motivated by the same reason. "I decided not to return when I learned that YU was getting rid of all but one Hebrew teacher

again next semester."

Some Wilf students who were previously in Linzer and Schachter's classes felt their departure was a significant loss for YU.

"I think I speak for many when I say that Professor Schachter has always exemplified the values that make a great professor: respect for her students and commitment to their success," said Liav Garbuz (SSSB '22), who took Schachter for two of his Hebrew courses. "I certainly wish her well in all of her future endeavors and know that YU will be lacking without her presence."

"Knowing that I would no longer have a future teaching Hebrew at YU made it very difficult to stay."

Prof. Aliza Schachter

and replacing us with asynchronous videos starting Fall 2022," she explained. "Knowing that I would no longer have a future teaching Hebrew at YU made it very difficult to stay."

Next year, Schachter is working at GETIDA, a technology solutions company specializing in auditing Amazon sellers for financial discrepancies. "While I will miss being in the classroom," she said, "I am excited for this new challenge."

Some students registered for either professor's class were frustrated about the situation. "As a student, I research each professor prior to registration and I heard great things about Professor Linzer," Zach Wild (SSSB '23), said. He explained that he and other students are put "in an awkward position not knowing who will be teaching us next semester and whether or not that professor will even be a good teacher at all."

Wild added, "Obviously you can't blame Professor Linzer for leaving YU because long-term job security is imperative."

Ozzie Jeselsohn (YC '23) felt disappointed about the news and felt YU should have communicated this to him. "I've been signed up for Professor Schachter's class for a while now and am upset that YU never told me about this," he said. "I had Professor Schachter last semester, and she was amazing — I was looking forward to taking her

is to have a single program for both campuses so all students "will have the same course offerings and competency expectations."

Over the years, YU has reconfigured and changed the Wilf Hebrew program several different times. YU's most recently redesigned Hebrew program for Wilf students began in Fall 2020 and began its first year operating online via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Koller, an asynchronous model is "not any less expensive" to run than an in-person one. He explained that the people-power needed to return feedback on assignments for "the hundreds of students we [will] teach each semester is not cheap."

"The goal here is not to save money," Koller said, "but to create a program that provides more options for students in terms of scheduling and learning."

"All in all, I am sad that an asynchronous Hebrew program is what YU has chosen for its students," Linzer said. "So many of the students want to improve their Hebrew conversational skills and this is nearly impossible to do without human interactions."

She added, "As I told the Dean and the Provost, it has been a pleasure and privilege to teach Yeshiva College's students. I feel fortunate to have met and worked with so many wonderful students, and I look forward to hearing about their many successes in years to come."



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YU's 2019 Tax Return Reveals Salaries of President Berman, Senior Officials

By JARED SCHARF

This article was published online on July 11.

Yeshiva University's Form 990 from the 2019 fiscal year, which discloses the salaries and compensation of President Ari Berman and numerous senior executives, was obtained by The Commentator.

Form 990 is an IRS form required for non-profit organizations, which provides its financial information for the general public. The form is due annually on May 15 and becomes publicly available soon afterward.

In 2019, Vice President (VP) for Legal Affairs and General Counsel Andrew Lauer, former Senior VP Josh Joseph and Berman were the only executives on the form who made over \$700,000, with Lauer breaking \$870,000. Berman's announcement last summer that he would take a 20% pay cut while other senior officials took between 5-10% will be reflected in the 2020 Form 990, which will be released next year.

Berman's total compensation in 2019

was \$745,683, which included a base salary just above \$590,000 that was about \$2,000 less than in 2018. That total also included an additional compensation of \$2,386 and nontaxable benefits — which could include health insurance or retirement services — of \$152,623. Additionally, Berman is provided with a \$1.8 million parsonage house in Teaneck, NJ, which he has maintained since the beginning of his presidency.

Lauer's total compensation was \$874,181 — over \$170,000 more than in 2018 — ranking him the highest-paid senior staff member of 2019, followed by Berman. In 2018, his \$700,000 compensation made him second behind Berman. Joseph, who left YU in 2020, saw an increase of more than \$200,000 from 2018 to 2019, for an aggregate sum of \$706,580. The 2019 tax record also noted that both Joseph and Lauer received \$250,000 in deferred compensation from past years.

Vice Provost Selma Botman received a \$50,000 raise in 2019, with a base salary of \$400,000, compared to her 2018 base

salary of \$350,000.

In contrast, some senior officials saw a decrease in pay. VP of Business Affairs Jacob Harman's total compensation decreased from \$663,860 in 2018 to \$549,286 in 2019. Ahron Herring, the university's chief investment officer, made slightly over \$419,000 in 2019, nearly \$100,000 less than in 2018. As of publication, YU did not immediately respond to The Commentator's inquiries regarding these changes.

Aside from the listed senior officials, former President Richard Joel — who is the Bravmann Family University Professor and taught three courses at the Sy Syms School of Business in 2019 — continued to be on the top of the payroll in 2019. In addition to the university-owned residence, Joel continues to receive money from YU, this year with a total compensation of \$428,283. In 2018, he made \$665,889.

Joel's total compensation averaged \$1.16 million between 2009 and 2016, and was \$2.5 million in 2013, rendering him the fourth-highest-paid executive in private

college that year. Joel's house, which he has maintained since the beginning of his presidency in 2003, cost \$2.2 million and continues to be owned by the university.

Asked about Joel's high compensation, a YU spokesperson told The Commentator that "other than what is required by law to be disclosed in Form 990, the University does not disclose confidential salary or benefit information of individual employees."

The tax return also included information on YU's finances in 2019. That year, YU spent nearly \$2.4 million in advertising, about \$130,000 less than in 2018. Similarly, travel costs decreased from about \$3 million in 2018 to about \$2.5 million in 2019. It also showed that YU gave over \$98 million in "scholarships & fellowships" to 3,921 students. YU did not respond to The Commentator's inquiries regarding whether that was across all of its schools or only certain ones.

Sruli Fruchter contributed to this story.



Joseph, Berman and Lauer (left to right) were the only senior officials who made over \$700,000 in 2019.

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Marjorie Rasinovsky-Albert Promoted in OSL, Several New Staff Members Hired to Focus on Student Affairs

By AVIGAIL GREENBERG

Marjorie Rasinovsky-Albert, formerly the student life program manager at the Office of Student Life (OSL), will be taking on the new role of associate director of student life, Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel emailed students on Aug. 23. His email also included that the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) hired several new staff members for various new positions.

Kristen Gartside and Rukia Rahi are joining the Office of International Students (OIS) as assistant director and international program coordinator, respectively. Alana Reichenberg is working with the Department of University Housing and Residence Life (UHRL) as the new housing manager, along with another role in COVID-monitoring, while Ashlee Burrs will begin as the director of student success.

Rasinovsky-Albert's role was created in place of the director of student events, formerly held by Linda Stone. She will be responsible for overseeing event programming administrative aspects of OSL. A graduate of SCW, Rasinovsky-Albert has over six years of experience working at the university. "As an

alum, current graduate student, employee, and a proud member of the YU community, I am looking forward to using my past experiences to serve our student body in this new role," she said. "Yeshiva University provided me with some of the best years of my life, and I am so excited to be able to give other students even more incredible opportunities on campus."

Rasinovsky-Albert's promotion follows a year of departures from OSL. Student Life Coordinator Avi Schwartz left YU to work in the Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus at Rutgers University in December 2020. Following Schwartz's departure, Director of Student Events Linda Stone also stepped down.

"Yeshiva University provided me with some of the best years of my life, and I am so excited to be able to give other students even more incredible opportunities on campus."

Marjorie Rasinovsky-Albert

"I congratulate Marjorie on this promotion," commented Nissel. "Just as she has shined as a student and in her various roles on campus, she will continue to be an

amazing resource for students and student programming in her expanded new role."

"I was lucky enough to get to know Marjorie through close collaboration on Yom Haatzmaut programming last spring," said Yeshiva Student Union President Elazar Abrahams (YC '22). "She's an absolute legend who understands and cares deeply about the students of YU, and I'm excited to see what she can accomplish in this expanded role."

The new OSA staff come with their own backgrounds for their new roles.

Gartside has worked in the field of international education for over seven years, including nearly four years as an international student advisor at The New School.

University (OSU). As a university student, Rahi worked in the International Student and Scholars Office and held leadership positions in the OSU International Student Organization.

Reichenberg is a Stern College for Women graduate who was actively involved in campus life as a student. After receiving her bachelor's degree in biology and business, Reichenberg went on to earn a master's degree in biotechnology management and entrepreneurship from the Katz School of Yeshiva University. She spent the last year as the primary coordinator for managing COVID-19 related isolation and quarantine on the Beren campus.

Burrs holds a master's degree from Kent State University in higher education administration and a bachelor's degree in communication, and is currently working on earning a doctorate in higher education administration. Her most recent roles include director of student success and learning center as well as director of campus life at Long Island University.

In Nissel's email to students, he announced a total of 13 new hires or promotions, some of which The Commentator previously reported on.

Rahi was born in Baghdad, Iraq and raised in Stillwater, Oklahoma. She earned a bachelor's degree in marketing and minored in international business from Oklahoma State

Fall 2021 Course Registration Resumes for Beren and Wilf Students After Technical Delays

By SRULI FRUCHTER

This article was published online on May 11.

Fall 2021 course registration resumed for Beren and Wilf students on Thursday, May 6 and Tuesday, May 11, respectively, after initially being suspended on May 5 and May 10 due to technical difficulties. The delays occurred during the registration slots of Beren seniors and Wilf juniors.

Beren Campus registration was set to begin on May 5 for seniors, May 6 for juniors, May 7 for sophomores and May 11 for freshmen. The delays pushed the registration dates for seniors and juniors to the following days, and sophomores registered on May 10 at 9 a.m., before Wilf students experienced difficulties.

Registration for Wilf students began on May 6 for seniors, and the slots for juniors and upper sophomores were planned for May 10, while lower sophomores and freshmen were designated times on May 11. Due to registration being suspended on May 10 in the afternoon, juniors, sophomores and freshmen instead registered on May 11.

On May 5, when upper seniors of Beren Campus began selecting their fall courses at 9 a.m., the MyYU Banner portal, which is used for course registration, indicated that “registration changes” were not allowed and prevented students from signing up for their classes. While this was fixed shortly afterward, students were then locked out of some classes that needed prerequisite courses, even if they had the necessary requirements. This issue continued into

the 10 a.m. registration slot assigned to lower seniors.

In an email sent that day to Beren students around 12 p.m., Beren Associate Registrar Aniruddha Das announced that registration was temporarily halted, crediting the delay to a “technical issue.” Once the issue was resolved, Das notified students that the registration slots of seniors, juniors and sophomores were adjusted to “re-prioritize” seniors and that registration would resume the following day on May 6.

“I think this is an issue YU can learn from in the future by making sure everything is up to code with their systems before class registration begins.”

Moshe Hecht (YC '22)

On May 10 around 2:30 p.m., upper and lower juniors of Wilf Campus were prevented from registering after the MyYU portal experienced a “system outage,” according to an email by Wilf Associate Registrar Rabbi Akiva Koenigsberg. He added that registration would be suspended for the remainder of the day. While some juniors did sign up for their desired courses, others could not due to the technical issues.

Four hours later, Rabbi Koenigsberg informed students that registration would resume the following day on May 11, beginning with upper juniors at 11:30 a.m. Each following hour, the lower grade would be able to register.

On April 27, Information Technology Services (ITS) emailed students about the “upgrade of Banner Database Systems,” which began on April 30 and ended on May 2. As of publication, ITS did not respond to The Commentator’s inquiries regarding how, if at all, these changes affected the registration difficulties experienced by students.

As per standard policy, students can continue to add courses until Sept. 10 and drop courses without a “W” — which would not indicate a “W” on one’s transcript —

that “it’s very unfair and inconvenient to expect the students to move around their schedule for registration.”

Moshe Hecht (YC '22) also experienced difficulties. “It was frustrating trying to register for classes and being locked out, unsure if some of the classes I had hoped to take would be filled up,” said Hecht, who is classified as an upper junior. “Nevertheless, I think this is an issue YU can learn from in the future by making sure everything is up to code with their systems before class registration begins.”

Others, like Lily Polonetsky (SCW '22), were not significantly affected by the technical issues. “Mistakes happen,” she

said. “Thankfully it wasn’t such a big deal for me because I got into the classes I needed, and the classes I couldn’t get into were specific for my major, so I knew I would be able to get in once the issue was resolved. I understand it’s frustrating but my personal experience wasn’t.”

Nissim Cantor (YC '23) had a similar experience. “Thankfully, I was able to register for all of my secular classes before the system crashed,” he explained. “When I attempted to register for my *shiur* less than thirty seconds later, the system was no longer functioning. Fortunately, I was able to register for my *shiur* after about twenty minutes, but I know that many of my friends were not as lucky.”

University Registrar Jennifer Spiegel did not respond to The Commentator’s request for comment about the registration difficulties.

until Oct. 18. The drop date with a “W” requires permission from an academic advisor and ends on Dec. 2.

Some students expressed annoyance about the situation. “It’s very upsetting after all the work being done to the website that it can’t function on such a day planned and expected for high traffic, like registration,” shared Akiva Levy (YC '22). “I planned my schedule around [the original] registration, and I’m busy during the new time. It’s very upsetting and very inconvenient. It seems fairly unprofessional and unprepared of YU to be doing this — the traffic should be expected.”

Levy felt that the university was unprepared for the high traffic usage, adding



Course registration for Beren seniors and Wilf juniors was temporarily suspended due to technical issues.

Moody's Raises YU's Credit Ranking to B2 With Positive Outlook in a First Since 2013

By **SRULI FRUCHTER**

This article was published online on June 23.

After seven years in the subpar B3 ranking, Yeshiva University's credit rating was upgraded by Moody's Investors Service to the B2 ranking with a "positive" outlook, according to Moody's June 22 report.

Moody's, a leading credit rating company, publishes data on commercial and government bonds relating to assets, debts and income, all of which are used to measure credit. Last year, YU's rating faced its first

demoted outlook from "positive" to "stable" since 2014, when it was first placed in the B3 ranking. This year's report attributed YU's upgrade to "positive momentum" with revenue from tuition — which enhanced university operations — and improvement in "liquidity and financial resources."

Although a level higher than B3, the B2 ranking is still considered "speculative and high risk," which can lead to continued high interest rates for YU from potential lenders.

In 2014, Moody's downgraded YU from B1 to B3 with a negative outlook, drawing attention to the university's deteriorating financial condition. Three years later in 2017,

Moody's determined the university's situation to be "stable," followed by an upgraded "positive" outlook for the next two years. However, last year, in light of the pandemic that financially crippled institutions across America, Moody's brought down its outlook of YU to "stable."

According to the report, YU can further improve its credit rating by sustaining revenue growth, controlling expenses and developing strategies to "invest in capital and programs to strengthen market competitiveness," among other suggestions.

The report also cautioned that several factors could downgrade YU's ranking,

including a "more rapid" decline in liquidity and a failure to reduce "operating deficits in line with expectations."

S&P 500, another major credit rating company, also upgraded YU's credit rating this year from "Negative" to "Stable" in its BBB- category.

As of publication, Vice President of Business Affairs and Chief Financial Officer Jacob Harman did not respond to The Commentator's request for comment.

Campuses and Events Receive Extra Security Due to Rise in Antisemitic Violence Across the US

By **JONATHAN LEVIN**

This article was published online on May 30.

Due to the recent spike of antisemitic incidents in the United States, enhanced security measures for Yeshiva University's campuses and events began last week. These steps were taken by the YU Security Department, the New York Police Department (NYPD) and by the New York State Police.

The Security Department informed the student body in an email sent out on Friday, May 21 that it would increase security measures, would be in close contact with the NYPD and would have their personnel available to escort students around campus. Both the Security Department and the NYPD declined to comment on any of the specific security measures on campus.

Antisemitic violence has risen globally — including a spike of 80% in the United States alone — since May 10, when Israel

and Hamas, a state department-designated terrorist group located in the Gaza Strip, began to clash. In the New York metropolitan area, these attacks consisted of the attempted torching of synagogues, and numerous incidents of gangs attacking Jews, in some cases with baseball bats and explosive devices.

on May 26 that "there will be an adequate security presence at the Yeshiva University commencement at Arthur Ashe Stadium," scheduled for that afternoon. The commencement passed without incident.

Due to the anti-Jewish violence, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and other

prejudice, they will be found."

The student response to the enhanced security measures has been positive. "I feel like it's the right move, and a safer environment for Jews in the city is better for both the Jews and the city," Ezra Emerson (SSSB '23) told The Commentator.

Other students felt similarly, but felt that the scaling back of certain services due to the pandemic has created headaches for security. "I wish the local shuttle would come back so we don't need to bother individual security guards to walk us back to our building at night," said Leah Feder (SCW '22). "Even so, every time I've asked security to walk me back they've been very helpful and welcoming and I truly appreciate all that they do."

The mayor's office did not respond to The Commentator's requests for comment.

"I feel like it's the right move, and a safer environment for Jews in the city is better for both the Jews and the city."

Ezra Emerson (SSSB '23)

On May 24, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that state troopers will begin providing extra security near Jewish institutions in New York City and the Lower Hudson Valley, which includes both of YU's campuses.

In response to an inquiry from The Commentator about security at Yeshiva University's 90th annual commencement, an NYPD spokesperson told The Commentator

government officials have met with representatives of the Jewish community, promising increased police presence and the arrest of the perpetrators of any antisemitic attacks. After one such meeting on Sunday, May 23, Mayor de Blasio — according to CNN — told reporters that "we will stomp out [antisemitism] anywhere we find it. It is unacceptable. This is a city that is for everyone, and anybody who perpetrates an act of bias and



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How Prof. Alan Broder Changed the Game for Hybrid Teaching

By GILAD MENASHE

This past year, as the vast majority of classes were operating at least partially online, Chair of Computer Science at Stern College for Women (SCW) Prof. Alan Broder set up a technological system for his hybrid classes that allowed for a more engaging experience for his virtual students without sacrificing the experience of those in-person.

Broder presented his slides to his students akin to a weatherman communicating a weather report. His image was displayed in front of the slides where he was able to indicate what was relevant, differing from the typical Zoom session where the professor teaches from the corner of the Zoom screen. The slides presented on the green screen were displayed to the in-person students on an additional monitor beside Broder. The in-person students managed the class by looking back and forth between the monitor beside Broder when observing content and directly at Broder when he lectured.

When Broder was having a back-and-forth discussion with a student, he shifted the Zoom image to a view from the corner of the classroom — similar to a security camera angle — so that the online students could see the entire communication.

Additionally, there were multiple speakers placed throughout the classroom for the virtual students to hear whoever was speaking at the same level of volume regardless of where the sound was being projected.

The system used two key technologies. The first was a microphone array system from the brand Acoustic Magic that captured sound from around the classroom. As mentioned before, the system allowed remote students to hear a speaker at the same volume no matter where they were in

the classroom, contrasting to a typical Zoom session where a participant could only hear whoever is closest to the speaker. The core system was the Blackmagic Design ATEM Mini, which was the control panel for the entire system. Broder was able to present his slides in a weatherman-type of format using this control panel along with a green screen. The Blackmagic Design control panel pro-

duced what was shown on the green screen. “The remote students have reported to me that they’re tremendously engaged and they feel that it’s almost as good as being in person,” Broder told The Commentator.

“Professor Broder’s dedication to teaching gave his students an unparalleled experience on Zoom, one that came close to in person classes.”

Talia Leitner (SCW '22)

duced what was shown on the green screen. “The remote students have reported to me that they’re tremendously engaged and they feel that it’s almost as good as being in person,” Broder told The Commentator.

Complicated technological systems are not foreign to Broder. He ran a computer software company for 15 years prior to teaching at SCW, where he has been teaching for the past eight years. He received this year’s Professor of the Year Award from SCW. The system he built perfectly demonstrates his dedication to his students and the effort he has put into giving them a top-quality education. “I put a lot of effort into being as engaging as I can with my students,” Broder said. “When I started watching the videos of myself using standard Zoom I knew that my students couldn’t possibly be engaged.”

Other additional equipment included theater lights to lighten up the image displayed on Zoom to students and a monitor in the back of the classroom for Broder to see the “gallery view” of his virtual students.

This system was set up at a staggering

cost of under \$3,000. “What I’ve demonstrated is you could use this system for not that much money,” Broder said. The system was funded by an outside grant received by the university.

Broder taught two courses this past semester, COMP 1300 and COMP 1320, which both utilized this system. “Professor Broder’s dedication to teaching gave his students an unparalleled experience on Zoom, one that came close to in person classes,” Talia Leitner (SCW '22) told The Commentator. “We all benefited from his commitment, and I was able to continue my computer science courses with very few glitches.”

Broder’s system exhibits that any educator willing to take simple efforts could ultimately change the quality of education given to their students. “I want other teachers here and at other universities to see how a small expense could deliver a much more engaging experience,” Broder advised. “This is not a substitute for normalcy, but if you have to do Zoom why not do it right?”

This technology was simply a temporary solution to the global health crisis. As the world returns to normalcy and as the university will be completely in-person this coming fall, the system will be unnecessary. But what Broder’s system has proven is that going the extra mile for the students generates better performance, a skill that all educators must possess in order to adapt to any situation and provide the greatest quality of education.

We Asked,
Y(O)U Answered

Expectations for Return to Normalcy

By DANIEL MELOOL AND
GILAD MENASHE

After more than a year of uncertainty, students are returning to campus fully in-person. Considering that the pandemic and its implications affected certain students differently than others, The Commentator has collected a few perspectives on how students are feeling about the world going back to normal.

Rivka Shavelson (SCW '23)
Major: Speech Pathology and Audiology

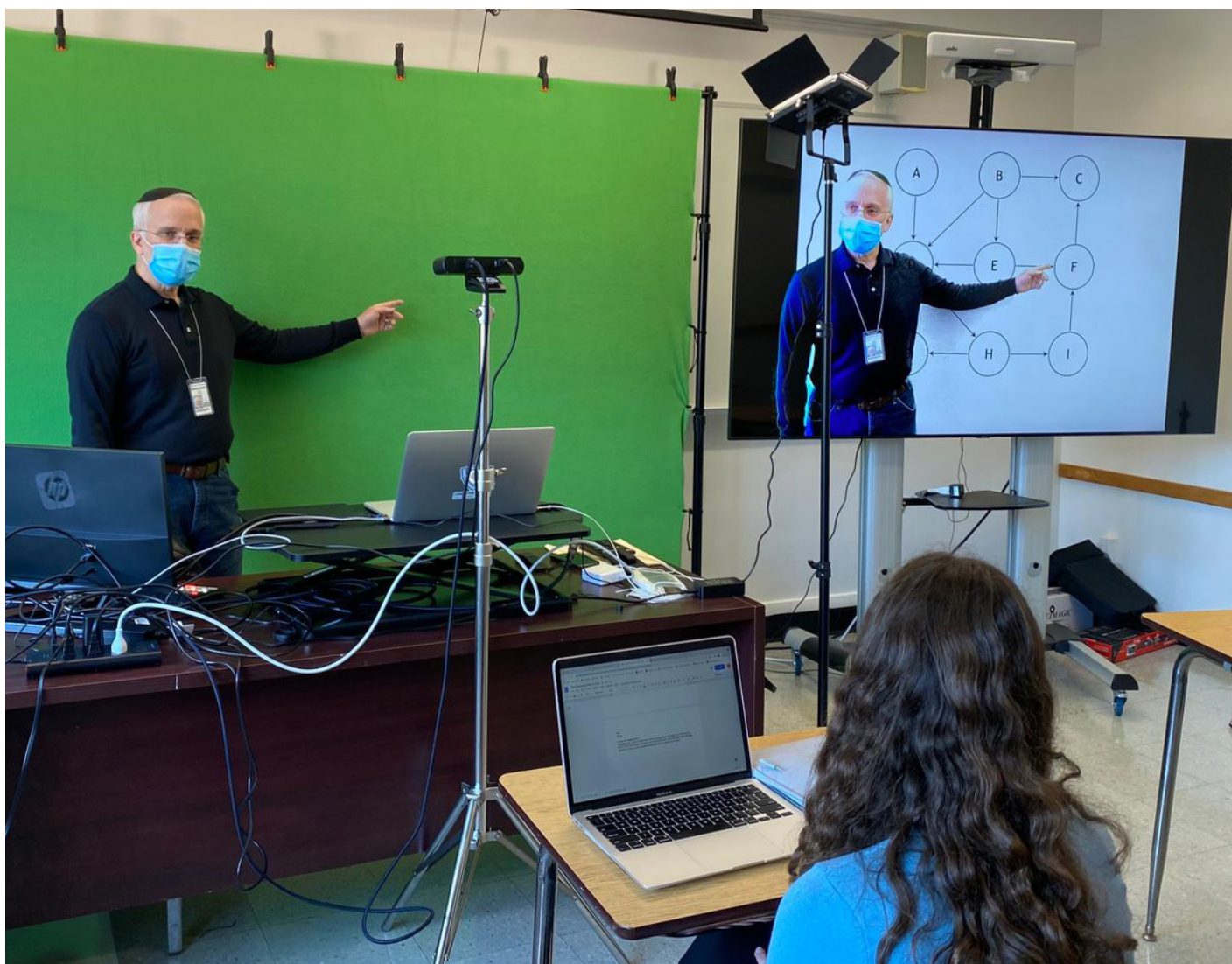
“I am definitely excited to be back in the classroom, learning alongside my peers and face-to-face with my professors. Despite the comfort and relief I feel from this return to normalcy, I am anxious about certain things as well. I am a second year student, but am still unfamiliar with the campus. Additionally, the day-to-day lifestyle change will contrast with my virtual habits that consisted of grabbing a snack from the fridge or taking a nap in between Zoom classes. I know that I’ll have to reprogram myself back to ‘real life.’ Although I am a little nervous, I am generally looking forward to this transition.

“The virtual classroom seemed to lend itself much more toward lecture-style teaching and less interactive learning. Though discussions are a vital part of the learning experience, lectures given on Zoom moved at a quicker pace and covered more ground than they would have in person. Additionally, many classes were recorded so that students could go back and listen to points they missed or needed clarification on. If I could keep anything from the virtual experience, I would keep the class recordings. This would aid students by allowing them to absorb material repeatedly.

“Being that this upcoming semester will be my first time on campus, it’s hard for me to pinpoint my expectations. I imagine, however, that campus will be livelier and busier both in the classrooms and dorms. I think that a full student body will enhance the YU experience and will provide a sense of excitement. I am sure there will also be technical issues in readjusting to a full student body such as classrooms being double-booked or the Caf running out of food. After the first month or so, I’m confident that things will function much more smoothly as everyone — students and staff included — will be better adjusted to the routine and expectations of living on campus.”

Binyamin Jachter (YC '23)
Major: Computer Science

“From the testing perspective, Zoom will never replace in-person testing. From the learning point of view, Zoom was just as good as absently watching a video online. If a class was pre-recorded, I can rewatch if necessary and email the professor if something isn’t fully clear. In-person is clearly superior in the capacity for learning. Even just being in a learning environment is better than a corner of your house.



Prof. Alan Broder has changed the game for hybrid classes.

TALIA LEITNER

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WE ASKED, Y(O)U ANSWERED
Continued from Page 14

“Making recorded classes standard would be incredibly helpful. I studied by listening to class recordings. It also benefits those who had an off day and couldn't focus to not fall behind as quickly. Granted, that may lead to others' feeling that class isn't required, but if you can perform well on exams and still be a part of the class, I don't think there is much to gain from having that attitude in the classroom anyway.

“I hope that the campus environment is back to complete normalcy, without the regulations of where and when students can hang out and the need for reservations to use facilities. As the world transitions back into normalcy, I expect YU to emulate that and reincorporate its pre-pandemic routines.”

Malka Kershner (SCW)
Major: Psychology

“I consider it a joy to return to in-person learning; however, the return to normalcy affects some students' level of comfortably attending school. Zoom allows students to join classes regardless of physical location. Students from all over the world can contribute to the classroom in an easily accessible fashion. While in-person classes are wonderful, I feel strongly that the addition of a virtual alternative is highly beneficial for both students and faculty.

“Zoom is a wonderful advancement in making programs and lessons accessible globally. This is beneficial on many levels for both students and faculty. While in-person classes require limited attendance, vaccination and other regulations and protocols, Zoom is safe, limitless, inclusive and forward thinking. I believe if YU were to provide options of both in-person and virtual attendance, the result would be positive and provide easier accessibility to students.”

Ilana Aidman (SCW '23)
Major: Studio Art

“I'm happy about the transition from Zoom back to fully in-person because I'll actually be able to pay attention in class and look at people's outfits. There is nothing from the virtual experience that I want to keep — it was so bad. I do hope that it stays common for people to stay on campus for Shabbos.

“I think that campus life will, hopefully, be full of people. I also don't think that masks will stay on as long as they did last year.”

Maybe I'm Wrong
Expressing Student Criticism Purpose Of Undergrad. Paper

by MYRON M. FENSTER
It becomes poignantly evident with each successive issue that many do not fully understand the scope and purpose of an undergraduate newspaper. The members of this staff who from time to time express their views herein are considered the bearers of only unpleasant, highly - exaggerated tidings with the result that any and all suggestions are usually ignored. This is grossly unfair.

In the past the opinion columns of "Commie" have been, on the whole, of a critical nature. But in all instances these have been offered in a strictly constructive manner, the aim being the improvement of an institution which we all hold dear. At no time has

University. Commentator exists so that these students may have a medium for their expression. Despite the protestations, despite the unbecoming cries of "reformers" and "revolutionaries", I think that any honest observer will readily admit that through the years this paper has been an instrument for good within these walls.

We are living through a period which sees the squelching of student opinion on all sides, in colleges throughout the country which were formerly noted for their liberality of thought. For that reason, Dr. Belkin is to be highly lauded for never having attempted to usurp our freedom by censoring the contents of this paper. This, despite pressure many times from highly influential sources. It may even surprise some to know that the editors fully appreciate the freedom of movement that has been offered to them and have never purposely profaned that freedom.

Unfortunately, no institution can be free of some internal deficiencies. We feel it incumbent



The Commentator Archives

THE COMMENTATOR

Hezbollah — What's Next?

By RAMI LEVIN

In the midst of the Israeli-Hamas crisis of 2021, from May 13 to 19, about a dozen rockets were fired from Lebanon into Israel. This was the first time since late 2015 that such an attack was carried out, breaking the unofficial ceasefire and paving the road for further attacks over the summer.

The next rockets over the Lebanese border would come two months later. On July 20, at 3:54 a.m., sirens went off in about ten towns in northern Israel. This time, only two rockets were fired.

The latest round of attacks on Israel proper occurred on Aug. 4, at 12:15 p.m.: Three rockets were fired, with two landing in Israel. Two days later, on Aug. 6, sirens went off in three towns in the Golan Heights.

These attacks give rise to a valid fear of war. With the current instability of the Lebanese Republic, the terrorist organization Hezbollah has functionally become, for many, the de-facto government. As such, Hezbollah would be aware of planned attacks along the Lebanese border with Israel.

Considering this pattern of attacks, it appears rockets will not stop for the near future. While the rockets launched in May could have been in response to Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, there isn't as clear of a reason why rocket attacks are happening now. This could indicate Hezbollah's desire

for a larger conflict with Israel. Hassan Nasrallah, the chief of Hezbollah, has openly said they will retaliate against future Israeli airstrikes.

Another Lebanon-Israeli war would be disastrous. Hezbollah is estimated to have 40,000 to 150,000 rockets. Such a bar-

These attacks give rise to a valid fear of war.

rage would absolutely overwhelm the Iron Dome. And, unlike Hamas's rockets, these are military grade.

Fortunately, escalation is not guaranteed. For one, Hezbollah has not claimed responsibility for any of the following attacks, except for the launches into the Golan Heights. The attack that occurred on July 20, for example, was claimed by the Palestine Islamic Jihad, a terrorist organization affiliated with Hamas. While other attacks are unclaimed, Hezbollah's denial of responsibility could be viewed as sort of a "de-escalation."

More significantly, none of these attacks have resulted in any casualties on either side. Many rockets launched at Israel are landing in empty fields, and those that aren't have been intercepted by the Iron Dome. Israeli airstrikes into Lebanon have also not caused casualties. Effectively, current rocket fire is for "show," not for actual

damage. Also notable is that Nasrallah has said Hezbollah will retaliate to airstrikes "in a suitable and proportionate way." If he holds to this standard, Hezbollah would not escalate to an open conflict.

It should be noted that Hezbollah is not Hamas. Here's why that is important.

Hamas is the government of the Gaza strip. They have full control over their territory, using courts to punish those deemed criminal. The only way to expand is conflict with Israel. The same cannot be said of Hezbollah in Lebanon where the government is still functioning. Hezbollah still has more internal room to "grow." An open conflict with Israel would weaken Hezbollah and limit their ability to gain further control of Lebanon. At the same time, however, Hezbollah is funded by Iran. Indeed, Hezbollah has been called an Iranian proxy. As Iran speeds up uranium enrichment and Israel contemplates striking Iran, Hezbollah might be influenced to launch rockets as a distraction. This would put Hezbollah at a crossroads: Attack Israel and be put under greater Iranian influence, or have a cold peace while establishing a stronger grasp over Lebanon.

What will Hezbollah do next? Such remains to be seen. For now, expect bloodless shows of force, with a possibility of a sharp escalation.

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES
(January 1, 1948; Volume 26, Issue 5) — Maybe I'm Wrong: Expressing Student Criticism Purpose Of Undergrad Paper

By MYRON M. FENSTER

Editor's Note: Since its founding, The Commentator has been a paper of free thought and diverse opinion. Below is an editorial from the 26th volume's managing editor, Myron M. Fenster, discussing the importance of the constructive criticism often expressed in the paper. As we are in the month of Ellul, this piece serves as a reminder that in the quest for self-betterment, one should be constructive and not destructive.

It becomes poignantly evident with each successive issue that many do not fully understand the scope and purpose of an undergraduate newspaper. The members of this staff who from time to time express their views herein are considered the bearers of only unpleasant, highly-exaggerated tidings with the result that any and all suggestions are usually ignored. This is grossly unfair.

In the past the opinion columns of "Commie" have been, on the whole, of a critical nature. But in all instances these have been offered in a strictly constructive manner, the aim being the improvement of an institution which we all hold dear. At no time has any criticism purposely been given in a derisive manner either to individuals or groups. Why some consider a divergence of opinion a sign of disrespect or why they feel personally affronted or insulted when our opinion disagrees with theirs is difficult to understand.

I would be the first to agree that in the past the Commentator may have been wrong on certain issues. We do not claim to be infallible, perfectionists being requested

to turn elsewhere. "Commie" has always stood for forthright uncensored opinion of the student body of Yeshiva College, without waiting years to express that opinion and without waiting to see whether or not it could stand the test of time. In all instances majority opinion is expounded. Whether it be dramatics or pleas for a militant Zionism we feel the will of the student body of Yeshiva College is being expressed. Dissenting student opinion is heartily welcomed. I can truthfully state that I have never barred these pages to any student in this institution. Our sole purpose is to record student opinion.

'Commie' has always stood for forthright uncensored opinion of the student body of Yeshiva College, without waiting years to express that opinion and without waiting to see whether or not it could stand the test of time.

We do not for one moment contend that our knowledge is equal to that of our teachers and leaders, but to us the students are the most important, the pivotal part of this University. Commentator exists so that these students may have a medium for their expression. Despite the protestations, despite the unbecoming cries of "reformers" and "revolutionaries," I think that any honest observer will readily admit that through the years this paper has been an instrument

for good within these walls. We are living through a period which sees the squelching of student opinion on all sides, in colleges throughout the country which were formerly noted for their liberality of thought. For that reason, Dr. Belkin is to be highly lauded for never having attempted to usurp our freedom by censoring the content of this paper. This, despite pressure many times from highly influential sources. It may even surprise some to know that the editors fully appreciate the freedom of movement that has been offered to them and have never purposely profaned that freedom.

Unfortunately, no institution can be free of some internal deficiencies. We feel it incumbent upon us to point these out from the students' viewpoint with hope of their early amelioration. Instead of disregarding all criticism as just so much blasting by well-meaning but politically naive individuals, it would seem worth the administration while to actually look into some of the suggestions to see if they are sound or not.

What is most important of all, I feel that readers construing our opinions as being directed against the core of Yeshiva are committing a gross injustice to us.

Regrettably enough, a certain Jewish weekly, always prone to play up the dissident forces of Orthodox Judaism, has found these pages fruitful hunting grounds. Perhaps they will also be interested in what is to follow. Despite all the criticism, which is done only in the hope of self-betterment, the students, including the "reformers" and the "revolutionaries," consider this institution unparalleled as far as erudition and liberality is concerned. They consider it a true symbol of Orthodox Judaism of which we all may feel extremely proud.

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I Thought Rape Culture Didn't Exist at YU — Until I Was Raped

By ANONYMOUS

Editor's Note: Under normal circumstances, The Commentator does not publish articles anonymously, but given the exceptionally sensitive nature of this piece, we have decided to grant the author anonymity.

Content Warning: This article mentions and briefly describes the author's sexual assault, which may be upsetting to some readers.

When I first heard about the conversations of rape culture on college campuses, I remember thinking to myself that surely rape could never happen at Yeshiva University. Then it happened to me this past year.

In retrospect, I realize I had felt falsely protected by the morals and values that are the founding pillars of our institution. He was also a YU student, and he was on the men's basketball team; we agreed to hang out for a little while, and then he raped me. I still remember the shock I was in as I sat in the hospital the day after the rape. My heavy thoughts quickly changed from "it could never happen at YU" to "did this really just happen at YU?" Part of me did not want to believe that it happened in our institution, but I am now forced to realize that a school like Yeshiva University essentially acts as a sanctuary for rapists, since the school system allows them to walk freely while forcing victims to suffer in silence and pain.

I can sometimes be a very trusting person, especially when it comes to other people at my school, so naturally, I trusted him. I do not wish to go into details, but when he proceeded to hold me down and respond to my "no" with "but it's fun," I knew that I could no longer trust anyone at YU. The feeling of his body holding me down with no escape will forever be engraved in my mind. I explicitly told him I did not want to have sex, I remember telling him "no," but that word had no meaning in his mind. He had already decided he would not take "no" for an answer. "But it's fun," he said. That clearly had more weight in his mind, since it was the last thing he said before he raped me.

I won't lie. I felt completely lost and confused for the months following the rape. Immediately afterward, I did not want to tell the school. I was extremely hesitant. Everything was so fresh. I was not even sure how to process it. I told some of my friends about what happened, but my mind still could not process the violation both my body and mind were going through. I only decided to take matters to the school after a professor yelled at me for missing a class and the work for that class.

I simply wasn't sure how to explain to the professor that I was sexually assaulted two nights prior or that I had to go to the hospital to get a rape kit and have testing done during class. Overwhelmed with the situation and the inability to explain to the professor what had happened, I burst out in tears. The professor then proceeded to

not to go to the police or the school immediately after the assault.

In truth, the outcome had proven why I wanted to keep silent. The duration and back-and-forth with the school felt like an eternity, and the time spent waiting for the school's response afterward seemed like no less of an eternity. What I was made to

Sometimes I feel as if telling the school was almost as painful and hard to go through as the rape itself.

kick me out of class as they did not understand what was happening. That was when I knew I needed to face the discomfort of the situation and contact the school. When I reached out to Vice Provost Nissel's office, I decided to keep the perpetrator completely anonymous because at the time I felt so much shame and guilt for what had happened: I felt guilty for being so trusting of my fellow YU student, and I felt bad for possibly ruining his life just as he had done to mine a few nights before.

The school continuously asked me to give over the name, as they claimed they could only help me if I gave it over. They claimed that giving over the name would not only ensure my safety but the safety of other female students on campus. I finally gave over the name, and the school took over from there. They made me and my rapist sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) before anything was done, which I was made to believe would have a positive outcome. I am limited in what I can share about the school's involvement because of that NDA.

Since formal claims were made with the university that a member of the basketball team raped me, another player on the team decided to slut-shame me in a semi-public place, calling me a "whore" and "slut." He told me, "You're so dumb for letting this happen to you." As a member of another athletics team, this is extremely surprising considering the NCAA goes to great lengths for sexual harassment trainings.

Sometimes I feel as if telling the school was almost as painful and hard to go through as the rape itself. I was alone and continuously had to give over my story — every single detail — some of which I could not remember because I felt as though my brain had partially shut off during the rape in order to protect myself. The same repression that protected me also made me feel dumb, as the school would ask the most technical of questions about the incident. It was a consistently unfortunate and overwhelming conflict.

At one point, I was questioned by a man as to why I chose not to go to the police. I answered that I was scared, shocked and alone. He thought it was ridiculous. The man made me feel bad about myself and second guess myself because I had chosen

believe would be a quick investigation extended over the course of three months, in which every day I would anxiously refresh my email for any updates on what was going to happen. The process felt like a re-traumatization of what I had been through — like I was still holding on to the incident that I would do anything to let go of — and each day of waiting was just adding to that trauma.

Finally, I received an answer, but not the one I was looking for. Vice Provost Nissel's office gave me the news that "it's usually hard to prove something happened when only two people were there." This left me in complete shock. My heart sank. My world was turned upside down. I had developed a sense of hope that after months of worrying and pain, I might finally be validated and heard, but I was not. The same people who had constantly encouraged me to go through this painful process — all the while promising that I would feel safe again — seemed to have pretty much known from the start that nothing would come from it.

The school has refused to do anything to

make me feel safe on campus this upcoming year. Since getting the results I have reached out multiple times concerning my safety in the library and other spaces on campus as I will be on campus again this coming year. I have been told to just deal with it and that nothing can be done by YU — not one thing. The perpetrator is a player on the men's basketball team, so I also reached out to the Athletics Department. It turns out that it's simply not in the school's interest to prevent me from running into my rapist again. I am not sure why YU has chosen to ignore me and try to silence me, but I think it has to do with the reputation of the basketball team.

After this happened, I started to realize that there is indeed a rape culture at Yeshiva University, and it enables rapists to rape without fear of getting in trouble. YU is not an exception to the rule — its founding pillars have become weak. Every student deserves to feel safe on campus, and right now, they do not. The moral structure is collapsing, and I experienced one of its fatal breachings. Students are not safe on campus, and the school cares too much about its image to restore its values or do anything about it. Rape culture is real at YU, and it needs to be taken seriously.

If you or anyone you know needs help and support, you can call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-4673 or visit Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network's website at rainn.org. If you would like to share your story with The Commentator, please email [Sruli Fruchter at srulifruchter@gmail.com](mailto:SruliFruchter@gmail.com); any information you share is completely confidential.



Wilf Campus

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

University Statement

By YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Editor's Note: The following statement was sent to The Commentator following our recent publication of the article, "I Thought Rape Culture Didn't Exist at YU — Until I Was Raped." While we usually include university statements in news pieces, we have decided to publish this here.

Yeshiva University is dedicated to engaging everyone with respect and dignity while providing a safe and secure environment for our students, faculty, and the entire YU Community. To this end, we have extensive policies and procedures in place, required by Title IX, to address allegations of sexual misconduct in which all complaints are investigated fully and comprehensively. YU also conducts annual harassment and misconduct training for staff and students. While the law very clearly re-

stricts what we are allowed to share to protect the parties involved, we treat this and all allegations in a caring, sensitive, and compassionate manner. As is our standard practice in sexual misconduct complaints, we immediately retained independent investigators to conduct a comprehensive inquiry into the allegations and a final determination was made based on a full evaluation of all available information.

Based on the advice of outside legal counsel, prior to delivery of the report, an

NDA was signed by the parties in order to protect the confidentiality of the investigation and the integrity of the process. The NDA did not in any way restrict any party from speaking about the incident or their experience. In addition, at the beginning and throughout the process, the University informs all complainants that they can go to the police with the full support of the University.

An Unmitigated Disaster: The Pullout From Afghanistan

By **ELISHAMA MARMON**

Over the course of only a few days, the Afghan military and national government fell to the Taliban terror group. But the Taliban's resurgence and the government's collapse were entirely preventable, caused entirely by bad decisions made at the top levels of American leadership.

The United States first sent troops into Afghanistan in the aftermath of 9/11. Now, almost 20 years later, we have left. There are two large questions here: First, should the US have withdrawn its troops, and second, did we execute the withdrawal in the best possible way?

This entire episode has shown the world one thing: America is a bad ally.

The US has sunk, in popular parlance, a lot of "blood and treasure" into Afghanistan. That can be measured at nearly a trillion dollars, 2,300 US troops killed and 20,660 Americans injured. That is a high cost, but when deciding between staying in Afghanistan and leaving, it's critical to note two things — timeline and benefits.

At the conflict's peak, the US had 110,000 troops in Afghanistan. Since 2015, however, we have had only about 10,000 troops in Afghanistan, and that was lowered to about 2,500 by 2021. Spending has been reduced to under 40 billion dollars a year, and we've averaged under 14 fatalities a year since 2015, including over a year without a single one. That was not a "forever war." That was not a large US force when you consider that we have more troops in Italy, the UK, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Spain, Qatar, Japan and Germany. The war in Afghanistan was no more a "forever war" than WWII, and in recent years we had pulled back to such a small force that we could have easily sustained it in perpetuity.

But what was the return for this modest expenditure? The goal of the war in Afghanistan was rooted in 9/11 and the death of over 3,000 innocent American citizens. After the Taliban, who harbored al-Qaeda, refused to give up 9/11 mastermind Osama bin Laden, we began combat operations. We routed the Taliban, killed bin Laden, and, as a side benefit, brought an unprecedented

amount of freedom to the Afghan people. Most significantly, for 20 years there were no more 9/11s. There were no more attacks on American soil originating in Afghanistan. With our withdrawal, the risk of the next 9/11 is elevated significantly.

So the withdrawal itself was a foolhardy mission. But even many people who were interested in withdrawing are currently unhappy with the situation. For that matter, this withdrawal has been such a disaster that the number of Americans who support it dropped from 73% in April to just 45% now. What went wrong?

The short answer is everything. We pulled out our last troops before we evacuated our embassy or, for that matter, got our citizens and allies out. Now, that embassy has been taken over, and our people — over 10,000 Americans and 85,000 Afghans — are trapped under Taliban rule. We abandoned the larger Bagram Airport without informing our allies, and now we no longer have the airport capacity for effective evacuations. We negotiated with the Taliban, and may have paid them off, to let people get to the airport at all. Now, not only are our people at their mercy, but we only have until their Aug. 31 deadline to get the Americans out. And what about the Americans unable to get out before then? It seems at this point that we will simply abandon them, along with our Afghan allies, to the tender mercy of the Taliban, which has a track record of brutal and heartless attacks on those they consider to be enemies. In the meantime, people are passing their babies over the airport's barbed wire fence to get them out of the country, and others are hopelessly clinging to planes as they take off, plummeting to their deaths.

This is before touching on the effect on the people of Afghanistan, including but not limited to: Taliban massacres, journalists being targeted, girls being restricted from certain jobs and schools and pictures of women being painted over. Americans, Christians and anyone who helped the previous regime have to worry about the Taliban's door-to-door searches, the checkpoints where Taliban officials are checking papers and destroying many people's documents, and much more.

There are only two possibilities as to what happened here: either there was a complete breakdown in the intelligence coming out of Afghanistan, or the intel was accurate and some people made terrible decisions. Reports coming out over the last few days point toward the latter.

So where did the withdrawal go wrong?

Here, we arrive, finally, at the commander-in-chief of the United States armed forces, whose approval, if not leadership, created this mess: Joe Biden. His messaging about this has been confusing, even downright contradictory. Not only that, but he lied to the American people.

He described the situation in Afghanistan as an "endless war" which would add "endless rows of headstones at Arlington National Cemetery." This, as discussed above, is a completely false claim to make about the situation he inherited. He claimed he had no choice due to the deal that the Trump administration made with the Taliban, despite the fact that the Taliban violated the terms of that agreement, and that Biden has proven completely willing to get rid of many Trump deals he didn't like. He claimed, in a ridiculous smear, that the Afghan army's collapse proved that they were not willing to fight the Taliban, despite the fact that the Afghan army has lost over 70,000 troops over the course of this conflict, far more than the US ever did.

Furthermore, on July 8 the president assured the world that the odds of "the Taliban overrunning everything and owning the whole country is highly unlikely." This proved to be incorrect and to conflict with many intelligence reports now being released to the public. He then claimed during an Aug. 18th interview that chaos was always going to be part of the withdrawal and that this was in fact the best it could have gone. If that's true, not only does it raise questions about his previous briefings, but also about why he

scheduled a vacation for a time of crisis. In the same interview he callously dismissed the people who had fallen from planes, saying (falsely), "that was four days ago-five days ago". He asserted that no one was dying at the Kabul Airport (which is incorrect), that the US has no troops in Syria (incorrect) and that he wasn't told by his own advisers to leave troops there (evidence says this is also incorrect).

This entire episode has shown the world one thing: America is a bad ally. We betrayed the Afghan army, cutting off their air support, intelligence and even contractors to maintain their vehicles, and then blamed them for their loss. We betrayed our coalition partners, leaving them under an oppressive regime with no way out. And we betrayed thousands of our own citizens, leaving them stranded in Afghanistan with no guarantee of their safety as they try to escape.

What does this mean for our geopolitics? President Biden has made the unbelievably false claim that our adversaries would like nothing more than for us to stay in Afghanistan. But all evidence suggests otherwise. It seems more likely that our adversaries — China, Russia, North Korea, Iran — are overjoyed in seeing a weak America unwilling to help its allies, led by a weak President unable to handle crises.

What message will Taiwan take from this? What about Hong Kong? Israel? Can they trust the United States, particularly this administration, to stand by them in their own struggles? Recent events unfortunately suggest not.



US Marines at a Kabul Airport evacuation checkpoint, Aug. 20, 2021

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Pundit

What the Events in Afghanistan Tell Us About American Foreign Policy

By **ALEX FRIEDMAN**

Editor's Note: This article is the first in a new Commentator column called The Pundit, developed in partnership with the Dunner Political Science Society. It is a platform for students to express and share diverse perspectives on politics and current events. For more information about the society, and to write for The Pundit, email Alex at ajfried4@mail.yu.edu.

Recent headlines have been dominated by the drama and horror occurring in Afghanistan following the withdrawal of American forces from the country and the

subsequent takeover by the Taliban. While America's withdrawal was supposed to mark the end of a nearly 20-year-long war, America was forced to send troops back into Afghanistan after the Taliban swept through the country and regained power in a mere 11 days. It is obvious that the withdrawal of forces did not go according to plan, and the scenes of the American embassy being hastily evacuated and the chaos at Kabul Airport have turned the withdrawal into a humanitarian disaster and a crisis for the Biden administration.

Of course, in the days following the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, it seemed the focus on every politician's mind turned to blame, with most of it directed at President

Biden. However, Biden was not the only target; many Democrats blamed President Trump for the crisis because of his deal with the Taliban last year, setting a May 31 deadline for American troops to withdraw without handing over a proper plan to the Biden administration. Some commentators even blamed President Obama for Afghanistan's collapse while some went as far back as President George W. Bush. In reality, the responsibility for recent events in Afghanistan probably lies on the shoulders of all four. However, trying to assign blame does nothing to change what happened, does not immediately tell us what we can do differently in the future and certainly does not help the people of Afghanistan. Instead of

casting blame, we should be learning from what happened so we can ensure that US foreign policy changes for the better and that the current events in Afghanistan are never repeated.

While watching all of the coverage from Afghanistan, the thing that struck me most was the Taliban's attempts to appease the West and launch a PR campaign on Western media outlets. Watching any of the major news outlets, you would see the Taliban's English spokesperson, Suhail Shaheen, speaking to the likes of CNN and the BBC, saying that women's rights and freedom of speech would be protected and that there will be no retaliation against former Afghan

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THE PUNDIT

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officials. Listening to this spokesperson, as well as to the Taliban Press Conferences in Kabul, it would seem the Taliban is building a pluralistic and democratic state that protects the rights of all. Of course, the reality is far from that. The Taliban has already returned to some of their brutal ways, and the fact that the Taliban is building a sophisticated international PR campaign to show the world that they are upholding Western values is startling.

As New York Times reporter Max Fisher put it: "The result is head-spinning scenes like Mr. Mujahid's [the Taliban's spokesman] press event, with hardened fighters toiling to appease the very foreign powers they dedicated their lives to expelling, and trying to smooth over the hard-line ideology that animates their movement." And the audience could not be clearer. China has already taken steps to recognize the Taliban's regime, and Russia has indicated they are willing to engage with the Taliban. For the Taliban, the last big prize remaining, and really the most important prize, is legitimacy from America and its partners. This strange dichotomy is not new. Indeed, it has been demonstrated before by newly formed governments.

For example, when the Muslim Brotherhood came to power in Egypt in 2012, stoking fears that the country would

take a radical and anti-Western shift, the new President, Mohammed Morsi, reassured America and its allies such as Israel that Egypt's agreements would stay intact

This, coupled with existing sanctions by the US and other countries on the Taliban, will make it impossible for the Taliban to govern effectively. These sanctions make it difficult

Instead of casting blame, we should be learning from what happened so we can ensure that US foreign policy changes for the better and that the current events in Afghanistan are never repeated.

and that he would undertake a "balanced" foreign policy. But, unlike Morsi and almost any modern government that has come to power, the Taliban has been a sworn enemy of the US for decades, one whose cooperation with American soldiers and diplomats would seem unthinkable just a few years ago. But it is happening right now.

Above all, what this shift in the Taliban's attitude tells us is how important legitimacy in the eyes of America is for any aspiring government. America has created an international system dominated by itself and its partners, reliant on the US dollar and full of American-led international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. Soon after the Taliban took power, the US froze billions of dollars in Afghan government reserves placed in US bank accounts.

for international and humanitarian aid to enter Afghanistan as well.

After 800,000 American troops deployed, 2,352 Americans killed, 20,000 wounded and more than two trillion dollars spent, it seems we are back to square one — with America's reputation in international

engagements ruined. However, the aftermath of the collapse of Afghanistan has demonstrated that America's influence and economic power still rule, even when its military's credibility suffers. Just a few days in governance has shown the Taliban that their only successful path in maintaining their governance is not with Chinese or Russian support but with American support. Will the Taliban change their ways? Most certainly not, but that doesn't mean America cannot change. The future strength of American foreign policy is not in the Defense Department, but in the State and Treasury Departments, as well as in international organizations. As President Biden himself said at his inauguration speech, "We will lead not merely by the example of our power but by the power of our example."



Afghanistan, 2011

CPL SAM SHEPHERD

On Hamas Rockets, the Sheikh Jarrah Crisis and Fighting Antisemitism Online

By AVIGAIL WINOKUR

This article was published online May 12.

As I'm writing this, over 1,050 rockets have been launched by Hamas into Southern and Central Israel. At least five Israelis and an Indian caretaker have been murdered by those Hamas rockets, and at least nine Palestinian children have been killed (along with 47 other people, both civilians and Hamas militants), due both to Israeli retaliation strikes and some likely by a Hamas rocket misfire. 21-year-old IDF Sergeant Omer Tabib was murdered by a Hamas anti-tank missile fire.

Jews have been nearly lynched for taking a wrong turn into a Palestinian village (only to be saved by a righteous local), and Palestinians have been teargassed and shot. Terrorists have been attacked, Hamas targets have been neutralized and our country is on fire. There are videos of children on both sides of the Gaza border cowering in fear. It's impossible to fully capture and recount the scope of the violence happening,

It's by far the worst rocket warfare in the last decade.

There is a war brewing, if not ensuing. Operation Guardian of the Walls.

I have friends in the IDF, and though as women they won't be on the front lines, they are gearing up their soldiers. They don't know what tomorrow is going to bring.

The current violence is pervasive, dis-

in a fortified shelter. That is, those who are lucky enough to have one nearby. They're sometimes scarce in Jerusalem apartments because Jerusalem isn't usually subject to rocket threats and red alerts.

I was living in Jerusalem up until a month ago. Had this happened then, it would have been me hearing red alert sirens and watching the Iron Dome disintegrate

To bring peace, we have to understand that the past, present and future of Israelis and Palestinians are irrevocably intertwined. There is no future or self-determination of one group without the other.

turbing, and feels deeply personal. There are videos of desecrated synagogues in Ramla, a town where I was just over a month ago. A similar event in Lod today was dubbed a "Kristallnacht in Lod" by the town's mayor. My good friends and family, located all over the country, have spent a good portion of their last 24 hours hiding

rockets before my eyes. That would have been me spending my nights in a bomb shelter, listening to explosions overhead, knowing that mayhem and destruction lie outside. That could have been me ducking for cover on Ben Yehuda street, with nowhere to go in the 90 seconds one has to take cover.

Eid al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan, is on Wednesday. I wonder if the three dead Palestinian children were planning activities for the festivities for one of the most joyous days in the Muslim calendar. They would be alive if Hamas respected the sanctity of life. Those children are only dead because Hamas values agenda-fueled warfare over the security of its people.

I don't know how to feel.

Many YU students have seen YUPAC's Instagram account, @yupac21. For more information about what sparked the current tension, the Sheikh Jarrah Crisis, I recommend checking out our infographic as a start. That is just as a start because historical and legal land battles cannot be summarized into an eight-slide infographic.

That leads me to what I wanted to write about today. Because of my role as YUPAC's PR director (and incoming co-president), I spend a lot of time monitoring and updating our social media page. We try and present

the most non-partisan, factual view of current events as it relates to Israel in a way that will reach the largest audience.

Because of the time I've spent on this platform, I've been exposed to neo-Nazis, Israeli and Palestinian extremists, and misinformed Americans. I've seen both American laymen and politicians believe that their surface-level knowledge of a nuanced and complicated conflict gives them the right to speak out from the comfort of their North American homes.

What I know is this: Israel has an undeniable and inalienable right to both exist and defend itself. Posting #FreePalestine while presenting a demonizing, double-standard and delegitimizing view of Israel (see Natan Sharansky's 3Ds) will NOT bring Palestinians any freedom. It only perpetuates antisemitism.

Don't get me wrong. I think there's a large gap in our pro-Israel education. Those of us that attended Zionist day schools know what I'm talking about. We receive an education that is largely one-sided. This is the same criticism many of us have of those who are posting only the Palestinian perspective on social media.

Through a lot of research and exposure to multifaceted opinions, conversations with people who think differently than me, both Israeli and Palestinian, I've come to realize a few things. To truly be pro-Israel, one needs to recognize Israel's flaws, acknowledge areas for improvement, and most importantly, recognize the suffering that the Palestinian people have had to endure (at the hands of their own leaders and the Israeli government). As long as the criticism is with the intent to improve, one can safely do so outside of violating Sharansky's 3Ds.

To be very clear, I'm saying this as an outspoken and proud Zionist. You can find proof of that on both my personal social media pages and YUPAC's.

True Zionism is not equivalent to hatred of Palestinians. To bring peace, we have to understand that the past, present and



House in Israel Destroyed by Hamas Rocket

ISRAELI DEFENSE FORCES

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MassChallenge Israel: Where YU and Startup Nation Collide

By NAFTALI SHAVELSON

I woke up the morning of my flight, passport ready and headphones charged, to a text that my trip was cancelled. For the second time. I had signed on for the inaugural season of YU MassChallenge Israel, a summer internship program run by YU in partnership with the eponymous startup accelerator, but our flight kept getting delayed due to a COVID-related visa backlog at the Israeli Ministry of the Interior. Somewhat disheartened, I re-unpacked my suitcase.

Two days later, though, the daybreak text read “WE ARE ON!” shadowed by no fewer than 14 Israeli flag emoji. And the following afternoon, jet-lagged and bleary-eyed, I and my fellow interns tumbled out of a creaking minibus in the middle of YU’s suburban Jerusalem campus.

It was worth the wait. I spent the next two months at the Israel branch of MassChallenge, a global zero-equity accelerator which provides Israeli and international early-stage companies the resources, training and connections they need to thrive in the modern business world. In my specific role, I helped build links between entrepreneurs and corporate partners in an effort to keep our corner of the Israeli innovation machine running as smoothly as possible. Two other interns and I worked directly at MassChallenge, and half a dozen others were paired with various startups that had graduated from its accelerator in years prior. Our work experience, despite being stuffed with hours of cold calls and Excel spreadsheets, was often exciting and always eye-opening, exposing us to fascinating and unexpected aspects of Israeli business culture. (The degree to which projects are equitable and collaborative has no parallel on Madison Avenue or Wall Street. Nor, of course, do the sandals people wear to the office.)

The summer seemed to end as abruptly as it began. On the evening of July 26th, guests filtered into the courtyard of the MassChallenge Israel headquarters, housed in the old Shaarei Tzedek building on Jaffa Street. String lights blinked on, casting a rich glow on the inventors, investors and innovators milling about the outdoor venue. A few taps on the mic indicated that the keynote was about to begin. Seats were taken, conversations halted. Against a purple Jerusalem sky, judges announced the nine winners of the 2021 accelerator cohort, selected from the class of 42 to go

HAMAS ROCKETS

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future of Israelis and Palestinians are irrevocably intertwined. There is no future or self-determination of one group without the other.

As much as people would like to pretend that the existence of the other is an impassable barrier for their respective statehoods, that is a false pipe dream that will frankly bring no one closer to peace. However, the importance of criticizing Israel CANNOT be used as a justification for calling thinly-veiled antisemitism criticism of Israel (again, Sharaknsky’s 3Ds).

This is why I mourn the death of Yehuda Guetta, a 19-year-old student who died after a drive-by shooting last week, and the three other yet unnamed victims of the rocket attacks. But I also mourn the deaths of the Palestinian children. I mourn the death of 16-year-old Said Odeh, who was a civilian killed in clashes with the IDF. Life is sacred.

I blame Hamas entirely for these deaths. Without Hamas violence, there would be no reason for retaliation. No reason for more bloodshed.

While some may think that in an ideal

on a fundraising roadshow in New York and Boston. Triumphant founders and ecstatic co-founders wept over their glimmering crystal trophies and even brighter prospects, the whirring of the light rail providing a sort of abstract commentary off in the distance.

I loved the work from beginning to end,

Fundamentally, YU would be able to further actualize its core Zionist values, bringing the next generation of world Jewry to its historic homeland and fostering bilateral flourishing in terms of physical safety, economic development and spiritual growth.

but the extracurricular experience was similarly impressive. At YU’s campus on Duvdevani Street, we enjoyed an open Beit Midrash and numerous *shiurim* by figures from inside and outside the YU community. Once a week, the ten of us would board that same creaky minibus to the headquarters of an Israeli high tech company, where we met researchers and executives who shared their stories and introduced us to the pioneering projects undertaken by their respective organizations. And on the rides there and back, we got to know each other too, forming and solidifying friendships sure to last well beyond the conclusion of the program.

Such a positive summer experience got us thinking that YU could and should facilitate footholds for its students in Israel in more serious ways. And the need could not be more pressing. Key events over the past few years have accelerated certain social trends that have been bubbling below the surface of Information Age society for quite some time. The pandemic has snowballed an embrace of remote and hybrid work, and resulting job insecurity especially among young people has solidified shifts away from the liberal arts and toward concrete vocational training, especially in tech-related fields. Unease with standardized testing and traditional grading has led academic institutions to move away from or completely abandon such touchstones. Very recently, stock market volatility and unprecedented access to equities markets has exposed Gen. Z to retail investing and the corporate culture it brings with it. Closer to home, political developments across the globe have shocked diaspora Jewry out of complacency in the face of rising antisemitism, and driven record numbers of young Western Jews to

world, Israel would be a state reminiscent of the Kingdom of Judea, flourishing as it did under the rule of King David, that is not the reality. Israel is a vibrant, multicultural and multireligious country. It is the only safe place for LGBTQ people in the Middle East, relative to countries like Iran, where 20-year-old Ali Fazeli Monfared was killed in an “honor killing” for being gay. For the most part, all citizens of Israel enjoy equal rights.

In fact, the Israeli Supreme Court, which is adjudicating the Sheik Jarrah case, has a sitting Arab justice, George Karra. How many Arab countries have a sitting Jewish justice on their supreme court? How many even have a supreme court?

On a deeply emotional level, I am enraged and disturbed by the antisemitism and misinformation perpetuated by influencers on social media. Presenting one side of a conflict does no one justice. And that goes for both people presenting just the Israeli side of the conversation and people presenting just the Palestinian side.

This isn’t me pointing fingers or “fence-sitting.” This is understanding that nuance

consider building new lives for themselves in the Jewish State.

To me, this geopolitical crucible represents a perfect opportunity for YU to launch a more permanent version of our summer-long internship program. Repackaged as a YU semester abroad, the initiative could

see students take Brand Management on Mondays... and go to work at local startups on Tuesdays to put their coursework into practice for actual brands. A longer-term partnership with MassChallenge and its alumni could provide a steady stream of relevant employment options in diverse sectors. Classes could, at least initially, be a mix of virtual and in-person to maximize the university’s resources across New York and Jerusalem. Employee performance metrics at the internships could complement

traditional grading and examination.

Fundamentally, YU would be able to further actualize its core Zionist values, bringing the next generation of world Jewry to its historic homeland and fostering bilateral flourishing in terms of physical safety, economic development and spiritual growth.

Morning following the MassChallenge finale was bright and quiet, with a slight breeze. We spent it deconstructing — taking apart tables and lugging their components into storage, organizing and itemizing unclaimed notebooks and party favors, untying flags and pennants from the building’s exterior walls and watching them flutter softly to the ground. As I worked, primeval dust from the Shaarei Tzedek cellars mixed on my palms with nascent dew that had collected over the banners left out overnight. It reminded me of the riotous surrealism of tackling tomorrow’s challenges in the capital of Jewish yesteryear. The latest in artificial intelligence coming alive a short walk from where King David encountered Aravnah the farmer, negotiated to buy his threshing floor and built upon it an altar to the God of his forefathers.



The Old Shaarei Tzedek building on Jaffa Street, where MassChallenge Israel’s offices are located

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is extremely relevant when it comes to the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, and knowing that while I will defend Israel’s right to exist for as long as I live, I will learn as much as I can to make sure my defense is rooted in truth.

That is why I ask anyone who has social media, to take a moment and engage people in dialogue. I find it ironic when comments are limited on a #FreePalestine post by Bella Hadid. How can we move towards peace without a free and open dialogue?

I feel similarly anytime I hear someone in our communities wish death upon Palestinians. The Zionist community will have growing pains. I myself am experiencing those pains as my perspective on the conflict grows and becomes more nuanced with each new voice I listen to. However, we cannot become enraged at one-sided social media posts and call for a two-sided perspective, while only listening to Israeli voices ourselves. A valid defense of our belief must be rooted in a multifaceted perspective.

Again, I want to emphasize that I am a staunch and proud Zionist. But that doesn’t

change my opinion that there is a great and powerful need for our role in the larger conversation to change.

We are Jews. Israel is our home. We must protect and defend that home, whether online or in person. But again, our defense has to be rooted in truth to be effective. To defend our nation in person and online, we have to know what lies beyond sparkling propaganda. Take a moment, do some research and arm yourself with facts to articulate for the State of Israel.

I wish peace, safety and prosperity for all the people of Israel, and I hope this conflict comes to a speedy end.

Ki Beiti Beit Tefilah YiKareh LiKol HaAmim. [My House will be known as the house of prayer for all.]

Hiney Lo Yanom viLo Yishan Shomer Yisrael [Behold, the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps].

Editor’s Note: Some Instagram accounts to follow for more information are @henmazzig, @rudy_israel, @evebarlow, @ajewishresistance and @jewishunpacked

A Call for Hebrew

By RABBI YITZCHAK BLAU

My parents and mother-in-law can all carry out basic Hebrew conversations even though none of them studied in Israel for a year. Yeshiva education of the 1940s and 1950s included enough *Ivrit b'ivrit* in elementary school (Etz Chaim in Brooklyn, The Yeshiva of Crown Heights) and in high school (Central) for them to acquire this skill. With the exceptions of Yeshiva of Flatbush and Ben Porat Yosef, I do not know if any other Orthodox American schools could make that claim today.

At a later stage, American students learned modern Hebrew during their year in Israel. In the 1970s, almost all the options for boys (BMT was an exception) were *hesder yeshivot* with Israeli peers and instructors with intensive exposure to Hebrew. Two things have changed since then. One, many exclusively American programs opened (including one at which I am a *rosh yeshiva*). Secondly, even in the *hesder yeshivot*, programs for foreign students have grown increasingly separate from their Israeli counterparts with many *shiurim* designated exclusively for students from abroad. Thus, we have the odd phenomenon of students who spent two years at a *hesder yeshiva* and still cannot speak Hebrew.

I emphasize that, in other ways, Jewish education has improved and that language achievement is not the only barometer of success. At the same time, we should admit and confront the implications of not teaching Hebrew skills.

These communal changes have been in place for a while, but recent trends in the broader Western world, including the devaluing of language acquisition, exacerbate

the problem. Many practically motivated students today eschew humanities in favor of business, computers and engineering. The New York Board of Regents dropped the Regents exams for all foreign languages.

greatest Torah teachers of our time teach predominantly or exclusively in *lashon hakodesh*. One who cannot understand such *shiurim* loses out on the deep *shiurim klaliem* of Rav Re'em Hacoen, the insightful

Jewry. This should be good enough cause for learning to speak Hebrew.

Our three arguments for Hebrew do not all lead to the same conclusion; the first motivates study of biblical Hebrew whereas the latter two emphasize contemporary Hebrew. Nonetheless, the two goals work together. Despite language's development over time, the two Hebrew discourses exhibit considerable overlap. It is no accident that Israeli students read scripture and rabbinic sources much more easily than their counterparts from abroad.

President Ari Berman deserves credit for stressing Israel as a value more than any of his predecessors. Unfortunately, the university's recent decision to do away with Hebrew in person courses flies in the face of this emphasis. In almost all fields of education, dialogue between the teacher and students plays an important part of the pedagogic program, all the more so when learning how to speak a different language. As a result of this decision, YU has already lost two excellent Hebrew professors. It is hard not to see this as reflecting indifference as to the quality of the Hebrew language program. It is equally hard to accept at face value the claim that this has nothing to do with financial savings.

YU students: You can still overcome this decision. You can begin with protesting and calling for a return to regular or even enhanced Hebrew instruction. If that proves unsuccessful, you can work on Hebrew skills without the university's help. Learn "*Peninei Halakha*," listen to Hebrew *shiurim* online and spend a summer in Israel in a Hebrew speaking environment. *Hachi chashuv: Al tityaeshu vi'tilmidu et leshonenu hakadosh!*

Our Jewish world translates almost all Torah into English. However, not studying texts in the Hebrew original impoverishes our Torah study.

The idea that an educated person knows something about Greek, Latin and Hebrew appears to us a quaint idea from a distant past.

I propose that the Jewish community needs to fight this trend when it comes to Hebrew skills. Our Jewish world translates almost all Torah into English. However, not studying texts in the Hebrew original impoverishes our Torah study. Someone who reads Tanakh in translation and juxtaposes the nakedness of Adam and Chava with the cleverness of the snake misses the Hebrew word play (*Bereishit* 2:25-3:1). A reader who hears Joseph complain about being put in prison will not realize how the Hebrew word "*bor*," both pit and prison, allows Yosef to simultaneously protest his brothers and Potiphar's mistreatment of him (*Bereishit* 40:15). A translator who renders "*kach na et birchati*" as "please take my gift" loses the resonance of Yaakov returning the blessing to Eisav (*Bereishit* 33:11). Finally, simply knowing how *nifal*, *hifil*, and *heh ha'yediah* work will make one a more competent reader of every biblical chapter.

Knowledge of Hebrew impacts on Torah learning in another way as well. Many of the

Tanakh readings of Prof. Yoni Grossman and the profound thought of Rav Yuval Sherlow. Furthermore, certain *seforim* such as Rav Hutner's "*Pachad Yitzchak*" become much more comprehensible if one knows modern Hebrew. Surely, we would like to provide our students with access to this world of Torah.

Finally, study of Hebrew reflects our strong identification with the Zionist project. Language is identity; note how individuals who want to be more *yeshivish* increase their employment of Yiddish phrases. To be sure, a smattering of phrases does not equal fluency, but they both reflect the powerful connection between mode of discourse and identity. Those who identify with *Medinat Yisrael* should want to speak its language and the ability to do so will also make moving there a more successful endeavor. We are the beneficiaries of the unprecedented and amazing story of a people returning to its homeland after two millennia of exile. Moreover, the successful forming of the state happened in the hour of greatest need, just after arguably the worst tragedy in Jewish history. The state has led to the renewal of Orthodoxy, the rebuilding of Torah learning, and the rescue of Russian and Ethiopian



Zysman Hall on Wilf Campus

From the President's Desk: SCWSC

An Unprecedented Opportunity

By TALIA LEITNER

I am so excited to welcome all of you to campus this semester! Like most things lately, this semester is “unprecedented” in that the vast majority of YU students have never actually experienced campus life “as usual.” Only those who began their time at YU prior to Spring 2020 will recall the fight to secure a spot on the elevator or waiting in the never-ending line for the salad bar. That being said, this gives us a special opportunity to reinvent campus life. Instead of focusing on reverting back to pre-COVID routine, let us create a new atmosphere on campus — one where students get involved and make a difference.

I had the privilege of attending the

Mechina Pathways Shabbaton last semester. For those of you who are unfamiliar, making all in attendance reflect on whether they recognize all that YU has to offer.

When we chose to come back to YU, we were choosing to invest in our college experiences. Your time at YU is limited, so what is stopping you from making the most of it?

Mechina Pathways is a program for students who are new to Hebrew language and textual studies. Students spoke of their unique paths that led them to Stern, and it was incredible hearing how much they each appreciated all that YU has to offer. For many of these women, this was their first exposure to Jewish learning and being a part of a greater Jewish community,

Last semester, many of us were able to return to campus thanks to the hard work of the administration, faculty and student council. Although there were many noticeable differences, (the elevators were strangely empty), it turned out to be an incredible year, largely due to the presence of the community. Instead of rushing out Thursday night, students stayed in for Shabbat — yes, even the in-towners. Meals became more intimate due to their limited capacity, and through these Shabbatot, people formed strong connections with one another. When we chose to come back to YU, we were choosing to invest in our college experiences. Your time at YU is limited, so what is stopping you from making the most of it?

Student council has already started to plan many events for the coming semester. We have spent the summer organizing a

spectacular Welcome Back Week. Night activities and trips to New York City attractions are also in the works. We look forward to celebrating Thanksgiving, Chanukah, Purim, Yom Ha'atzmaut and much more together, but we especially hope that you will come celebrate with us.

As we enter a year that we pray will be “normal,” I ask that we reflect upon the positive experiences that we had over the past year and a half. Instead of reverting campus culture back to the ways of pre-COVID, let us create a new atmosphere on campus. I can tell you from personal experience that the more involved you get on campus, the more you will enjoy your experience at YU. Find a club that interests you and apply for the board. Enhance campus life by joining the Student Life Committee. Show prospective students how much you care for YU by becoming a student ambassador. In whatever capacity, take advantage of your college experience!

If you have any questions regarding campus activities and how to get involved, feel free to contact Talia Leitner, SCWSC President, at tleitner@mail.yu.edu or the Stern College for Women Student Council at scuscatberen@gmail.com.



The SCWSC logo

SCWSC

Rocking the Boat and Finding Yourself

By MA'AYAN TZUR

Camp blew in with a whirlwind of crazy. Since it was my first time working there, I was surprised to find out that my pre-teen campers were full of attitude, had an impressive lexicon of profanity and were struggling spiritually with *tefillah*, not dissimilar to the rest of us. Each day brought new challenges. In addition to this, I spent countless hours watching girls practice their dances and songs and rehearsing their play in the sauna of a theater, all activities I loved, but as the counselor, needed to supervise instead of joining. My main activity of comfort was boating, but, have no fear, one of my campers figured out a way to still rock the boat, quite literally. She decided to wriggle in her canoe seat, so, for the entire ride, we sat in fear of capsizing. (I do have to admit, despite feigning annoyance, that that “roller coaster” was really fun.)

There were girls who walked off by themselves time after time forcing us to begrudgingly trail after them, even though we would have been just fine with not having to deal with them for a little while. All our attempts at words of discipline fell on deaf ears. No one can count the amount of times we made the trek to the infirmary for serious, urgent ailments, such as itchy bites, slightly sore throats, the smallest offset of a headache and imperceptibly injured ankles, with whiny girls in tow. We were in a constant scavenger hunt for water bottles and bags, which girls forgot more often than not. We had to haggle with them every day to do their basic chores so that the bunk would look like a slightly neater pigsty. You'd think that with everything we had to deal with, the girls would constantly be singing our praises, right? But ... no. Not only was our hard work not so appreciated, but girls consistently complained. Any time a girl was upset, we, miraculously, were the root of the problem. Sometimes, with some campers, it seemed that the more I tried to become close with

them, the harder they pushed me away. We were insulted right and left and were forced to bite back our retorts. Contrary to what many might think, pre-teen burns really

Israel, when I felt more alone but at the same time realized I should be old enough and independent enough to deal with things by myself. However, I slowly started to learn

in. This was hard for me to learn during my just-completed year in *midrasha*, where I only felt responsible for myself, but even harder and more crucial at camp. At camp, I was also responsible for others, so I felt I should at least be able to deal with my issues on my own. However, it dawned on me that if I wanted to be able to help my campers when they asked for help, I had to be able to ask for help myself, and that was nothing to be ashamed of. In conclusion, while I had an intense camp experience, I am so happy I had the opportunity to end up connecting with my campers and to learn about letting others in, a crucial life skill I hope I will be able to bring with me as I start Stern. I really hope that Stern will become a home for me, and that the people I meet there will become family, just like at camp. I got a lot out of my time in camp, and I hope that anyone reading this can glean just a little from my incredible summer experience too.

I learned something which I hope will help me as I begin Stern — that even when someone is responsible for others, they still must look out for themselves and should not be embarrassed to seek support.

sting, possibly even more than adult ones.

However, even with all this, I really loved camp. It was undeniably slightly crazy, but I also learned integral lessons about discipline, about being sweet, about assuming the best of people but still being able to put my foot down. In addition, I learned there are some quandaries that one never quite outgrows; a lot of the internal dilemmas my campers were going through, like questions of identity and figuring out who they each really are, I am still working through. I realized that it's just an ongoing discussion one always needs to have with oneself. I also learned how to love people when it's hard, and that it's OK to get frustrated sometimes.

In addition, I learned something which I hope will help me as I begin Stern — that even when someone is responsible for others, they still must look out for themselves and should not be embarrassed to seek support. Clearly, working at camp was not exactly a walk in the park. However, that did not in any way mean I was alone. I had my amazing co-counselor alongside me, and we held each other up as the other was falling down. I had my other counselor and staff friends, who were there to commiserate and lend a hand. The upper staff and camp mom were there to aid whenever I wished. Everyone was there for me, I just *had to learn to ask*.

Asking for assistance was something difficult that I frequently encountered in

that requesting help should not diminish one's sense of capability — in fact, it should do the opposite. It shows that you are brave and strong and willing to do anything to succeed, even if it means opening yourself up to others and thereby making yourself more vulnerable. The truth is, we really need each other. We just have to let other people



A typical summer camp canoe

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Chess' New Opening

By **BENJY SPANJER**

In late October of 2020 the TV series, *The Queen's Gambit* came out on Netflix. This popular mini-series was much more than just a fun watch, it also piqued people's interest in the United States with sales of chess boards rising over 87% and book sales rising by 603% in the three weeks following the series' launch. Beyond that, online formats for playing chess such as Chess.com, Internet Chess Club and Chess24, which all require subscriptions to play on, saw membership increase by 40% when they combined their individual increases together.

Chess has also taken over Twitch streaming. Twitch.tv is the most popular internet streaming platform and boasts popular chess streamers such as Americans Hikaru Nakamura, Levy Rozman (GothamChess) and Eric Rosen, as well as Canadians Eric Hansen, Aman Hableton

(Chessbrah) and Alexandra and Andrea Botez (BotezLive). These Twitch streamers may even earn their livelihoods through Twitch streaming, such as Alexandra Botez

ing \$1,750,000 and the Meltwater Champions Chess Tour which has total cash prizes amounting to \$1,500,000 for the ten tournaments that comprise the tour.

Chess has come back to the forefront of modern life.

who made upward of \$100,000 this past year and Levy Rozman earning his living with a combination of Twitch and Youtube streaming.

Chess streaming isn't the only way talented players can make money. Current chess world champion Magnus Carlsen owns a chess teaching service called Play Magnus. Five-time US national champion Hikaru Nakamura has a sponsorship from Red Bull, and former world champion Garry Kasparov came out with his own chess MasterClass. Many chess tournaments also have cash prizes such as the Grand Chess Tour which boasts cash prizes total-

Pogchamps is a tournament that has occurred three times so far which features famous internet personalities such as actor Rainn Wilson, poker player Daniel Negreanu, popular Twitch streamer xQc and Youtuber MrBeast. These popular figures get trained by famous chess players such as Hikaru Nakamura, Levy Rozman, IM (International Master, the second highest title achievable by a chess player) Anna Rudolph, and Alexandra Botez. The first Pogchamps had a total of \$50,000 of prize money on the line and was the first chess stream on Twitch to ever break 1 million unique views. The third Pog-

champs tournament, Pogchamps 3 offered \$100,000 worth of prize money with another \$100,000 matched in donations to non-profit organizations. Pogchamps 3 was also the most watched tournament of the three garnering 375,000 viewers for the first match alone.

With chess ballooning in so many areas, the question remains, will the game continue to undergo rapid expansion, or will it die down once the pandemic ends and people begin spending less time at home? If the chess community continues reinvigorating their tournaments with celebrities and makes games more watchable with interesting streamers and commentators, it seems as though the game's popularity will continue to gain traction. If the best way to predict how something will perform is based on past performance, then chess' nearly 1,600-year-old history seems promising.

Shopping in the Office

By **ALIZA LEICHTER**

Luxury department store Saks Fifth Avenue, owned by Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), collaborated with coworking real estate company WeWork in their most recent venture: SaksWorks.

Slated to launch in September 2021, the joint venture will transform Saks locations across the New York tri-state area into shared workspaces for suburban part time and full time employees working remotely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. HBC's statement announced plans to expand locations across North America following the opening of SaksWorks' inaugural locations. An all-access pass with a \$299 monthly membership fee will allow both SaksWorks and WeWork members to visit urban and suburban workspaces. In a mutually beneficial deal for both com-

panies, the locations will be managed and staffed by WeWork; in exchange, HBC will not charge rent and WeWork receives a cut of the revenue.

Similar to women-focused coworking club The Wing, SaksWorks locations will include amenities designed to incentivize

leveraged Saks Fifth Avenue's legacy by affirming the department store's commitment to "elevated and highly personalized service," and noting that SaksWorks would extend the company's nearly century-long legacy.

The rise of ecommerce amidst the pan-

are some of the retailers who permanently closed their stores after clothing sales plunged by 89 percent; in contrast, online sales increased about 21 percent.

Commenting on the partnership, SaksWorks President Amy Nelson, founder and former CEO of women's network and startup The Riveter, stated that the goal is to "broaden our offerings to redefine the idea of the classic rec center into modern community hubs." Although capitalizing on the remaining Saks Fifth Avenue square footage allows the retailer to remain temporarily profitable, it is unclear whether the department store's success will be based entirely on an employee's decision to continue to work remotely.

Similar to women-focused coworking club The Wing, SaksWorks locations will include amenities designed to incentivize membership.

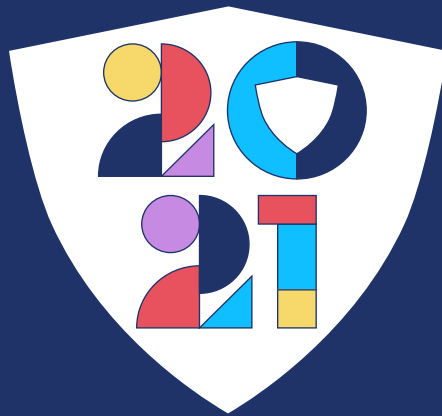
membership. While The Wing's Bryant Park location in New York City has its own in-house cafe and bar, the Perch, and select locations feature childcare spaces and babysitting services, SaksWorks will have recreational options such as retail, fitness studios and event programming. HBC's executive chairman and CEO, Richard Baker,

demic permanently altered the retail landscape. Over 12,000 stores were forced to close after being deemed non-essential and shuttered for weeks. According to an analysis by S&P Global Market Intelligence, 630 retailers declared bankruptcy in 2020, the highest number recorded in a decade. Macy's, Neiman Marcus and Nordstrom



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