

THE COMMENTATOR

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Rabbi Dr. Moshe Tendler, Long-Time YU Rosh Yeshiva and YC Professor, Passes Away at 95

By YONATAN KURZ

This article was published online on Oct. 1

Rabbi Dr. Moshe Dovid Tendler, long-time *rosh yeshiva* at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and professor of Jewish Medical Ethics and Biology at Yeshiva College, passed away on Tuesday, Sept. 28 at the age of 95.

Born on Aug. 7, 1926, Rabbi Tendler grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He received his early education at Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva, where his father, Rabbi Isaac Tendler, was head of school, in addition to serving as the rabbi of the Kominitzer Synagogue. After elementary school, he attended YU's Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy (MTA) and subsequently RIETS, learning under Rabbis Moshe Aharon Poleyeff, Samuel Belkin and Joseph Soloveitchik for the next nine years.

To devote more time during the day to Judaic studies while in RIETS, Rabbi Tendler attended New York University at night, and received a bachelor of science in biology and a master's degree from the university in 1947 and 1950, respectively. He received *semikha* from RIETS in 1949, as well as a doctorate in microbiology from Columbia University in 1957. Rabbi Tendler continued to work in the laboratory as a microbiologist even after his doctorate,



Rabbi Tendler at the 2013 Annual Medical Ethics Conference

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

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Macs Star Gabe Leifer Returns to YU for Coming Season

By JEREMY KOFFSKY

Gabe Leifer (SSSB '21), last year's star player of the Yeshiva University Maccabees Basketball Team, is returning to play for the team's 2021-22 season. While no longer an undergraduate student at YU, Leifer is allowed to play for the Macs due to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) extending player's eligibility an extra year.

In March 2021, after the Macs beat the Stevens Institute of Technology Ducks Basketball Team 88-70, the team's active win streak stood at 36, tied for the second-longest record in Division III history. Due to unclear reasons, the Macs' last three games of Spring 2021 were unexpectedly canceled.

Last year, it seemed Leifer would move on from the team once he was no longer an undergraduate at YU. However, the NCAA Division III committee ruled last year that

YU Updates COVID-19 Testing Management After Long Wait Times Sparked Student Frustration

By JONATHAN LEVIN

This article was published online on Oct. 7.



Wait Students waiting to get tested on Monday, Oct. 4.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

The resumption of Yeshiva University's COVID Monitoring Program on Monday, Oct. 4 sparked student frustration as many experienced overcrowding and long wait times. In response, YU's COVID Team emailed students two days later that the testing protocols would be updated to include "substantive changes" to speed up the process, beginning today.

Contributing to the initial wait times — which were anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour — were the number of staff administering the COVID-19 PCR tests and processing the health forms that everyone was required to complete. Each campus had two to three workers administering the tests and around three people scanning students' healthcare information. During last year's COVID-19 testing, when significantly fewer students were on campus and YU's stations had more staff, testing times could be several minutes.

When Monday's testing was held at

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Biggest Beren Shabbat Ever

Anti-Science at Yeshiva University

Fashion's Biggest Night

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

The Tragedy of Apologetic Judaism

By SRULI FRUCHTER

Last year, before my friend began his business internship, he asked me a seemingly innocent question: Should he wear his kippah in the office? The answer, I thought, was an obvious and resounding yes. In an era that champions diversity and inclusion, will we voluntarily check our Judaism at the door when we step outside of our personal lives? The answer to that question, many others thought, was also a resounding yes.

At the advice of older, “more experienced” Jewish professionals in the field, my friend believed a kippah would, for whatever reason, reflect negatively on him. Moreover, his own senior boss was an Orthodox Jew who chose not to wear his kippah, so my friend feared that wearing it would send an arrogant signal. The issue was not with religious practice per se, but rather it was with others’ conscious and constant recognition of his Jewish identity. I’m not sure what he decided to do, but the conversation stuck with me.

Since then, I’ve realized that my friend’s dilemma was not an isolated incident but actually a common mindset among many Jews — even at YU.

Just last week, a different friend boasted that the word “Talmud” doesn’t appear on his law school application. In agreement, another person quipped, “If you’re Jewish, law schools don’t want to hear from you.” Beneath the veneer of this harmless exchange was the same problematic thought: Judaism can jeopardize one’s career aspirations, so when in doubt, leave it out. I experienced a similar situation myself after a YU staff member grimaced when seeing my resume, noting that it “said ‘YU’ too many times.” They encouraged me to try and emphasize my non-Jewish activities.

I’d imagine that for some or even most people reading this, the logic checks out. Antisemitic hate crimes are high, and Jews feel unsafe, especially those who are recognizably Jewish. Why, then, should one sacrifice professional success on the altar of their

Jewishness?

Halachically speaking, there’s a compelling case that it’s actually permissible to conceal one’s Jewish identity by taking off one’s kippah, for example, if it could harm one’s job prospects. The issue, however, notwithstanding whether one’s job would actually be at risk in such cases, is less a question of halakha and more a question of values.

The contemporary instinct among some to so willingly part with their Judaism at the slightest hint of animosity stands in contrast to the proud footprints of Jewish History.

From biblical Egypt to Nazi Germany, we have always been a “stiff-necked people” that refuses to capitulate to the greener grass of assimilation, whatever form it may take. We merited liberation from Egypt, the Midrash says, because we retained our Jewish dress, language and names. We celebrate the Maccabees’ fierce resistance against the Greeks’ attempted Hellenization every Chanukah. The contemporary instinct among some to so willingly part with their Judaism at the slightest hint of animosity stands in contrast to the proud footprints of Jewish History. That instinct is apologetic Judaism.

This type of Judaism has no issue lauding Torah and Jewish values in general, but that pride is conditional. When that same Jewishness stands in another person’s doorway, so to speak, many opt to find a temporary, partial assimilation, a way to “pass” as non-Jewish. Implicitly, it says, “I’m sorry for being Jewish.”

This model sounds like the pitiful description of the “Jew with trembling knees” that former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin rejected at the United States

Senate in 1982. Instead, he declared that Jews are a people who “stand by our principles.” To imagine that those principles are threatened not by government persecution or genocidal regimes but by our own insecurity is perhaps the greatest tragedy of all.

The solution begins with redefining how we relate to our values and going from apologetic to unapologetic. The spirit of such an idea is especially apropos given the recent passing of Rabbi Moshe Tendler z”l, someone who fully embodied this ideal.

A decades-long *rosh yeshiva* and professor of YU, Rabbi Tendler was renowned in both Jewish and medical circles. The list of his accolades is a long one, especially in the field of Jewish Medical Ethics, but what I find most inspiring about Rabbi Tendler lay not in his accomplishments but in his character, namely his unapologetic Judaism.

This is most readily apparent from a particular episode in 2010. After the Rabbinical Council of America redefined its position on halakhic death, backing away from one Rabbi Tendler himself developed in the 1990s, he vocally and adamantly expressed his opposition. He penned many pieces with strong language against what he called the “the most dramatic *chilul Hashem*” in the American Jewish community, according to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

While tough, Rabbi Tendler’s approach was ultimately rooted in a place of deep love. Everything he said and did was backed by his undying dedication to Hashem and His truth, and for that, he had no apologies. Such conviction is a rarity today, but with Rabbi Tendler, it was the norm.

In that vein, Rabbi Tendler serves as a model for more than just his breakthroughs in Jewish Medical Ethics. He showed up in his life as his whole, Jewish self. As we reflect upon what his loss means for the Jewish community and the Jewish People, we are prompted to ask ourselves: Do we want to be the Jew with trembling knees or the proud Jew? How we present ourselves in the world will answer that question.

THE COMMENTATOR

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The Commentator is the student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

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 Squid Game Takes Over

YU Admin announces generous new offers for those in caf card debt. Just sign here...



2 Student Council Election Season

YU competes with Israel for most elections in a year.



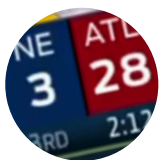
3 Clubs Are Back In Person

[Click here](#) to join “Crypto-sports analysis and marketing for Panamanian weeb, poets and chess players” club group chat.



4 YU Connects Celebrates 500th Engagement

And you weren't one of 'em. That's rough, buddy.



5 The Five Torot Are Here To Stay

Greatest comeback since the Patriots beat the Falcons



6 Campus COVID Testing

Within 2 days, YU responds to student complaints and revamps testing protocol. Shkoy, administration. Shkoy.



7 YU Athletics unveils new website

Akiva Poppers definitely had something to do with this.

7UP NMODL

by Raphael Alcabes

Facebook Outage

A moment of silence for the Android users and Instagram influencers please.

Sushi Scandal

The caf on Wilf is no longer making fresh sushi. In other news, I no longer go here.

YU Rises to 68th Best College Nationally

Meme makers go on strike.

The Elevators Are All Working Fine

But probably not by the time this is published .

Gottesman Pool Reopens

Sorry, ladies.

Los Angeles Ports Backed Up the Wazoo with Merchandise

Is anybody traveling from Guangzhou to the heights this weekend that has space for a small bag? Dm me

Flooding in 36th Street Residence Hall

Maybe we should scratch no. 5 — I guess Beren students can go swimming

Letter to the Editor

Just Wear Your Mask

By TAL ERSHLER AND ALEX FISCHER

This article was published online on Sept. 1.

At some point this week, every single YU student has encountered the question: “How do you feel about the mask mandate?” A recent article published in The Commentator about YU’s new mask mandate answered that quite clearly. That question, however, is inherently flawed — wearing a mask has nothing to do with your feelings.

No one enjoys wearing a mask. That may seem obvious, but it is important to distinguish between wanting to wear a mask and understanding and respecting the university-instituted mask mandate. Yes, wearing a mask does provide minor physical discomfort and in some cases can lead to “mascne” (mask acne), but prioritizing those minuscule inconveniences over very real threats to our community’s health is dangerously arrogant.

Additionally, it is incumbent upon all of us to take the whole country’s public health into consideration. YU students are going home at the end of the week for the upcoming chagim where they will be interacting with many people across various shuls, cities and states. If there is more virus spread on campus, people may unknowingly bring COVID home to their parents, grandparents and shul members. This can lead to potential spread and illness, and chas v’shalom, death. It is important that we think not only about our community at YU but about those around us and those that we impact. It is our responsibility to consider our chavrutah’s grandmother or our friend’s immunocompromised sibling.

At the start of the summer, the world felt semi-normal; it felt like a return to pre-pandemic life was near. Unfortunately, however, COVID vaccines are not as effective against the more contagious Delta variant currently circulating in the United States. We are seeing more breakthrough infections, and the CDC and the NYC Department of Health are recommending that fully vaccinated individuals wear masks in public indoor settings in areas where there is substantial or high transmission — New York City included.

At the time of writing this article, there have been four days of class and five positive cases, as per YU’s announcements to students. We are not epidemiologists, but if this continues to be the way cases develop, we could be looking at another Zoom semester.

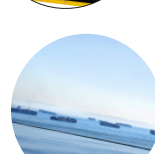
To the members of the student body who believed that we would not have a mask mandate this semester, we are sorry. Unfortunately, we have been living in a world where our daily reality changes in an instant, as has been the case for almost two years at this point. We understand how badly you have all waited to be able to have in-person events and for those events to be maskless — for things to be “back to normal.” We want the same, but please consider the alternative. None of us want to go back to Zoom events or classes. Beyond that, none of us could ever dream of bearing the responsibility of spreading illness or causing hospitalization.

Lastly, it is important to mention that life has rules. We are at an establishment that has chosen to enact a rule. You all choose to be here. It’s time to start following the rule.

From only following our normal daily routines, we have noticed that few people on Wilf Campus abide by the mask mandate issued by the university. In fact, we have even noticed some people specifically going out of their way to get around or disobey the mandate.

The week before the yamim noraim is a great time to think more about other people and what we can do to protect them.

Follow the rule. It’s not worth the risk. Just wear your mask.



LEIFER RETURNS

Continued from Front Page

the 2020-21 season — which was heavily truncated for many schools, including YU — would not count toward an athlete's four years of eligibility. Therefore, Leifer is allowed to play this year, which will be his fifth season with the Macs.

To Leifer and the rest of the Macs, “the job” is winning the tournament they never got the chance to finish back in 2020.

Leifer's ongoing enrollment at YU is specifically what enables him to continue to play for the Macs after graduating from Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB). While working full time for PricewaterhouseCoopers as a tax associate, he is enrolled in YU's real estate master's program. This two-year program is part of SSSB and is completely online.

To announce his return, Leifer tweeted a GIF of Kobe Bryant on Sep. 17 saying “Job's finished? I don't think so.” To Leifer and the rest of the Macs, “the job” is winning the tournament they never got the chance to finish back in 2020.



Leifer has scored over 1,000 points throughout his time on the Macs.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

RAV TENDLER ZTL

Continued from Front Page

developing a drug he dubbed Refuin (a play on the Hebrew word for healing, *refuah*) that garnered a mention in a May 1963 article from Time Magazine.

Even before his ordination, Rabbi Tendler was delivering a regular shiur in MTA and was appointed instructor of Biology at Yeshiva College in 1952. In 1956, then-President Samuel Belkin appointed him to serve as assistant dean of Yeshiva College in charge of student affairs in addition to being chairman of religious guidance at YU. In the following years, Rabbi Tendler was appointed as a *rosh yeshiva* in RIETS, a position he held until his passing.

In 1967, Rabbi Tendler was appointed rabbi of the Community Synagogue in Monsey, New York, where he would serve until his death. He also continued to give a *shiur* in RIETS until the past year, despite a broken hip and extended hospital stay.

Rabbi Tendler was also a neighbor and eventual son-in-law of Rabbi Moshe

Feinstein, one of the foremost rabbinic authorities in twentieth-century America; some of Rabbi Feinstein's "*Iggros Moshe*" responsa are addressed to his son-in-law. While at RIETS, Rabbi Tendler met Rabbi Feinstein's daughter, Shifra, when she approached him at a neighborhood public library to ask him a chemistry question. “After that, somehow I managed to come more often to the library to study,” Rabbi Tendler was quoted as saying in a 2011 article; they later married. Rebbetzin Tendler died in October 2007.

“The Jewish community and the broader society were elevated by his leadership, and his absence is a loss for us all.”

President Ari Berman

As son in law of the *posek ha-dor* [decisor of his generation], Rabbi Tendler quickly became a major figure in Rabbi Feinstein's positions on Jewish law and bioethics,

writing many articles in prominent medical and Torah journals alike. He was also a past president and *posek* [decisor] of the Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists, as well as chair of the bioethical commission of the Rabbinical Council of America and the Medical Ethics Task Force of UJA-Federation of greater New York.

Rabbi Tendler also wrote extensively on euthanasia, infertility, end-of-life issues, organ donation and *bris milah* (Jewish circumcision), as well as stem cell research; he

Rabbi Tendler also wrote *Pardes Rimmonim: A Marriage Manual for the Jewish Family*, in addition to co-authoring *Practical Medical Halachah*, a textbook of Jewish responsa to medical issues, with Dr. Fred Rosner.

“As a renowned scientist, beloved communal leader, and preeminent rabbinic decisor, Rabbi Dr. Moshe Tendler embodied the Torah values of our community and successfully lived a life of deep learning, commitment to others and spiritual authenticity,” President Ari Berman told The Commentator. “The Jewish community and the broader society were elevated by his leadership, and his absence is a loss for us all.”

Rabbi Tendler's funeral was held on Thursday afternoon at the Community Synagogue in Monsey, New York, with the burial at the nearby Monsey Cemetery. He is survived by eight children and over 100 grandchildren and great grandchildren.

LONG WAIT TIMES

Continued from Front Page

Beren Campus, its placement in Yagoda Commons of the 215 Lexington building caused overcrowding, since the line to scan the healthcare information was largely located in the main lobby. The line was so long that students were told to continue the line onto the second floor of the 215 building. Neither the ascending nor the descending escalators were working properly, and the ascending escalator was blocked off for the entire morning of testing, compounding students' difficulty in ascending to the second floor for class. A student reported that at about noon, students removed the caution signs blocking the ascending escalator and walked up, at which point security got involved and tried to manage the students walking along the single down escalator.

Felicia Weintraub (SSSB '23), who waited among the crowd at 215 Lexington, shared her frustrations at the time with the state of COVID-19 restrictions at YU. “While I understand that the school is doing all these things to keep us safe and our school open, is being vaccinated, having to wear masks and getting tested twice a week all really necessary?! I hope YU is going to shift a little bit to give us the school experience we hoped

for while also keeping us safe.”

In their email sent out yesterday, YU explained that testing will now be in a self-test format, more personnel will be hired and the process will be streamlined to decrease inconveniences. COVID-19 testers did administer tests, on request, for students who preferred not to do it themselves. According to many students, the new system cut the total testing time down to about five minutes.

The university's email also informed students of further changes made to testing, including the testing sites relocating on Beren Campus from Yagoda Commons to room 501 at 215 Lexington Ave and on Wilf from Weissberg Commons in Belfer Hall to room 501 in Furst Hall.

Additionally, for future on-campus testing, all students will be required to download Navica, a third-party app that will inform students of their test results. If a student tests positive, they will need to return to the testing site to confirm their diagnosis with a PCR test.

Due to student frustrations with Monday's testing, an on-campus PCR testing site was organized by students at Wilf Campus for Thursday at the gym in Rubin Hall and at

Morgenstern Hall's lounge. The university later told the students they could not manage this on campus. The tests — administered by Travel Test NY-NJ — promised results in 24-36 hours.

While the university originally announced that failing to test on Monday would result in students' IDs being frozen, this was halted “due to the challenges to Monday's testing.” Nevertheless, in the email sent on Oct. 6, YU said that beginning on the night of Thursday, Oct. 7, failing to test would either result in a warning or a notice of ID deactivation. Last year, IDs were only deactivated if students missed three consecutive tests. As of publication, Associate Dean of Students Joe Bednarsh did not respond to The Commentator's request for comment.

Students found the new system to be significantly better. “Testing went very smoothly and easily,” Benjamin Pray (YC '22) commented. He said the difference between Monday and Thursday was between “night and day.”

Tanya Goldschmid (SCW '25) agreed. She said, “The line was super quick, and I got my results within a minute of it being done.”

Yeshiva College Student Council

President Jonah Chill also applauded YU's decision to adjust its system. “Students have busy schedules and cannot be expected to wait over half an hour to get a COVID test,” he explained. “I'm very pleased that YU acknowledged the faults in Monday's testing and made quick adjustments to ensure a more efficient testing experience.”

The resumption of the COVID Monitoring Program was announced by email to the student body on Sep. 23 and entails mandatory testing twice weekly on Monday and Thursday. According to the original email, testing will continue for the next few weeks, after which the university — together with its medical director — will examine infection rates and other data to decide on how to proceed with further testing, including whether to increase or decrease its frequency.

Infection rates in New York City have been declining since mid-September, with the seven-day average of confirmed COVID-19 cases as of Oct. 6 standing at 964. The latest data for Washington Heights - Inwood — from the week ending Oct 1 — averages 63 positive COVID-19 cases per 100,000, the third-lowest neighborhood rate in the city.

YU Jumps Eight Spots to 68th Place in US News and World Report's 2022 National Rankings

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

This article was published online on Sept. 14.

Yeshiva University tied for 68th place in the U.S. News and World Report's 2022 national university rankings, released on Monday, Sept. 13, rising eight spots from 76th place in 2021. This was the greatest jump of the top 100 schools included in the report.

This U.S. News report ranks 1,466 colleges and universities based on a variety of factors, in descending order, including graduation rate, peer assessment scores, faculty resources, financial resources, student excellence and alumni giving. U.S. News also published reports of Best Value Schools and of Top Performers of Social Mobility, placing YU in 33rd and 297th place, respectively. Last year YU placed in 54th and 256th for those categories.

YU shared its 68th place with six other universities, including Fordham University, Indiana University—Bloomington, Southern Methodist University, Texas A&M

University, University of Massachusetts—Amherst and University of Minnesota—Twin Cities.

The Best National University Rankings have been published by U.S. News since 1983. From 1997 to 2016, YU's ranking on the National Universities report exhibited little variation, wavering between 40th and 52nd place before plummeting to 94th in 2017. In 2018, YU rose to 80th place but then fell again to 97th the following year in the 2020 rankings.

The report provided additional information about the university. Over 63% of classes contain fewer than 20 students, and only 0.8% contain 50 or more. The acceptance rate is 67%, and the four year graduation rate is 69%. The median starting salary of alumni is \$53,600, which is down \$1,000 from last year but still remains over \$3,000 above the average college graduate starting salaries in the U.S. According to the report, YU met 88% of its students' financial aid needs.

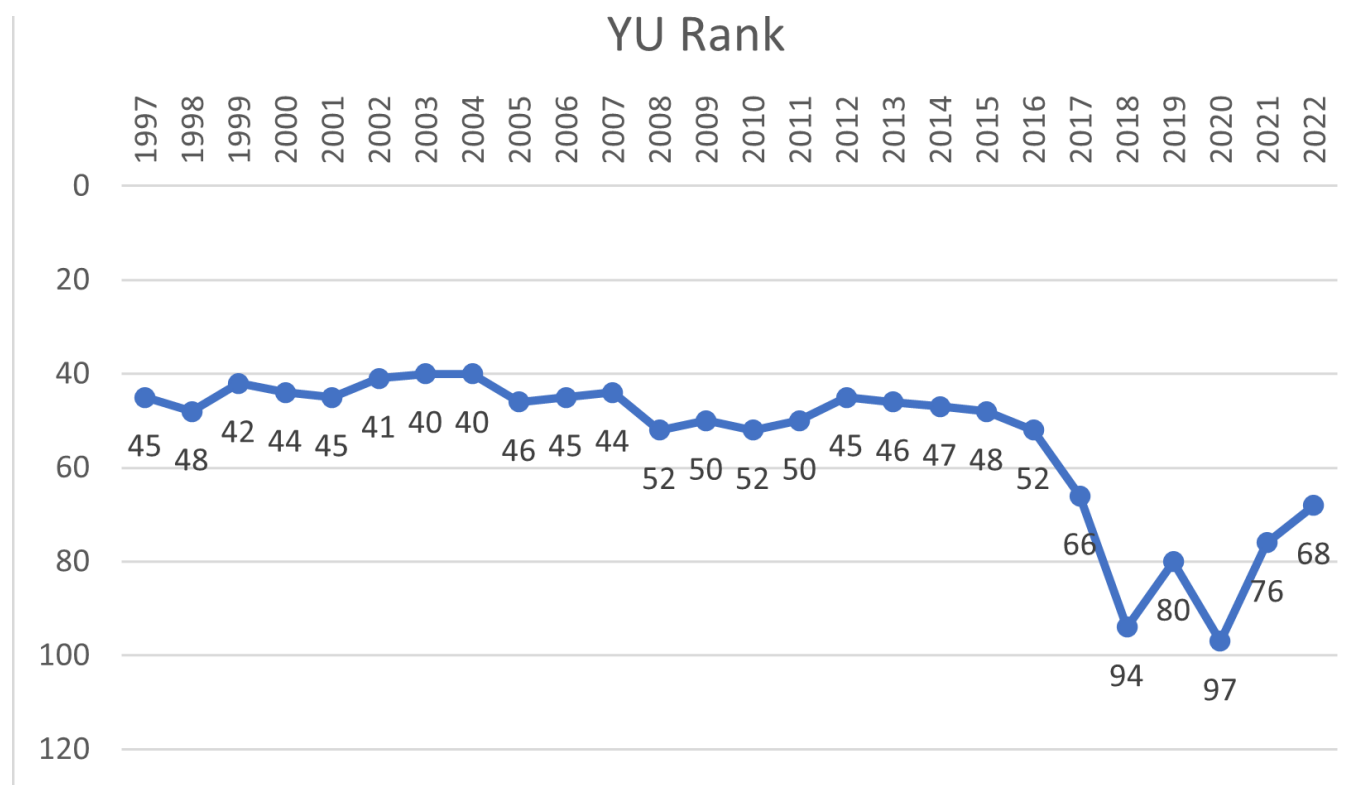
Additionally, there are 2,017 undergraduate students in total with 53% of them male and 47% female. 40% of students

live in on-campus housing. Full-time faculty gender distribution is 58.3% male and 41.7% female, while part-time faculty gender distribution is 50.8% male and 49.2% female. The student-faculty ratio is 7:1.

Vice President of the Office of Institutional Advancement Adam Gerdts emailed past donors about this achievement on Sept. 13. "Our ascent in the U.S. News rankings results from numerous benchmarks—from student-faculty ratio and faculty resources to graduation and retention rates to alumni giving—and increases the value of a YU degree," Gerdts said in his email. "As our philanthropic partners, you make everything that we do possible."

The first place in the Best National University Ranking is held by Princeton University. Columbia University, Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) are tied for second.

As of publication, the Wall Street Journal did not yet release its "Best Colleges 2022" report. In its 2021 report, YU was ranked 143rd.



YU's U.S. News Rankings since 1997

DANIEL WEINREICH

Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies Launches First Master's Degree Program This Fall

By AVIGAIL GREENBERG

YU's Emil A. and Jenny Fish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies launched its first-ever master's degree program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies this fall.

The program focuses on the Holocaust as a stand-alone subject while placing it in the context of other genocides that have occurred in the past century. Students also analyze the social, political, philosophical and theological ramifications of genocide.

Since opening in 2019, the Fish Center has held both in-person and online lectures, interviews and events, and has produced a video library to curate easily available Holocaust education content. It also features a variety of undergraduate course offerings through YU on the history, progression and media representation of the Holocaust as well as on the broader concept of genocide in the modern world.

Holocaust survivor Emil A. Fish, after whom the center is partially named, migrated to Los Angeles in 1955, where he served as president of many major congregations and started a nonprofit to memorialize and document the Jewish heritage of his hometown Bardejov. In 2010, he was appointed to the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, where he still serves.

The master's degree consists of two required courses and six electives. After completing their first 24 credits, students choose between a capstone unit or a final thesis to complete an additional six credits of fieldwork. This 30-credit program can be completed in a year and a half and is open to students of any undergraduate major with a minimum GPA of 3.2.

Aside from undergraduate transcripts, the program's application requires two letters of recommendation, an interview and a personal statement on the "experiences that led you to pursue graduate education in Holocaust and Genocide Studies," according to the center's website.

In line with changes caused by COVID-19, the Holocaust and Genocide Studies program offers enough online courses that students are able to complete their degree either in-person or remotely.

"This program fulfills a critical need to train the next generation of teachers as well as professional and lay leaders in the field of Holocaust and Genocide Studies," Fish Center Director Dr. Shay Pilnik told The Commentator. "As survivors are passing or are too frail to share their stories with us, the Fish Center was founded to both envision and guarantee the field's future and ensure that the Holocaust's memory won't fade away."

The program is designed to give students the opportunity to work in this growing academic field, be it in research, human rights advocacy or education, according to the program's website. Career paths include employment at Holocaust museums, community centers, universities or other organizations.

Campus Sexual Assault, Harassment Are YU's 'Top Priority,' says Dean Bacon

By JARED SCHARF

This article was published online on Sept. 5.

Yeshiva University is making sexual assault and harassment on campus its "top priority," Undergraduate Dean of the Faculty Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon announced in an email to students on Thursday, Sept. 2. This came in response to an anonymous student's article in The Commentator published on Aug. 25, in which she alleged that she was raped by another student this past year and that the university did not do enough to help her.

"Our student affairs professionals have already begun a series of meetings with groups of students to understand their concerns," Bacon wrote. "The President has made this issue a top priority for the

University, and he has personally attended these student meetings."

She also shared that she will spearhead this effort going forward and will be sharing updates after the holidays.

Among YU's impending changes, Bacon said, the YU website will be updated to more prominently and clearly display the security resources available to students.

"While we already have extensive protocols in place that we utilize and excellent professionals to compassionately attend to all claims of harassment and assault," she wrote, "we understand from student conversations that there is more that we can do to better educate and secure our students, including a review of past experiences to glean lessons to be learned."

In her article, titled "I Thought Rape Culture Didn't Exist at YU — Until I Was

Raped," the student alleged that she was raped by a male student from the men's basketball team. "I felt completely lost and confused for the months following the rape," she said.

She wrote that after filing a Title IX claim through YU against the other student, the university "made" her and the other student sign a non-disclosure agreement before the university could conduct an investigation; the agreement pertained to what occurred during the investigation, not about the alleged incident itself. After a few months' wait, she said, "I received an answer, but not the one I was looking for."

The university's first statement, which was published by The Commentator a day after the original article on Aug. 26, said,

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Gottesman Pool Reopens as COVID Restrictions Increase

By SEFFI JONAS

This article was published online on Oct. 4.

The Benjamin Gottesman Pool on Wilf Campus reopened on Aug. 31 for the first time since March 2020, when it closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Hours for the pool, which is only accessible to male students, are tentatively from 6-11 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday, with additional morning hours from 7-9 a.m. on Monday and Wednesday. The pool is open on Fridays from 11 a.m. until 1 p.m. and will be closed on Shabbat and Saturday night. In past semesters, the Gottesman pool was only open from 8 p.m. - 12 a.m.

"The plan is to have increased hours and increased usage of the pool as I feel it has been under-utilized," commented Athletics Director Gregory Fox. "As far as protocols specific to Covid, that will be a conversation we will have with the University's medical director."

On Sep. 23, Yeshiva University emailed students to inform them of new COVID guidelines. There will be twice weekly COVID testing, and failure to comply may result in the deactivation of one's student ID. Additionally, masks are required in all YU academic buildings.

The pool closed at the beginning of the pandemic and remained closed through all of last year. An attempt was made last semester to open the pool to students living on campus, but an apparent mechanical issue stymied

that plan, Associate Dean of Students Joe Bednarsh told The Commentator. The university's Facilities Services suggested the pool would reopen last May, but that too did not come to fruition.

This year, student lifeguards received training and certification on campus before the semester. The hourly wage for lifeguards

was increased this semester from \$15 to \$20.

The Athletics Department also emailed Wilf students on Aug. 30 to gauge their expected swimming hours and interest in joining Yeshiva University's swim team. Swimming team practices are expected to take place two to three times weekly.

Mitch Goulson (SSSB '22), who was

involved in past efforts to open the pool, said, "I want to thank Greg Fox and [Head Lifeguard] Yossi Friedman for their tireless work in the reopening process. I look forward to swimming again, and potentially spearheading the first YU Swim Team."



The Benjamin Gottesman Pool, Wilf Campus

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS

YU'S TOP PRIORITY

Continued from Page 5

"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."

The day following its publication, the student's allegations received attention from several Jewish news outlets, including The Forward and the Jerusalem Post. That same week, "We Stand With Survivors," a Facebook group with over 200 members as of publication, was formed in response to the news. While school-wide walkouts were planned at Wilf and Beren campuses, a group admin announced on Aug. 30 that they would be postponed "until after we hold a formal meeting with the YU administration about our demands for change."

Bacon's email was the second official statement the university made publicly since the article went live.

"YU's initial response was really not a good one," the student who wrote the article told The Commentator. "It was very much

from a legal perspective of them putting a little bit of water on the fire."

The student felt similarly about Bacon's email. "Their second response was also not the greatest," she said. "I even had teachers and people from the school tell me that. They didn't even respond to me or try to reach out."

Her greater concern is what YU is going to do moving forward. "I don't know how they're trying to address sexual assault on campus because no one's been doing anything," she explained. "I heard there have been meetings, and everyone is saying they want to do things, but no one is taking any action."

Over the last week, YU administrators began meeting with students to hear their concerns, Bacon wrote in her email. On Tuesday, Aug. 31, President Ari Berman and several other administrators met with resident advisors and student council members — in separate meetings for Wilf and Beren campuses — about the anonymous student's article and YU's procedure for

"[W]e understand from student conversations that there is more that we can do to better educate and secure our students, including a review of past experiences to glean lessons to be learned."

Undergraduate Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Karen Bacon

Title IX claims, according to students at the meeting. Bacon said meetings will continue after the chagim.

As of publication, Associate Dean of Students Joe Bednarsh, who is YU's new deputy Title IX coordinator as of a few months ago, did not respond to The Commentator's request for comment.

Noa Berman (SCW '23) and Cayla Muschel (SCW '23), co-presidents of YU's Students Against Sexual Assault Club, told The Commentator that while they appreciate YU's recent efforts, they feel it's not enough "to ensure the safety of the student body."

In a joint statement, they explained, "Up until now, the university's actions have communicated more concern for their image than the safety of their students. Dean Bacon's email and its proposed changes are not nearly enough." However, both acknowledged that this is "a step in the right direction," and they are "grateful to Dean Bacon for her efforts."

The main issue at hand, Berman and Muschel said, is how the university addresses cases of sexual assault and harassment. "The main concern going forward is that the university must create an environment where their students feel comfortable turning to the school for support," they said.

Specifically, Berman and Muschel suggested YU create a "comprehensive action plan to hopefully prevent further assaults," which would address students' claims

with "compassion and a student-oriented perspective."

A student council member, speaking to The Commentator anonymously, identified the same issues. "While I appreciate YU's efforts to do better in the future, this really is the bare minimum," the student said. "I've unfortunately seen a lack of compassion from the administration when discussing this issue and hope this is just the start of real change."

Another student leader, who also spoke under the condition of anonymity, felt differently about YU's actions so far, saying "It's very telling of the type of community that we are that members of the administration sat down with students to discuss their concerns regarding the safety of the student body."

The student added, "After several productive conversations, the administration is working hard to assure that all students are aware of the university's resources and protocols."

"This isn't new," Berman and Muschel said about sexual assault at YU. "It's only being publicized because of The Commentator article. People have been assaulted and raped at YU before."

They concluded, "It's our job to ensure that the community does its best so that it doesn't continue to happen. We look forward to working with the university in good faith to create a better and safer YU."



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

SAT, ACT Scores Optional for YU's General Admissions in 2021-22 Cycle, Only Required for Honors Applicants

By FLORA SHEMTOB

YU is not requiring SAT or ACT test scores for general admissions applicants for the 2021-22 admissions cycle due to “evolving admissions practices” and “the continuing COVID situation” for test-takers, according to the Office of Admissions.

Last admissions cycle, YU stopped requiring standardized test scores. According to Chief Enrollment Manager Chad Austein, this admissions policy will be reviewed on a “year-by-year basis” going forward.

Only those applying to one of YU's honors programs — Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein, S. Daniel Abraham and Business Entrepreneurial Leadership — are required to send in their SAT or ACT scores, which remain one of the determining factors for their potential acceptance and scholarship. There is no replacement test or penalty provided to general admissions students who choose not to send in their scores.

Although not required, general admissions applicants may choose to send in their standardized test scores. “When we review an application we take a holistic approach to every student and every application,” Acting Director of Undergraduate Admissions Marc Zharnest told The Commentator. “Scores alone don't guarantee admission, but they are a factor in the process.”

“Scores alone don't guarantee admission, but they are a factor in the process.”

Acting Director of Undergraduate Admissions Marc Zharnest

The SAT and ACT were canceled when the U.S. first went on lockdown after the pandemic broke out. When the test centers opened again in August 2020 they were at limited capacity. This led to many of the tests being canceled and refunded since there was not enough space for all college applicants

to take the test while maintaining social distance. In October 2020, the SAT College Board was still unsure of how to go forward. Tests at different centers were getting canceled and the students were left without any scores to add to their application.

In June 2021, most test centers reopened. The students must wear masks, social distance and respond to any questions they

their test due to COVID-19 exposures or other unforeseen variables. In reality, many test centers failed to inform most of the students if the center closed; many would show up on test day and find that their test had been canceled.

Additionally, test centers occasionally closed without warning. The SAT has about 10 to 15 centers closed in New York as of Sept. 30, 2021. Due to these complications, it can be difficult to secure a test date. To accommodate applicants, YU is not requiring incoming students to send in their scores. The admissions center believes that the applications themselves offer enough “insight into our future students.”

Many other universities in the New York City area have a similar approach to YU. City University of New York's Hunter and Baruch colleges don't look at any standardized test scores, even if the scores are submitted. New York University and Columbia University encourage standardized test scores but are not requiring them.

YU Temporarily Mandates Masks Indoors, Will Announce Other COVID Protocol in Coming Weeks

By RIKKI KOLODNY

This article was published online on Sept. 1.

YU instituted a temporary mask mandate for administrative and academic buildings on Monday, Aug. 30 — which excludes residence halls and dining facilities — the COVID Response Team emailed on Aug. 29. Protocols for COVID-19 testing and reporting will be announced in the coming weeks, a YU spokesperson told The Commentator.

“The COVID monitoring team is constantly reviewing our protocols with the guidance of our medical director as well as NYS and NYC guidelines,” the spokesperson said. Any changes to the COVID-19 protocol will “take effect after the holiday break.”

They added, “We fully expect everyone to comply with all the COVID protocols, and appreciate the help of our students, faculty and staff in working with us to enforce the masking mandate in the academic and administrative buildings — working together to respectfully keep each other healthy and safe.” According to students, there is a lack of enforcement of the mask mandate across both campuses, with some professors and many students not wearing masks in classrooms, hallways and elevators.

The New York City Department of Health labeled both the Washington Heights and Murray Hill — where Wilf and Beren Campuses are located, respectively — as areas of “high transmission” for COVID-19.

As of publication, Vice Provost for Student Affairs Chaim Nissel and Assistant Dean of Students Joe Bednarsh did not respond to The Commentator's inquiries regarding the number of current cases and YU's enforcement of the mask mandate.

After an emergency meeting of the YU Faculty Council on Aug. 24, the council sent a resolution to the administration requesting that masks be mandated indoors for all individuals, regardless of vaccination status. This meeting was called after Vice Provost Chaim Nissel sent an email out school-wide, informing the University that masks would not be mandated. However, according to the email, YU noted that it expected “if a faculty or staff member asks students to wear a mask

... the student will understand and comply with the request.”

Back in April, YU announced that all students needed to be vaccinated before Fall 2021, with few medical and religious exceptions. Initially, masks were not required for vaccinated individuals who submitted a negative PCR test prior to move-in. The policy is subject to modification, the email said.

“I would want students to understand that this is not at all about personal choice, or what people are or are not comfortable with, which is unfortunately the language that has been used. It's simply a public health issue.”

Prof. Rachel Mesch

Professors and some students are divided about YU's mask mandate.

Prof. Abraham Ravid, chair of the Finance Department and co-chair of the Faculty Council, was pleased with this development. “I strongly support the mask mandate ... and I think it will lead to safer classrooms, elevators and corridors, remove possible friction between faculty and students and bring back the cooperative learning environment we are so proud of at YU.” He also told The Commentator that the faculty council “sent a thank you note to the president and the provost on this decision.”

Yeshiva College English Department Chair Prof. Rachel Mesch feels similarly. “One of the unfortunate things about the way the mandate came about is that it seemed to pit professors against students,” she said. “I would want students to understand that this is not at all about personal choice, or what people are or are not comfortable with, which is unfortunately the language that has been used. It's simply a public health issue.”

Mesch also believes that the

administration should be more transparent “in terms of how many positive cases” are on campus and that regular testing should be reinstated. “Of course, no one wants to be wearing masks. It's just as uncomfortable for faculty as it is for students if not more so. But that's the public health situation we're in.”

Some students aligned with the professors and felt that YU made the right move. “For a person who is high risk and has high risk family members, I always have my mask on,” Tal Orbach (SCW '24) told The Commentator. “I believe everyone should wear their masks and those who don't, don't understand that they are putting others in danger. I believe YU did the right thing by mandated masks because it ensures the protection of all students, faculty members and their close family.”

Others disagreed and were upset with the new policy. One student (SCW '23), who spoke anonymously, said, “I think it's really frustrating that we now have to wear masks in class. I understand the university is doing it's best to keep us safe, but masks make it difficult to focus, not to mention difficult to breathe. I wear my mask out of respect for the school rules, but I sincerely wish they hadn't instated the mandate.”

Still, others are split. “When I first heard that YU was requiring vaccinations and stopping the mask requirement I, like many others, was relieved,” Eli Saperstein (SSSB '23) told The Commentator. “For the most part, these policies made sense and it really felt like YU was on the students' side in balancing the students' comfort, productivity, and our ability to learn while not compromising on the students' safety.”

“Even though the mask requirement is only being enforced by some teachers it has still dampened the energy and relief that I and many students had come to a COVID-free campus,” Saperstein added, “it feels that YU is going to return to the restrictive campus it was last year albeit slowly and begrudgingly but nonetheless not the ‘new’ campus in my short time here that I have come to know and love.”

Twice Weekly COVID Testing to Begin After Holiday

By SHLOMIT EBBIN

This article was published online on Sept. 27.

Bi-weekly COVID testing will return to campus starting Oct. 4, the COVID monitoring team emailed undergraduate students on Sep. 24. This protocol applies to all students regardless of their vaccination status.

Testing will take place on Mondays and Thursdays on both campuses. Failure to test will result in the deactivation of the student's ID until the results of a PCR test taken off campus are uploaded to Inside Track. Testing on Oct. 4, when in-person school resumes, will be from 10 a.m to 3 p.m in Yagoda Commons for Beren Campus and from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m. in Weissberg Commons for Wilf Campus.

“Details on future testing dates, times, and locations will be shared shortly,” the email stated.

“In addition to having a vaccinated campus, masking and testing are part of a multi-layered approach to safety,” a YU spokesperson told The Commentator. The university is taking these steps, “out of [an] abundance of caution,” the spokesperson added. “We will continue to monitor NYC and NYS guidance, and will update the testing protocols with our medical director's guidance. We appreciate our students' compliance with the protocols to help keep our campuses healthy and safe.”

COVID-19 cases in New York City have been slightly decreasing since the beginning of August, according to NYC Health. The data of the 1,612 cases from the week of Sep. 12 showed that 12.9% of those cases were of unvaccinated individuals. Some New York City colleges, like Columbia University, have random sample testing protocols for vaccinated students, while others, like New York University, do not require testing for vaccinated students and faculty.

The introduction of on-campus COVID testing follows the recent addition of a

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COVID TESTING
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mask mandate. On Aug. 24, the YU Faculty Council passed a resolution that called for YU to mandate masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status. The establishment of the mandate in administrative and academic buildings began on Aug. 30 after two full days of in-person class without any COVID-19 restrictions. The mandate excludes residence halls and dining facilities. Some students responded to the mandate by calling for an alternative solution, while others supported it and encouraged fellow students to comply.

The monitoring team's email also announced that students must upload proof of a negative COVID test prior to returning to campus after the break. The test must be taken no more than five days before returning to campus. Unlike all future COVID testing requirements, a rapid antigen test is allowed in this case "due to the timing of the Holiday and the turnaround time of PCR test results." In lieu of a negative COVID test, students may upload a positive COVID test from 10-90 days ago.

Students "should NOT" go to class or work if they don't feel well, and they should get a PCR test immediately. If a student tests positive, they should send an email to COVIDStudentLine@yu.edu for assistance with "isolation, quarantine, and other support." Students are encouraged to reach out to their professors directly about class absence concerns and questions.

The COVID monitoring team said that it will continue to inform close contacts of positive-tested students and provide them with advice regarding the next steps, such as if they should quarantine or be tested based on the guidance of the medical director.

"We know that COVID protocols can be

challenging and that there is a bit of fatigue around the requirements," the COVID monitoring team acknowledged in the email. "However, please know that you have partners in the faculty, staff, and administrators that appreciate your position and are dedicated to fostering a safe and positive learning experience."

Last year, students were required to take part in YU's COVID-19 monitoring program by testing twice a week. Students who missed three consecutive tests were temporarily banned from campus.

Some students were supportive of the implementation of COVID testing. "As much as I, nor anyone else, enjoyed the demands of the COVID-19 monitoring program, I understand the university's decision to reinstate it for the weeks after the chagim break," shared Zach Ottenstein (YC '22). "YU has worked tirelessly to get us to a point where we can have a safe on campus experience and it would be unfortunate if that went up in smoke due to people not being diligent."

Others weren't as excited. "Although I understand why YU wants to be extra

cautious, I feel that two times a week is a bit excessive due to the fact that we're all vaccinated," said Ayelet Marder (SCW '22). "If someone isn't feeling well or is nervous, they would be able to get tested on their own. Of course, I know YU is acting with the guidance of their COVID monitoring team and I trust that they're doing what's best for the community."

As of publication, there is no communication to alumni on COVID testing and accessing campus.



Students were tested twice a week last year.

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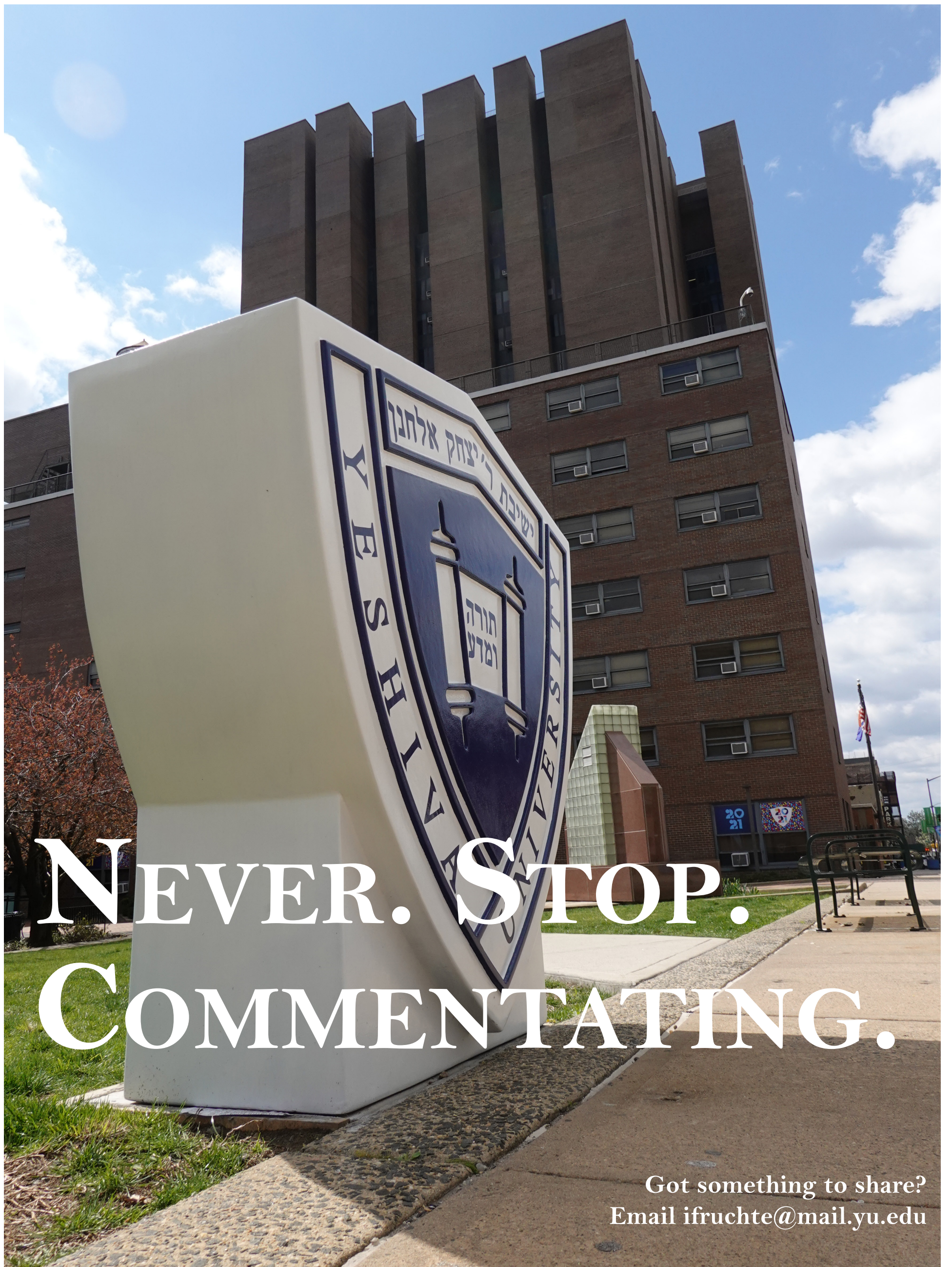
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The Biggest Shabbat Ever on Beren Campus

By Shlomit Ebbin

This article was published online on Sept. 13.

About 375 Beren students stayed on campus for the first Shabbat of Fall 2021, marking it the biggest single-gender Shabbaton recorded on the campus in history. The first Shabbat of the semester was Aug. 27-28.

Of the 375 students, over 100 were “first time on campus” (FTOC) students. FTOCs — which includes any freshman or sophomore who is on campus for the first time — were able to sign up for this first Shabbat for free. They were joined by various guests, including Yeshiva University President Rabbi Ari Berman, Associate Dean of Torah Studies and Spiritual Life Shoshana Schechter, Director of Spiritual Guidance Rachel Ciment, Beren Campus Rabbi and Rebbetzin Jacob and Penina Bernstein and Beren Campus *Av* and *Em Bayit* Rabbi Yisroel and Dr. Elisheva Rosenzweig.

The Shabbat meals, “gladly” subsidized by the Office of Student Life (OSL), cost \$15 dollars for two meals if registered before Tuesday. After Tuesday, meals cost \$25, and after Wednesday they cost \$50. Students also have the option of signing up for only one meal. *Seudat shlishit* is included for free with any meal sign-up.

The first Shabbat on campus of Fall 2021 did not involve any COVID restrictions; however, this changed for the second week on campus as per YU’s new masking policy which began on Monday, Aug. 30. Some of last year’s restrictions which were lifted for this semester include requirements to sign up

in a pod of six people to eat with and sit with at davening, and to specifically sign up for individual programs over Shabbat to ensure a spot. The Beren *minyán* — which returned to campus in April 2021 when COVID-19 restrictions were lightened — continued into this semester.

Changes were made to the normal pre-COVID Shabbat locations due to the considerable number of students. In previous years, *davening* took place in the Beren Campus Leon Eisenberg Beit Midrash in Stanton Hall. However, *davening* had been moved to the Koch Auditorium last year to enable social distancing. On this first Shabbat, *Kabbalat Shabbat* and *shacharit/musaf* remained in Koch despite no social distancing due to the room’s ability to accommodate more people. *Mincha* took place in the *beit midrash*. Additionally, a meal location in Yagoda Commons was added after sign-ups “due to an amazingly large group of students who signed up for meals,” OSL Rabbinic Assistant Daniel Albert emailed the overflow students on Thursday, Aug. 26. There were four meal locations in total: the Kushner Dining Hall, classrooms 101/102, Le Bistro Cafe and Yagoda Commons.

Dean Schechter reflected on the Shabbat. “Our first Shabbat back on campus was just beautiful. We had the largest number of women in the history of Stern College join,” she said. “There were students from a variety of different backgrounds, many geographical locations — at least 15 countries represented — and different *hashkafot* all coming together to celebrate Shabbat and to connect to each other and to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.”

Many attribute the trend of staying in for Shabbat largely to the group of students

who made an effort to stay in last year. The university encouraged students to stay in for Shabbat in Fall 2020 to decrease the exposure to COVID-19 through student travel off campus.

“The sign-ups were in a sense expected,” Beren Shabbat Coordinator Adina Passy (SCW ‘21) told The Commentator. “I think last year, because staying on campus became a necessity, people saw how amazing it was to stay in so there was a lot of hock around staying in and people really wanted to.”

“I think part of the reason people stayed in is coming off of a year of COVID, and a year where we didn’t necessarily have opportunities like this to be together with hundreds of friends. I think that there was an immediate kind of reaction to that,” said Rabbi Bernstein. “We’re in the new era of the Beren Campus for Shabbos.”

“Before Corona, the culture on campus was that most people left campus for Shabbos,” said Resident Advisor Leah Feder (SCW ‘22). “The culture is now different. Instead of the norm being to go home, the norm is now to stay. Shabbos was packed with students who wanted to be here.”

Feder continued, “it was a weekend filled with old and new friends, amazing administration, delicious food, inspiring Torah and all around fun. I cannot wait to see what Shabbos this year on campus looks like. I can’t believe this is just the start!”

FTOC Yaffa Goldkin (SCW ‘24) shared her experience. “My Shabbat was awesome,” she said. “I was able to run into a lot of people in my classes and we are all very friendly now. It was a great first Shabbat, and I even got to connect with my roommates after we all got back from Friday night dinner.”

“It was definitely a little crazy as the Shabbos coordinator, trying to do both buildings and coordinate everything, but thank God I’m so happy we were able to,” said Passy. “I think people really enjoyed it and had an incredible time. This was our chance to grab the FTOCs’ attention of how amazing Shabbat on campus could be, and I think that’s really what we did. I’m hopeful that we’re going to see an upward trend of staying on campus.”

“I think the hope and goal has always been since Penina and myself joined the campus was to try to have...opportunities for students to feel connected to a community, to see Beren Campus as not only a place where courses take place and where other clubs happen, but where a community can be built and felt,” shared Rabbi Bernstein. “People really have a sense that there’s something happening on campus they don’t want to miss out on...it’s really true that people who don’t stay in for Shabbat are really missing out not only on the incredible opportunity, but also on an incredible component of their Beren Campus college experience.”

“We have an amazing staff, led by our campus Rav and Rebbetzin, the Bernsteins, who help create this wonderful environment,” Schechter added. “It was particularly meaningful having President Berman join us for Shabbat, and students had the unique opportunity to spend personal time with and learn from the president of the university. Shabbat is an essential part of the campus experience and we are looking forward to continuing to have meaningful and uplifting Shabbatot together during this upcoming year.”



Dean Schechter addressing students in Koch Auditorium at orientation

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

YU's Israelite Samaritans Project: A Deep Look Into a Micro-People

By NOAH MEIMOUN

It would likely not come as a surprise to most Yeshiva University students that humanities majors represent a somewhat meager percentage of YU's undergraduate student body. Among the dozens of students I met during my brief stint thus far at YU as a recent Post-Pesach student (plus a two-week tenure on campus this semester), I recall meeting few, if any, students who were declared humanities majors. Let that not, however, be suggested as an accurate representation of the importance of these studies at YU, especially Jewish history and contemporary Jewish culture.

The Yeshiva University Center for Israel Studies — a department that supports diverse educational and academic opportunities that enhance awareness and study of Israel — is an instrumental resource of YU. It provides rich and engaging educational material on *Eretz Yisrael*, covering Abraham, Zionism and the many millennia in between. One of their current enterprises is the Israelite Samaritans Project — a program that will exhibit the complex history and culture of the micro-people who claim to be descendants of Biblical Jews. Dr. Steven Fine, a YU professor of Jewish history and the director of the center, spearheaded this program.

Who are the Israelite Samaritans? A brief history is due. (Disclaimer: Events described in the forthcoming narrative will be inconsistent with the Tanakh's storyline. For our purposes, we will use the Samaritan's historical account from their website. Readers are encouraged to read and compare/contrast both accounts, especially Tanakh's.) Their story goes as follows: After the Jews entered the land of Israel and conquered the city of Ai, Yehoshua established the *Mishkan* on *Har Gerizim* while the Jews proceeded with the reciting of the blessings and curses as described in Deuteronomy 11:29 and Joshua 8:33-34. According to the Samaritans, the

schism begins here with the rivalry of two *kohanim*: Eli, a descendant of Itamar, and Uzi, a descendant of Elazar. The Samaritans believed that the legitimate line of the *kohen gadol* passed only through Elazar. While the Tanakh records the *Mishkan* being brought to Shiloh after the Jews conquered Israel, the Samaritans claim that it was set up first at *Har Gerizim*. They claim that after a dispute between Eli and Uzi, Eli left *Har Gerizim* to set up the *Mishkan* in Shiloh. (Interestingly, the Tanakh only once mentions the Samaritans; The Talmud, however, refers to them as *Kutim*, suggesting they were descendants of Mesopotamian Cutheans and not true Israelites.)

— most captivating was the glimpse at its documentary directed by filmmaker Moshe Alafi. Aside from its stunning visuals and striking cinematography, the documentary's emphasis on Samaritan intermarriage hits particularly close to home for Jewish viewers. As mentioned, the Samaritans are made up of some 850 individuals, and at present, the discrepancy between male and female populations forces men of marrying age to look outside their community for spousal potential. How do they solve this issue? Perhaps surprisingly, they turn abroad — Eastern Europe to be precise. More than 15 Ukrainian women have married Samaritan men in recent years, and for a population

ramifications that arise from this division, especially consequences that are *halakhic* in nature. For example, the Israeli Chief Rabbinate requires Samaritans to undergo a formal conversion to be considered *halakhic* Jews. Interestingly, while similar to ours, their *Chumash* shares some 6,000 differences to our Masoretic text. While most are minor variations such as spelling or grammatical nuances, some semantic discrepancies vastly change the meaning of the text. Historical affairs such as this are frequently enriched when intersecting *halakhic* discourse and the Samaritan story is so captivating given its relevance to both the Torah and *maddah* spheres.

This brief background is barely a glimpse of the complex yet fascinating history of the Samaritans and their neighboring nations. The Yeshiva University Center for Israel Studies offers a more comprehensive, accurate and engaging history. Their Israelite Samaritans Project includes a 2018 lecture by Benyamin Tsedaka, director of the A-B Center for Samaritan Studies in Holon, who spoke about Samaritan traditions and their connection to manuscripts housed in the Gottesman Library's special collections.

The project will culminate in a traveling exhibition by the Yeshiva University Museum that is meant to open at the Museum of the Bible in Washington D.C. this coming spring. The exhibit will include the full length documentary by Alafi, an exhibition volume, a stunning Samaritan cookbook (to which I was also privileged to preview and must recommend as well), a compendium of fascinating artifacts and a rich and extensive history among many other things, including online courses and student field work with the Samaritans. Tsedaka's lecture will be featured in Alafi's documentary.

As per the Samaritans Project website, students are encouraged to engage with the project's exhibition and content for a greater understanding and appreciation for Israel's extensive history and role as a focal point to a myriad of tribes, cultures and peoples.

Historical affairs such as this are frequently enriched when intersecting halakhic discourse and the Samaritan story is so captivating given its relevance to both the Torah and maddah spheres.

According to the Samaritan tradition, the split occurred as a result of the Babylonian exile and the Jews' subsequent return to Israel. Despite rapprochement efforts between returning Jews and Israelites in Samaria during the period of the Second Temple, the two groups eventually developed into distinct tribes with unique identities. The Jews and Samaritans considered themselves descendants of the Kingdoms of Judah and Samaria, respectively. The Jews proceeded to add 19 books to Tanakh, leaving us with the 24 we have now. The Samaritans only follow the *Chumash* and do not recognize the other 19. Today, the Samaritans make up a clan of around 800 people residing in *Har Gerizim* and the city of Holon.

I had the privilege to discuss the project's details with Dr. Fine. He recounted the origins of his fascination with the Samaritan tribe when he met a Samaritan during college. I was especially privileged to receive access to the outline of the exhibit's contents

that is smaller than that of either of YU's undergraduate campuses, that is no modest number.

Dr. Fine praised YU's and Alafi's approach to the project's admirable research ethos and dogma. He outlined many faults exhibited by anthropological endeavors similar to this one, particularly the tendency to minimize a studied tribe to a status similar to a lab rat. He reminds us that these are real people living real lives with real complexities and real issues, not merely a project for our educational repertoire and ensures us that this project's personnel have expressed genuine interest and care for the specific individuals involved and the Samaritan tribe collectively. Dr. Fine also stressed the unparalleled value of projects of this nature, an appreciation for the significance of Israel, its history and all its complexities. He exalted this undertaking as an exemplar of the Torah U-Madda mantra and exudes a contagious passion for this enterprise.

As expected, there are unique



Cantor Matzlia (Najah) Cohen and his son, Brito, examine the Abisha Scroll during the filming of CIS's documentary, *The Samaritans: A Biblical People*.

We Asked, Y(O)U Answered

Reflections on the Chagim

By SRULI FRUCHTER

After a nearly month-long break for the *chagim*, we wanted to hear from students what their break was like. Inspiring? Relaxing? Disappointing? It's a time filled with action-packed chagim from Rosh Hashanah to Simchat Torah, and each person's personal experience comes with its own insight and perspective.

Samuel Denker (SSSB '22)
Major: Finance

"This year, my *chagim* were worse than compared to the past, and it mainly differed because I had school on my mind because of the Zoom school over what, usually, is a break for students. I feel more connected to the *chagim* when there is no school on our 'free days.'

It would have enhanced my *chagim* to not have had a class then. I find Pesach to be the most enjoyable, as I'm hoping not to have class during any part of the break."

Madlen Kavian (SSSB '22)
Major: Finance, Management, Economics

"My *chagim* were much more stressful than in past years because of the remote days of class in between the break. They were totally unnecessary and made the

holidays less enjoyable for me. I feel more connected when I can be carefree and don't have to think about all the assignments I have due. No remote classes would have enhanced the *chagim* for me."

Levi Paris (SSSB '23)
Major: Marketing and Management

"I had a great Sukkot because I stayed with family and was not pressured to be observant. Rosh Hashana was also amazing because Rabbi Orlian took me under his wing in Lawrence, and Rabbi Green also hosted me for a lunch meal.

"Unfortunately, I felt very out of place at Yom Kippur at YU, and the Glueck *minyán* was very crowded. Also, nobody wore a mask and that experience was uncomfortable for me and was hard to be around.

"Being around good people and families, getting fed healthy food definitely enhances my *chag*. My *chag* would have been enhanced if I had access to the Caf and the gym at YU. I had to buy a gym membership somewhere else and needed to spend a lot of money just to get by this month."

Baruch Lerman (YC '23)
Major: Biochemistry

"My *chagim* were amazing. I spent Rosh Hashanah at a HASC house in Brooklyn. Even though I wasn't able to daven like I usually can, it was very meaningful to be

there. The rest of the *chagim* were just as amazing.

"In terms of connecting to the *chagim*, I enjoy singing during davening, eating in the *succah*, spending time with friends and family, and of course the meaningful food; each *yuntif* has a food that is so closely

connected to it in my mind and eating them always brings me back to my childhood.

"I think that if YU was able to have its Torah Tours program, that would have been really meaningful for the *chagim*. I'm sad that the COVID situation didn't allow that despite so many people's efforts."



PIXABAY

FROM THE COMMIE ARCHIVES

(April 2, 1959; Volume 49, Issue 4) — The Professor Exposed: Dr. Tendler, Holding Many Posts at Yeshiva, Comments on Y.U. Policies

By Jerome Blau

Editor's Note: Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler, a renowned professor and rosh yeshiva of Yeshiva University for many decades, passed away over Simchat Torah. Below is an interview with Rabbi Tendler conducted by Rabbi Yosef Blau, who at the time went by his English name, Jerome.

"It is not synthesis but symbiosis that is the goal of Yeshiva University," spoke Rabbi Dr. Moses D. Tendler, assistant dean of Yeshiva College. During symbiosis both organisms retail their identities while benefiting from each other. The values of Torah and secular education must complement each other.

Rabbi Tendler himself personifies symbiosis being both a *Rosh Hayeshitva* in RIETS and a biology professor at Yeshiva College. Yeshiva's goals are feasible, so he declared. In fact they are the traditional goals of Judaism, which always stressed living within this world. Secular education is like knowing the house that we as Torah Jews still live in.

Rabbi Tendler, who, while attending RIETS completed His secular education at N.Y.U. and Columbia, studying in the evenings and summers for his BA. and Ph.D., considers Yeshiva's program a better path for achieving a well rounded college education. He recommends a five-year college program as the best method for many to successfully combine secular and Jewish studies.

The curriculum in the Yeshiva for students studying for the Rabbinate, and pre-professional students whose formal Jewish education will end at the close of their four year stay at Yeshiva College should not be the same. Rabbi Tendler suggested a new program for the pre-professional majors that would stress *halacha limaaseh*, tracing the Halacha back to its Talmudic sources, and the moral and ethical aspects of Torah. Choice of faculty for this new program is crucial because the students' religious survival depends on it.

Dr. Tendler stated that he had attempted to start a pilot program but the students who played lip service to the idea were not willing to take the program because of the work involved. This student attitude makes any new programs unworkable.

Discussing his functions as assistant dean, Rabbi Tendler stressed the counseling guidance aspect of his work. He also expects to expand his work on acquainting the Yeshiva student with scholarships and research grants available. As far as student activities the assistant dean's office will handle routine administration, but policy decisions will be made by the new policy committee as organized by Dr. Belkin.

In general Dr. Tendler finds Yeshiva's student-administration relationship basically a healthy one, and the informal approach here potentially better than the formal one of other universities. The absence of professional administrators at Yeshiva makes the student-faculty-administration relationship a closer and friendlier one.

The Professor Exposed

Dr. Tendler, Holding Many Posts at Yeshiva, Comments on Y.U. Policies

by Jerome Blau

"It is not synthesis but symbiosis that is the goal of Yeshiva University," spoke Rabbi Dr. Moses D. Tendler, assistant dean of Yeshiva College. During symbiosis both organisms retail their identities while benefiting from each other. The values of Torah and secular education must complement each other.

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The Commentator Archives

THE COMMENTATOR

"I think there is a need for an innovation wherein students would evaluate courses at their completion. A formal evaluation sheet should be given each student which he may or may not sign. The department should meet and discuss these evaluations. One advantage of this is that teachers will be made more aware of the interests of the students."

Rabbi Tendler declared, "the direction of Yeshiva's expansion is healthy from a Torah standpoint." Yeshiva's basic goal is the training of orthodox *baalebatim*, doctors and lawyers. All these expanded facilities, he continued, must have the unique stamp of Yeshiva. This would be one exemplified by a voluntary course in the medical school on the halachic attitudes to the moral questions in

medicine. Expansion should not hurt existing conditions.

However, if new divisions will not have the unique stamp of Yeshiva, and there is no reason why they shouldn't, expansion of this type is still justified. Yeshiva has certain responsibilities to the general community which it must meet. These divisions also serve as good public relations which help the financial needs of the Yeshiva proper.

I thanked Rabbi Tendler for his time and my exercise as I chased him from his *Shiur* on the second floor, to his office on the third, to the cafeteria to check the food, to the bacteriology lab. So I ended my marathon interview.

Prof. Ronnie Perelis Followed His Passion, and He Doesn't Regret It For a Second

By ARIEL KAHAN

Anyone who has tried to take a class with Prof. Ronnie Perelis knows that there is always an immense challenge: getting into the class. It is widely known that Perelis is one of the most popular professors at Yeshiva University. Students who have taken him leave the class singing his praises. “Professor Perelis is a really knowledgeable and dedicated professor who wants each and every student to succeed,” said former student Yonatan Sturm (YC ‘23). “His extreme passion for teaching and true mastery of the material he relays makes being in his class so enjoyable.” Many other students have had the same reflections.

Perelis knew that the odds were stacked against him. Although he had been passionate about history his whole life, the risks of a career in academia made him think twice. Academia is a challenging field with high standards and fierce competition. Very few thrive, and many struggle to even find a job. These challenges are intensified by the pressures of living an Orthodox lifestyle and finding a job in proximity to an Orthodox community. Despite these reservations, Perelis took the chance. Today, he lives his dream, raising a family in Teaneck while teaching students at a university where he greatly admires and respects his colleagues and students.

Perelis is the Chief Rabbi Dr. Isaac Abraham and Jelena Rachel Alcalay Associate Professor of Sephardic Studies at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies of Yeshiva University. Additionally, he teaches undergraduate classes at Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women. His research explores many topics, including Colonial Latin America, Atlantic Studies

and Latin American Jewish Culture. Perelis also serves as Director of The Rabbi Arthur Schneier Program for International Affairs, which seeks to promote international understanding and cooperation by providing an educational forum to exchange ideas related to diverse critical issues in our increasingly interdependent world.

growth that opened his mind to many areas of Torah. After yeshiva, Perelis spent the next three years as an undergraduate at Bar Ilan University, where he earned his bachelor’s, majoring in philosophy and comparative literature.

After graduating from Bar Ilan, Perelis knew that he wanted to be “a scholar in

classes are not a mere curiosity,” he said. “I can teach them things that really matter to their lives.”

Ultimately, Perelis believes he learns the most from his students: “People think the student body is monolithic. I find it to be incredibly diverse with each student coming with a different background, approach and style.” He also understands that his teaching can affect the broader Jewish community, as he believes that his students will be at the forefront of many issues in the Jewish world.

When asked what the most important thing he learned from his students was, he said, “They appreciate when you push them and that you can teach the same material and always hear something new. Hearing different things from new students confirms my faith in teaching humanities, that I can read the same poem every semester and always have a student point out something new.”

Perelis knows he was lucky. He reminds all of his graduate students about the risks of entering his field. He encourages them to be smart and responsible. “Have a backup plan and choose a program with a good track record of people finishing and finding jobs.” Perelis also warns his students about the emotional difficulties they will encounter: “You have to remind yourself why you did it and stay grounded; you need emotional support from parents and friends.” Perelis claims he couldn’t have made it through graduate school without his friends and wife. While Perelis acknowledges that there are challenges, he encourages his students to follow their passion: “We need to expose ourselves to challenges and to be successful; you have to take some risks.”

“There is something special about teaching students that have engaged with Judaism their whole life and these classes are not a mere curiosity. I can teach them things that really matter to their lives.”

—
Prof. Ronnie Perelis

Family and past have always been significant to Perelis. He was born and raised in Miami Beach by parents who emigrated from Cuba in 1961 to escape Fidel Castro and the communist revolution. Even as a child, he was fascinated by history and ideas, and remembers a family trip to Toledo, Spain, where he was deeply touched and intrigued by the historical sights. He is the self-proclaimed “guy in the family that knows all the family stories and everything about the family genealogy.” As a child, he switched off between public and private Jewish schools and attended a local Hebrew school when he was enrolled in a school with no Jewish curriculum. He is grateful for the many fantastic teachers he had in elementary school.

After graduation, Perelis spent the next five years in Israel, spending the first two at the now-defunct Yeshivat Hamivtar in Efrat, where he learned under Rabbis Chaim Brovender, Dovid Ebner, Menachem Schrader and Shlomo Riskin. He cherished his time in yeshiva and considered it a time of

the world of ideas and teaching” but was nervous about the risks of the field. He considered playing it safe and going to law school. However, he followed his passion and applied to a graduate program in Spanish Literature at NYU, to which he was accepted. While studying at NYU, he met his wife and moved to Philadelphia for five years, where he taught Spanish and Jewish History at the University of Pennsylvania. After brief stints at Brandeis and Ma’ayanot, Perelis joined the YU faculty in the fall of 2009.

Perelis is a big fan of YU. He is thankful every day for his outstanding students and colleagues. When asked specifically what he likes about teaching at YU, he had many answers. First, there is great depth to the Jewish History Faculty at YU; thus, he can teach and explore topics that interest him. Second, Perelis loves that he gets to teach Jewish students with a strong background. “There is something special about teaching students that have engaged with Judaism their whole life and these



Prof. Perelis's classes are often popular among students.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Is YU Really Following the Science?

By **ELISHAMA MARMON**

Yeshiva University has again updated its COVID-19 policies, with changes that took effect upon return from the holiday break this week. The new regulations consist of mandated masking in “all academic and administrative buildings and intercampus shuttles, excluding the residence halls,” as well as biweekly COVID testing on campus. These requirements, though obviously intended to keep students and faculty safe, are superfluous and a drain on the time and learning ability of YU students, as well as a perpetuation of the excessive fear of COVID among students who are not at risk from this virus.

The way to understand a virus like COVID is through the statistics. Between Jan. 1, 2020 and Sept. 18, 2021, a total of 1,146 people between the ages of 19 and 24 (the approximate ages of students on campus) have died of COVID-19 in the United States. The total population of that age group is 25,867,140, meaning that the death rate for COVID has been 0.0044% among YU students’ age group.

That is incredibly low. But it gets lower.

That number comes almost entirely from deaths pre-vaccination. The vaccines, with little variance by age between 18 and 65, prevent 97% of deaths from COVID, which, layered on top of the previous number, gives a fatality rate of about 0.00013%. That’s just 1.3 people dying per million. That is less than 1% of the odds of dying in a car crash, which is about 117 per million per year. We are safe from COVID. It is not a significant risk for us.

Even for the older teachers and administrators for whom the virus is more deadly, the vaccine is effective at reducing the spread of COVID and its lethality for people above age 65 (a 94% reduction in hospitalization and likely a higher reduction in deaths). For those without serious comorbidities, the fatality rate once vaccinated is incredibly low for all age groups.

But what about steps beyond even this level of safety? What about testing? Testing is safe and can help identify positive cases, but even when provided on campus is quite inconvenient for students to have to do twice a week. Due to my schedule, for example, I only have a break during the Monday testing period from 12-12:45 p.m. I have to spend a very significant chunk of my only break between 9 a.m. and 5:45 p.m. getting tested. The threat held over us is that if we forget, can’t schedule, or miss a test, we will be locked out of all YU buildings, which in my case, includes my dorm room. Additionally, as I will discuss, it fu-

els the perpetual panic and fear of a virus which, as explained, is a nonissue for the vast majority of the YU family.

respond to my request for comment about what specific data or guidelines had caused them to change their regulations.

We on YU’s campuses are vaccinated. We are safe. Our lives must return to normal, free of mandates, tests and panic.

Masking is another question. A recent study in Bangladesh where villages were either left alone as a control group, encouraged to wear cloth masks or encouraged to wear surgical masks found that while the surgical masks had some effect, it was only for people older than 50. Additionally, there was “no effect for cloth masks.” It’s also important to note that COVID spreads primarily by being exhaled with droplets (largely not affected by masks) and building up in rooms with poor ventilation. This detail explains why airplanes (which sport advanced air filtration systems) have not been vectors of transmission. This would lead to the conclusion that the masks would be even less effective in a poorly ventilated classroom, where particles can build up over the course of a class, than they are in rural Bangladesh, where gatherings are largely outdoors. This data must be added onto the fact that the Delta variant is more virulent than the Alpha variant, with about 1,000 times as high a viral load and 43 times as much aerosolized viral RNA (leaving masks even less effective than before). Perpetually attempting to use masking and other relatively ineffective prevention measures instead of accepting that the virus is here to stay is just wishful thinking.

But what are the downsides of masking? The primary one in the context of a university is a restriction of social cues and interactions necessary to learn optimally and connect with people. Many people also find masks unpleasant to wear, and according to the FDA, they may cause breathing problems or oxygen deprivation. The price of suboptimal learning and social connection (as well as whatever other effects there may be) is not worth the largely negligible benefits of masking.

Additionally, there is a serious internal inconsistency in YU’s own rules. At the start of this semester, there was a vaccine requirement and the need for a PCR test to return to campus. A temporary but indefinite mask mandate was then imposed on Aug. 30, and over the break biweekly testing was announced. YU’s email to students said that they are “constantly monitoring the NYS and NYC guidelines and infection rates,” but those guidelines and infection rates have both been nearly unchanged since the start of the semester. YU did not

This inconsistency and lack of clear communication is as problematic as any statistical point, and has been a sore point for institutions up to the state and federal governments. There is no proper sense that YU is making intelligent, controlled and data-based decisions. This leaves the student body, including many students I have personally spoken to, confused, annoyed and unsure of the risk that COVID poses to them.

On the flip side, there are many students who are under the assumption — a sensible one at first glance — that these policies are science-based. This leads them to logically conclude that COVID is a significant danger to them, and to significantly change their patterns of social interaction or day-to-day life in the fruitless quest to avoid a mild cold. Furthermore, there is an assumption that COVID is some sort of moral virus, striking only those who are not properly observing the quasi-religious rituals advised by our moral betters. This leads to guilt and anxiety among those who get it, making them feel that they must have done something wrong. An example of the COVID guidelines becoming almost religious in nature is demonstrated

at Stanford University: A professor found that students who were bicycling were almost twice as likely to be wearing a mask than a bike helmet. This is despite the previously laid out statistics, on top of the point that under 1% of all transmission occurs outdoors. Another example of blatant disregard for actual science in deference to “doing something” is when Dr. Fauci, despite the data, advised people to “Just wear a mask. Wear a surgical mask, a cloth mask ... wear a mask.” This, as we saw, blatantly contradicts the data, which is clear that cloth masks are completely ineffective. The mask is simply a way of demonstrating that you have the right views, even if wearing it is illogical.

COVID is endemic. It is not going anywhere. And yet the goalposts for return to normal life continue to be pushed off. Two weeks to flatten the curve became a month. Then it became a year. The goal was to flatten the curve. Then it was to stop the spread. Then it was to get vaccines out. Then to get to 60-70% herd immunity. Then 80%. Now the goal is — I kid you not — a 97% to 98% vaccination rate. There are no more reasonable goalposts. The only goal seems to be completely wiping out a virus which — I cannot emphasize this enough — is going nowhere. We need to take a step back, take a deep breath and reevaluate. We on YU’s campuses are vaccinated. We are safe. Our lives must return to normal, free of mandates, tests and panic. When that happens is up to us as an institution.



Students wearing masks

THE COMMENTATOR

Shabbos on a Monday?

By **SHUIE BERGER**

On Monday, Oct. 4, there was an outage, and it created an uproar across the country. It was not the usual type of outage. It did not lead to spoiled food, sweating or freezing at home. It was an outage of the most modern variety: the app outage. WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram stopped working Monday, Oct. 4 in the middle of the business day, starting around noon. This resulted in chaos that threatened our everyday lives. Throughout the day, I overheard many complaints about the outage. Twitter blew up, and many people turned to other apps like Reddit and Snapchat to fill the time. It made me think about our reliance on technology and how these apps

became central to our daily lives.

Do we really use these apps for our everyday consumption of technology so much so that without them we are lost? Is it not strange that we find ourselves bored when

I know that I rely on technology too much to fill the extra time in my schedule. I also know that I am not alone.

we can’t check someone’s status or can’t see someone’s messages? If someone was using these apps for work, that’s a different story. I’m referring more to the free use of these apps on which we spend so much of our day without even realizing it.

I think about this sometimes when I am waiting around. In the waiting room at the doctor, at a restaurant or at the Subway sta-

tion. No one just waits anymore. A screen is required in front of me, and without it, I twiddle my thumbs, feeling incomplete and bored. Ultimately, the moment passes, and the food comes or my name is called.

I don’t really use Instagram, so that did not bother me too much. I use Facebook for browsing when I find myself not doing anything, so I was relatively unaffected because I was in school for most of the outage. When I am not in school, however, I use Facebook a lot. WhatsApp’s being down was very frustrating, mainly because I use it for school almost as much as I use

it for other things. Regardless of my own issues stemming from the outage, I noticed my personal reliance on these apps more than I had beforehand.

Between classes, I had some time and thought about the entire experience. What did the outage mean to me? How could I use this opportunity to grow? I know that I rely on technology too much to fill the extra time in my schedule. I also know that I am not alone. While I haven’t taken a survey, I can say with confidence that a good number of people feel the same way.

I am sure there are more useful things to do with my free time that don’t involve technology. Reading, learning, working, studying and similar activities are all valu-

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זכרו תורת משה עבדי

Hesped for Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler

By Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman

Editor's Note: This article is the speech Rabbi Berman delivered at Rabbi Tendler's hesped. The Commentator kept it in its original form.

We are here today to mourn the loss and reflect on the life and legacy of Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler, a senior rosh yeshiva at Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, Professor of Biology and former chair of the Biology department in Yeshiva College, the Rabbi Isaac and Bella Tendler Professor of Jewish Medical Ethics.

Rabbi Tendler represented everything that Yeshiva University stands for. In the world of Torah u'Maddah, Rabbi Tender removed the vav and fully integrated both aspects into his life. It was holistic, it was who he was.

Allow me to explain:

Moreinu ve-Rabbeinu Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik famously developed an approach to the story of creation in which there are two archetypes of Adam. Adam 1 is the scientist, he is the creator, he brings the world under his microscope and within his control

פרו ורבו ומלאו את הארץ וכבשוה.

Adam 2, however is the man of faith, of solitude, וינחורו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה. His goal is to live his life in God's garden, serving, protecting, alone with Hashem and pursuing a life of oneness with God.

In the way the Rav outlines these typologies there is a bifurcation within each individual as we are mandated to exemplify both

aspects in our lives. And this is a typology and bifurcation to which we, as students of the Rav, are very familiar.

But to me, this is not the world of Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler. For I do not think of him as bifurcated at all, instead as one exemplary whole.

And in this sense the better model for us is after the creation story. After Adam is created, expelled from Gan Eden, builds a fam-

passions, and ambitions into one unified story as a true eved Hashem.

And it is a story that is as unique as it is spectacular.

A renowned Rosh Yeshiva who would teach be-yun on the highest levels, who also taught biology to the undergraduate students, microbiology to the advanced biology majors, and was a research scientist in his own fully functioning lab. How many

On a personal level, Rabbi Tendler was always warm and generous to me from my days as a student to when I returned back to YU today.

ily, and experiences life, he is described in a different way. It is not as a typology וכבשוה vs. לעבדה ולשמרה but instead as a book: זה ספר תולדות אדם..... בדמות אלקים עשה אותו

Here Adam is not described with any verbs—a conqueror, a protector—but instead as a story, as a book. And this in fact is our goal—to live an integrated life where all of our disparate and multifaceted accomplishments are merged together to become a part of one cohesive narrative as an eved Hashem. And this is what Rabbi Tendler showed us. He wasn't two warring distinct typologies, he wasn't some days Adam 1 and other days Adam 2, he wasn't a Rosh Yeshiva who also happened to be a biologist or a biologist who also happened to be a Rosh Yeshiva. He was Rabbi Tendler a man who lived a holistic story and organic life. A person who wove together different expertise, interests, talmidei chachamim do we know who can masterfully speak about a ketzos in the morning and lead in the afternoon a research team to discover a cure for cancer! He was a rabbi to his community, a guide to hundreds of medical students who he showed how to halakhically navigate through the maze of medical school and residency, and a mentor to his thousands of students.

He pioneered the field of medical halakhah. In fact, when he began his career, he was the field. He was current and active in the latest developments. He was the most sought-after speaker at every conference on the topic. Most especially due to his vast knowledge but also because of his engaging, spontaneous, and at time even humorous formulations. He was a talmud chakham with a real personality.

And he had an incredible reach. He testified before congress a number of time, was

in the leadership of several major medical ethics associations and societies, and as the conduit to Rav Moshe's medical she'elot - he partnered in writing the very teshuvot on which the entire Torah world bases itself.

There have been in Jewish history those rare individuals who were great rabbis who were also renowned doctors. Some wrote halakhic works without any reference to medicine, and some authored medical works without referencing halakhah, Rambam's medical treatises come to mind.

For Rabbi Tendler, one could not find one without the other. His Torah classes were infused with his deep reservoir of scientific knowledge and his science classes were infused with Torah.

There was no bifurcation. There was no "vav". Zeh sefer toldot ha-adam, there was a unified holistic individual who developed his tzelem elokim to its greatest possible capacity.

On a personal level, Rabbi Tendler was always warm and generous to me from my days as a student to when I returned back to YU today. I experienced directly his grace, kindness, guidance and insight. And at our Yeshiva, he was with us for over 80 years, from his days as a student in high school throughout his legendary life and career as a Professor, Rabbi, Rosh Yeshiva, as a father, grandfather, and great grandfather.

For all the ways in which his story helped us shape our own, he will be sorely missed but his legacy and memory will continue to be remembered in our Yeshiva and by all those who knew him and were inspired by him.

תהא נשמתו צרורה בצרור החיים

We Need a Solution That Works for Faculty and Students, and a Mask Mandate Isn't It

By Jonah Chill and Akiva Poppers

This article was published online Aug. 31.

On Aug. 24, Yeshiva University's Faculty Council passed a resolution by a 12-2 vote calling for YU to mandate masks in all "indoor interactions." Just five days later, on Sunday, Aug. 29, all undergraduate students, faculty and staff received an email from the university in which a "temporary mask mandate for all academic and administrative buildings" was imposed. This was a sudden reversal of masking policies that were set forth months ago and constantly reinforced by members of the administration in emails to the student body and in conversations with student leaders. While the reasons for this sudden reversal were not outlined in the email, it can be assumed that the Faculty Council vote was a driving force behind the change — an assumption further supported by the fact the mandate does not apply to residence halls.

The Wilf Campus student body overwhelmingly opposes this mandate. Sy Syms School of Business Student Council President Akiva Poppers (co-author of this article), who is a business intelligence & marketing analytics (BIMA) major experienced in data-driven decision-making, conducted a straw poll in the hours after the mandate was announced on Sunday. He asked 164 male undergraduate stu-

dents from diverse backgrounds whether they 1) supported the mandate and 2) would/did wear a mask if asked by their professor to do so. We recognize the flaws

stained or were indifferent. Excluding the abstentions and indifferent students, **83% of respondents opposed the mandate.** 151 of the 164 students answered

Just as students in the residence and dining halls have autonomy regarding masking, they should have autonomy in all areas in which faculty are not required to spend extended periods of time.

Any solution moving forward needs to recognize the student body's autonomy, in addition to the faculty's.

in this method of surveying students, but given the time constraints, we determined this to be the best method available. The results of this survey and the diversity of the students polled make us very comfortable in saying that the results are a representative sample of the larger Wilf Campus student body.

Of the 164 students, 27 supported the mandate, 132 opposed it and five either ab-

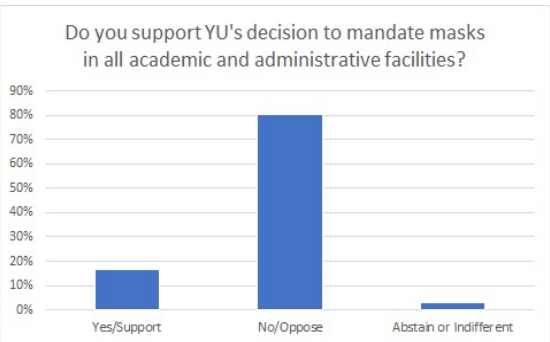
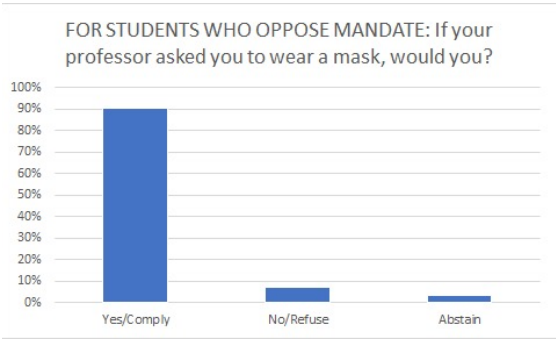
that they would wear a mask if asked by their professor to do so, while only nine said they would not, and four abstained. Excluding the abstentions, **94.4% of respondents would wear a mask if their professor asked them to do so.** Of the 132 students who opposed the mandate, 119 would comply, nine would not and four abstained; excluding abstentions, **93% of students who oppose the mandate**

would wear a mask if their professor strongly asked them to do so.

It is clear that an overwhelming majority of the student body is opposed to being required to wear masks at present, yet at the same time, the same students are more than willing to respect faculty members who would feel more comfortable in a masked environment. For areas within the faculty, staff and administrators' domains — classrooms and offices — said employees should have the authority to determine whether or not to require masks. Given the fact that even students polled who vehemently opposed the mandate overwhelmingly responded that they would wear masks if requested by their professors, this should not be an area of concern.

Unlike faculty and staff members, students spend a significant portion of their days outside of classrooms and offices. They learn in the batei midrash in the mornings and evenings, buy food at Nagel Bagels for

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NO MANDATE

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lunch and chill in the Heights Lounge between classes. Many Wilf students find themselves leaving their dorms at 8 a.m. and returning only after 10 p.m.. Just as students in the residence and dining halls have autonomy regarding masking, they should have autonomy in all areas in which faculty are not required to spend extended periods of time. **Any solution moving forward needs to recognize the student body's autonomy, in addition to the faculty's.**

The atmosphere on campus this year is — or was, before the mandate was imposed — radically different from last year. It may be because this year we were supposed to actually see the smiles on others' faces in class, or because we can sing on Shabbos (for now); not being required to wear masks brought with it a sense of progress.

A mask mandate mentally reverts students back to a particularly difficult period of time. Studies show that mask requirements lead to a loss of autonomy and personal freedom. A loss of such a basic psychological need can lead to undesirable consequences, such as non-compliance, anger and derogation of the source of such a requirement. For us students, YU is our home, and to make it sustainable, it has to really feel like home.

This conversation would, of course, be very different if COVID-19 was a greater threat to Yeshiva University than it currently is. CDC guidance for Institutions of Higher Education where everyone is fully vaccinated states that such institutions can return to full capacity in-person learning, without requiring or recommending masking or physical distancing. (Roughly

99.7% of YU undergraduate students are vaccinated; according to Vice Provost Nissel, as of Aug. 21, only six students across both campuses received exemptions.) Obviously, if the CDC or NYC Department of Health required masks in all indoor settings, if an alarming number of students on campus tested positive for COVID-19, or if an overwhelming number of students supported wearing masks, it would make sense to issue a mask mandate. However, this blanket "temporary mask mandate" in academic and administrative buildings is, for the time being, unreasonable.

Based on all the above reasons, YU's recently issued mask mandate is not fair to the student body. Rabbis, professors and all other staff members are fully entitled to their fears and concerns regarding the spread of COVID-19. As such,

faculty should be able to require masks in their classrooms and offices, if that would make them feel comfortable. However, to force students to wear masks at any other time is unfair. We would be happy to work with the Faculty Council and administration on a proposal that meets the needs of both faculty authority and student autonomy. We pray that the situation does not continue to worsen, and hope that the administration comes to a resolution that promotes mutual respect.

Jonah Chill is president of the Yeshiva College Student Council, and Akiva Poppers is president of the Sy Syms School of Business Student Council.



Wilf student leaders enjoying orientation

JONAH CHILL

SHABBOS

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able and beneficial to our day. I usually find myself only reading on Shabbos. Those 25 hours force me to open a physical book and read, rather than browse Facebook; perhaps I should make it a habit during the week as well. It doesn't have to be as big a commitment as never using any social media, but even something small like Mishna Yomi rather than Twitter scrolling could be a helpful step. Whatever it is, there are probably many more useful activities that are a better use of the time we waste with social media.

I think we can all learn from this experience. It is important to self-reflect, and this short saga can provide a much-needed mirror to look at and say, "I can improve myself. I can do better." These reflections help us move forward and progress toward our goals. I can only try my best to better myself in this respect, and I implore the readers of this article to join me. Take a break from technology once in a while during the day. Make "Shabbos" more than once a week.



Facebook outage illustration

UNSPASH

The Pundit

Reassessing The Supreme Court's place in American Democracy

By DANIEL MELOOL

The Supreme Court is back in session. Last term, the Court dealt with several high-profile cases regarding issues spanning voting rights to campaign finance disclosures. This term will be no less exciting or contentious. The Court will be hearing landmark cases regarding the death penalty and abortion. Regarding the latter, the Court has been asked to overrule the landmark case *Roe v. Wade*, the most famous abortion case in U.S. history. Needless to say, both sides of the political aisle will evince their greatest passions regardless of the outcome. To prepare for this storm, I think it is imperative that we take time in the current calm to prepare ourselves for when the storm arrives; we must rethink and evaluate our perceptions of the Court and its proper place in our democracy.

Unanimity Still Reigns

After President Trump appointed Justice Amy Coney Barrett to replace the late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, many political observers warned that the balance of the Court would shift drastically to the right. After all, the Court had been composed of five justices appointed by Republican presidents and four justices appointed by Democratic presidents. With the appointment of Justice Barrett, the composition would now be 6-3. Thus, the Court will be even more conservative.

When the media only gives attention to cases decided 5-4, or 6-3, and portrays cases as being decided based on politics, it makes sense that casual followers believe the Court is a political institution. However, this is simply a misconception framed by the media. The reality is much more complex. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, each term the majority or plurality of cases are decided unanimously. This past term was no exception: 43% of cases were decided unanimously, an increase from the previous term when 36% of all decisions were unanimous.

To be sure, there are cases decided 5-4 and 6-3. However, these cases do not reflect a rightward shift. In this past term, the Court heard 67 cases. Eight of these cases

were decided by a margin of 5-4 and 16 were decided by a margin of 6-3, comprising a total of 12% and 24%, respectively. Of the cases decided 5-4, four of them consisted of Republican-appointed justices forming the majority, three of them consisted of Democratic-appointed justices forming the majority and one had a mixed composition. Of the 6-3 decisions, 10 of them were decided with Republican-appointed justices comprising the six, while the other six cases had a mixed composition. Taken together, there were a total of 14 cases decided by a majority of Republican-appointed justices. By comparison, in the term before Barrett's appointment, the Court heard 61 cases in which 10 of them were decided by 5-4 margins with Republican-appointed justices forming the majority. Mathematically, 10 out of 61 is about 16%, while 14 out of 67 is about 21%. While the "partisan" decisions are a clamorous minority, unanimous decisions

According to Scalia, the death penalty was given for every felony when the Eighth Amendment was ratified, and therefore it is constitutional. Furthermore, the death penalty is referenced in the Constitution in the Fifth Amendment, which mentions "capital ... crime" along with the provision — which also appears in the Fourteenth Amendment — that no person be deprived of "life ... without due process of law." On the other hand, Breyer is a pragmatist who considers contemporary definitions and factors beyond the text. These factors include purpose, consequence and statistics. In a dissenting opinion in *Glossip v. Gross*, Breyer listed four reasons why the death penalty is unconstitutional — the first three demonstrating cruelty, and the final one demonstrating unusualness.

One might disagree with Breyer or think Scalia is dead wrong. The point is that these vastly different conclusions were reached

The fact that the two originalists came to different conclusions should not come as a surprise. Free minds, even with the same approach, will not always find the same conclusion.

Judges Do Not Vote

Another misconception surrounding the judiciary is that judges "vote" for an outcome, or cast the "deciding vote" in a controversial case. However, we must realize that judges do not "vote" on anything — they rule or decide. Voting is the job of the legislature. A senator or a representative casts a vote on a policy or nominee. There need not be a particular reason for why the legislator voted the way they did. For all we know, the particular legislator could have thrown a dart on the wall to decide how to cast the vote. However, judges must rule in accordance with the law, even if they dislike the outcome. The ruling must be grounded in objective reasoning, unlike a legislator who can vote for or against a particular policy for any reason under the sun. This might sound like semantics, but it is a vital part of understanding the judiciary. The word "vote" implies that the judge was free to proceed however he or she pleased, but that is not how judging works. When deciding cases, judges are looking for the correct way to apply the law objectively, not giving the most expedient or popular answer to the question at hand.

Going Forward

The Supreme Court has been placed at the forefront of the current political climate. Though the Court usually enjoys high approval ratings, its latest rating of 40% is a new low. Unfortunately, that low approval stems from misapprehensions about the Court. Rethinking our perceptions of the Court will be indispensable as people across the country wait to see how the Court rules in several upcoming contentious cases. When those cases are decided — regardless of the outcome — we must remember that the justices were not driven by partisanship, but by a good faith effort to uphold the Constitution.

While the "partisan" decisions are a clamorous minority, unanimous decisions still reign as the silent majority

still reign as the silent majority.

Philosophy Not Politics

Just because cases are decided by close margins does not mean that they are decided according to politics. Each justice has a judicial philosophy through which they interpret the law. Sometimes, the different philosophies lead judges to different conclusions. As Justice Sonia Sotomayor explained in an interview with CNN: "Is it partisan, or is it because, as I believe, we approach judicial decision-making in different ways?"

Take for example Justices Antonin Scalia and Stephen Breyer who vigorously clashed regarding whether the death penalty violated the Eighth Amendment's Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause. Their conclusions did not differ because of their policy preferences, but because they espoused different judicial philosophies. Scalia was an originalist who sought to interpret the Constitution according to its meaning at the time it was adopted.

through complex legal reasoning which stems from different judicial philosophies, not personal politics.

For that matter, even justices with the same jurisprudence reach different conclusions. Scalia and fellow originalist Clarence Thomas were often in agreement during their time together on the bench, but they still had their disagreements. In *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Commission*, the Supreme Court held that an Ohio law prohibiting anonymous campaign literature violated the First Amendment. Thomas concurred in judgment, finding that the original meaning of the First Amendment protects anonymous speech. As an example, he pointed to the Federalist Papers, written by some of the founders, which were published under the pseudonym "Publius." Conversely, Scalia dissented, noting that for over a century every state had such a law with no objection. Therefore, he rejected the challenge, declining to say that every state had been wrong that whole time.



The Supreme Court building

PIXABAY

What Simone Biles Taught Us About Hard Work

By GILA LINZER

This article was published online on Sept. 5.

Despite a rising population of eligible workers, American worker productivity rates have been crawling with an average increase of less than 1% in recent years. This begs the question: Have Americans gotten lazier or have they shifted their values? Perhaps Americans have come to place more emphasis on their own self-care than on working and achieving as much as they could. Considering that twenty percent of Americans dealt with mental illness in 2019, it seems that a decrease in productivity might be necessary to allow people to treat their mental illnesses appropriately. A 2013 study found that working longer hours increased future risk of depression.

On July 28 this past summer, Simone Biles, a four-time Olympic-gold gymnast, withdrew from the finals of the Tokyo Olympics individual all-around competition. Over the following days, she also withdrew from the vault, uneven bars, and floor competitions. The news sent shockwaves across the world, as Biles, a woman deemed the best female gymnast in Olympic history, had been slated to win gold again. What stunned people most was her reason: mental health. While an athlete has never dropped out for mental health reasons, it is well known that Olympic coaches and even fans place immense pressure on Olympians to break records in their respective sports. So should this news even be so shocking? During the preliminary games, Biles wrote on Instagram: "I truly do feel like I have the weight of the world on my shoulders at

times ... The Olympics is no joke."

Biles' decision is impressive because it defied the athletic world's obsession with perfectionism. Instead, Biles helped balance this obsession by highlighting the

Biles' decision was eagerly embraced, and people were quick to extend her message to their own lives, using it to justify their lack of motivation and achievement.

importance of mental health and physical well-being. While other Olympians have also spoken out about their mental health issues, including Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, this is the first time an athlete has actually withdrawn from an Olympic event because of it. By opting out, Biles set a precedent for young rising athletes who are struggling with mental health. Biles' decision is an incredible example that can help women regain empowerment in the sport. Biles demonstrates to women that they can make individual decisions that are best for their own body and health and not to give in to societal pressures that force them beyond their comfort zones.

Some might interpret Biles' quitting as a sign of weakness, but I think Biles displayed dignity and tenacity by choosing to forgo a medal in favor of her mental health.

That being said, I worry that some may be taking her message of prioritizing self-care a little too far. Biles' decision was eagerly embraced, and people were quick to extend her message to their own lives, using it to justify their lack of motivation and achievement.

Thus, we should not take away from Biles'

act that we don't need to strive for success. To get to the Olympics, Biles underwent years of intense practice and training. She perfected her craft and challenged herself to reach greater levels of difficulty than any

realized that working hard does not mean proving to others that you are a winner.

A strong work ethic is a Torah value as well. *Ben He He* says in Pirkei Avot 5:23: "According to the labor is the reward." We cannot expect fruitful results without putting in a solid effort in all aspects of life.

Biles' career is a great example of the well-known principle that hard work and determination are vital elements of achieving success. Most importantly, she is a paradigm for what it means to be self-motivated instead of simply working to please others. Yet, by being aware of her own limits and opting out when she felt it was necessary, she is able to embody a more healthy and realistic model of what it means to "work hard."



Simone Biles at the 2020 Olympics.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

This Year's US Open is a Must for Tennis Fans and Non-Tennis Fans Alike

By YONI MAYER

This article was published online on Sept. 6.

Both tennis fans and non-tennis fans should go to the U.S. Open this year. Located right off the number seven subway line and just two minutes away from Citi Field, the U.S. Open arena is a bastion of the tennis world, a haven for tennis zealots and a permanent fixture of American sports pride. Although any year at the Open feels like an exceptional year, this year is especially important for a few big reasons.

For tennis fans: Novak Djokovic, widely considered to be the greatest player of all time, is attempting to make history by achieving the calendar Grand Slam — winning all four majors in the year, starting with the Australian Open and ending with the U.S. Open. If he wins, he would join an elite club of only five other players in the history of the sport to have accomplished

such a feat. Additionally, winning the tournament would grant him his 21st Grand Slam win, officially overtaking Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer for the most Grand Slam wins of all time. The tennis world is holding its breath, counting down each of Novak's seven requisite matches to win the final.

Make this year the year that you take the two subways down to Flushing Meadows, Queens, and enjoy a sports experience like no other.

Needless to say, if you are a tennis fan, this is the tournament to watch.

However, even if you have not watched a single tennis match in your life, there are plenty of reasons to visit the U.S. Open. First, the atmosphere is unlike any other in the sports world. Attending a tennis event feels more like walking through a scaled-down city than it does attending a baseball or football game. While there are no

skyscrapers or taxis, the excitement of the crowd and the sound of cheering replicate the experience of walking through a bustling city for the first time. The stadium is also different from that of any other sporting event. There are expansive grounds to walk around, host to all the Open's amenities and

up on training courts and playing matches around the venue. You choose how to spend your day and whom to watch. On that note, you're also able to see professional sports on another level; the smaller courts have standing sections that are about 20 feet away from the players. You walk around the complex, spot which match seems appealing to you, and walk right up to it, courtside. Tennis events democratize sports for those of us who wouldn't generally be able to afford first-row tickets, giving top-dollar seats to whoever's first to the courts to claim them.

Last, the pricing structure is extremely appealing. For most sporting events, you pay an exorbitant amount of money to see one game from the nosebleed section. Tennis is different. Yes, the stadium tickets can be a little pricey; if this is a concern for you, you don't need to spend the money on stadium seats, and can instead buy a grounds pass for around \$60. That fare gets you an entire day walking around a sporting city, witnessing upwards of 10 world-class tennis matches and sitting front row on all of them; this deal is amplified tenfold for avid tennis fans who really want to fill their entire day with tennis.

So everyone should head to the U.S. Open this year. It's one of the tennis world's premier events, one of tennis' four major events of the year and this year may see a player make history. I'm not saying anything radical or revolutionary about the U.S. Open; enthusiasts know all about tennis tournaments' unique atmosphere, entertainment experience and affordable pricing. Make this year the year that you take the two subways down to Flushing Meadows, Queens, and enjoy a sports experience like no other.



The 2014 U.S. Open

MICHAEL VADON/FLICKR

Fashion's Biggest Night Out is Back

By EMILY SAFFER

The Met Gala, officially named The Costume Institute Gala, was established in 1948 by fashion icon Eleanor Lambert as a fundraiser for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. This institute was and remains independently-funded because fashion was not recognized as art when this section initially opened. The annual gala is a glamorous, star-studded event, which takes place on the opening date of the Costume Institute Spring Fashion Exhibit. The first Met Gala, costing guests \$100 a ticket (\$830 in today's currency when adjusted for inflation), was a humble event featuring an orchestra, fine dining and elegant attire. In 2021, the cost was an astronomical \$30,000 a ticket, or \$300,000 a table, with musical performers by Tony Award Winners, Broadway stars and pop star Justin Bieber dining consisted of a 10-course vegan meal, and renowned designers — such as Oscar de la Renta and Versace — in the business. The initial quaint gala became the “extravaganza” it is today with the vision of Anna Wintour, Artistic Director of Conde Nast and Editor-in-Chief of Vogue magazine. Her first gala — which sold out at \$1,000 a ticket in 1995 — was a smashing success thanks to the enormous media coverage surrounding the celebrity attendees and fashion designers. Over the course of two decades worth of Met Galas, Wintour raised nearly \$175 million.

This year's Met Gala, themed “In America,” raised a record \$16.75 million. The Gala is the main source of income keeping the museum's fashion department alive. Due to the decline in museum visitors as a result of COVID-19, the Met lost approximately \$150 million in revenue; in addition, their main source of funding, the annual Gala, was cancelled.

In past years, the Met's biggest sponsors were corporate businesses ranging from Amazon to Apple, as well as fashion houses Gucci and Versace. The Gala allows companies to advertise their brand by outfitting celebrities in their respective labels for red carpet appearances, and often signing them on as brand ambassadors. In more recent years, tech companies including Amazon and Instagram have slowly participated in this lavish benefit. This year, Instagram sponsored the gala — reported to be a sum between \$1 million and \$3 million — the exhibitions and the Met catalogue.

The Met Gala is no stranger to social media. Being the second most-followed museum Instagram account behind the Museum Of Modern Art (MoMA), the Met is well-versed in social media platforms and their influence on viewers. For the 2019 Gala, the Met partnered with TikTok to advertise the benefit. In less than 48 hours, they garnered over 170 million views and obtained major digital publicity. They recognize social media as an opportunistic marketing platform, with the ability to grow their audience digitally. Over the course of an almost-entirely virtual year, Instagram — with its 1 billion global users — became a tool capable of hosting online museum tours and showcasing works of art. As Met spokeswoman stated, by “attaching their name to such a defining, high profile gala secures their cultural standing,” Instagram has much to gain from such a sponsorship deal.

The Taliban Attacks the Market: How Foreign Unrest Affects the U.S. Economy

By SHMUEL METZ

With incessant images of Taliban leaders strapped with weaponry and heart-wrenching videos of civilians attempting to flee Afghanistan, even still, a far more ruinous condition lurks behind the scenes. The United States' departure from Afghanistan demonstrates horrible insight and foreboding. As Mir Sadat, former policy director for the National Security Council (NSC), notes, the U.S. undercut both evacuation effort timelines and did not extend the airport perimeter to have more protection from attacks, which would allow more access points to the airport. The aggregate of this miscalculation, and many others, resulted in the deaths of U.S. service members, the creation of effective Taliban checkpoints, an inability to retrieve U.S. persons throughout Kabul and the rest of Afghanistan, and a humanitarian disaster at the gates of Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul.

Looking at the broader picture, however, the economic case for pulling out is clear. The impact of the war is staggering. After having U.S. troops in Afghanistan for over twenty years, the cumulative cost of the war is a whopping \$2.3 trillion, according to a Brown University study. Throughout that time, 2,500 U.S. soldiers' lives were taken and a total of 250,000 lives altogether. Future interest payments and healthcare obligations to veterans could amount to trillions

of dollars as well. This kind of impact is certainly unsustainable long term and the war needed to come to an end. While President Biden made the decision, former Presidents Donald Trump and Barack Obama wanted the troops out as well. The unrest and tension from the war that inundated America for the past twenty years has a clear and

The unrest and tension from the war that inundated America for the past twenty years has a clear and extensive impact.

extensive impact.

The detrimental effects on the U.S. from foreign political unrest is not an anomaly. Although the U.S. certainly has one of the most robust economies, it is tremendously impacted by the global economy time and time again.

The combined effect of the 2011 earthquake, tsunami and a nuclear disaster in Japan, left 18,000 dead and caused over \$220 billion in damages. Due to possible radiation in food, the U.S. banned the importation of many goods from Japan. Japan was unable to keep up levels of production for components of critical U.S. imports, such as electronic parts and batteries and transmissions for electrical vehicles.

In 2016, the UK decided to leave the

European Union, sinking the British pound and slowing economic growth significantly. This increased the U.S. dollar, making American shares more expensive for foreign investors and raising the cost of exportation of goods to the UK.

In more recent times, COVID-19, which emerged from China, has had a far reaching impact on the U.S., and the world. With 720,000 Americans dead, a historic stock market crash with the DJIA declined twenty six percent over four consecutive days and the unemployment rate in the U.S. at 20%, the U.S. is only beginning to climb out from the impact of the pandemic.

Apart from the negative consequences the U.S. endures from being part of a global economy there are many mutually beneficial gains from international relations. Increased international trade decreases the cost of manufacturing by allowing companies to source raw materials where they are inexpensive and in turn, companies can offer goods at a lower price to consumers. Businesses can outsource services and production to places where labor cost is lower.

Being a part of the broader economy has improved financial markets and has brought success to many businesses across the U.S. It is no secret that globalization has produced many of the technological, cultural and economic advancements we see today.



Retail Apocalypse

By MIRIAM FELZENSTEIN

When one thinks of an apocalypse, images of destruction, chaos and even zombies may come to mind. While these are unlikely to transpire, an equally horrifying sight has reared its head: dead malls. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, retail stores and malls were in rapid decline. The retail apocalypse started in 2010, and continues as more retail stores continue to die off. In what became known as "The Great Retail Apocalypse of 2017," seven major retailers filed for bankruptcy, and stocks, such as American Eagle and Lululemon, sank to all-time lows. While retail stores were already facing their demise, the pandemic accelerated the downfall of these stores.

But how is it that these destinations once beloved by so many are now becoming empty? Even before the pandemic, e-commerce was rising. According to an article written by BBC news, "In 2018, [Amazon] became the world's second-ever public company to be valued at \$1 trillion, after Apple, and today it has the third-highest market valuation in the US, after Apple and Microsoft." Other retailers are simply unable to compete with

the ease of online shopping. And it makes sense — why go to the store to buy an item when it is more convenient to purchase online? Rather than spend time walking around stores, one can use the Amazon or Google search bars. Retailers failed because their in-store experiences were not enticing enough for consumers, with one example being the

virtually experiment with makeup available for purchase on nearby shelves. Amazon Go stores allow customers to purchase items without the hassle of waiting for a register. Customers can walk out with their items, and in-store scanners paired with a phone app will charge them remotely. Target offers an app guiding in-store shoppers to the loca-

at items. These techniques upgrade the shopping experience by making it more efficient and timely. This has helped retailers improve before the pandemic and has allowed them to stay afloat during these challenging times.

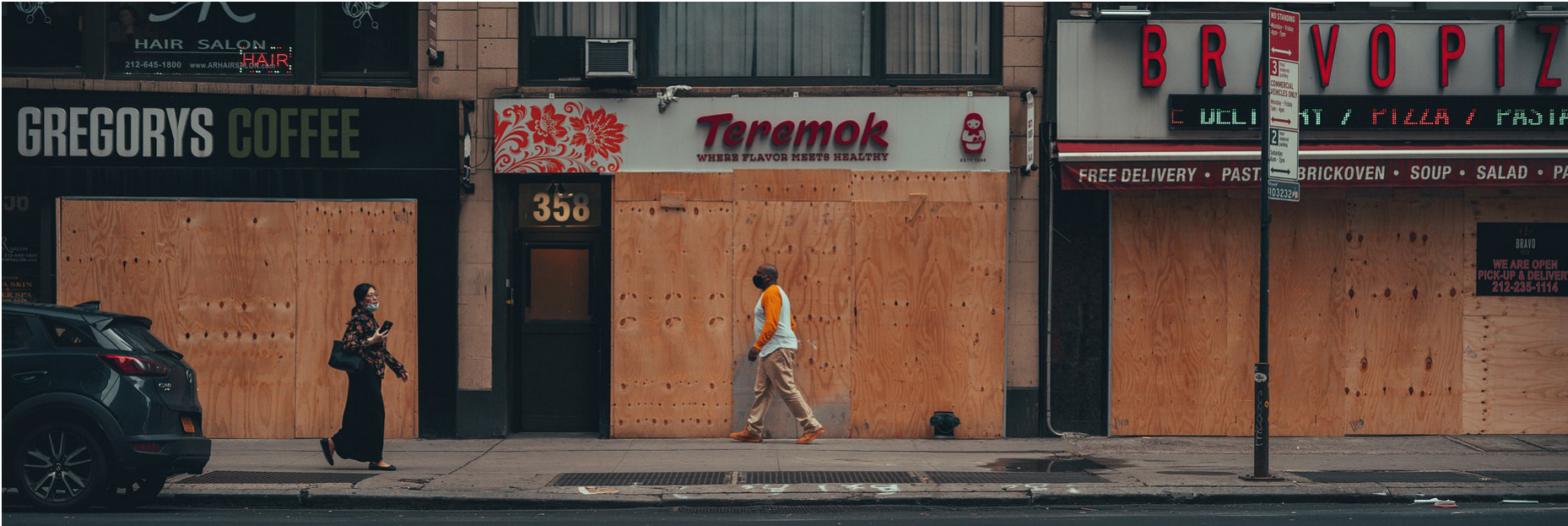
Despite the pandemic, retailers like TJ Maxx, Five Below and Dollar Tree are opening more locations as these types of "discount chain stores" have found an in-person method that works at piquing customers' interests. Discount stores typically receive overstock from popular brands which they sell in limited quantities at a lower price. At TJ Maxx, high-end brands such as Tommy Hilfiger and Michael Kors are available at a large discount. In a study done by Accenture, it was discovered that 64 percent of consumers are concerned about their job security, and 88 percent are worried about economic impacts from the pandemic. These worries have resulted in a shift in consumer behavior towards discount stores. While e-commerce is a growing market causing many traditional retail stores to go out of business, understanding consumer behavior and implementing strategy accordingly allows retail stores to better compete with online giants.

While retail stores were already facing their demise, the pandemic accelerated the downfall of these stores.

once-popular Toys-R-Us, which filed for bankruptcy in part due to its inability to compete with Amazon, as well as with stores that offered unique, innovative shopping experiences such as the Lego Store's customization stations.

In response to this, stores made necessary improvements. Kohl's reduced the square footage of their stores, allowing customers to feel less stressed with a reduced item selection. American Eagle implemented interactive fitting rooms equipped with digital screens. Sephora now offers an in-store smart mirror, allowing consumers to

tion of the items they wish to purchase. The use of virtual reality has increased in stores too, allowing customers to virtually try out experiences. Virgin Hotels and Holiday Inn experimented with a VR headset for customers to try out travel destinations. According to their study for a 2018 trial of VR, "The 50 stores that featured the VR headsets saw 81% more sales for Riviera Maya compared to the 50 stores that did not." In addition, the pandemic led to fear of enclosed public spaces and caused consumers to avoid staying inside stores for lengths of time. It also changed the way consumers shop and look



Shuttered retail stores

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