Honoring Rav Schachter's 50 Years as a Rosh Yeshiva: More Than Good Enough

By Rabbi Moshe Rosenberg

Rabbi Moshe Rosenberg serves as Rav of Congregation Elz Chaim of Kew Gardens Hills and teaches Judaic Studies at the SAR Academy, where he also serves as JudeoTech Integrator. His latest book is The Unofficial Hogwarts Haggadah. He writes this piece in honor of Rav Hershel Schachter’s 50 years as YU Rosh Yeshiva.

I write these lines with trepidation, not merely because of the difficulty in capturing Rabbi Hershel Schachter on paper but because I tried once before, thirty years ago, and still have not learned my lesson. When Rabbi Noach Goldstein, z’l, editor of Chavrusa Magazine, asked me to profile my Rabbi, I was somewhat lavish in his praise. Then I had the bright idea of showing the piece to Rav Schachter before submitting it. His two word response: “Nice Hesped!” So let me paraphrase Mark Antony at the outset: I come to praise Rav Schachter, not to bury him.

During the early 1980’s, I spent five years in Rav Schachter’s shiur, as well as two summers learning from him in Tannersville, NY. I also was privileged to travel with him to various other speaking engagements and even spend time at a program in Israel for which he spoke. What follow are snapshots from my experiences.

The Audience Matters

...A member of the audience in a Manhattan shiur asks a question totally lacking in any logic or redeeming quality. Without skipping a beat, Rav Schachter reframes, “Oh, you must be referring to the kashya of the Ketzos Ha-Choshen...” and proceeds to answer the question, conveniently eliding over the fact that the gentleman and the Ketzos are about as acquainted with each other as Richard Simmons and Hershey Bars. The scene repeats itself countless times, in different venues, with “klutz kashyas” instantly transformed into strokes of genius.

...On a program in Israel for Modern Orthodox families, Rav Schachter delivers a masterful shiur.

Moody’s Changes YU’s Financial Outlook on Eve of Rabbi Berman’s Transition into YU Presidency

By Doron Levine and David Rubinstein

In a credit rating released February 28, Moody’s Investors Service affirmed the B3 junk rating on YU’s bonds, but changed YU’s outlook from “negative” to “stable” for the first time since 2009. The report cited “material increase in unrestricted cash and investments” that have “significantly improved the university’s liquidity position.” Moody’s noted that recent improvements to YU’s finances should allow its financial management team to “execute its plans and reach financially sustainable

Floors 5 and 5A of Gottesman Library to be Renovated over the Upcoming Summer

By Eitan Lipsky

The wait is almost over for those “fifth-floor studiers” who might have felt short-changed by the recent renovations to floors 2 through 4 of the Wilf Campus library. According to Dr. Paul Glassman, Director of University Libraries, thanks to the generous donation of David and Ruth Gottesman, floors 5 and 5A of the Gottesman library will undergo a major renovation that will begin at the conclusion of the spring semester and is scheduled to be completed before the upcoming academic year. Construction of the Gottesman Library Building on Amsterdam Avenue, including

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SEE MOODY’S, CONTINUED ON PAGE 7
Don’t Protest the Westboro Baptist Church

By Doron Levine

On February 27, The Westboro Baptist Church announced its intention to stage a protest at Yeshiva University. In response, a number of students plan to stage a counter-protest to broadcast their unequivocal opposition to the Church’s positions. I do not wish to malign the organizers of this retaliatory demonstration or interrogate their motivations. Doubtless they mean well (who doesn’t?). But I submit that they are making a costly, even if innocent, mistake.

Based in Topeka, Kansas, the Westboro Baptist Church has achieved notoriety over the years for its aggressively anti-homosexual positions. With dogged tenacity and zealous fervor that Modern Orthodoxy could only dream of, the Church’s delegations are constantly on the prowl, protesting organizations and events they deem guilty of assorted depravities and basking in their status as celebrity scoundrels. Categorized as a “hate group” (whatever that means) by the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Church publicizes its travel schedule on its website called “godhatesflags.com,” a starkling domain name that straightforwardly delineates the group’s overarching philosophy. The Church maintains that homosexuality is the primary sin of American society and that its normalization in mainstream American culture has incited countless acts of divine retribution including the q/11 terror attacks and the deaths of soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

When the Church announced via its Twitter page that it would visit YU, a Facebook event materialized in the Yeshiva community to rally hundreds of people to “Join us in welcoming the Westboro Baptist Church to The Heights!!!” Scheduled for the morning of the protest, the event urges participants to “Bring your gay, lesbian, trans, and all of the above loving Jew selves along with your funny jokes, signs, flags, and t-shirts.” Of stereotyping, it seems abundantly clear that this type of demonstration is inconsistent with the culture and ideology of the YU right; because of the way the event has been framed, we can reasonably expect that many will not only decline to attend, but will also feel uncomfortable with its very occurrence on our campus. Thus on the day of the protest, many students will find themselves in the midst of an event that excludes a sizable contingent of students, this event will further accentuate fault lines within our community that excludes a sizable contingent of students, this event will further accentuate fault lines within our community instead of uniting us against a common enemy.

I understand the motivation. This sort of demonstration provides an exciting opportunity to interrupt the dreary monotony of college life. Protest has exciting appeal – rarely do sheltered New York collegiates get to experience the thrill of combating an ideological enemy, and rarely do opportunities to cement our credentials as LGBT allies show up on our doorstep.

In this case, though, we must resist the urge. Tempting as it is to escalate, to weave this event into a poetic narrative and imagine the upending protest as an epic showdown between good and evil, this truly is not a significant moment for YU. The ideology of the Westboro Baptist Church has no influence on any elements of modern Orthodox Jewry. Their message bears no substantive pertinence, it can and perhaps should inspire a brief moment of communal introspection. There are a number of possible positions that members of our community take out in contrast (even if not in direct response) to the Church’s position on homosexuality. Some within YU believe that it is not our place to tell people whom to love, and therefore Orthodox Judaism should embrace the standard progressive approach to homosexuality. But YU is also home to a sizable right-wing contingent composed of many who believe variants of the following: while biblical and Rabbinic law prohibit homosexual acts, it does not follow that “God hates fags.” The culture of open homosexuality and the ethos of gay pride are inconsistent with the spirit and even the letter of Jewish law, but individual LGBT members of our community deserve compassion and respect even as we stand by the normativity of Jewish legal precedent traditionally understood. There are many who believe this.

Members of this second group, which I suspect includes many of our religious leaders, though I hesitate to speak on their behalf, find themselves in a unique position with respect to the arrival of the Westboro Baptist Church. The Church’s protest requires them to respond, if at all, with a uniquely nuanced stance that sets them apart from both the Church and the Facebook event. I am quite sure that many of them will be uncomfortable attending a protest that encourages participants to bring “your gay, lesbian, trans, and all of the above loving Jew selves along with your funny jokes, signs, flags, and t-shirts.”

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 religious thought, 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 out the ideals of Torah u-Maddah, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.
1 Snowflakes
   Much to Ben Shapiro’s chagrin, there have been two snow days and lots of flurries. He has officially failed to destroy all snowflakes on campus.

2 Outrageous March Madness Prize
   UHRL has promised that anyone who gets a perfect bracket will win free housing. Before getting excited, though, you might want to know that the housing will be on the top floor of Muss, and your roommate will be a thirty-something semicha student who hasn’t figured out his life direction, or how to flush the toilet.

3 Chag HaSemikhah
   YU’s ultimate diversity showcase: One hundred musmachim, and three different types of black hats. It’s the 21st century alright!

4 Professor Robert E. Kelly
   Has his BBC interview interrupted by some “hippity-hoppity kids,” makes his way around the internet as a meme for a week, before proceeding to be forgotten about forever.

5 Admissions Office Desk
   No joke, this desk in Furst Hall is constantly loaded with delicious Laffy Taffy’s and Twizzlers. Clearly this is an attempt to lure eager high school students. Heck, I know that’s why I gave up my Harvard acceptance.

6 SCWSC
   I finally looked them up, and it turns out that the Salmon Creek Watershed Council is pretty legit. The only thing I don’t get is why this Washington State-based environmental society sends so many ystuds.

7 Debbie Beaudreau
   She is ever so mysterious and her ystuds are ever so eloquent that she must be the smartest, most beautiful, most powerful woman in YU. All hail Queen Debbie!

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor,

I was shocked to read Where are the Pitchforks? Being an Openly Gay Student at Yeshiva University (The Commentator, Feb 12, ‘17). While it is one thing to profess that gay people undergo an incredible struggle, which must be addressed with great sensitivity, it is another thing to advertise and publicly validate at Yeshiva a lifestyle which the Torah prohibits. The fact that the above article appeared without any apparent pushback, neither in the comments nor elsewhere, is extremely troubling.

Avrohom Gordimer
CSL ’93
RIETS ’93
YC ’89

MTA Student Attacked and Robbed in Washington Heights

By Shoshy Ciment

On Monday, February 27, 2017, two assailants attacked and robbed a 15-year old MTA student as he was leaving school. The two attackers, reported to have been “dark skinned” teens, punched student Yaakov Weisberger in the face. They ran off with his phone, leaving him “completely stunned” and in need of stitches for his wounds.

According to a YU Security Advisory that was sent out on Feb 28, 2017, the attack occurred at approximately 6:00 on the evening of February 27, 2017 on W. 187th Street and Amsterdam Avenue.

The advisory also mentioned that “the New York City Police Department responded to the scene and the 34th Precinct Detective Squad is now investigating” and claimed that the YU Security in the area has “increased patrols,” especially during MTA dismissal times.

MTA and the NYPD have not responded to requests for comment at this time.

Weisberger explained that he was fortunate that the attack occurred so close to MTA because students immediately came to help him. Although he described the period of time between the attack and arriving at the hospital as a “vague memory,” Weisberger was confident all the while that he “was in good hands.”

Describing his recovery as “speedy”, Weisberger expected to be back to school on today, March 1, but those plans were frustrated due to a sudden cancellation of classes at the YU High School for Boys due to a bussing mixup. Weisberger is thankful for everyone who helped him recover.

“It’s a crazy world out there,” mused Weisberger. “It’s even harder to believe that the craziness can reach you, but it certainly can. This incident is proof to that.”

YU Security is advising that students take extra measures of caution during this time, especially during the afternoon and evening hours.
Formerly Banned Restaurants Reinstated in Caf, Nagel, and Available for YU Events

By Samuel Gelman (Houston, TX)

On March 6 at around 10pm, in a post to YU Marketplace, Chop Chop’s manager Matthew Chan announced that Chop Chop will once again be served in the YU Cafeteria. “Just really Baruch HaShem!” said Matthew. “We want to thank YU, OU and all the Rabbis from Vaad Of Riverdale and all the support from the YU Rabbis, and especially all the students for the support.”

Rabbi Elefant, COO of the Orthodox Union’s Kashrut Department, in an interview with The Commentator. “Therefore, we take our responsibility very seriously and need to be sure that standards are the same as OU supervision.” When asked why this was happening now and why Chop Chop had previously been allowed to sell their food in the YU cafeterias, Rabbi Elefant responded, “We became aware that the students at YU were interested in their school selling the products in the food service system of YU, but YU recognized that they needed OU approval. Perhaps things fell through the cracks, perhaps.”

The manager of Carlos and Gabby’s rebuffed several requests for comment on the matter. The move came as an apparent reinforcement of the OU’s kashrut policy with Yeshiva University. Since Yeshiva University cafeterias and events are under the supervision on the OU, any food not certified by the OU cannot be served on campus. Chop Chop is certified by the Va’ad of Riverdale, the kashrut organization overseen by YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Mordechai Willig. “Given that Yeshiva University food programs are OU-certified, everything that is sold in cafeterias in the Yeshiva University system must meet OU standards,” said Rabbi Elefant, COO of the Orthodox Union’s Kashrut certification programs are consistent with standards that.

While this policy made sense on the surface, YU does sell snacks and other food items that are certified by kashrut organizations other than the OU. “The OU does not insist that the factories that certify products use OU ingredients,” Rabbi Elefant responded. “We insist that they use ingredients that meet OU hashgacha and that is the same policy we have for YU. If the supervision is up to standards, we have no problem allowing YU to use it.” When asked whether this meant that the Va’ad of Riverdale was not up to OU standards, Rabbi Elefant said, “I did not say that.”

The OU offered no timetable as to how long it would take to ensure that Chop Chop’s kashrut is up to standards. However, Rabbi Elefant did talk about how they were approaching the matter, saying that “some of our people are visiting those restaurants under the Va’ad of Riverdale to ensure that the standards used in their certification programs are consistent with standards that...”

SEE CHOP-CHOP, CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

LIBRARY, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

That project was also generously sponsored by David and Ruth Gottesman, and was completed in November 2015. Although at that point only part of the library underwent renovations, the administration knew that they would get back to the remaining library floors soon.

Earlier this year, a project team consisting of Dr. Glassman, Head Librarian of Hebraica-Judaica Leah Adler, Director of Administrative Services Joseph Cook; and architects Ran Oron and James Driscoll of the architecture design firm ROART (the same firm that headed the 2015 renovations) met to begin planning how to go about improving the fifth floor. After several weeks of discussion, the team proposed a diagram of how the layout of the floors will look. This diagram has been altered numerous times since it was originally proposed; as of press time, no conclusion has been reached on exactly what the renovations will look like. (The Commentator is in touch with the project team, and hopes to publicize the floor plan for our readers to see as soon as it is finalized.)

Part of the reason that coming up with the exact plan for the new design of floors 5 and 5A is taking some time is the nature of the Gottesman Library. “We feel that the Gottesman Library is the Hebraica/Judaica library of record in the Northeast, if not the entire United States,” said Dr. Glassman, “and we believe that it contains a comprehensive account of Jewish scholarship.” As such, the team commissioned studies from two outside consultants to guide them in how to manage the collections in light of the renovations and how to create the optimal research library. Whereas in the previous renovation project of the library’s lower floors many of the bookshelves were cleared out and many of the books were either removed entirely or relocated to the library’s basement to create more study spaces, this renovation has a different set of goals; to preserve the integrity and prestige of the Gottesman library, most of the collections will not be moved from their current locations. One set of the Gottesman collection that will be relocated is the periodicals, which will be moved up to the 6th floor of the library. While the library’s 6th floor cannot be accessed by elevator, it can be reached by the stairs and will be used as storage space for any books that are moved in order to keep them close to where they might be needed.

While not all of the details of the new-look library are known, some of the planned changes have already been agreed upon. A row of windows much like those on floors 2 and 4 will replace some of the brick wall that currently faces Amsterdam Avenue on floor 5, which will provide additional natural light to the room. New couches will be placed on the floor and the current tables will be refinished and reoriented to give the furniture on the floor a new look, and new carpeting will be added for the whole floor. Additionally, efforts will be made to create more visual communication between floors 5 and 5A. At least two group study rooms as well as one seminar room will appear on the floors. The restrooms will be upgraded and a women’s restroom will be added. Updated LED lighting will bring much brightness to the floor that has a reputation of having a gloomy aura due to its poor lighting. The printer stations will be consolidated and will appear in one designated area on floor 5. New copiers will be added, all integrated with the new Pharos software.

Unfortunately, one problem that exists on these floors is that the renovations will not be able to solve is the tendency of the floors to be rather sultry. As Dr. Glassman keenly explained, “Heat rises. If you would like to be cool, go to a lower floor. There is no way for us to get around that problem.”

While the team is committed to working diligently over the summer and to sticking to a strict timetable to have the library ready for the beginning of the fall semester, Dr. Glassman acknowledged that there is always a chance of things getting delayed in the process. “With architectural projects, we have to allow for unforeseen conditions that might alter the timetable of the project,” he said, “especially when we are working on an existing building.” Nevertheless, Dr. Glassman said that he would make sure to keep the student body updated if the completion date of the project were to change.
Sympathy for Chop Chop and confusion as to why this
of the comments on the initial Facebook post expressed
the time.
the Va’ad of Riverdale could be reached for comment at
see it resolved very soon.” Neither the staff of Chop nor
certification company, the OU, and Chop Chop. We hope
that “this is currently being worked out between our
Cook, the YU Director of Administrative Services, stated
the OU has in in its programs.”

CHOP-CHOP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4
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Yeshiva University was quiet on the matter. Joseph
Cook, the YU Director of Administrative Services, stated
that “this is currently being worked out between our
certification company, the OU, and Chop Chop. We hope
to see it resolved very soon.” Neither the staff of Chop nor
the Va’ad of Riverdale could be reached for comment at
the time.
YU students, however, were more outspoken. Many of
the comments on the initial Facebook post expressed
sympathy for Chop Chop and confusion as to why this
had happened at all.
Furthermore, with the lack of communication from
YU and from Chop Chop, many students believe that
this entire situation had more to do with profits than
with “standards.” Zev Behar, a senior in YC, expressed
sympathy for Chop Chop and its owner, saying that
“from the outside, it seems like YU is trying to strongarm
Chop Chop into switching to the OU, which would cost
significantly more than what they pay to be certified by
the Va’ad of Riverdale and they are holding their meal
plans as ransom, which for Chop Chop I think is nearly
40% of their income.” Aaron Kirshtein echoed this
feeling: “As a YU student, it upsets me that YU seems to
be penny-pinching other kashrut organizations. I feel the
Va’ad of Riverdale is a legitimate kashrut [organization],”
Rabbi Elefant, however, stressed that this situation
was simply about kashrut standards. “We need to make
sure that everything sold at YU meets YU standards…We
don’t have a crisis on our hands here. It’s kosher food.”
But now it appears that the crisis is over. When asked
for a final comment about this ordeal, Chan simply
responded, with his characteristic piety, “I feel blessed
from Hashem. Baruch Hashem.”

YU Roller Hockey Team Advances to National Championship

By Ben Strachman
The YU Roller Hockey team has advanced to the
national championships, the National Collegiate Roller
Hockey Association announced on Monday, March 6.
“From day one our goal was to make it to the national
tournament,” said Joseph Robin, who plays goalie for the
team. “To get the recognition we know we deserve means
so much and it’s an unbelievable feeling to get to this
point. It’s been a long road to get here and our next step is
to win the whole thing.”
The team finished the regular season with a 15-2 record,
tyling for second place in the Division 2 Eastern league
with Northeastern University, which was not invited to the
championships. The team will compete against nineteen
other teams in Fort Myers, Florida from April 3 through 5.
“We know we didn’t exactly show up during the
regionals championship weekend but we’re excited that
the league is giving us another chance to prove to everyone
why we were one of the best teams all season long,” said
team forward Etan Bardash.
The invitation to the championship is the latest episode
in the team’s meteoric rise since its founding last season.
After being placed in Division 4 and winning the division
championship last season, the team rose this year to
Division 2. The team’s unexpected success was featured
last month in a New York Times article outlining the
challenge and motivation that religious life offers the team.
“We are so excited to be able to continue making a
kiddush Hashem” as well as bring pride to the school and
community,” team captain Amir Gavarin said. “We have
around a month to really bear down and work hard in
preparation for the national tournament, where we will
have to play elite teams from across the country. It won’t
be easy but we plan on making our mark.”

Stu Halpern and Ari Lamm Join
Rabbi Berman’s Presidential Transition Team

By Doron Levine
President-Elect Rabbi Ari Berman has recruit-
er personnel to facilitate his transition into the YU
presidency. As of March 1, Dr. Stu Halpern has been
serving as Rabbi Berman’s Tran-
sition Chief of Staff, responsible for coordinat-
ing the Office of the President-
Elect. He over-
sees Rabbi Ber-
man’s schedule, and will arrange a wide range of
meetings with the university’s vari-
ous stakeholders over the next few
months.
Dr. Halpern holds a Masters
in Psychology in Education from Columbia Teachers
College, a Masters in Bible from Revel, an MBA in
Nonprofit Management from Touro, and an EdD from
Azrieli. Prior to becoming Transition Chief of Staff, Dr.
Halpern held a number of positions within YU. He served as Assistant Director of YU’s Straus Center
for Torah and Western Thought, the Assistant Direc-
tor of Community Outreach and Student Activities of
the Bernard Revel Graduate School, and the Deputy
Managing Editor of YU Press. Halpern told The Com-
mentator that he “put those positions on pause” when
he assumed his current role.
Also beginning March 1, Ari Lamm has been serving
as Advisor to the President-Elect for Research
and Strategy. A graduate of YU, Lamm received a Ful-
bright Scholarship to complete a Masters in Hebrew
and Jewish Studies at University College London. He
completed his semicha at RIETS and pursuing a PhD
in the religions of Mediterranean antiquity at Princ-
eton University. He also currently serves as Resident
Scholar at the Jewish Center of Manhattan’s Upper
West Side, the synagogue that previously saw Presi-
dent-Elect Rabbi Berman serve as its Rabbi. Accord-
ing to Transition Chief of Staff Halpern, Lamm “is as-
sisting Rabbi Berman on a number of fronts, includ-
ing exploring new
initiatives.”
Rabbi Berman
officially began
his transition
into the YU Presi-
dency on March
1. He is currently
living on the Wilf
Campus, though
his family re-
mains in Neve
Daniel for now
while his chil-
dren finish their
respective school
years. Though
Rabbi Berman
was originally
slated to take over
the presidency on July 1, President Joel sent out an
email on March 1 announcing that Rabbi Berman will
actually become president on June 5.
Completion of 185th Street Plaza Renovation, Years In The Making, Delayed

By Ben Strachman

Completion of the construction on West 185th Street is being delayed due to energy company Con Edison, a spokesperson for the project said.

Shavone Williams, Public Information Officer for the NYC Department of Design and Construction, stated that while the renovations were originally expected be completed by the summer, the finish date has been pushed off to the fall. She said that although the underground construction was an expected part of the renovations, working around energy company Con Edison’s work schedule has delayed the project.

“We expected that there was going to be [gas pipe and electrical conduit replacement] anyway, it’s just that that type of work has to be taken of by Con Edison. It could have just been one of those things where their schedule towards [the expected completion date] prohibits them from starting the work at a certain time or finishing by a certain time. We have to work around them, and we can’t start our part until they’re finished. We’re hoping, weather permitting, that they will finish their portion this month.”

After Con Edison completes their work, students will begin to see improvements on the street, most of which will be finished by the summer. According to Joseph Cook, Executive Director for University Operations, “It’ll all be done by summer of 2017, except for the planting. They’ve gotten so far behind that they’re going to miss the spring planting.”

Ms. Williams noted that the complexity of the project arose from the intersection of separate plans that ultimately combined into the current construction on 185th. The NYC Department of Transportation requested years ago that the underground water mains on the street be replaced. When the plans to create a plaza on 185th began, the Department of Design and Construction included that work in the current project, and Triumph Construction won the contract to renovate the plaza and replace the water mains. Before any plaza or water work could take place, however, Con Edison needed to move and replace gas and electric lines.

After construction workers began replacing pipes on 185th Street and the project remained relatively inactive over the winter, the lack of information has left many YU students confused.

“I don’t know much about the current state of the construction other than what I’ve seen on the signs and posters with the picture-perfect depiction of the future plaza, which are up around YU,” said Avi Hirsch, a Yeshiva College Sophomore. “While I’ve heard people mention that the underground work involves fixing the pipes, I haven’t been informed of the details.”

According to Mr. Cook, the completion of the plaza represents the culmination of a project planned for years.

“The plaza renovations were started by Jeffrey Rosengarten, the Vice President for Support Services, probably 20 years ago. Over time, [185th Street] was slowly closed, restricted, and at the same they went into a fund raising mode, so the university in effect reached out to all different government agencies, and found funding in the city [government]. They found some funding to slowly do this, and this was a very long process.”

After Mr. Rosengarten’s application to have 185th street included in the city’s pedestrian plaza project was rejected in 2008, the university tried again in 2011, this time willing to contribute money to the project. In the end, according to Ms. Williams, part of the funding for the $3.6 million project “came from Council member Rodriguez, Comptroller Scott Stringer while he was still Manhattan Borough President, and the Department of Transportation.” Mr. Cook confirmed that YU did not pay for the current round of renovations at all.

When asked whether there are currently any plans to block off more of Amsterdam Avenue, Mr. Cook stated that while the city doesn’t allow avenues to be closed off to traffic entirely, the part of the street that is currently blocked off will also be renovated and resurfaced as part of the current renovations.
MOODY'S, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

operations." The rating service explained that this change also reflects their "expectation that continued operational improvements will reduce the pace at which the university uses liquid reserves to fund structural cash deficits."

The news was not all positive, though, as an affirmation of YU's B3 rating reflects continued high credit risk. A B3 junk rating on a bond means that the bond is non-investment, speculative grade. This rating significantly affects Yeshiva's ability to borrow more money.

The reaffirmed B3 rating, according to Moody's, is based on YU's "very weak fiscal and operational condition." Though the outlook is now stable, negative but improving cash flow is expected to continue as YU "continues to adjust its business model and right size operations." Moody's also referenced challenges specific to YU's mission, explaining that the B3 rating "also reflects challenges associated with growing revenue in a highly competitive market with a narrow undergraduate student focus."

The decline in YU's bonds began in April 2009 when Moody's downgraded YU bonds from Aa2 to Aa3, assigning them a negative outlook. The slide continued over the next few years until, on March 5, 2014, Moody's downgraded YU's bond rating from B1 to B3 and reaffirmed the negative outlook, attributing the downgrade to "extremely thin and unstable unrestricted liquidity, with significant reliance on external facilities." Cash and liquid investments were scarce at the time -- according to Moody's, as of fiscal year-end 2013, unrestricted cash and investments that could be liquidated within one month covered only ninety-one days of expenses. YU's endowment was therefore in danger, with increasingly severe operating deficits requiring YU to draw heavily from its endowment in order to cover daily expenses.

More recently, on February 9, 2016, Moody's reaffirmed YU's B3 rating and negative outlook, citing factors that could lead to an upgrade, such as "substantial improvement in unrestricted liquidity" and "progress towards balanced operating performance."

This upgrade from "negative" to "stable" comes shortly after the departure of three of Yeshiva's senior fundraisers: Seth Moskowitz, Alan Secter, and Howard Charish. Fundraising is one of YU's principal means of increasing available cash.

On December 12th, Seth Moskowitz, the chief administrator of YU's fundraising office, abruptly vacated his position of Vice President of Institutional Advancement. His departure came the morning after the Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation, YU's biggest annual fundraising event. Sector and Charish have also recently departed -- the former to work at another nonprofit organization, and the latter to retirement. The university has yet to replace any of these fundraisers; for the time being, President Richard Joel is personally overseeing Institutional Advancement until he steps down on June 5.

The credit rating upgrade also came the day before President-Elect Rabbi Ari Berman began his transition into the YU presidency. On Wednesday, March 1, Rabbi Berman assumed a temporary residence in Washington Heights and officially joined YU's payroll. In their report, Moody's directly referenced this transition in leadership, pointing out that "the now sufficient level of unrestricted liquidity is a stabilizing factor during a highly transitional period, with a new president scheduled to join the university prior to the start of academic year 2017-2018."

President-Elect Rabbi Berman's background is not in financial management, leading many to note that, judging by his history and background, he looks to be a different sort of presidential figure from Current President Richard Joel. Rabbi Berman is an ordained rabbi with a doctorate in Jewish thought and little experience with financial management, while President Joel is a lawyer who, before he became president of YU, served as Associate Dean of Cardozo School of Law and President of Hillel. In an interview with The Commentator, Rabbi Berman affirmed the importance of strengthening YU's financial situation, but noted that "we don't have clarity," he explained, "if we don't explain how our Torah is translated into the world around us, we're not going to get the means either. We need to explain the value of YU today if we want increase enrollment and if we want to broaden our donor base."

MOODY'S, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

President Elect Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman officially began his transition into the YU presidency on Wednesday, March 1. Since that date, Rabbi Berman has been residing in the Morgenstern Residence Hall on the Wilf Campus in Washington Heights. He occupies a recently-vacated office in Belfer Hall and has been placed on Yeshiva University's payroll.

Rabbi Berman was voted in as the fifth president of YU by the Board of Trustees on November 15, 2016. In a recent article, The Commentator reported that "Rabbi Berman will take over on July 1 and President Joel will be in charge until then. In the interim, Rabbi Berman will be traveling back and forth between Israel and America, but as time goes on he will become increasingly more of a presence on campus."

This transition looks be similar to President Richard Joel's transition. After his election in December 2002, President Joel spent two or three days a week on the YU campuses, using the rest of his time to finish up his duties as president of Hillel International in Washington, DC. The length and frequency of Rabbi Berman's visits during the next few months are still unclear.

Though Rabbi Berman was originally slated to take over the presidency on July 1, President Joel sent out an email on March 1 announcing that Rabbi Berman will actually become president on June 5. When he becomes President of YU, Rabbi Berman will leave his current teaching position at Machon Herzog, a teachers college in Alon Shvut, and will step down as head of the Jewish Heritage Center in Jerusalem.

In an interview with The Commentator, Rabbi Berman discussed the importance of clarifying YU's values along with strengthening its financial situation: "If we don't have clarity, if we don't explain how our Torah is translated into the world around us, we're not going to get the means either. We need to explain the value of YU today if we want increase enrollment and if we want to broaden our donor base."
By Judah Stiefel

After protesting recently at Shalhevet High School in LA, The Westboro Baptist Church (WBC) set its sights on YU. In a press release, the church announced that the “God Hates Your Idols Preaching Tour” will stop at Yeshiva University “in religious protest and warning” on the morning of March 27. The small group, based in Topeka, Kansas, is infamous for its inflammatory protests and spiteful beliefs.

Westboro’s beef with YU seems to be on two different counts: killing Jesus Christ and spreading the “soul damning” (sic) lie of “It’s okay to be gay.” Westboro chose to picket YU in particular because the latter “encapsulates the perverse state of both modern Judaism and the American university system” (sic), the press release said.

On the accusations of killing Jesus, a spokesperson for Westboro said the church seeks a statement from YU administrators including a confession that “our ancestors killed the Lord Jesus Christ and his blood is on our hands, we mourn for him whom we have pierced, we repent, and killed the Lord Jesus Christ and his blood is on our hands.”

A Church spokesman explained to The Commentator that “we mourn for Him whom we have pierced, we repent, and killed the Lord Jesus Christ and his blood is on our hands, we do not beyond rebuke just because you’re a Jew, and just because someone rebukes you doesn’t mean he an anti-Semite,” a spokesperson for the church said. “If it did, then Jesus Christ (a Jew) and Paul (a Jew) would both be anti-Semites.”

Westboro does not see its protest as anti-semitic. “You’re not beyond rebuke just because you’re a Jew, and just because someone rebukes you doesn’t make him an anti-Semite,” a spokesperson for the church said. “If it did, then Jesus Christ (a Jew) and Paul (a Jew) would both be anti-Semites.”

Westboro was unphased that some of Yeshiva’s leaders have been criticized for voicing conservative opinions on homosexuality. “What difference does it make if ‘some’ of the leaders of the university oppose homosexuality?” a spokesperson for the church asked a Commentator journalist rhetorically. “The zeitgeist among the student body is to support (homosexuality).”

In a March 10 tweet, WBC showed a developing nuance in the theology of their protest slogans. “We AREN’T bringing our ‘God Hates Jews’ sign on March 27th,” the tweet said. A video attached to the tweet showed a WBC member flaunting a sign with a more qualified text: “God hates Christ-rejecting apostate Jews.”

Westboro said it expects “probably 10 at most” from the church to protest YU, including “one or more” church elders. A spokesperson said the church may also protest at the Beren Campus, but initially chose the Wilf campus due to minor logistical considerations.

Various response strategies have emerged from Yeshiva University. An email signed by Senior Vice President Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph and Vice President for University and Community Life Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brandner stated that the administration is aware of the protest by WBC. “As both a Yeshiva and a University committed to the nobility of people, YU firmly rejects the group’s vile message of intolerance and hatred,” the message read. The email further stated that the group will not be allowed onto YU property and that campus security will be working with the NYPD to ensure public safety. The email emphasizes that students should not engage WBC during its visit.

In what might be seen as opposition to the administration’s request to not engage the protestors, Asher Lovy and YU student James Alavosus, are organizing a student response in which counter-protesters are encouraged to bring their “funniest, dankest signs, flags, and t-shirts, and just have a good time.” They expect 20 to 30 students, possibly more, to attend. A Facebook event page has 61 people listed as “going” and over 200 as “interested.” Alavosus said he wants to send a message to the group that, “being accepting of LGBT+ people isn’t a novel concept.” He would like the WBC to understand that everyone should be treated equally and with decency. The message of the student response is not intended solely for the Westboro Baptist Church but for the greater YU community: to proclaim that acceptance for all will continue to be defended.

Asher Lovy points out that though the Westboro Baptist Church is simply a fringe group, “there will be people who see it and will be hurt by the message… when the WBC shows up they should see the hate countered with love and levity.” Lovy also points out that it will still be the month of Adar, and this is an excellent excuse to have a good time.

“Part of me really wants to get into the face of these bigots, part of me doesn’t want to be anywhere near them, part of me wants to make sure I don’t stoop down to anywhere near their level, and the last part of me wants to be in morning seder,” Lovy said. One student joked about calling the Na-Nach Breslov headquarters to inform them of the upcoming WBC protest and request that a Na-Nach van be sent to YU the day of the protest to blast Jewish music and lead some dancing.

The WBC is known first and foremost for its anti-gay protests. Founded in 1955 by pastor Fred Phelps, the self-proclaimed Christian church consists of family lawyers who profit from suing the groups they provoke. The group is monitored constantly by the Anti-Defamation league and has been branded a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. Phelps, who died in 2014, was disbarred from practicing law in Kansas in 1979 for what the Kansas Supreme Court called “a lack of ethics.”

The membership of the church includes nine of Phelps’ thirteen children, his grandchildren, and a handful of other families. Nearly the entirety of the church’s 100-person membership is related to Phelps. In 1993-1994, a number of Phelps’ estranged children claimed that their father no longer maintained his religious beliefs, and that the WBC “serves rather to sathe Phelps’ addiction to hatred.”

The WBC’s current “preaching tour” includes stops at a Miranda Lambert concert in Wichita, KS on March 10, an Ariana Grande concert in Kansas City on March 18th, and a trio of Baptist, Methodist, and Catholic Churches on the 19th. They then plan to stop at the White House on the 29th and “warn Donald Trump that it unlawful for him to have Melania when he has Marla, his first and only wife.” A Church spokesman explained to The Commentator that the group expects not to change anyone’s minds through its protests, but rather “to preach, and let the Holy Spirit change hearts if He will.”
Wilf and Beren Student Council Budgets, By the Numbers

By Avi Strauss

Student councils are responsible for a wide range of campus activities throughout the year, aimed at appealing to the sizeable and broad undergraduate student bodies. Despite the similarity in size of these student councils, there are seven different councils on two campuses, the process of allocating and utilizing student council funds is more complex than simply dipping into a supply of money and spending it on events and programs.

Student council money is used to sponsor and fund a variety of campus activities, including large scale events like Chanukafest, Yom Hazikaron commemorations and Yom Haatzmaut festivities, several Chagigahs, and the Simms dinner, as well as day-to-day club affairs and other smaller events.

Each council, primarily the president, determines based on the size and significance of any given event, as well as the event’s relevance to that specific council, how much money should be allotted for its programming.

Councils work closely with the Office of Student Life (OSL) to navigate the spending process, since student council leaders do not always have the benefit of being involved in the budgeting process from year to year.

Stern Student Council President Lizzi Peled reflected: “Throughout the year, the OSL helps us ensure that we budget money for the various large events we run. They show us how much was spent on the events last year, and use feedback from how they went to help determine what we should budget for this year.”

Funds for the courses are provided directly by the $150 “activity fee” ($75 per semester) matriculated students are charged at the beginning of the year. Activity fees paid by students at the Wilf campus go to the pool of money for the Wilf student councils (YSU, SOY, YCSCA, SYMS) and activity fees paid by students at the Beren campus go to the Beren student councils (SCWSC, TAC, SYMS). This ensures that funding between campuses is equally and fairly distributed.

The entirety of this money is channeled into the student council budgets, with funding for Office of Student Life (OSL) salaries, and non-student council events and activities coming from separate university funds.

On the Beren campus, funding for the three student councils are divided as follows: SCWSC receives 52%, TAC receives 38% and Syms-Beren, 10%. In the Fall of 2015, the most recent year in which student populations are available, this amounted to $74,422 for SCWSC, $74,378 for TAC and $14,310 for Syms-Beren, for a total of $143,100.

According to the Office of Student Life at Beren, these percentages are based on an outline in the Beren student constitution, and were determined back in 1995. The Commentator was unable to retrieve a copy of a Beren constitution with such a clause as of printing.

These percentages have not changed since then, despite some minor fluctuations in student enrollment in either undergraduate college on the Beren campus. Based on available data, from Fall 2012 to Fall 2015, Syms-Beren saw an increase of 47 students (an increase of about 50%) to 986 students, from 939.

The budgeting on Wilf is slightly more complicated, with some allotments changing from semester to semester based on student enrollment in Yeshiva College and Syms-Wilf.

According to Director of Student Life on the Wilf Campus Rabbi Josh Weissberg and OSL Director of Events Ms. Linda Stone, this is based on a contract, signed by the Wilf Student Council presidents in the year 2012-2013, whereby the council presidencies were consolidated to four, from seven. A copy of this contract was presented to The Commentator as part of this investigation.

When asked about the origins of the agreement, newly-minted musmach and 2012-2013 SOY President Gabi Weinberg (YC ’13 Revel ’15 RIETS ’17) explained: “Through the year, the OSL helps us ensure that we budget money for the various large events we run. They show us how much was spent on last year’s events, and use feedback from how they went to help determine what we should budget for this year.”

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On the Beren campus, funding for the three student councils are divided as follows: SCWSC receives 65%, TAC receives 20% and Syms-Beren, 15%. In the Fall of 2015, this amounted to $29,426 and $24,799, respectively. This breakdown is likely altered slightly at the turn of the semester mid-year, with students graduating in January and first-time students beginning their undergraduate study in either school in the spring. The percentage floor set for the Syms-Beren council ensures that specific council for the following year. Although he didn’t go into further detail, Weissberg stated that both the Beren and the current Syms-Wilf percentage split of the total Wilf budget, Syms-Beren council represents around 150 students, while Syms-Wilf council represents around 380 students.

However, even this discrepancy doesn’t tell the whole story. Of all the councils, the Syms student councils coordinate the most closely, investing a large share of their resources in the Simms dinner, which is a joint event open to men and women. Similarly, out of all the councils, the two Syms councils share nearly all over their budgets—a higher percentage of sharing than any other two councils.

When asked why the Syms-Beren budget didn’t more accurately reflect the breakdown of student enrollment on the Beren campus, Beren Program Director Tami Adelson stressed that every council needs a minimum amount of money to effectively sustain quality programming throughout the year. In this regard, she noted, the general idea for set for the Beren council is that there are sufficient funds to contribute to joint student council programming, and provide essential business oriented clubs for future Beren students that may be interested.

As far as the question of whether or not the current allotment system is working effectively, according to a recent survey conducted by the Office of Student Life, 70% of surveyed students believe the number of events on campus is "just right." Just 17% answered that there were "too many" events, while the remaining 13% responded that there were "too few." Councils budget more than satisfied by that overwhelming response, although he stressed there is always room for improvement in bringing new and innovative events to an ever-changing student body.
Howard Charish Retires as Third Institutional Advancement Officer Departs YU

By David Rubinstein

Howard Charish retired from his position as YU’s senior philanthropic advisor on February 28. Mr. Charish is the third member of the Office of Institutional Advancement to leave YU in the recent months.

Mr. Charish, who has worked as a Jewish community professional for over 40 years, joined Yeshiva University in March 2016 after serving as chief development officer at American Friends of Bar-Ilan University.

“It has been a privilege to be associated with Yeshiva University and to have interacted with numerous individuals of talent, commitment and goodness,” Mr. Charish said. “I have been blessed to have spent my entire career working in the Jewish community.”

When Mr. Charish joined Yeshiva, then-Vice President of Institutional Advancement Seth Moskowitz said that Mr. Charish, “is a gifted fundraiser, and his tenure in all his positions was marked by strong campaign and community growth.”

With Mr. Charish’s departure, YU will lose yet another critical leader of its fundraising team. On December 12th, Mr. Moskowitz, the chief administrator of YU’s fundraising office, abruptly vacated his position. His departure came the morning after Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation, YU’s biggest annual fundraising event.

Alan Seker, Executive Director of Annual Giving and Major Gifts, stepped down on February 24. He joined YU’s fundraising office, abruptly vacated his position. His departure came the morning after Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation, YU’s biggest annual fundraising event.

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Greek Life at a Jewish College?

By Elana Luban

According to Michael Lenett, a senior at YU and the current President of AEPi, the answer is yes. Not only is there nothing contradictory about being in Yeshiva University and being a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi, but in fact the two go hand in hand. “Our slogan is that AEPi breeds Jewish gentlemen – that’s the most important part of all,” Lenett says.

AEPi is not like any other fraternity – from the moment it was founded by Charles C. Moszkowitz in 1913, its goal was to give young Jewish college men a sense of brotherhood and connection. What drove Moszkowitz to change history by creating this fraternity was his experience with a New York University fraternity’s blatant anti-Semitism; the frat rushed (for those who don’t know much about frats in general, “rushing” is a process which involves interviewing) him because of his athletic success, but when he proposed that the fraternity include Jews, the fraternity declined.

AEPi began with less than ten men, including Moskowitz and several friends, who organized the first meeting in the basement of the local eatery. The official website of Alpha Epsilon Pi, aepi.org, asks concerning Moszkowitz’s endeavor, “Could this non-affluent group of young students, busy with their daytime jobs and nighttime studies, successfully launch a new fraternity when there were already seven well established groups at the School of Commerce, three of them nationals?” It could, and it did – the young men had a point to prove and a heritage to stand up for.

Since then, AEPi has grown and spread unbelievably. Today, branches exist across the U.S. as well as in Canada, the UK, France, and Israel, and countless inspiring individuals have had the honor to say they were members – among them Gene Wilder, Paul Simon, Mark Zuckerberg, and our current YU President Richard Joel.

Any brother at Yeshiva University’s AEPi, or at any branch for that matter, would be able to provide a list of AEPi’s historical accomplishments, plus countless other details with ease. Much about the Pledge and Brotherhood periods remains confidential, but knowing the roots of, and reasons for, Alpha Epsilon Pi’s establishment is an integral part of becoming a brother.

And if you thought that AEPi was only about hospitality and making connections with other brothers or other students at YU, you’re wrong. Alpha Epsilon Pi’s mission is to breed leaders who contribute to whichever community they find themselves in, even long after their college days are over. Even during their time as undergraduates, AEPi members are concerned with creating Jewish programming, and donating to Jewish organizations (resulting in a yearly total of more than $1,000,000 in donations), all with the goal of creating a stronger sense of community. One of the most striking examples is an event called “We Walk to Remember,” an AEPi walk through the campus in a yearly march commemorating those who perished in the Holocaust.

But if you’re not a member of Alpha Epsilon Pi, don’t worry – its doors are open and its members welcoming to everyone. Ezra Weinberger, who only found out about Alpha Epsilon Pi in his senior year at YU and is himself not a brother, says “AEPi is one of the best things that I’ve discovered since coming to YU.” When describing his experience with the fraternity, he jokes “this place is our treehouse” – it’s a chilled-out, close-knit, home-like environment, where the connections made are real and long-lasting. AEPi President Lenett and all of AEPi invite you, whether as a member or just a student at Yeshiva University, to experience this unique fraternity to offer.
on the laws of berakhot. Some of the participants react, “But we were expecting something more ‘relevant’...” Instead of commenting on the religious observance of someone for whom berakhot are not relevant, Rav Schachter simply shifts the rest of his curriculum. The topic of the next shiur is the feasibility of building a Beit Ha-Mikdash today and offering korbanot.

At a conference for the journal Torah She-Be’Al Peh, a speaker who was supposed to introduce for five minutes, instead speaks for nearly a half hour. In the ensuing schedule shuffle, all of the speakers are asked to curtail their remarks. None do—except Rav Schachter. He speaks for five minutes so that the audience will not be overburdened. Those, like me, who want to hear his presentation, will have to wait for the printed proceedings.

Adventures in Israel

I accompany Rav Schachter to Mahane Yehuda in Jerusalem to purchase an esrog for Sukkos, looking forward to learning exactly how one examines Arba Minim to assure that the Krashut. Will Rav Schachter use a magnifying glass? Will he distinguish dust specks from blemishes with a tweezer? We stop at a vendor’s table. Rav Schachter picks up an esrog: “This is a beautiful esrog,” he exclaims. He picks up a second esrog: “This is also a beautiful esrog!” He bought the second; I bought the first.

...We are staying in the Eshkolot Hevron Hotel and Rav Schachter is asked to deliver a guest shiur at the local Hesder Yeshiva, Yeshivat Nir Kiryat Arba. That shiur turns into a series of shiurim on the beginning of Bava Kamma, which the Yeshiva is learning. I marvel at the time, as I would many times in the future, that Rav Schachter doesn’t deliver a talk on a general topic related to the masechta being studied by his listeners. He speaks instead on exactly the daf and the sugya that his listeners are currently learning because he is comfortable with every sugya. This time I also discover that he can deliver a shiur in fluent Hebrew.

...Rav Schachter tells a story about a niggun for Havven Yakir Li Ephraim. He liked the melody so much that he had the band play it as he walked down to his Chupa. His friend, Rav Binyamin Tabory, a Ram for many years at Yeshivat Har Etzion, heard it at the wedding and liked it so much that he had it played at his Chupa, as well. On our last morning in Kiryat Arba, I accost Rav Schachter with a tape recorder. “Sing!” He records the melody onto my cassette tape. I treasure that tape, and learn the niggun. Five years later, I have the opportunity to play it at my Chupa, under which Rav Schachter stands, as mesader kiddushin. I don’t know where the tape is now, but here (http://youtu.be/MIPHiHc_C2a?hd=1) is my more feeble attempt at that melody.

Tannersville

...After spending a couple of years in the shiur, I hear that some students actually travel to Tannersville, NY, better known for its proximity to camping and skiing venues, to learn from Rav Schachter, who rents a house there each summer. How do you get permission to join that group, I wonder. “Jackie” (Yaakov) Blinder tells me, “You just ask him.” “You mean,” I ask, “That he’ll either say yes or no?” “Oh, no,” Jackie says. “He’ll say yes. You just have to listen to see if he says yes with enthusiasm or not.” I hear enthusiasm in Rav Schachter’s voice, whether it is there or not.

...In Tannersville there are three sedarim, morning and afternoon on the lawn and evening in the Schachter home. This schedule does not take away from the time Rav Schachter spends learning with his children (at the time there are six, ranging from 12 to a baby). Rav Schachter reads and explains. People ask questions; he answers. We are learning Yoma and Chullin and so the Gevuros Ari and Leu Argeh join us at the table. There is no such thing as simply reading and translating. As if osmotically, Rishonim and Acharonim enter the conversation. It is a shiur that masquerades as a chavrusa. I cannot imagine any place I would rather be. When I say the words of modim, thanking God for his kindnesses, even va-voker v’zaharakim (evening, morning, and afternoon), I consciously think of the three learning sessions I am able to attend daily.

That doesn’t mean that I can always stay awake. Even as the Tosfos Yeshanim accompany us through the pages of Yoma, a tosefes gesheimim is noticeable around the table at certain points in our learning. As much as I want to learn, I am not immune to tiredness. But I plot my defense against the minor detail that one of you is conversant with all of Shas and the other isn’t. You know that Rav Schachter is repeating what he may have said numerous times during the term, but he never betrays impatience at the audience for reacting as if hearing it for the first time. The speed may vary, from the deceptively leisurely pace of an evening shiur to balebatim, to the brisker (no pun intended) rhythm of the daily shiur in Yeshiva, to the telescoped topics encompassed in a half-hour Kollel chaburah. But each variety contains a staggering amount of information that sneaks up on you. And it’s all presented as if there were no chidush involved at all: “Al pi pashtus...Whose pashtus, one wonders. In shiur there will be running routines. RSH: So what’s the Halakah? David Arbesfeld: Mahlokes! RBS: Mahlokes who and whom? David Arbesfeld: .... It all seems so easy. The more perceptive of the talmidim know how misleading that appearance is and how much labor lurks behind each shiur. In my day, Jeff Geizals is the student that pries apart the “Schachterized” product after shiur, looking up all the sources and trying to determine how it was constructed. Then he goes back to the Rebbi and asks for clarifications. The rest of us are satisfied basking in the glow. I am proud that my note-taking ability makes it possible for the shiur to flow from Rav Schachter’s lips to my ear, down my arm and onto paper. But I am not bright enough to pierce the “easy” facade. When interviewing me, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein asked what I found so compelling about Rav Schachter’s shiurim. I answered, “He makes it all seem so easy.” He replied, “That is perhaps the hisaron of his ma’alos.”

Good Enough

When he concludes a daily shiur at Yeshiva, Rav Schachter often remarks, “Good enough.” To me these words have always meant that that the work is not done, nor will it ever be done. After all, kol ha-Torah kula inyan ehad, the whole Torah is interconnected and no one segment can substitute for the whole. But at the same time, there is a recognition that there is “good” even in the incomplete state. We have a right to be proud, even as we need to resolve to make our Torah even more complete tomorrow.

What can one say of fifty days of day in day and day out “Good Enough”?

More than good enough. V’hisnei tev me’id.
Music Review: “Lev Tahor 5” (LTV)

By Arthur Schoen

The album was finally released in late February (in honor of Adar, Lev Tahor’s own heritage month) after putting it together. In advance of the release, Lev Tahor promoted the album heavily on social media, made some rare concert appearances, and revamped their website (levator.com), which is back up and running after a few years off the web.

The new Lev Tahor 5 – which is available in stores, on mostlymusic.com, and on iTunes (on iTunes, be sure to search for “LTV” – otherwise you won’t find it) – has been an instant success. The distributor had to order a new batch of physical CDs just days after the release, and the album spent a good bit of time in the #1 spot on the iTunes Jews album charts.

There is good reason for LTV’s success. The new album is exciting, it features a diverse range of songs, and it’s a good, manageable size (12 tracks running just 46 minutes). Their voices sound as good as ever, and it’s a pleasure to hear them singing together again.

In recent interviews, the trio have gushed about how much fun they had making the album, boasting that they didn’t have a single fight during those two years. And the fun comes out in the music.

Longtime fans should be forewarned, however, that this is not quite the Lev Tahor they’re used to. The sound of the group is now adults with careers, not the yeshiva guys they were when they first got started; this is readily apparent in the sound on this album, their recent interviews and appearances, their new website, and their social media profiles. Don’t expect to hear any covers of old-time Jewish classics or to discover any covers of old-time Jewish classics or to discover any covers of old-time Jewish classics.

One of the new tracks is a cover of “Holiday Road,” a 1983 song by Lindsey Buckingham. Buckingham’s song had a Beach Boys sound that is preserved in “Halali”’s chorus, and Eli Schwebel updated it, fusing a unique contemporary vibe with the group’s music. Sri Segal (see LTV album review) provided (according to Lev Tahor’s social media) by the Sephardic Boys Choir led by Jack Braha – that “Segment” provided (according to Lev Tahor’s social media) by the Sephardic Boys Choir led by Jack Braha.

The emphasis too far away from Torah study can take place. Eli’s voice is certainly distinctive, but it’s not unique – it is strikingly similar to the voice of his father Rivie, who was a member of Dveykus, one of the foundational modern Jewish music groups. Rivie guest-stars on the vaguely Sephardic “Dror Yikra,” and his vocals steal the show.

Eli’s impact on Lev Tahor goes far beyond the sound, however. A major creative force involved in every stage of the music from composition through production, his solo work in Hearts Mind leaves its stamp on LTV in the form of three songs, two of which are actually re-worked versions of songs from his solo album.

The catchy “Yagga,” which was arguably the best-known song on Hearts Mind (it was originally released as a free single and it has an official music video), receives the Lev Tahor acapella treatment with the kind of technically excellent arrangement that was the hallmark of so much of their earlier work. LTV also features a heartfelt and hopeful remix of “Don’t Stop Giving” that sounds like it belongs on Phil Collins’s Tarzan soundtrack and features a synthesized beat

that could have come right out of a ’90s pop song.

The album’s third track, “Gam Zu L’ova,” is an original tune in the theme and style of Eli’s journey as expressed in Hearts Mind. Anyone bothered on a religious level by the perception that “Yagga” shifts the emphasis too far away from Torah study can take comfort in “Gam Zu L’ova,” whose tune beautifully captures the spirit of the Talmudic expression from which it takes its name (Eli Schwebel and Ari Cukier described this in a recent interview with Nachum Segal). The song traces the experience of someone going through a tough time who utilizes the power of positive thinking to lift him out of his sadness; the song’s spirit picks up as this person’s mood improves.

When we hit the first chorus, which proclaims that “this too will be for the best,” the slow guitar that conveyed the doldrums in the first verse is replaced by synthesized instruments and a choral background accompaniment. The music in the second verse is more upbeat, and that trend continues through the rest of the song, as the second chorus features choral background singing that’s even more exuberant, followed by a pumping beat.

Longtime Lev Tahor enthusiasts need not despair after hearing about all these new and unfamiliar sounds – LTV also features four songs in the mold of the group’s greatest hits. Fans love discussing which original song is their favorite – “Aneini” vs. “Refaimin” is a classic debate – and there are sure to find their way into those conversations. It can’t be a coincidence that Gadi Fuchs – the most musically conservative of the group, according to Ari and Eli – composed all four songs.

This is certainly true with respect to his voice. Eli Schwebel has always been the strong point of the group’s music. This is certainly true with respect to his voice. Eli Schwebel has always been the strong point of the group’s music.

By the way – Schwebel fans get a special treat on this album, as Eli’s father Rivie makes a long-overdue appearance. Eli’s voice is certainly distinctive, but it’s not unique – it is strikingly similar to the voice of his father Rivie, who was a member of Dveykus, one of the foundational modern Jewish music groups. Rivie guest-stars on the vaguely Sephardic “Dror Yikra,” and his vocals steal the show.

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The catchy “Yagga,” which was arguably the best-known song on Hearts Mind (it was originally released as a free single and it has an official music video), receives the Lev Tahor acapella treatment with the kind of technically excellent arrangement that was the hallmark of so much of their earlier work. LTV also features a heartfelt and hopeful remix of “Don’t Stop Giving” that sounds like it belongs on Phil Collins’s Tarzan soundtrack and features a synthesized beat

that could have come right out of a ’90s pop song.

The album’s third track, “Gam Zu L’ova,” is an original tune in the theme and style of Eli’s journey as expressed in Hearts Mind. Anyone bothered on a religious level by the perception that “Yagga” shifts the emphasis too far away from Torah study can take comfort in “Gam Zu L’ova,” whose tune beautifully captures the spirit of the Talmudic expression from which it takes its name (Eli Schwebel and Ari Cukier described this in a recent interview with Nachum Segal). The song traces the experience of someone going through a tough time who utilizes the power of positive thinking to lift him out of his sadness; the song’s spirit picks up as this person’s mood improves.

When we hit the first chorus, which proclaims that “this too will be for the best,” the slow guitar that conveyed the doldrums in the first verse is replaced by synthesized instruments and a choral background accompaniment. The music in the second verse is more upbeat, and that trend continues through the rest of the song, as the second chorus features choral background singing that’s even more exuberant, followed by a pumping beat.

Longtime Lev Tahor enthusiasts need not despair after hearing about all these new and unfamiliar sounds – LTV also features four songs in the mold of the group’s greatest hits. Fans love discussing which original song is their favorite – “Aneini” vs. “Refaimin” is a classic debate – and there are sure to find their way into those conversations. It can’t be a coincidence that Gadi Fuchs – the most musically conservative of the group, according to Ari and Eli – composed all four songs.

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Game of Thrones and the Death Effect

By Sam Gelman (Houston, TX)

Warning: Spoilers for Game of Thrones Seasons 1-6 and Books 1-5

The world of Game of Thrones (GOT) has many religions, and with those religions come many gods. There are the Old Gods of the Children of the forest, the Seven Who Are One, and the Lord of Light himself, R'Illo. Yet, after reading five books and watching six seasons I cannot help but think that the light of Yggdrasil was right. Perhaps, in the world of GOT “there is only one god, and His name is Death.”

From the way the show treats its characters, it truly seems that death rules this world. From the start of the show, the writers make it clear that death will play a massive role in the show and be an overarching theme throughout the series. The first two scenes alone are surrounded by it, with several members of the Night’s Watch being killed by White Walkers in the first few minutes followed by Eddard Stark executing a deserter of that same organization. One could even argue that it is the main character of the entire series, and that everyone from Tyrion to Daenerys is hopefully trying to outrun it before it inevitably catches up with them.

These types of scenes, however, do not fully capture the role death plays in GOT. There are plenty of violent shows out there that kill off countless of redshirts (unimportant characters that die simply to move the plot along), Sons of Anarchy, The Walking Dead, Daredevil, The Wire; death is prominent in these shows as well.

Rather, what makes death in GOT so special is that it does not just come for the redshirts but for everyone. Unlike most TV shows, GOT is not afraid to kill off their major characters. Look at who was killed in the first season: King Robert Baratheon, Viserys Targaryen, Khal Drogo. These were all major characters that played massive roles in the first season’s story and death came for them all.

Yet, perhaps the defining moment for the show came in episode nine of season one when the show executed Ladd Eddard Stark in front of his two daughters. It was a truly shocking and unprecedented move. The main character, the one we invested the most time in, the one who represented all that was good and just in the world of GOT, the one who was not supposed to die, was decapitated before the first season even ended. The risks were huge from both a story and business standpoint.

Would fans be able to handle a world where none of their favorite characters were truly safe? Would they be willing to invest their time in new characters now that the most important one was gone? Could the show survive financially without its biggest name actor and the constant turnover that comes with so much death?

Just mention the words “Game of Thrones” in a conversation and you will see that the answer to all these questions is a resounding yes. The fans loved it.

LTV, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

epitomizes the classic Lev Tahor song exemplified by the hits from the second album. I can’t wait for “Meheira” – which even features a Shahsheles-style opening – to become a hit at weddings. I suspect that many listeners will find that the hauntingly beautiful “Avedcha” is their favorite track on the album; I know I can’t stop listening to it.

Those who particularly enjoyed the English songs on the earlier Lev Tahor albums (which were often covers of old Abie Rottenberg/Journeys songs) might be drawn to “Mr. Tanner,” a cover of a 1974 Harry Chapin song by that name that Schwabel explicitly re-worked to give it more of the Abie/Journeys feel. Be prepared, though – the song is emotionally moving, but it’s not a dramatic, high-stakes number like “Watch Over Me” or “Defe Man in the Shteeble” and it’s no more “Jewish” than Chapin’s original. It’s great to have Lev Tahor back in our lives giving us some new work to enjoy. This album may be different from what we’re used to, but it’s a pleasure to hear their voices again. LTV represents a new step in the trio’s musical maturation and a worthy addition to their audio library. Newcomers and Lev Tahor lifers alike can look forward to many hours of enjoyment from this wonderful new album. Here’s hoping that this time, we won’t have to wait eleven more years to hear what the group is up to.

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Monday, March 20, 2017  - 22 Adar 5777

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Monday, March 20, 2017  - 22 Adar 5777
By Benjamin Koslove

The hotel parking lot right now is ordinary, even boring. But in just a few Monday afternoons, minivans will pull up in droves from the Five Towns, Bergen County, Brooklyn, and even from areas farther down the I-95 corridor and the Midwest. As the vernal sun slowly descends, families will unload suitcases and shift their weight as they wait for bellhops to become available. Program directors will sit behind folding desks handing out Shabbos keys. Kids holding board games will argue over who gets to keep which key when. An older couple who has attended the program for decades will take a welcome basket and flip through the scholars-in-residence packet.

The lobby area on the main floor will empty out for the remainder of Pesach after the first Ma’arich, but the lounge directly upstairs will be a scene. On the first morning of Yom Tov a few women will read quietly in armchairs, soaking coffee that they just made and slowly working their way through chumata-free wafers from one of the mini dinette areas nearby. There are billiards tables here, but the teenagers who will congregate by them will still be sleeping off the late seder, not rushing to catch most of davennig.

To the north and south of this lobby area are stairwells, leading up to five or six floors of guest rooms. Housekeepers will knock on doors to see if they are ready for cleaning. Most will be — in others, someone will call out groggily to please come back in an hour. The carpeted hallways will be mostly empty, but for some desk chairs that guests pulled outside of their rooms so that they could read by the light. There will be used dining utensils with remnants of one mom’s shulchan Orech shef. She will have brought up her meal well before the end of the night so that she could tuck in her young kids. As much as they attempted to stay up all night, their eye rubbing and ear pulling suggested otherwise.

Past the second-floor gaming lounge, a long hallway runs to connect the hotel’s two main buildings. By noon of the First Day davennig will have concluded. Guests of all ages will vie for the most comfortable chairs in this window-filled hallway that have the best views of the outdoor lake and promenade. If it is a late Pesach, the trees might be in early bloom.

A right turn off the long hallway leads downstairs to one of the hotel’s larger dining areas. On Pesach, this will be designated as a Tea Room. On Yom Tov afternoon, right between lunch and dinner, waiters will fill tables with kosher-for-Pesach snacks, chips, sodas, fruit platters, chocolate, ices, and much more. In one corner of the room a man will lead Bingo for excitable retirement-aged women, as well as for some less-than-excitable grandchildren of said women. At another table will sit six children ranging in age from nine to twenty. They are siblings and first cousins who for hours war to battle to the death in a game of Risk. This will be the first game of the holiday, but it will certainly not be the last.

At the end of the long hallway is a carpeted foyer with large doors that lead to many different rooms. One conference room will be set up with tables. This will serve as a dining room for relatives of the program directors and caterers. Another conference room has rows of swirling chairs and a podium, which lecturers will use, as well as a projector and screen. A recent Oscar-winning film will play here on the first motzei Yom Tov. Those hard of hearing will be wheeled by their personal aids to sit closer to the screen.

Down a grand staircase is the hotel’s biggest dining area. This room, which can seat over one thousand, will be set with central buffet stations and hundreds of scattered tables all around. On the first morning of chol hamaord the room will not fill up, but by lunch the lines at the omelet station will stretch nearly out the door. Most of the tables seat five or six, but a significant number are much larger, arranged to sit as many as thirty members of extended families. At one of these tables a third-grader will wait for her mom to walk away before she asks her waiter for her second cup of chocolate milk. Her grandparents sitting at the head of the table will labor over the day’s printed schedule, deciding which lectures to attend and when they will take their afternoon walk outside (weather-permitting). Her aunt and uncle who have five children will take their time at lunch, enjoying their few hours while the kids are with their counselors in groups for the day. If they are lucky, Sofia will finally decide on this fourth day at the hotel that it is cool to stay with the bunk until 4 pm.

The area immediately outside the main dining room leads to tennis courts, a basketball court, and a swimming pool. The latter will still be closed in April, so guests on weekdays will instead use the indoor facilities. Different hours of the day will be regulated for men-only, women-only, or family swim time. There is an indoor racquetball court, where a forty-something doctor and his father will whip out the gear and tie their seldom-used sneakers for a good old throwback. The father will take a break to catch his breath. He’ll assure himself and his son that he would’ve crushed twenty years ago.

On the last day of chol hamaord, the hotel’s courts, patio, and parking lot will transform into a makeshift carnival. A mediocre but energetic singer will play on his keyboard as children moon bounce, ask their parents if they can have cotton candy, and feed the goats and horses in the petting zoo imported for the occasion. Counselors will run around with cameras to capture the scene. Before the end of chol hamaord, these pictures will go up on one of the walls for everyone to see.

Right above the large dining area, a bit farther down the hallway, oak doors lead to an auditorium with stadium seating. This will be the first game of the year. Some of these boys will head to the Tea Room after the show as a posse for a last round of snacks (only drah potato chips will be left) and soda (only off-brand Coke will be left). They’ll discreetly look without-looking at a group of girls sitting at one of the tables. One of the girls will notice and they’ll giggle. The boys will try to gather the courage to walk over. They probably won’t.

Back in the main dining room, a spontaneous “‘L Shma Haba’ah” will break out during the last dinner as hundreds dance shoulder-to-shoulder between the tables. Some of the waiters will join in. They’ll more-or-less pronounce the words correctly. At one small table, a middle-aged couple there by themselves will clap along while staying in their seats. At another, a family will sing with the crowd and then continue the music with some of their own niggunim that they sang at the seder.

Some families will run out of the hotel immediately after Havdalah. Waiters and groups counselors will hang out by the hotel lobby, hoping for tips. Most will be very pleased by the guests’ generosity. The main dining room will be cleared already the next morning, but the Tea Room will be set with some bagels and real cereal for the few guests who didn’t leave yet. One of the boys from the middle school posse will fight back tears as he leaves the hotel and wheels out his mini suitcase to the parking lot. But right now that boy is counting down the days until Pesach. The hotel currently looks like any northeastern Hilton or Crowne Plaza, but in his mind he sees the cozy guest room and his cot. He sees the ping pong tables, the long hallway where he’ll sit and talk with his grandmother, and the couches in the Tea Room where he’ll play Setters of Catan with his cousins. He sees the dining room where he’ll take eggs and ice cream for lunch, and order chicken and ices for dinner. He has been going to the hotel his entire childhood, and he is sure that this Pesach will again be one of the best weeks of the year.

Larry and Frank will reminisce over potato kugel about their years in YU in the 90s. “Remember how Dave used to fall asleep every day in Rabbi Lifshitz’s shiur?” Larry will ask. “You bet I do,” Frank will lie. They’ll both chortle. Frank has recently retired. Larry still works as a lawyer, but at the kidshush he will be preoccupied by a grandchild tugging at his pants asking him to join for an unempteen game of war. Larry will join. By the schnitzel station, an elderly woman with a dolly will sit in a wheelchair. A granddaughter will yell over the crowd asking her if she wants anything to eat. The elderly woman won’t hear, but she’ll still smile and say thank you.

Directly upstairs is another conference room which will be made into the Children’s Dining Room. Little kids will be dragged here for 6 pm early dinner on the second-to-last night. Toddlers will eat a few bites of chicken nuggets, while moms and babysitters will spoonfeed younger ones in strollers. Later that night, on the same floor, older children will attend night groups. Different rooms will be arranged for different ages.

On the last full day, these children will nervously go over their dance numbers and routines for the end-of-Pesach talent show. Their parents and grandparents will fill the auditorium to laugh as adorable three-year-olds sing “Pharaoh in pajamas,” and to cringe as not-so-adorable middle school boys crack awkward jokes as their performance. Some of these boys will head to the Tea Room after the show as a posse for a last round of snacks (only drah potato chips will be left) and soda (only off-brand Coke will be left). They’ll discreetly look without-looking at a group of girls sitting at one of the tables. One of the girls will notice and they’ll giggle. The boys will try to gather the courage to walk over. They probably won’t.
By Matthew Silkin

In 2017 alone there are seven major superhero movies - four from Marvel and three from DC - that have either already been released or are on schedule to be released. Add that to all the previous superhero films, the many more that are on schedule in the coming years, and the myriad superhero television shows, and one could point to a new superhero renaissance. While many fans of the original comics are not complaining - movies in the Marvel Cinematic Universe continue to impress - Rotten Tomatoes scores for a franchise that is nearly ten years old - there are people who are growing bored of the tried-and-true superhero formula. Where are the fresh, original stories? Why is every superhero movie starting to feel the same?

Enter One-Punch Man, started in 2009 as a crude webcomic by the anonymous author ONE, adapted into a manga in 2012 by artist Yusuke Murata and anime by Madhouse Inc. in 2015 with a second season coming out later this year. The titular character, Saitama, is a superhero - for fun, he often comments - who is so strong that he can defeat any enemy with one punch. His power has rendered him bored with his place in life, and much of the story revolves around him finding a proper fight where he would actually have to put in effort.

A story about a guy who can punch things really hard, while amusing, sounds like it would grow stale after three chapters in... and that’s where it gets you. While Saitama absolutely destroys his opponents in fight scenes - which, mind you, are entertaining as anything to read - ONE instead focuses the story on Saitama’s struggles off the battlefield. His interactions with his fellow heroes and the hopeless citizens of the city are Saitama’s greatest challenge - he gets no recognition for his previous victories, and everyone thinks he's a fraud. After a particularly soul-crushing fight against the Deep Sea King, who at this point has taken out several high ranking heroes, Saitama comes in an allowing him - and the people boo Saitama, calling him a weakling coming to steal the other heroes’ credit! We root for Saitama, not because he’s going to win the fight - we know he’ll win the fight - but because we want someone to say, “Hey, that guy is actually pretty awesome”, even though Saitama himself states that he wants no recognition for his actions.

Luckily for Saitama, he has one person on his side from the start - Genos, a cyborg out for revenge against the mysterious being that killed his family, who discovers him during a fight against Saitama and forces himself in as Saitama’s disciple. Normally, Genos would be the type of character who would be the focus of the story. He endured tragedy that forced him to become a hero; Spider-Man and Batman, to name two characters, both went through the same ordeal. Instead, Genos is relegated to being a deuteragonist, forced to take the hits until Saitama shows up to save the day. He seems fine with it though; in fact, he follows Saitama with almost a religious devotion, moving with Saitama and absorbing everything he says or does. In this respect, Genos exists not just as plot fodder, but as a window for the reader to enter the world of Saitama and absorb his way of thinking, to experience his compassion, and to feel his love.

If you’re not feeling the superhero fatigue yet, by all means continue to enjoy the myriad superhero movies for the next few years, or until Marvel and DC forget how to print money with their movies. But if you need a palette cleanser from the superhero genre, then you’re in luck. Despite being bitten by a radioactive spider or enduring exposure to gamma radiation, Saitama’s secret to his power is a simple (though exaggerated) training regimen of 100 push-ups, sit-ups, sit-ups, and a 10km run every day (none of the other characters believe Saitama's naturally-accrued powers). Though he is the strongest man in the world, he is largely unknown in society, often derided by fellow heroes and even civilians as a hack who shows up at the end of fights to take the credit. Speaking of the fellow heroes, many of them are in the business for fame and to turn a profit; altruistic heroes like Genos are few and far between.

Genre subversion is nothing new; Alan Moore tried his hand at it with the fantastic series Watchmen in the late '80s, and one could argue that Deadpool as he exists today is a subversion. But what sets One-Punch Man apart is the sense of being jolted into the story. When I said that the original was a crude webcomic, I wasn’t kidding. ONE’s drawings are but scribbles in comparison to Murata’s years of experience on other series such as Eyeshield 21, but that hasn’t stopped him from making his dream of being a true manga artist (or mangaka) a reality - besides for One-Punch Man, he has authored five other manga, including the just-as-popular Mob Psycho 100. One-Punch Man is not just a humors take on superheroes - it is a sort of commentary on ONE’s own career as a mangaka, trudging through the criticism and lack of recognition in order to get his story out to the world.

“Humorous,” another of One-Punch Man’s strengths lies in its comedic timing. Unlike Watchmen’s gritty, brooding take on superheroes, One-Punch Man revels in the lighthearted aspect of its story. Sure, there are dramatic moments - the fight against the Deep Sea King I mentioned earlier is up there - but the comedy is uproariously funny. From the bizarre nature of the heroes - including a muscly gay convict named Puri-Puri Prisoner, a shoe-patterned suit named Snoek, and a bicyclist with no powers named License-less Rider - to the monsters who try their might against Saitama and fail miserably, there is no shortage of great jokes in the series. If you’re not feeling the superhero fatigue yet, by all means continue to enjoy the myriad superhero movies for the next few years, or until Marvel and DC forget how to print money with their movies. But if you need a palette cleanser from the classic superhero story, or if you’re just looking for someone to give you the most epic fist bump ever, I would suggest One-Punch Man.

By Chavissa Freedman

It’s a Monday evening. I am standing on the corner of 43rd and Park, waiting to get on the 6:43PM shuttle to the Heights. The corner is packed with Stern students discussing the next few movies, or looking for someone to give you the most epic fist bump ever. I am going up for a play rehearsal with the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society. As for me? I am going up for a play rehearsal with the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society.

The Women of the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society

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Never.
Stop.
Commentating.

Got something to say?
Email doron.levine@mail.yu.edu
By Rachel Zakharov and Rebecca Shiner

The Boycott Divestment Sanctions Movement defines itself as a “Palestinian led movement for freedom, justice and equality...” and holds the simple principle that Palestinians are entitled to the same rights as the rest of humanity.” If this definition is true, then surely the movement would take issue with human rights violations worldwide, like the Black Lives Matter movement has. Israel, is after, all a democracy, with robust freedom of speech, religion and expression, and as much of a human rights violator as any other Western nation — including the United States. There seems no reason to focus on Israel in the exclusion of known human rights violators, like China and Saudi Arabia.

Some facts can help put this contention in a clearer light. On February 27th, The New York Times reported that China “expelled” monks and nuns from major religious enclaves in a Tibetan region as part of China’s continued oppression of Tibet. Tibet is a Buddhist state, whose religious leader, the Dalai Lama, declared independence from China in 1959. But Communist China, which considers Tibet to be a province in rebellion, invaded Tibet in 1950 for the region’s wealth of natural resources. The Chinese have been restricting Tibetan culture, religion and freedom ever since.

On January 3, 2016, The Independent published a list of Saudi Arabia’s 10 most egregious human rights violations. Among them: the incarceration of those who criticize the government, the arrest of women drivers and the deportation of migrants. The June 16, 2016 edition of The Washington Post also listed Saudi Arabia as a country where homosexuality is punishable by death. Has BDS ever focused on any of these violations?

BDS’s vehement singling out of Israel for its human rights violations toward Palestinians is hypocrisy at best and anti-Semitism at worst. In fact, both sides of the aisle—and the green line—agree that the BDS movement amounts to the acronym standing for “Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement” (“BDS”), a unified group of people in Israel and around the world committed to supporting Israel’s right to defend itself, including by retaining its qualitative military edge, and oppose any effort to delegitimize Israel, including at the United Nations or through the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement.”

Do these positions, with their judgement of the BDS movement, match the movement’s own definition where it claims to stand for “freedom, justice and equality”? No. On the contrary, both sides of the aisle agree that BDS stands for anti-Semitism.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu uses harsh language to describe the reality of what it is that BDS truly stands for, as implied by both the Republican and Democratic parties: “B for bigotry, D for dishonesty, and S for shame.” Does that constitute anti-Semitism? At its worst, absolutely. And is anti-Semitism, which is quite literally hatred, contrary to BDS’s claim that is stands for “freedom, justice and equality” and “the same rights as the rest of humanity”? At its best, yes.

Even Palestinian activist Bassem Eid, whose agenda is to promote a Palestinian, nationalist agenda, agrees that BDS is hypocritical, which is why he argues that the movement is counter-productive: “I’m opposed to the boycott because it only ends up harming the Palestinians themselves.” Take the SodaStream case, for example. In

“The Veheement Singing Out of Israel by BDS for its Human Rights Violations toward Palestinians is Hypocrisy at Best and Anti-Semitism at Worst.”

By Lilly Gelman

At his speech at the Beren Campus orientation, President Richard Joel repeatedly encouraged us to utilize the newly renovated library, while simultaneously informing us of the need to protect the “tradition” concealed within the Beit Midrash next door. The ambiguity of his statement has left me curious, and, perhaps frustrated, regarding how exactly these two concepts can coexist.

I often wonder what purpose the Beit Midrash serves and the meaning of the tradition to which I am connected. When I walk into the Beit Midrash, I can feel a sense of community. This is the type of environment in which I fit in. The Beit Midrash at Stern, tucked away on the second floor of the Glueck building, leaves a life consumed by Torah study and enters a spiritual connection. This is the type of environment in which I feel comfortable and where I can begin to unify the religious experience at Stern.

President Joel informed us that the Beit Midrash uptown guards the foundation of Torah on which Yeshiva University is based. While it may serve such a purpose, it also acts as a modern enclaves in a Biblical region. Community of Learners.

What was considered a victory for the BDS movement, SodaStream moved its factory from Mishor Adumim, which is in the West Bank, to Lebavim, which is in Israel proper, in 2014. The result was that over 500 hundred Palestinians lost their jobs, becoming part of a growing trend of BDS’ success.

Contrary to its self-definition that BDS is a “movement for freedom, justice and equality...” BDS has never really been about freedom, justice or equality. BDS is about the boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel, as implied by the world of the acronym BDS.

BDS, however, allows YC and male Syms students to return to that feeling of community.

Stern is a different story. We have a beautiful Beit Midrash, bright lit, with floor to ceiling windows that look out onto the city, and lined with bookshelves filled with sefarim (Jewish books). But when I walk in, I do not feel that feeling. I do not feel that buzz and the sense that the people learning around me had the same thought when they walked into the room — “I came here to learn.”

The Beit Midrash at Stern, tucked away on the seventh floor, does not serve the same purpose as the Beit Midrash uptown. We have no seder and shiur, making it difficult for the Beit Midrash to act as the focal point for Torah study on campus. There is no organized time during which a large portion of the undergraduate students’ body can convene to participate in the mission of limud torah. I take Judaic classes when they fit into my schedule and prepare for them when I find an hour to spare. Although at Stern one is able to continue high-level Torah learning, it becomes an isolating experience. The relationships rooted in learning (aside from with my chavruta) become long distance, loosely based on infrequent run-ins with classmates in the hallway or terse conversations in the elevator. Our learning is independent of each other, preventing a community from forming, from growing, and from strengthening.

I would love if the community of learners uptown was open to me. I would love if I could join the tradition which President Joel hinted lies within the uptown Beit Midrash. But what I want most of all is to be able to create this culture in Stern. I’m not saying it cannot happen, and I am not saying it will not happen, but right now it is not happening. So I will register for Advanced Talmud II, schedule chavruta time in between labs, and do my best to foster the type of learning that could begin to unify the religious experience at Stern.
Hate Speech: What’s to Hate?

By Avigayl Adouth

Freedom of speech is one of the principles upon which our nation was founded. Recently, however, some people have become increasingly concerned with the fundamental idea of free speech, and increasingly concerned with how the content of said speech affects our culture. Most would maintain that it is a privilege to live in a country and attend a university where they are granted the freedom to express their beliefs as they please. Yet as soon as, in the spirit of open discourse, someone expresses an idea which undermines another’s own agenda or offends a specific group of people, many are quick to return the affront by villainizing them, accusing them of breaching the code of social ethics and committing the heinous crime of propagating hate speech.

Unfortunately, “hate speech” has become an accusation that can be casually flung at people and their actions both in the political sphere as well as on our campus. What is important to note is that hate speech, so long as its purpose is not to incite violence, is included in our constitutional right to free speech.

The Constitution does not state that Congress shall make no law abridging the freedom of speech unless it’s mean—it states that Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech. This alone should delegitimize the contemporary tendency to criminalize those guilty of promulgating their racist, sexist, homophobic, antisemitic, and Islamophobic ideas. As immoral and hurtful as the expression of those views may seem, they are not only legal, but are an exercising of our constitutional right.

Yeshiva University is a private institution; it can make its own rules and has the right to enforce speech regulations. YU, however, has no speech codes. This gives unbridled power to the university, allowing it to judge potential offenses on a case-by-case basis. So, while hate speech is not officially banned by the university, the administration reserves the right to arbitrarily decide what it deems inappropriate. This is in essence an enactment of censorship in its most extreme form. By not telling students what they are and are not allowed to say, they both entice outspoken students to push the envelope of acceptability and discourage the voices of those too scared that their opinions will fall outside of the mysterious bounds of “appropriateness” which the administration has set.

The recent trend to use the Nagel Wall as an instrument for protest, and the reaction to the establishment of the YU Feminists Club, lie at the center of the free speech conversation on campus. Both the tearing down of said protests by fellow students and the hurtful comments made on YU Marketplace in response to the founding of The YU Feminists Club have been likened to “hate speech,” which allegedly only seeks to silence the minority voice. In both instances, the original initiatives were valiant attempts by student activists to defend the human rights and fight for social justice of a particular group. The fundamental issue with calling these counter-protests hate speech is that the assumption is that anything which doesn’t agree with, or prioritize, fighting for human rights or equality as determined by the speaker discriminates against the minority group being spoken for, and therefore means to insult them. Even if we were to accept this flawed reasoning as legitimate and assume that removing a mural or commenting hurtful things on a Facebook page constituted hate speech, it would still be important to acknowledge the danger in silencing such actions. The notion that the only way to express a dissenting opinion is to be forced to engage directly with those whose stances you wish to dispute, on their terms, is absurd. Tearing down the mural, albeit cowardly and unimpressive, is as much an expression of disapproval as the construction of one’s own mural would be.

The expression of hate speech creates a scenario that allows those who disagree to speak up; it does not delegitimize the positions of those who feel targeted just because it hurts their feelings. Freedom of speech is not some curtain racists and bigots hide behind; racism and bigotry, while revolting and immoral, are both direct expressions of freedom of speech. The lack of speech censorship serves a dual purpose and meets the needs of self expression for all parties. By allowing hate to speak, we protect freedom of speech and self expression. Those who find such speech appalling remain free to utilize their free speech to challenge the hate, but not to suppress it.

In an attempt to decry the expression of these unpleasant opinions, students call on YU to reprimand the offenders on the grounds that they are students at a Torah institution. Unaware of the fact that YU has no official speech codes, students assert, rightfully so, that the expression of these hurtful views are antithetical to Torah Judaism and ask YU to use that claim as a basis on which to condemn these reprehensible deeds.

As Editor-in-Chief of The Commentator, Doron Levine, expressed earlier this year in his editorial, “Not a Theocracy”, although YU is guided by Jewish values on an institutional level, it has not historically held its individual students to halachic standards. While it is true that hateful remarks are at odds with the decency and common morality that Torah demands of us, and that the university can and should speak out when the views of their students are not in line with the institution’s views, the expression of said views does not ask of the university to punish those who espouse them. Asking the university to cast a wide net when it comes to censorship on campus plays directly into their hands. If they, as an administration, have maintained a policy of enforcing speech codes without a codified set of rules, then asking them to censor more than they already have is limiting ourselves in terms of speech that will be deemed acceptable in the future. Narrowing the field of discourse to something much smaller than it should be.

While I do not stand in solidarity with those who hold or express sexist, racist, homophobic, Islamophobic, or even anti-semitic opinions, I respect the rights of individuals to express those opinions. By allowing for, and being receptive to, the voices of others, no matter how extreme or distasteful they may be, we can create a dialogue which allows for people to comfortably express themselves and to develop their own opinions. These extremes, both the offensive and the hypersensitive, are what allow for the very existence of the elusive Maimonidean acme of balance, and give people the ability to cultivate their individualized and nuanced stances.
By Brian Snow

When I received my summons to jury duty, back in late August, my initial reaction was to attempt to postpone the date when I would need to serve for as long as possible. Luckily, as a student, I had a ready made excuse. I proceeded to happily push off jury duty until the January intersession break. Unfortunately, when January rolled around, I was out of excuses. Now that I was home with no work to do, there was no way that I was going to be able to continue postponing jury duty. I couldn’t push it off indefinitely.

When my day of service finally arrived, in mid-January, I proceeded with a groan to the Superior Court of Middlesex County. It didn’t help that I was required to arrive extremely early in the morning. It didn’t help that I was home with no work to do, there was no way that I was going to be able to continue postponing jury duty. I couldn’t push it off indefinitely.

When my day of service finally arrived, in mid-January, I proceeded with a groan to the Superior Court of Middlesex County. It didn’t help that I was required to arrive extremely early in the morning. As one would expect, the mood at the court was not a happy one. Almost none of the two hundred potential jurors had a smile on their face. It seems that everybody else felt the same way that I did: we were depressed, even frightened, at the thought that we might actually end up on a case. The sense of trepidation in the room was almost palpable. In the background, I could hear people discussing tricks, techniques, and excuses that would guarantee that they wouldn’t get put on a case.

To kick-off the morning, I and the two hundred other potential jurors watched a ten minute video describing the jury process. The video made sure to note how lucky we were to be able to perform our civic duty. Of course, many people paid no attention to the video. About a third of the people in the room had headphones in their ears and were totally tuned out. The rest of us, who were watching, rolled our eyes when we heard the video describe us as “lucky” to perform our “civic duty.”

The worst part of the day was when I was almost selected for the jury of an actual trial. Luckily, before my turn came to be questioned by the judge, the eight needed jurors had already been selected, and I was good to go. As I travelled back home from the court, I pondered whether jury duty actually is a civic duty. The courts extol the importance of being judged by a jury of one’s peers. After a day at the Superior Court of Middlesex County, I can attest to why that is and to the tremendous importance of jury duty.

The case I was almost placed on was that of a single mother who was suing her insurance company after a small fire broke out in her home. This woman was a regular person, just like the rest of us. One of us could easily have been in her shoes. A jury of one’s peers, while not a perfect system, is meant to help ensure that a verdict won’t be rigged in favor of one party. In this case, in which a woman was

God, Israel, and The Constitution: How to Protect Ourselves

By Elliot Fuchs

Over the past few weeks, the Jewish people have been under assault by anti-semitic threats across the nation. Both our youth, in local Jewish Community Centers, and our deceased, in Jewish cemeteries, have faced hatred as bomb threats and vandalism have been keeping the entire community on its toes.

With President Trump doing little to rectify the situation other than offering not-so-harsh words of rebuke, and with little indication of what, if anything, it will take to protect the Jewish people, it is incumbent upon all Jews to remember how to fight back. Here is how we protect ourselves in a society structured like this one when facing persecution.

It is no secret that, right now, Jews are politically polarized. 70% of Jews across the country vote Democrat, which is comprised of mostly ethnic Jews and ultra-Orthodox Jews. But a large chunk of the Modern Orthodox community is conservative. A Pew Research study found that 57% of “modern orthodox” Jews lean to the right in 2013. While groups like J-Street and AIPAC offer contrasting views for the American-Israeli partnership and cause Jews to fight politically on a regular basis, we are now presented with an opportunity, albeit an unfortunate one, where Jews can all agree that oppression against our people is (obviously) a bad thing.

Thus far, this moment has transcended partisan politics and we must use this newfound unity to reach out to politicians and force them to take action. We need to continue to make our voices heard and explain that the Jewish community will not stand for this.

We must then also keep the second amendment very close to our hearts and fight to the death for it’s preservation. We cannot forget that in the days of Nazi Germany, gun control was very strict for all the disfavored minority groups. I am not trying to suggest that modern America is anything like Nazi Germany. But as Ben Shapiro explained, in his infamous gun control debate with Piers Morgan, if our Jewish ancestors were better armed it is likely that 6 million people would not have been slaughtered. In the event these perpetrators end up being some type of racist or anti-religious group like the KKK, we must be ready to fight back.

Perhaps most importantly, we can never cease in our fight for the State of Israel and her continued growth and survival. As proven by the “Raid on Entebbe” in 1976, the State of Israel will come to the aid of her people no matter how dangerous the mission her continued growth and survival. As proven by the “Raid on Entebbe” in 1976, the State of Israel will come to the aid of her people no matter how dangerous the mission

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The (Sometimes) Uncomfortable Truth

By Emily Firestone

Students at Yeshiva University are not generally attacked for their pro-Israel views and often feel comfortable discussing them publicly. But how about when out and about in the city? When visiting a friend on a secular college campus? In the office of an internship or a job? The discomfort tends to increase as one gets farther and farther away from a comfort zone.

What if you find yourself in a discussion out of your comfort zone and someone asks you if you support the building settlements in the West Bank (or Judea and Samaria)? Would you yield to what you think the person wants to hear? Would you even have an answer?

It has come to my attention that there is a sense of uncertainty, hesitation, and tension around the topic of showcasing one’s pro-Israel stances in the urban setting of New York City. Some express concerns for the building settlements in the West Bank (or Judea and Samaria)? Would you yield to what you think the person wants to hear? Would you even have an answer?

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The current account must equal the financial account. For example, if foreign residents purchased $50,000 of financial assets in the United States only purchased $30,000 of financial assets, the demand for the currency goes up, causing its value to increase. When a country increases its exports of goods and services, it will lead to less foreign residents willing to put their saving in the country will get a lower return which is likely to have negative consequences because many times the money is not directly used for growth, as opposed to the companies which mainly borrow to increase revenue.

If a country’s growth is greater than the liabilities it’s owed due to a deficit, than it can be argued that the investment is not a bad thing. On the flipside, if the country’s growth is less than the liabilities incurred through investment, the foreign residents that put their saving in the country will get a lower return which will lead to less foreign residents willing to put their saving in the country. Hence, the foreign investment must decrease which will lower the deficit. This is why a recession is one of the quickest ways to lower the deficit because all savings flood out of the country, which will increase the demand for the currency going down because the country needs to exchange some of its currency for foreign currency to buy imports and foreign countries’ financial assets. The balance of the financial account largely determines the movement of the exchange rate because it happens more often and quicker. Therefore, if the United States is investing more than it is saving, it will have a net borrowing in its financial account—the dollar will appreciate due to the demand for the dollar by foreign residents. A stronger dollar makes exports more expensive for foreign countries to purchase and it makes imports cheaper for domestic consumers because they can purchase more with their dollar. This leads to an imbalance in the current account as well.

A trade deficit is not necessarily a bad thing and a trade surplus is not necessarily a good thing. The deficit is mainly determined through macroeconomic policy, an imbalance of savings and investment. Generally, when an economy is expanding, it incurs a trade surplus as a result of either an injection of business or an increase in household demand. A country is just the aggregate of all of its residents’ investments plus the government’s budget. If the government is unable to balance the budget with taxes, it must import savings from abroad. When the government contributes to the trade deficit it is more likely to have negative consequences because many times the money is not directly used for growth, as opposed to the companies which mainly borrow to increase revenue.

Business

Verizon Brings Back the Unlimited Plan

By Isaac Greenberg

This past week, Verizon began offering an Unlimited plan for the first time since July 2011,despite Verizon’s CFO saying a year ago that the unlimited model does not work. Verizon reestablished this plan as a response to the “price war” between cell phone service companies. David Eger, a senior equity analyst with Edwards Jones, commented that “Verizon was sitting out here as the one that didn’t have an offering,” since AT&T, Sprint, and T-Mobile all offer unlimited plans, and Verizon realized it needed a similar plan to remain competitive. A main driver behind Verizon’s specific decision to bring back an unlimited plan, as well as their general competitive strategy, is that last quarter T-Mobile added 857,000 and Sprint added 347,000 customers, while Verizon lost 36,000. Verizon hopes their plan will significantly change these numbers in the upcoming quarter.

Verizon’s new plan costs $80 for one line and $180 for four lines, which is expensive compared to Sprint and T-Mobile who offers the single line for $50 and $70 and the 4 lines for $160. Rounding out the competition is AT&T, which has an astronomical single line price of $100, though they have the same $180 price as Verizon for four lines. Investors see many benefits, along with some negatives, in the new plan. For example, there has been a lot of excitement about the new plan, which is leading to new customers. Though the plan has only been around for a very short time, Verizon’s President of Operations John Stratton said at a Deutsche Bank conference earlier this month that “we’ve seen a pretty huge rush to unlimited.”

In the past, the issue with an unlimited plan was when it comes to cell phone carriers there is no longer about which carrier provides the most data. Instead, it is about which carrier provides the fastest and most reliable service. This is where Verizon shines, and they have been getting a lot more attention recently for their customer service and the media.

There are two significant drawbacks for Verizon with this new unlimited plan. The first is that although they can be sold significantly more customers, their top paying customer’s bills will go down significantly. In other words, those customers that were using a ton of data— and frequently paying penalties when they exceeded their data allowance—will now be able to pay a flat fee for the unlimited data and avoid all penalties. A second drawback is that Verizon will now have to spend a lot of money on maintaining their super fast network. It is estimated that they will be spending $11.3 billion in the upcoming months to maintain the high-speed network. That is a sizable sum compared to the $5.1 billion T-Mobile will spend.

The Verizon unlimited plan costs slightly more than T-Mobile, but that is fully justified because of the superior network that Verizon has. The plan will affect the other carriers, before debuting their unlimited plan, T-Mobile had 3 times as many new subscribers as Verizon. Since then, that number has dropped to as low as 2. In addition, it is not possible to know how many subscribers are just trying the plan and how many are still using it. Given that they can no longer compete with Verizon by having an unlimited plan, T-Mobile is now trying to compete by reducing the number of customers that are still using the plan, as seen recently with the cut in churn. From 2013 to 2016, churn fell from 1.6% to 1.3%, and if T-Mobile can maintain this, it is their best way to try to compete with Verizon.

But I believe that not only has Verizon come out with an unlimited plan, customers from all other carriers will be flocking to Verizon. This is because not only is Verizon known to have the best overage, but now they also have all the data you want. Increasing revenue due to an influx of customers should be extremely beneficial for investors in Verizon too. In 2016, 10 trillion megabytes of data were used—and this is more than double the usage in 2014. Adding an unlimited data plan is inherently risky, but it’s a move that Verizon had to make to remain competitive.

Is a Trade Deficit Bad?

By Mendel Harlig

People point to it in horror. Many politicians claim it manifests the decline of the United States as an economic superpower. Our current president states it is here because of our horrible trade deals. It is our nation’s trade deficit, and it has been the source of much anger and anxiety in recent months.

A trade deficit is created when a country has a negative balance of payments. A balance of payments is, simply, the difference in value between payments into and out of a country. It consists of two accounts, a current account and a financial account. The current account records the exports and imports of goods and services, investment income received or sent abroad, and secondary income (current transfers, such as works’ pensions) received or sent abroad. Exports, as well as investment income and secondary income received, are called credit transactions. When a country sells its goods or services to other countries, it is called debit transactions. Therefore, if the credit amount exceeds the debit amount in the current account, there is a current account surplus. On the other hand, if the debit amount exceeds the credit account, the current account is in a deficit.

The financial account records the buying and selling of financial assets such as stocks, bonds, and real estate. Net borrowing is when residents of a country have sold more financial assets than it bought. Net lending is when residents of a country have bought more financial assets than sold. For instance, if foreign residents purchased $50,000 of financial assets in the United States, while residents from the United States purchased $30,000 of financial assets, the United States would have a financial account deficit. The term deficit is used because selling a financial asset guarantees a liability in the future, whether it is divided or paying the principal amount invested with interest.

The current account must equal the financial account, just like the assets must equal the liabilities plus the owner’s equity in accounting. For example, if there is a $10,000 deficit in the capital account, there must be a $10,000 deficit in the financial account. The reason why there must be parity is because no one will trade their currency forever. In order to receive the foreign currency in return, the residents need the country’s currency to purchase exports or financial assets. When a country increases its imports of goods or foreign residents purchase financial assets in the country, the demand for the currency goes up, causing the country’s currency to appreciate. The people need the demand for their currency to purchase exports or financial assets. When a country increases its imports of goods or foreign residents purchase financial assets in the country, the demand for the currency goes up, causing the country’s currency to appreciate. The people need the demand for their currency to purchase exports or financial assets. When a country increases its imports of goods or foreign residents purchase financial assets in the country, the demand for the currency goes up, causing the country’s currency to appreciate. The people need the demand for their currency to purchase exports or financial assets. When a country increases its imports of goods or foreign residents purchase financial assets in the country, the demand for the currency goes up, causing the country’s currency to appreciate.
By Noam Zolty and Evan Axelrod

For any student with an interest in the real estate industry, there is no better place to start than the Real Estate Club of Yeshiva University. In short, the goal of the club is to introduce the YU student body to a broad range of topics regarding real estate and to provide club members with unique social, career-oriented, and personal opportunities which are consistent with those manifested throughout the real estate industry. This is an ideal opportunity for any student who wishes to be equipped with the knowledge, network, and resources to pursue a successful career in real estate. Founded in 2005, this club has grown to over 100 students, and with three or more events a semester has become one of the most visible and active clubs on campus. The club hopes to attract students with any inclination towards real estate and prepare them for the real world of prospective employers. This relationship consists of shared passions, shared interests, and, most importantly, a strong group dynamic. With approximately eight out of ten employees preferring group work to independent work, companies must share this millennial passion for a group dynamic. This can be examined further by simply doing group projects; a strong group dynamic requires an overall sense of unity within the firm. This unity can be defined by a shared vision and is created in an open, engaging workplace.

The Amazon subsidiary, Zappos, has become the paradigm of a company that has mastered its group dynamic and overall enjoyable workplace culture. Tony Hsieh, the CEO of Zappos, claims that “Zappos’” number one priority is company culture,” so he formalized ten core values and aligned his company around them. The employees receive free breakfast and lunch, a 40% discount on merchandise, access to nap rooms, and have monthly team outings. These are some of the reasons that explain why, annually, only 13% of employees leave Zappos on a voluntary basis, whereas 7% are let go on an involuntary basis for various reasons. Concurrently, there are approximately 300 new Zappos employees hired on an annual basis, and amazingly, there are over 30,000 resumes submitted each year to Zappos’ recruitment department for those 300 job openings. The direct correlation between Zappos’ workplace culture and the dedication of their employees is clear. Companies must emulate Zappos’ approach to workplace culture in order to keep the modern workforce engaged and motivated.

Depending on the country, the vision of the ideal workplace culture varies. One factor that causes this contrast is any given country’s relationship with power and authority. The culture in Israel is the quintessential example of a unique approach to authority. Although a hierarchy of power does exist there, it is often overlooked for increased participation from top management to the bottom, where everyone has a say. The extent of this disregard for localized power is evidenced by Israel’s ranking on the Power Distance Index, a measurement of how much a country’s population accepts unequal power distribution within its culture. Israel ranks second from the bottom of countries that do not accept unequal power distribution. In other words, Israelis heavily disregard the power of “higher-ups” and want to have a say. Another detail deeply ingrained into the Israeli culture is direct confrontation. While in other countries there is a tendency to communicate virtually or through a messenger, Israelis believe open, blunt verbal communication to be the most effective. Reflecting on the shared values of direct communication and an informal environment in the Israeli workplace, companies should incorporate these methods into their core operations if they want to arouse interest in potential employees. No matter the country, a strong workplace culture is, and is increasingly becoming the driving force in a company’s future success.

“ULTIMATELY, WE HOPE THAT THIS KNOWLEDGE WILL HELP STUDENTS PRODUCE GOOD JOBS IN THE INDUSTRY AND GIVE YESHIVA UNIVERSITY A PRESTIGIOUS NAME IN THE INDUSTRY.”

By Daniel Ferber

In our generation, more than ever before, a strong workplace culture is an essential quality for a company’s success. However, what exactly is “workplace culture”? In simple terms, workplace culture is the environment that a company provides for its employees. Ideally, each individual employee should have values that are consistent with those manifested throughout the overall company. Workplace culture is the formula that guides the team, motivates the employees, and attracts additional talent to the company.

The necessity of workplace culture is a recent phenomenon. According to the Bureau of Labor statistics, for the first time in history, millennials represent the largest generation in the United States labor force. Another study, done by the Deloitte University Press claimed that the number one challenge in today’s workplace landscape is culture and engagement. Being that the millennial employee averages a tenure of two years, it becomes apparent that they directly contribute to the dilemma in today’s workplace, a lack of loyalty and stability. As a result, it’s clear that in order to attract, retain, and engage the modern workforce, companies must intensely focus on improving company culture.

Companies need to be asking themselves what they can do to build and improve upon their culture. One of the most important qualities people want to see in a potential employer is flexibility. A recent study from PwC has shown that eighty-seven percent of millennials believe that flexibility will improve their overall productivity. This flexibility primarily entails a greater control over their schedule. A Bentley University study indicated that seventy-five percent of millennials Harvard Business Review claim that companies need to focus on creating a network of Yeshiva University Alumni and Yeshiva students as well, as it hopes to develop, the club has goals for an internal networking event of the club is to educate individuals in the near future. In addition, there is a section titled the Real Estate Executive of the Week, which gives a brief biography of a successful individual within the workplace. The club also produces a newsletter called the Book of the Week. This is particularly intriguing, as professionals within real estate professors to how crucial it is to have a deep understanding of how investing in real estate works. The best way to
Present

**Preparing for Pesach**

**A MORNING OF LEARNING & RECONNECTING**

Sunday, April 2 / 6 Nisan

**8:45AM SHACHARIS**
FOLLOWED BY LIGHT BREAKFAST
YOUNG ISREL OF QUEENS VALLEY: 141-55 77 AVE. FLUSHING, NY

**9:45AM**
RAV SHMUEL MARCUS
MARA D'ASRA & MAGGID SHIUR,
LANDER COLLEGE BEIS MEDRASH

**10:15AM**
RAV YEHUDA WILLIG
MAGGID SHIUR, YU & RABBI OF CAMP HASC

**10:45AM**
RAV JUDAH MISCHEL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CAMP HASC

RSVP for Babysitting: events@CampHASC.org

www.CampHASC.org