By Commentator Staff

Rabbi Kenneth Brander, current Vice President for University and Community Life at Yeshiva University, will leave his post around January 31st to assume a position in Israel. In an e-mail exchange with The Commentator, Rabbi Brander confirmed that he will be assuming the position of President and Rosh haYeshiva at Ohr Torah Stone, a network of 24 religious and educational institutions headquartered in Efrat, Israel.

Rabbi Brander's transition out of his current post will begin after the October holiday break. At this time, no replacement has been named for him and, according to one

SEE BRANDER, CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Vice President Rabbi Kenneth Brander to Leave YU

By Judah Stiefel

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SEE BRANDER, CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Yeshiva College Deans Ramp Up Efforts to Combat Cheating, Add Additional Proctors for Midterms

By Judah Stiefel

In a meeting between the Yeshiva College Deans and students on October 19th, it was announced that additional proctors will be added to various Yeshiva University undergraduate examinations beginning with ensuing midterms this Fall semester. In addition, classes will be moved to larger rooms for exams in order to create space between students who are taking exams and signs will be placed at the front of classrooms to encourage honesty.

Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, said, “Our intentions are not to identify and punish [cheaters], but to stop cheating from happening,” suggesting that the additional proctors will preemptively discourage cheating. The new measures taken to upgrade academic integrity on campus stemmed from last year’s dialogue carried out between students, deans, and academic advisors. Students had discussed the issues they had witnessed and heard about regarding students cheating off each other during tests, as well as the morality of test banks. Solutions such as extra supervision and modified tests were suggested.

SEE COMBAT CHEATING, CONTINUED ON PAGE 7
Chasing the Right Kind of Transparency

By Avi Strauss

Rare is it for a “good” concept to be absolutely good. Rarer still for something determined or voted to be good to only function for its intended outcome without unintended consequences.

So is the never-ending bid by undergraduate students for greater transparency from the university. Interest in, and a desire for, transparency may ebb and flow, but the underlying assumption of its pursuit is always aspirational: greater transparency will breed greater respect for the administration; greater transparency will lead to more student engagement in campus-wide activities; greater transparency will foster greater esteem by the students for undergraduate student institutions like the councils or the court.

Such was the subtext of last semester’s push for the “disclosure amendment,” requiring the release of the complete results, including per-candidate vote totals, from all future student council elections. It was also a key component of the desire by students to petition the student court to compel the release of the Spring Election results, after the vagueness of the amendment allowed the Canvassing Committee and Office of Student Life to withhold such information.

I certainly sympathize with the general notion that transparency is good, and applaud most student efforts to pursue it. I also recognize that this paper is a unique platform that can use the information to discuss the potential implications. Nonetheless, I can’t help but feel that the disclosure amendment expended a tremendous amount of student-leader capital for an effort that will not noticeably enhance the student body. Moreover, I find it troubling that, without an actual disclosure amendment, the students would be free to put forth their best effort without worrying about a crushing defeat or losing sleep over a slim loss.

But here’s the rub—this full appraisal of the consequences for student dignity and additional transparency in any area on campus. Clearing opacity requires concerted and sometimes relentless effort. And while it is easy to see the value of student-rights, the process of recording data must be handled with a degree of caution. Pause should be taken when new transparency may affect other students in ways the affected students can’t control. Any combination of these factors may influence any given election for any given position.

And while gaining virtually nothing, we’ve shifted to a system that does not provide transparency where concern for dignity should be paramount. Students running for council positions should be free to put forth their best effort without worrying about a crushing defeat or losing sleep over a slim loss.

Nonetheless, I can’t help but feel that the disclosure amendment expended a tremendous amount of student-leader capital for an effort that will not noticeably enhance the student body. Moreover, I find it troubling that, without an actual disclosure amendment, the students would be free to put forth their best effort without worrying about a crushing defeat or losing sleep over a slim loss.
7 Up 7 Down/Letters to the Editor

1 Dotard
   Word that Kim Jong-Un calls Trump, meaning “an old person, especially one who has become weak or senile.”

2 Autumn
   The season where both the leaves, your grades, and your self esteem begin to fall.

3 Torah Tours
   Helping in-towners understand that Jews exist outside of New York since the 1990’s.

4 Fake Ari Berman
   One of Business Insider’s “50 most influential political pundits.” Perhaps YU hired the wrong AB?

5 Neil Degrasse Tyson
   Underratedly taught at YU in fall 2005.

6 iPhones
   Around for 10 years now and constantly making you feel insecure about your current phone.

7 The Simpsons Season 29
   Just wow.

Yankees Lose in ALCS
After a stellar playoff run, their efforts in Game 7 deserve a non-sarcastic thumbs down.

Rabbi Berman Allergic to Nuts
Presidents, they’re just like us.

Lulav and Etrog
Could possibly be the weirdest custom we have aside from when we smack the branches on the floor on Hoshana Raba.

Three Day Yom Tov
Since we have had three three day Yom Tov’s in a row it is now a chazaka, mandating all future Yom Tov’s to last three days.

Belfer Construction
Now might be as good a time as any to explore that not-so-secret underground tunnel between the Rubin Caf and Belfer.

#BREXIT
The only Brexit that really matters is Rabbi Brander’s unexpected departure.

Shield News
The cornerstone of Yeshiva University broadcasting, a stud staple to our inboxes, and a former YU club that will proceed to be forgotten about forever.

Fall 2017 Club Lists Released, Beren Adds 27 New Clubs
By Avi Strauss and Shoshy Ciment

The Beren Campus added 27 new clubs this semester, based on the finalized list of clubs released by the Office of Student Life. Some of these new clubs filled gaps left by the nine clubs that did not apply for renewal at the beginning of this year or were not renewed as clubs, while others represent new student interest areas of the Jewish community and the ever-changing technological front.

The newly-minted clubs bring the Beren campus club total to the highest it’s been in at least three years. At 108 clubs, the total is up from 90 last year. Overall, the Wilf campus added three clubs, bringing its campus club total to 96.

Curiously, despite the increasing undergraduate student body of Sy Syms School of Business over the past five years, its club numbers have remained essentially flat over the last three years, and represent two of the three lowest totals amongst the seven councils.

The increase in clubs on the Beren Campus was the result of the Stern College for Women Student Council (SCWSC) and the Torah Activities Council (TAC) adding ten and eight clubs, respectively. SCWSC accounts for the greatest share of clubs on campus, as the council sponsors 73 total clubs. This makes sense, given SCWSC shares many of the responsibilities of the uptown the Yeshiva Student Union (YSU) and the Yeshiva College Student Association (YCSA), at the Beren campus.

Some of the new clubs that were added through SCWSC include the Diversity Club, the Movie Macs, Perspective Magazine, the Slam Poetry Club, and the Rube Goldberg Club. Amongst the terminated SCWSC clubs are Shield News, the Social Justice Society, and the Persian Culture Club. Although TAC’s Eruv club was terminated this year, some of the new TAC sponsored clubs such as Arabic and the Rambam, Chabad Club Lamplighters, and the Meditation Society are up and running. Clubs gain approval by submitting a petition with a minimum of 20 undergraduate signatures to the Office of Student Life. Those petitions are then voted on by the general assembly’s of either campus (the council presidents and the Senior Chair of the Student Life Committee), who decide to approve or reapprove a club for official status based on a variety of factors like its performance in past semesters and its appropriateness for the YU undergraduate student body, among other reasons.

Once a club is approved, the presidents of the respective student councils work together to determine which clubs they will sponsor. Club sponsorship is a key way in which clubs acquire funding from the councils for their events during the year. The number of clubs that have a presence on both the uptown and downtown campuses ticked up just slightly, to 56 from 54. Often, these clubs have co-presidents or liaisons between the campuses to coordinate larger, co-ed events like Shabbatons’ Cake Wars.

Interestingly, it seems the notion of “co-sponsorship”—when multiple councils on the same campus commit to overseeing a club — has returned to the Wilf Campus. This year, eight Wilf clubs will be sponsored by at least two councils.

The only club with co-sponsorship at Beren is SHEM, the Student Holocaust Education Movement, which receives sponsorship from all seven undergraduate councils.

The Office of Student Life did not immediately return a request for comment.
Zysman Hall Exterior to be Renovated, Honors Program Lounge to be Moved

By Ilan Hirschfield

Two renovation projects on the Wilf Campus will begin this semester as the facade and roof of Zysman Hall will be redone and the lounge for the Yeshiva College Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program will move from Furst Hall to Belfer Hall.

In an email sent in June to the YU community regarding the various renovation projects around the Wilf campus, including the 185th Street Plaza, the Amsterdam Mall, and Zysman Hall, Senior Vice President Joshua Joseph stated that “The roof of Zysman Hall is being renovated and the building’s facade continues to be reconditioned.” He also mentioned that “the sidewalk bridges [in front of Zysman Hall] should be removed by the end of summer/early fall.”

The renovations were slated to begin around the end of the summer or beginning of the new academic year but have not yet started. When asked about the project’s status and what might have caused the delay, Matthew Yaniv, YU Director of Marketing and Communications, said that, “The project was supposed to begin over the summer but was unavoidably delayed,” he wrote in an email. “We hope to have it completed by year end.”

The Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program’s lounge will be moved this semester from the basement level of Furst Hall to the basement level of Belfer Hall. Dr. Shalom Holtz, the program’s director, said Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences, notified him of the change at the beginning of the Fall 2017 semester. When asked why the lounge is being moved, Holtz explained that the university wanted to use the basement of Furst Hall for another project and therefore had to move the honors lounge elsewhere. YU will use money from a grant it received to turn the area currently used as the Honors Lounge into a technological research lab.

The Honors Program currently uses the space approximately every two weeks to hold “Honors luncheons”, events where various guests and YU professors speak to honors students about their academic work or other experiences, both personal and professional.

Holtz said that “I am very satisfied with the alternative we’ve been offered and we’ll use it to its full capacity.” The lounge was established after the program’s inception but has always existed in its current location.

These renovations continue the stream of infrastructure renovations the university launched on the Wilf campus this past year, including the new 185th Street Plaza, renovations to floors 5 and 3A of the Mendel Gottesman Library for Hebraica-Judaica, and renovations done to the original Amsterdam Mall.

Makor College Experience Caters to Students with Intellectual Disabilities

By Avigayil Adouth

In Fall of 2017, Yeshiva University launched the Makor College Experience Program. The program was developed in partnership with Makor Disability Services, formerly known as Women’s League Community Residences, and aims to provide young men with intellectual disabilities a classic college experience.

The Makor College Experience is a three-year, non-degree seeking program which aims to mirror the classic Wilf Campus, Yeshiva College experience, allowing students who qualify for disability services to experience the full range of activities and programs available to students studying on the Wilf Campus.

The program has been in the works for two years and was spearheaded by Dr. Stephen Glicksman, an adjunct professor at Yeshiva College and Yeshiva University’s Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology. Dr. Glicksman is a licensed developmental psychologist and serves as the Director of Clinical Innovation at Makor Disability Services. He worked closely with Rabbi Penner, RIETS Dean and Rosh Yeshiva, to bring the program from concept to reality this past fall.

Makor Disability Services is an organization which seeks to meet the needs of the disabled community creatively and innovatively. According to Dr. Glicksman, when the idea to create a college experience program was first born, Yeshiva University was the natural choice. Makor’s administration felt that for many, Yeshiva University is a right of passage to which their parents, friends, and siblings had all been granted access.

“Going to YU is not the same thing as going to any college,” Dr. Glicksman explained, “It is really the next step in one’s growth within the Modern Orthodox Jewish Community, and we wanted to open that opportunity to people who until now might have been excluded from it.” This, combined with the fact that, according to Dr. Glicksman “there are a lot of people [within the YU Community] who have experience working with individuals with specialized needs,” made Yeshiva University the perfect place to launch this revolutionary program.

The Makor College Experience is technically a day program of Makor Disability Services in partnership with Yeshiva University. This means that the organization pays YU for the rights to be on campus and benefit from their services. However, Makor students spend their days like any other student on the Wilf Campus. They live in Washington Heights, daven in regular YU minyanim, spend their mornings learning in the Beit Midrash, and attend specially designed classes in Furst Hall. Students have access to all YU facilities, as well as functioning dining cards, which include access to all of the restaurants on the YU meal plan.

The Makor Judaic Studies morning program, including it’s Beit Midrash component, is run by Rabbi Uri Feintuch a RIETS, Wurzweiler alumnus with a background in special education. The General Studies program, which takes place throughout the afternoon, adapts courses required by, or commonly taken by students on the Wilf Campus such as psychology, economics, and first-year writing, to make them more practical. Classes focus less on theory and more on the practical aspects such as developing interpersonal skills, money management, and resume or cover letter writing. In addition to formal classroom style learning, the General Studies program also has a vocational element. This added piece of programming is designed to teach things such as workplace etiquette and interviewing skills, as well as to help students explore their career options. Dr. Glicksman told The Commentator, “At the end of the three-year program people are going to graduate with a certificate of completion, a resume of all their work experiences over the course of the program, and a letter of reference for a job, hoping to culminate in some sort of employment.”

Students will reside in an off-campus dormitory tentatively named Makor Hall, which is right around the corner from the Wilf Campus. The dorms opened immediately after the holiday break, which is expected to create an increase in the possibility for inclusion of Makor students on the Wilf campus social scene.

“So much of what the young men of Makor are looking for can be found on the Wilf campus,” said Rabbi Penner. “Most of all – their peers are here.” The program aims to create a sense of community and camaraderie for a demographic to whom this might normally be denied. The Makor College Experience program has put forth notices, via email and across campus, for YU student involvement opportunities in initiatives such as potential lunch buddies or dinner companionship programs and is trying to facilitate Night Seder churutov between Makor and Yeshiva University students.

According to Rabbi Penner, Makor Students “have already become a part of the fabric of the campus.” He said, “They can be seen at minyanim, in the cafeteria, in the bez medrash and in the new 185th street plaza. They bring joy to the campus, always smiling, so glad to be here!”

Dr. Glicksman mentioned that Makor feels that they “have been embraced by the community” and commented that “it is nice to see our students hanging out on the pedestrian mall with their friends in the college, from camp, home, and other programs.” Makor hopes to see Wilf Campus student involvement increase as the academic year picks up.
YU Introduces New Joint Electrical Engineering Program with Tel Aviv University

By Yossi Zimilover

A new partnership between Yeshiva University and Tel Aviv University will now allow incoming electrical engineering majors to complete their studies at TAU’s International School of Engineering. After the completion of their studies, students will receive both a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from TAU and a Bachelor of Arts degree from YU.

In a correspondence with The Commentator, Professor Ehud Heyman, Head of the International School of Engineering at Tel Aviv University, stated that “students will study for two years at YU, during which they will study the basic courses in Mathematics, Physics and Computer Science, in addition to their liberal art studies and Limudei Kodesh, and will then study for three years in TAU...”

Professor Heyman noted that the partnership is of similar nature to the joint program that YU currently runs with Columbia University, in which students receive a B.S. degree in Engineering from Columbia and a B.A. from YU. He suggested that the TAU program is intended for students who are interested in studying in Israel for a variety of reasons such as immigration, increased contact with the Israeli industry, or simply the desire to study in Israel.

The partnership between YU and TAU is reflective of multiple goals that President Berman presented at his investiture speech on September 10. He stressed both the need to create new opportunities for students in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, known collectively as STEM, and to help build the modern State of Israel.

“We certainly encourage students to move to Israel and we encourage those who live outside of Israel to devote their time and resources to help Israel further its role as a shining light to humanity,” Berman stated at his investiture.

New Magazine “Perspective” Brings Positive Spirit to the Beren Campus

By Ilan Atri

Perspective, a new magazine on campus with the goal of providing a unique reading experience and outlet for the YU community, has just been launched at Stern College.

Perspective is a venue for students mainly on the Beren Campus to express themselves creatively in both a serious and fun way. The goal of the magazine is to bring a more positive and upbeat spirit to the Beren Campus for both the writers and the readers.

While other magazines aim to inform or entertain their readers, Perspective is aiming for something greater than that. Rebecca Kerzner, the Editor In Chief and founder of the magazine, stated that her vision for the magazine was to “provide a space of voices for readers and writers to build a community upon the topics that are discussed in the articles.” She was concerned that the image YU attempts to portray is a homogenous representation. Therefore Kerzner wanted to start a publication that omits the political and controversial aspects that she felt were not often discussed in the current publications focus on, and instead aimed to depict the side of YU that is not usually publicized by the university. She aims to cater to the students that don’t feel they are represented in the school’s media or feel forgotten.

So far, Kerzner has received a lot of positive feedback. Beren Campus students have expressed a sense of relief and thankfulness for the articles that have been posted so far. These students, along with Kerzner, feel that the topics the magazine aims to focus on are topics that needed to be discussed and were required to fill a niche that has long been empty on campus. A few of the articles include Modest Fashion, A Beginners Guide to YU/Stern, and Social Media: An Alternate Reality.

Sarah Gold, a senior in Stern College, commented, “Perspective is the breath of fresh air that the YU-sphere has been waiting for. Its genuine and upbeat vibe radiates off the page. I would compare it to reading a diary about the ups and downs of college life, that leaves me with the recognition that my experiences are universal, and that I’m part of something bigger than myself.”

According to Kerzner, part of the inspiration for Perspective comes from other platforms of confessional media like Hercampus, Upwrite Magazine, Shine, and Collective Hub. These all follow an emerging wave of online media labeled confessional, which combines the experience of the author with their own feelings behind that experience. However, Perspective started as something different. At first, it was merely a class project created by Kerzner in a course called Magazine Journalism.

She took last semester. It focused on maintaining stress and how to deal with it. But, after another student in the class displayed interest in continuing the magazine, the focus was broadened and Perspective went public.

The magazine is run by Kerzner, along with two head editors and design partners. They are Lily Gelman, a junior majoring in biology and minoring in writing in Stern College, and Shira Feen, a senior majoring in graphic design and minoring in marketing also in Stern College. The magazine also has mainly junior or senior English majors on staff, and they supply the articles and images. Kerzner mentioned, “Perspective also accepts contributing authors for specific articles if someone has a topic they want to write about. The writing is open to both the women’s and men’s campuses.” So far, the magazine has been mainly composed of female writers.

Perspective will be published online once a month with 5-10 articles each month. However the first two issues were released within a smaller time span. Currently, the editors run an Instagram and Facebook page and post daily articles, quotes, and inspiration. The handle for Instagram is @yuperspectivemag and the Facebook page is called PerspectiveYU. Additionally, the editors aim to publish a print version this year for collecting and evergreen purposes for the writers and readers.

Although the magazine gained approval from Dean Chaim Nissel, University Dean of Students, over the summer, it has not received any official funding yet and therefore is not technically an official YU Magazine.
YU’s Assistant Vice President of Governmental Affairs
Phil Goldfeder Departs to Work for Bank

By Lilly Gelman

Phil Goldfeder is leaving Yeshiva University. Goldfeder joined YU in November 2016 to serve the newly-created position of Assistant Vice President for Government Relations. According to a YU News article from June 2016, Goldfeder was hired to “strengthen and develop relations between the University and federal, state, and local governments, and to monitor legislation and policies that could have an impact on YU and its programs.” He departs after just over one year.

The Times Ledger reported on September 29th that Goldfeder will join Cross River Bank in New Jersey as their VP of Government Affairs, working to strengthen the bank’s ties with government agencies. Goldfeder will rejoin the ranks of Cross River, albeit now with a different title than before, having previously worked as a consultant for the bank in 2015.

When asked about his decision to leave Yeshiva University, Goldfeder responded with warm words. “There is so much that I will miss at Yeshiva University,” said Goldfeder, “particularly my time working with and mentoring students. I joined YU to enhance our government and community affairs efforts and we have far exceeded every expectation.” Goldfeder added, “My departure is bittersweet, but I intend to stay engaged to ensure that our foundation, framework, and progress we’ve created lead to continued growth and success for years to come.”

Mr. Goldfeder has begun his transition out of his role at YU, but there is no exact date for when he will fully vacate his position as Assistant Vice President for Government Relations at Yeshiva University.

Goldfeder began his career in public service as a community liaison for the New York City Council, continuing on to serve as Queens liaison for the Mayor’s Community Affairs Unit under Michael Bloomberg as well as director of intergovernmental affairs for New York State Senator Chuck Schumer. Goldfeder left public service in 2016 to join Yeshiva University.

In a statement discussing Goldfeder’s departure, Andrew Lauer, Vice President for Legal Affairs at Yeshiva University, said: “While we are sad to see Phil leave, we are proud of the success and growth he has helped us achieve. Phil is a caring, energetic and dedicated professional and has added so much during his time at YU. Though we have worked with our incredible elected officials for many years, Phil helped us expand and deepen those relationships. We will certainly continue to build on the momentum Phil set in motion and look forward to continued success in the future.”

During his tenure at YU, Goldfeder was responsible for bringing various New York City Councilmen and New York State Assemblmen to campus, such as Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, whose 10th district of New York City includes YU, and Councilman Mark D. Levine, who was the subject of an anti-Semitic, “greedy Jewish landlords” attack in a campaign last April. Goldfeder also helped student leaders coordinate programming with local public servants like the New York Police and Fire Departments.

Goldfeder also secured close to $2 million in grants for Yeshiva University projects. In August 2017, the State Senator Todd Kaminsky Funds Program granted Syms School of Business $350,000 to begin the Israel Business Incubator program connecting YU students with Israeli startups, and, in September 2017, the Max and Celia Barnes Family Psychological and Psychoeducational Services Clinic of Perkauf Graduate School of Psychology received a $1,025,000 grant from the New York City Capital Budget, allowing the program to utilize a newly renovated space and expand the amount of families it is able to serve. In addition, Goldfeder secured $1 million worth of grants which has yet to be announced by Yeshiva University.

Goldfeder in May 2017 recruited YU students for a public use study of Fort Tryon Park in Washington Heights, for the purpose of helping with field research and data collection for New York City. That same month Goldfeder invited Yeshiva students to join the Community League of the Heights and Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez in a community cleanup project.

In December 2016, shortly after beginning his career at YU, Goldfeder was honored by New York City Comptroller Scott M. Stringer at the Jewish Heritage and Culture Celebration. According to a YU News article at the time, the event recognized his “commitment to the Jewish community and the people of New York City, as well as his contributions to both over the course of his career in public service.” Goldfeder in March 2017 arranged for a guided tour of Sing Sing Correctional Facility for a group of YU students and faculty members. Goldfeder delivered a lecture to the men of the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program in April 2017 entitled “Albany to Oklahoma: Being An Orthodox Jew in Politics,” where he discussed his experiences as a religious politician.

This article has been updated since its original publication to include additional information.

Computer Science Experts to Lecture on Data Science

By Yossi Zimilover

On October 25th, Research Director of Gartner Inc. Dr. Erick Brethenoux and Chief Technology Officer of Mayo Clinic Steve Demuth are set to headline an event on the Wilf campus on data science and its impact on the modern world. Dr. Brethenoux will lecture about "The Data Science Revolution: The Future of Analytics is on a Need-To-Know Basis," after which Mr. Demuth will speak on the topic of “Realizing the Power of Data in Medicine.” The lectures will take place in Furst Hall Room 501 at 5pm that evening and are open to all.

Dr. Brethenoux plans to discuss the significant impact data-driven machines have on decisions and the additional influence of artificial intelligence systems in the future. He will also detail how organizations can position themselves for success within the current technological and economic revolution. Brethenoux currently specializes in machine learning, artificial intelligence, and applied cognitive computing.

Mr. Demuth will talk about the significance of data within the medical world. He will describe how using data science to harness large amounts of raw data can alter the world of medicine and help doctors, nurses, and patients. He previously served at IBM as Chief Architect and Senior Technical Staff Member in Decision Management.

Judah Diament, Program Director of Undergraduate Data Science and Co-Chair of the Yeshiva College Computer Science department, stated “given that we are now offering both a data science track in the computer science major as well as a series of classes for non-majors, we want to give students the opportunity to understand if/why they should care about data science...and consider going into it as a profession...even if they are not going into it professionally, [they should] understand how it is impacting the industries/professions that they do plan to pursue and what skills they need to succeed.”

Diament added that Dr. Brethenoux and Mr. Demuth are both members of an Industry Advisory Board of “highly accomplished researchers and executives with whom we have created and reviewed our plans for computer science at Yeshiva College.” He explained that “Our goal is to provide an education that would make every one of these board members want to hire our Computer Science graduates.” As such, we get input, guidance, and feedback from them to help insure that.

He expressed appreciation towards Dean Karen Bacon and Provost Selma Botman for their “amazing support” for the data science program, saying it “possible for us to do all that we’ve done so far and plan to do in the next couple of years.” Diament also thanked President Ari Berman, claiming he “has been extremely supportive as well, (and whose) address at the investiture indicates that we can expect more good things in this area to continue to happen.”

The event comes shortly after President Berman’s recent investiture, where he pledged to create new opportunities for YU students in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, known collectively as STEM, and highlighted the demand for data analytics in the marketplace of the future.

WWW.YUCOMMENTATOR.ORG
**YU Soccer Teams Receive United Soccer Coaches’ Team Academic Award, Women’s Team GPA Exceeds Men’s by 12.4%**

By Chana Weinberg

The Yeshiva University’s men and women’s soccer teams have received the United Soccer Coaches’ Team Academic Award for the 2016-2017 season. United Soccer Coaches gives this award to all college teams who are represented in the United Soccer Coaches association who have a grade point average above 3.0. The YU men’s team GPA was 3.14 and the women’s GPA was 3.53, 12.4% higher than the men’s. This marks the third season in a row that YU has won this award.

There were 837 teams who received the honor, but only 213 schools had both their men and women’s team qualify. Of those 837 teams who won, 549 were men’s teams.

"Our student-athletes are unique in that they have mastered the ability to excel on the field of play and in the classroom," Athletics Director Joe Bednarsh told The Commentator. YU student-athletes are especially unique because in addition to having secular classes and practice for NCAA-level athletics, student-athletes at YU need to balance in their Judaic Studies courses as well.

Mr. Bednarsh declined to comment on the wide gap between the men’s and women’s GPAs.

YU Men’s Soccer Coach, Joshua Pransky, attributed the large gap between the men’s and women’s GPAs to the large amount of international students on his men’s team. On the 2016-2017 men’s roster, 10 out of the 22 players listed at YUMacs.com were international students coming from countries including Australia, Spain, Venezuela and Israel. That same year, the women’s team had only two players of their 22 from outside the US and only one player, Anabella Berti (class of 2020) of Venezuela, came from a non-English speaking country.

"[Being from a foreign country] sometimes shows in their grades in their first few semesters on campus which shows up on our team GPA," Pransky said. Though the men’s GPA may have been weighed down because of international students adjusting to life in the US, Coach Pransky reminded The Commentator that "they keep their grades high enough to win awards," so, as a school, we should be "proud" of this accomplishment.

Women’s soccer coach Marc Zarhest also expressed his pride in his team’s accomplishment.

"The fact that they succeed both on and off [the field] is the real win," he said.

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**COMBAT CHEATING, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE**

"It’s time to act," asserted Associate Dean of Yeshiva College Dr. Fred Sugarman.

For now, two to four additional proctors will be added to the midterms of some of the largest YC classes, where midterms are just beginning. Classes in Biology, Psychology, Calculus, Economics, and parts of the YC Core will be receiving additional proctors to assist professors in monitoring the classrooms during the tests.

"OUR INTENTIONS ARE NOT TO IDENTIFY AND PUNISH [CHEATERS], BUT TO STOP CHEATING FROM HAPPENING."

-DR. KAREN BACON, DEAN OF UNDERGRADUATE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Many of the proctors will be semicha and kollel students, as part of an effort by the Dean’s Office to explicitly make the connection between ethical Jewish behavior and academic integrity. Some midterms will also be moved to larger rooms in order to provide more space to separate students taking tests.

Dean Sugarman made it clear that the steps to improve the academic integrity system within YU, and Dean Sugarman emphasizes students have the greatest ability to create an environment of integrity. Dean Jacobson said, "The initiative is coming from students."

Over orientation for incoming students at the beginning of the academic year, a program was implemented in which students, rabbis, and faculty were placed in groups, given nuanced integrity related dilemmas, and discussed the prompts were discussed. The program was meant to begin a dialogue between the different components which make up the university and get participants thinking about what the word integrity implies. The Dean’s Office believes it will provide greater clarity for students and faculty when faced with difficult moral decisions. Said Dean Jacobson, "We feel really good about a program during orientation in which we distributed scenarios [to groups of students, professors, and rabbis] which did not have simple answers."

While action is already being taken on this initiative in the form of extra proctors, signs, and moving test locations, students and administration continued to talk about ways to improve schoolwide integrity further. During the meeting, Editor-in-Chief of The Commentator Avi Strauss suggested, "There should be some avenue for students to volunteer information and to see results come from that information." Discussion ensued regarding ways by which to encourage students to voice their concerns with regards to cheating. Pre-Health Advisor Lolita Woodhill posed the question, "How can we make students feel comfortable getting involved?"

Dean Sugarman said, "We are going to look at the existing [academic] integrity document", which was last updated in 2013. The six page document, which can be found on the YU website, states the school’s policies towards cheating, plagiarizing, and other actions considered academically dishonest. As of now, no specifics have been given by the Deans as to how the document may be updated.
Founder of Jewish Watchdog Group Accuses YU of ‘Malfeasance of the Highest Order,’ Protests Center for Jewish History

By Shoshy Ciment

Richard Allen, the founder of the Jewish Watchdog group, JCCWatch.org that organized a protest at the Center for Jewish History on October 18, has been rebuffed by Yeshiva University for support. The protest, co-sponsored by Americans For a Safe Israel and JCCWatch.org, was originally in response to an upcoming event in which the Center would be hosting the anti-Zionist organization Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) on Oct. 26 in a lecture entitled, “The Balfour Declaration: Support for a Jewish Homeland or Jewish State? Is there a difference?” Though the event has been canceled, the protest is calling for the dismissal of the newly instated President and CEO of the Center for Jewish History, David Myers, who Allen says “is working diligently to assist groups that push the BDS agenda.”

BDS, or Boycott Divest and Sanctions, is an economic campaign led by non-governmental organizations that supports a boycott against Israeli goods and companies to help end the occupation in the West Bank. Jewish Voice for Peace was named one of the ten most influential and active anti-Israel organizations by the Anti-Defamation League in 2013. When Allen reached out to Yeshiva University to support the rally against the Center for hosting the BDS-supporting JVP, he was met with what he called, “a deafening silence.”

“We are very disappointed at the fact the YU has not taken a public stance and has allowed these nefarious activities against the state of Israel to take place in silence,” Allen remarked.

To Allen, the anti-Israel events at the Center for Jewish History are all symptoms of the main problem that stems from the President and CEO, David Myers, who was announced as president of the Center in June. For him the climate that allows these programs to be planned, accepted and promoted, Allen said. “He must go.”

David Myers is a highly regarded scholar in the field of Jewish intellectual and cultural history. In addition to his position at the Center for Jewish History, Myers is the Sady and Ludwig Kahn Professor of Jewish History at UCLA and an elected Fellow of the American Academy for Jewish Research. Although Myers claims he opposes BDS, he is on the board of directors of the New Israel Fund, which does not oppose BDS, and is on the advisory board of J-Street, which does not oppose BDS that advocates for a two-state solution.

The Center for Jewish History is composed of five organizations and includes the Yeshiva University Museum. Each organization is involved with the selection of the President of the Center for Jewish History. Allen voiced his displeasure with Yeshiva University’s involvement with the selection of Myers as President, claiming that the board of Yeshiva University must have known about Myers’ anti-Zionist tendencies before they voted him in.

“Yeshiva University Museum joins its fellow partners in the Center for Jewish History in expressing confidence in Dr. David Myers as its new president and CEO. Dr. Myers is an eminent and widely respected historian and scholar whose academic work and expertise in modern Jewish intellectual and cultural history make him the right person to lead the Center to fulfill its mission.”

The Board of Directors of the Center for Jewish History has publicly reaffirmed its support for Myers on the Center’s website. The website also features statements of support for Myers from world-renowned scholars in the US and Israel.

“We call on all who believe in the importance of Jewish history to join us in in supporting the Center and its distinguished President,” reads the Board’s statement.

Despite its support for Myers, Yeshiva University openly embraces Zionist ideals and a close connection to Israel. In his investiture address on September 10, President Ari Berman, an Israeli citizen, spoke about the importance of building the modern state of Israel.

“We certainly encourage students to move to Israel and we encourage those who live outside of Israel to devote their time and resources to help Israel further its role as a shining light to humanity,” Berman said in his address.

Further, the Yeshiva University Museum is hosting Dr. Daniel Gordis, senior vice president and Koret Distinguished Fellow at Shalem College in Jerusalem, to discuss the meaning and significance of the Balfour Declaration on Monday, October 30.

While some view this as evidence of the same anti-Zionist agenda that seems to be a common phenomenon in the mainstream media and on college campuses today, Gordis, whose lecture will take place in the Center, will discuss a time when Zionism had the backing of the world.

“We are so used to Israel being on the defensive that we forget that there is an era where it wasn’t like that,” Gordis commented.

Regarding the rally that will take place at the Center, Gordis did not comment on the perceived anti-Zionist agenda of the Center.

“Important issues deserve to be looked at in a variety different directions,” said Gordis. “The value of discussion helps you see viewpoints on both sides that matter.”

YU Improves in WSJ/Times Higher Education Rankings, Places 119th

By Commentator Staff

Yeshiva University ranked 119th in a just-released report by the Wall Street Journal and Times Higher Education. This represented a significant improvement, as last year YU placed 141st in the same WSJ/Times ranking. Harvard University bested all other Ivy League and top-tier universities to take the ranking’s top spot.

This improvement also comes on the heels of the investiture of YU’s fifth president, Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, whose inaugural address called for bringing the university into the “World of Tomorrow” by recognizing evolving industries and marketplaces that Yeshiva students must be prepared to enter.

YU’s Office for Communication and Public Affairs did not immediately respond to comment on the improved ranking.

To produce the rankings, each school is assessed on four categories: resources, such as finance per student and faculty per student; engagement, measured in part by student recommendation; outcomes, including graduation rate and alumni salaries; and diversity among student and faculty educational, national, and ethnic backgrounds. Unsurprisingly, YU scored lowest in the diversity category, gaining a mere 3.8/10. Resources was its highest scoring category, winning 23.8 out of 30 points.

Data for the rankings was collected from directly surveying at least 50 students per college as well as from United States government data collections, such as the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System and the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

YU’s increase was the result of mild improvements in its outcomes, resources, and engagement rankings.
New Lounge on Beren Campus to be Opened in Stanton Hall

By Esti Kuperman

Yeshiva University is in the process of transforming part of the third floor of Stanton Hall into a student lounge, which will be accessible at all hours and available for use by all students.

According to Dean Karen Bacon, this new lounge came after a request from the Beren Student Life Committee for more lounge space in Stanton Hall. The Dean’s Office helped create the lounge by repurposing a rarely-used computer room located on the third floor of Stanton Hall (245 Lexington) on the Beren Campus.

“The original conversion of the room was done by Mr. Joe Cook, head of facilities, with support from the SCW Dean’s Office,” Bacon explained. The room has been closed up for the past few years, and is being reopened specifically for the purpose of the lounge.

Stanton Hall, located on the Beren Campus, is one of two academic buildings that students occupy every day. Although the 245 Lexington café is often a great place to hang-out, it’s hours are limited. It is not open from 3:15-5:00 in the afternoon and is closed for the evening starting at 8 pm (Thursdays at 7).

“We really are no places on campus to really hang out with friends, talk on the phone, or study in a group,” said Kira Paley, a SCW junior. “Even the downtown library is hard to be in because it’s so quiet, and you can’t hang out, have meetings, or study with others there unlike the uptown library.”

Dean Bacon says the new lounge will be repurposed and will include couches, tables, and window treatments.

“The funding for the lounge came from Esther Lerer, a Stern College Graduate and daughter of Gita and Jack Nagel. Gita and Jack Nagel are long-standing members of the Yeshiva University Board of Trustees. They donated the Jack and Gitta Nagel Family Atrium, as well as Student Commons “Nagel’s Bagels” and Mrs. Gitta Nagel of the lounge,” said Dean Bacon. The Beren Student Life Committee has already begun working alongside student affairs staff to completely furnish and design the room to be the most fitting and comfortable for the students.

As for the expected completion date for the lounge, Becky Ciment, Assistant Director of Housing and Residence life, said that the university is working diligently. “I don’t have an end date yet,” Ciment said, “but it is likely it will be completed by winter break, although we are hoping for before.”

SCW junior Ilana Levy was ecstatic to hear about the new lounge. “As a commuter, the lounge is a great outlet to de-stress and organize my thoughts since I don’t have a dorm room,” she said. “Not only that, it’s a great way to meet new people.”

The new lounge will also add a social aspect to daily life at Stern, something many students feel is missing. “I think it’s perfect because there’s no other real lounge in the school,” said SCW junior Rebecca Vichaky. “Sure, people go to the study room and hang out, or the beis midrash, but that’s not their purpose. Now we finally have a place to catch up with friends in a voice louder than a whisper.”

Photo Credit: Yeshiva University Plexxus

Fall Wilf Student Council Election Under Way as Full Election Results to be Released for the First Time

By Avi Strauss

With the onset of the fall student council elections on October 24th on the Wilf campus, the uptown student body is gearing up for its first election since the passage of three amendments to the student constitution last spring. This election marks the formal implementation of two of those amendments, the addition of a PR Secretary to the Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) board and the requirement for the canvassing committee to release the vote totals for each candidate. Last semester, passage of the amendment requiring the canvassing committee, which runs student elections, to disclose details of the election results sparked controversy when students insisted the language of the amendment included the election (spring 2017) in which it was ratified. However, the Canvassing Committee understood the amendment as applying to future elections and not the election in the spring and simply released the winning candidates, as it had done in the past.

This ambiguity and confusion led senior David Rubinstein, Senior News Editor of The Commentator at the time and current Managing Editor of The Commentator, to challenge the Canvassing Committee in the Student Court, the relatively obscure, five member panel of upperclassman appointed by the YSU president charged with interpreting the student constitution and ruling on constitutional disputes between students.

While the court sided with Rubinstein, compelling the Canvassing Committee to disclose the full election results, ultimately the Office of Student Life declined to release vote totals for each candidate. The OSL, which was the only entity in possession of the full results of the election, said it would do so in all future elections, contravening the Student Court’s decision.

Nonetheless, of the seven candidates currently running for a position, five were unaware that the per-candidate vote totals would be released after the election as a result of last semester’s push for greater electoral transparency. The candidates’ unfamiliarity with the new rule is due to the fact that the Wilf Student Constitution has yet to be updated to reflect the amendments.

Of those candidates, some expressed concern for the change. “It definitely be embarrassing to get blown out,” said Akiva Clair, a candidate for the SOY PR Secretary position.

Daniel Ferber, a candidate for Sophomore Class Representative, echoed that sentiment when commenting “It can definitely be awkward if someone only gets a few votes.”

Both candidates affirmed that they would have run for their respective positions even if they had known about the impending election disclosures prior to announcing their candidacies.

In order to avoid conflicts similar to those that sparked the court case last semester, the OSL turned over control of the election program used for student council elections to the student run Canvassing Committee.

“The Canvassing Committee now oversees all aspects of the election process, including the decision to fully disclosure of all results. How and when the results are communicated to the student body will be their call,” said OSL Director Josh Weissberg and Director of Student Events Linda Stone in a joint statement to The Commentator.

That determination will be made following this coming Tuesday’s election, which will determine the rest of student council for this academic year. In this regard, the OSL was hopeful for a successful year, no matter the outcome or the disclosed results.

“We see every day the important role that student government plays in creating a campus environment reflective of our diverse student community. We look forward to continuing on this positive path, supporting and working alongside all Student Council members.”

WWW.YUCOMMENTATOR.ORG
The 185th street plaza was officially opened in a ribbon cutting ceremony on the plaza on Tuesday, September 26 at 1:00 p.m. by President Ari Berman and various city, state and local officials. The ceremony was conducted by Vice President of Legal Affairs Avi Lauer.

A crowd of students, administrators, and government officials gathered in the nearly completed plaza to incorporate the campus into the Wilf campus and officially open the space to the public. During the half-hour ceremony, speeches were given by President Berman and NYC government officials including Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, Assemblymember Carl Banks, and Assemblywoman for the 72nd district of New York Carmen De LaRosa. The speakers highlighted the significant relationship between the Jewish community of YU and the greater New York City.

In his remarks, President Berman noted that the plaza was the culmination of years of vision, hard work, and fundraising. He added that this plaza should not only be viewed as an addition to the YU community but as an addition to the Washington Heights community as a whole. “It’s a place for our entire community,” President Berman said. “This is a special place,” he added, “Yeshiva University is a special place and our mission of thinking [is] to create a plaza as a way of providing security and peace of mind to local residents. “This is not only about making a place for the pedestrians,” Councilman Rodriguez remarked, “but about the safety of this institution. We have to be sure that we are prepared for [whoever may go] after any of us.”

The project took over a year to complete and is still not entirely finished. It involved significant state funding as well as donations from private investors to fund the $3.6 million project. Assistant VP of Government Affairs Phil Goldfeder, who has begun his transition out of his role at YU, said that the completion of the plaza would be a fantastic addition to a growing campus and would give students and members of the Washington Heights community the ability to interact with each other in new ways.

“IT’S A PLACE FOR OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY.”
-PRESIDENT ARI BERMAN

YU President Zach Sterman gave remarks on behalf of the student population of the Wilf campus. Expressing gratitude for the efforts that went into making the plaza possible, Sterman said that a communal space can speak volumes about the values and goals of an institution. He noted that the plaza is a direct reflection of the school’s and the community’s value of safety and unity.

“This plaza is an integral part of the environment we have here and it sets the tone for what we can accomplish on the Wilf campus,” he said.

BRANDER, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Mentioned that the plaza is a direct reflection of the school’s values.

Our students continue to step up and I am proud of their hard work,” said Rabbi Efrem Goldberg, one of Rabbi Brander’s vision, wisdom and hard work,” said Rabbi Efrem Goldberg, the current Rabbi of Boca Raton Synagogue. “He brought those same qualities to Yeshiva University where his transformational leadership led to great innovation, community building and enriched student life. I am confident that he will bring those same attributes to his new position and continue to have an indelible impact and influence on the Jewish world.”

Ohr Torah Stone was founded in 1983 by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, the 1960 Valedictorian of Yeshiva University. OTS is comprised of a combination of institutions devoted to outreach, women’s empowerment, and leadership development within the Jewish world.

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“This plaza is an integral part of the environment we have here and it sets the tone for what we can accomplish on the Wilf campus,” he said.

Finally, together we have turned around our undergraduate discount rate. We never turned a blind eye to those in need but we also recognized the value proposition of a YU education. This year, that change is more evident. Our enrollment is one of the best YU has had. It is coupled with a net tuition and ancillary revenue that is unprecedented.

Rabbi Berman, I wish you continued success and fulfillment in your presidency of Yeshiva, and will do everything I can to help you assist you and orchestrate an orderly transition of my responsibilities over the next four months. I have enjoyed our time together and I am always available to help.

I thank each of you for being part of this wondrous period in my professional career and for your vision in navigating one of the most important institutions of our people.

Gmnr Tov,
Respectfully yours,
Kenneth Brander.
By Ilana Radinsky

Hillbilly Elegy, written by former marine and Yale Law School graduate J.D. Vance, tells the story of the working-class white, working-class communities living in the Rust Belt — a group frequently overlooked in discussions of poverty and disadvantage in America. These communities of what Vance lovingly calls “hillbillies,” are dispersed throughout the former Industrial Midwest, populating regions that suffer from extreme economic decline due to deindustrialization, population loss, and urban decay. Vance, having grown up in the Rust Belt, Kentucky and in a small town Middletown, Ohio, was born and raised a hillbilly.

In Hillbilly Elegy, Vance writes the personal tale of his childhood in working-class middle America, while attempting to explain the culture of the hillbilly community and the reasons for their continuing decline.

Subtitled “A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis,” this book provides interesting and often disheartening insight into this neglected population — filled with poignant stories of hard work, resilience, and family love and loyalty. Vance's primary subject of discussion are the working-class whites who hail from Greater Appalachia, the area in the Appalachian Mountains spanning parts of New York in the North and Alabama and Georgia in the South. Through generations of social isolation in these mountain communities, a distinctive culture of aggression, family loyalty, and self-reliance developed. For these working-class whites, poverty is, and always has been, the norm. After World War II, millions living in the poorer regions of Appalachia chose to move west, to places like Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, towards flourishing industry and abundant factory work. As a result, entire communities of Appalachians were relocated throughout the Industrial Midwest as they secured good jobs, with the self-reliance culture held largely intact. However, in later years, industry declined, and the factories that were providing honest work and stable income for entire communities closed their doors. After everyone with the means to escape, the remaining reached the deteriorating Rust Belt, all that remained behind were masses of poor people — lacking the resources to leave, trapped in towns devoid of employment opportunities or social support, and helpless to prevent the continuing decline of their communities.

Vance describes a culture plagued with alcohol and drug abuse; family instability and single parenthood are the norm, and children see no hope in upward mobility. The issues are caused by a culture of resentment and diffusion of responsibility, by childhoods filled with instability and trauma. Vance expresses the hillbillies’ unwillingness to honestly confront the problems inherent within their culture. Only once they do, he argues, will they be able to make lasting changes within their communities.

Vance’s nuanced and intricate writing allowed the reader to appreciate both the good and the bad that he sees within his culture. Vance thoughtfully and respectfully balances his open love for his family and his admiration of their strengths with an authentic, critical, and sometimes heartbreaking discussion of their flaws. The bravery required to make such admissions about one’s own culture, and especially about people one loves, tells of an incredible inner strength and personal honesty. Additionally, Vance delivers an engaging and artful blend of personal memoir and social analysis. In explaining the culture and history of the community in which he grew up, Vance shifts between stories of his own childhood and family history, references to various sociological studies and historical works, and his own social analyses. By integrating the three, Vance weaves a tale of a “culture in crisis” that proves interesting, understandible, and personal. Vance’s stories of resilience and success fill the reader with inspiration, while his descriptions of the trauma and tragedy afflicting millions provide a sense of heavy grief.

Hillbilly Elegy is an important and thought-provoking work that can give one a greater understanding of the lives and culture of this oft-neglected group of people, while also providing a plethora of timely and relevant lessons to be learned from his tales.

Twin Peaks: Weird for Weirdness’ Sake

By Matthew Silkin

I’ve been in sort of a slump recently when it comes to entertainment. Everything new coming out in movies and TV was either something I wasn’t interested in or something I was already tired of. Twin Peaks. Laura Palmer. But then I got a hold of David Lynch and Errol Morris’s soap opera, Invitation to Love will have an episode end with one character shooting another in self defense, Invitation to Love will have an episode with one character shooting another. Each episode also ends with enough information held back from the viewer to entice them to watch another episode, and the first season ends with a devastating cliffhanger that it’s impossible not to immediately dive into the second season to find out what happens next.

Twin Peaks is not without its faults, though. A few of the characters are a bit too cartoonish to take seriously, in particular the more villainous character Leo Johnson, played by Eric Da Re and the quirky teen girl Audrey Horne, played by Sherilyn Fenn. The show also suffered from declining ratings during its original 1990-1991 run, which caused it to be prematurely cancelled after season two, which means that a lot of the questions that the show brings up surrounding Twin Peaks are left unanswered (as of writing this review, I have seen neither the 1996 prequel film Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me nor the 2017 sequel season). While this hasn’t affected the overall popularity of the show nowadays — it is listed in TVGuide, TIME, and Rolling Stone as one of the greatest TV shows ever made — I do feel the need to point that out to people who expect closure from the end of the show.

Overall, I would recommend Twin Peaks to anyone who wants an offbeat, darkly humorous murder mystery. The production definitely has an aura of late 80s/early 90s around it, but the story and characters are timeless. has to offer.
From the Commie Archives

Editor’s Note: In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War and the unification of Jerusalem, The Commentator has decided to print a previously published interview from that time with YU students about their experiences in Israel during the war.

From the Archives (September 28, 1967; Volume 32 Issue 1) —

Students Relate Impressions Of Israeli War; YU Mitnadvim Recount Personal Experiences

By Richard Chaitetz

This article is based on an interview with five of the many Yeshiva College students who were in Israel before, during, and after the recent war. They are Earl Lefkovitz ’68, who spent the year at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; Chuck Abramchik ’68, who worked at Kibbutz Yannach for a year; and Milton Sonneberg ’68, Howard Bodner ’68, and Morris Berger ’67, who went to Israel during the crisis as mitnadvim. A full documentation of Yeshiva’s participation in the crisis will follow in a later issue.

Q. During the spring the number of Arab incursions into Israel increased markedly. Did you notice any increase in the tensions among the people?

Lefkovitz: I sensed something when he (Nasser) blocked the straits because then there was no way out of it. That’s when you really saw concern; sixty or seventy people would be gathered around a radio at the University to hear news broadcasts.

Abramchik: We were on a tiyul in Galilee when the crisis began and didn’t hear about it until we returned the next day (May 24). When we got back, there was a letter waiting for our truck driver—he and his truck were drafted.

Almost every day people were taken away. The CBS cameramen followed us all the way even though we tried to escape.

Q. Howie, you had an entirely different experience, didn’t you?

Bodner: Yes, I got there in the middle of the war. We landed at Paris about 9:00 Monday morning (10:00 in Israel). When we asked when we would leave, we were told that war had broken out in Israel. We waited and waited. Then at 5:30 we said “mitnadvim mitnadvim le’aretz” and were just waved through. We asked them whether they thought something was going to happen. They said that by the end of the week something would happen. It turned out that by the end of the week it was all over.

Bodner: My group arrived on June 1. Those who wanted to go to religious kibbutzim were told to step aside. We were taken to Masuot Yitzchuk, a moshav shitufi about ten kilometers from Ashkelon.

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Berger: My group arrived on June 1. Those who wanted to go to religious kibbutzim were told to step aside. We were taken to Masuot Yitzchuk, a moshav shitufi about ten kilometers from Ashkelon.

Q. What type of work did you do?

Bodner: We dug ditches and trenches, communication and defense trenches. Between the end of the war and the grape harvest we did odd jobs. Then we worked on the grape harvest.

Berger: We started Friday morning. They took most of us out to the cotton fields to weed cotton. A few of us remained digging ditches, and I worked in the mijun—sorting fruit. We harvested milonim—a sort of honey dew—for a month. It was the height of the season. They gave us the best protection in Israel.

Sonneberg: I’ve got news for you—at that point a Piper Cub was as good protection as a Mirage. Bodner: They took us to Herzliyah for the night. Next morning we woke to an air raid which turned out to be the last one in Israel. They took me to Yavneh, but they had no more room. Eventually, I wound up at S’dei Eliyahu.

Q. What is your impression of the kibbutz?

Lefkovitz: Monday morning I heard that fighting had broken out in Gaza. I thought it was a small skirmish and went into town to buy some things. I heard snatches of Dayan’s speech on the radio and it seemed like he was preparing the people for total war. Three or four minutes
The Pulse on Campus- Thoughts on the Recent Plaza/Library Renovations

We asked several YU students and faculty for their thoughts on the uptown campus renovations, including the new fifth floor of the library and the 185th St. “Pedestrian Plaza”. Here are some of their responses:

"Refreshimg. A crisp new monument to the university community in the Heights”
- Gavriel Gutman, English YC ’18 (on plaza)

"I'm really disappointed with the [library] renovations. I came to YU after the original renovations were done, so I don’t remember the way [floors] 2 and 3 used to be,” but I really liked the cozy, rustic feel of the 4 and 5. 2 and 3 are really great and modern, but I really appreciated having the ability to just go and work in a warmer, more inviting space.”
- Rickie Reiter, English, Stern College ’19

"These recent library updates have really put the ‘Modern’ in ‘Modern Orthodoxy”
- Moshe Kurtz, Psychology, YC ’18

"The sefarim are still there.”
- Rav Baruch Simon, MYP Rosh Yeshiva

"This kind of promptness, efficiency and responsiveness is the exception in such projects whether at YU or elsewhere. The library administration and staff outdid themselves and responded effectively to the many small suggestions that came from interested faculty...Regarding the actual “aesthetic changes”, moving the computers from 5A to 5 provides significantly better lighting for people working on the computers”
- Rabbi Shalom Carmy, Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Bible

Note: Thanks to Elliot Heller for his work in gathering the student and faculty quotes

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after I left the store to go home shots started coming from the Jordanian sector.

I ran all the way back, but I should have gone into the first shelter. In the shelter we heard the BBC announce the first victories in Sinai (before Kol Israel did) and went around telling everyone. From then on it was just gaining momentum. Every hour we heard something better. We expected them to keep on going and going and going.

Abramchik: We were about 15 kilometers from the Gaza Strip. We were out in the fields about 10:00 when we heard our first alert. Out in the fields there were no ditches so we just hit the ground. WE had a major air base around telling everyone. From then on it was just gaining momentum. Every hour we heard something better. We expected them to keep on going and going and going.

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Q. Did you feel any fear?

Abramchik: I definitely want to return. As soon as I finish school, I hope to make it back as quickly as I possibly can.

Berger: As everyone says, “One day I hope I will be back,” and I hope it will be soon.

Q. Why did you go?

Bodner: Something compelled me to go. It wasn’t that I felt that I was going to save Israel. This was an opportunity to do something right for the things I believed in. It was time to show that I believed in all the values that I’d been taught. Israel symbolized them.

Berger: I never was an ardent Zionist; Israel was nice for the Israelis. I never felt involved. I saw an impending holocaust; I wanted to do something. I suppose I was always very attached to Israel.

Q. Do you hope to live in Israel?

Sonneberg: You guys put the Ayin Harah on them.

Berger: Permanently. I made up my mind then. I have a moral obligation. I see how necessary aliyah is for the long term survival of Israel.

Q. Permanent or otherwise?

Berger: Permanently. I made up my mind then. I have a moral obligation. I see how necessary aliyah is for the long term survival of Israel.

Q. What was the atmosphere when you arrived?

Berger: It was terribly tense there—horrible. They were warm to us, I think we sort of relieved their pressures and anxiety, even if for only a relatively short space of time. I didn’t expect Kennedy Airport, but everyone was so tense. On the runway jets were lined up ready to take off. Everyone felt that it was only a matter of time until the war broke out.

Q. What was your reaction to the capture of Jerusalem?

Sonneberg: I didn’t really realize what Jerusalem was until I visited it. I guess I was happy. My real reaction came when I saw it; that’s when the strong reaction came. I wasn’t very impressed by the Western Wall itself. Jerusalem has a tangible atmosphere; you feel at home there—more than in New York.

Bodner: Jerusalem has all of the atmosphere of Israel. It’s a melting pot of the whole country.

Abramchik: That evening we felt something inside; it was really unbelievable. We hadn’t had Jerusalem for 2,000 years; we had only visitation rights. Now it was ours. It is just a plain wall, but I didn’t look at it as merely a wall. It was a part of the Temple.

Levkovitz: The first couple of hours, yes, because I was living right next to a mortar position, and I hadn’t known about it beforehand. I heard these tremendous explosions; I thought they were Jordanian shells. When I learned to distinguish between when they were hitting us and when we were hitting them, which took a couple of hours, the fear seemed to vanish.

Q. What is your term survival of Israel.

Abramchik: I definitely want to return. As soon as I finish school, I hope to make it back as quickly as I possibly can.

Berger: As everyone says, “One day I hope I will be back,” and I hope it will be soon.

Q. Permanently or otherwise?

Berger: Permanently. I made up my mind then. I have a moral obligation. I see how necessary aliyah is for the long term survival of Israel.
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GREEATER POSSIBILITIES IN ISRAEL

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By Nechama Lowy

Netflix has a new hit series on the rise, and it is bound to warm your heart, make you laugh, and open your eyes to a stigmatized topic. *Atypical* follows a relatively mundane middle-class family with two teenage children, one of whom, Sam, has autism. Sam, 18 years old, is extremely high-functioning, holding a steady job and attending a mainstream high school with his younger sister Casey, a sophomore track team star. Being a senior in high school and having never dated, Sam decides to invest his time in finding a girlfriend. While the show does center around this recurring storyline, Casey, the mother, and father each have personal screen time and their stories and personalities develop as the show goes on. 

*Atypical’s* producer, Robia Rashid, has been involved in other popular comedies, like *How I Met Your Mother* and *The Goldbergs,* and it is clear that she follows a certain pattern in production. Her productions are often entertaining, realistic, and usually revolve around a specific friend group or family with a strong affinity to one another. Each episode is a mere 30 minutes, which is plenty of time to fall in love with the characters and laugh out loud at their delightful personalities.

Although the title and description of the show might lead one to believe it is entirely about Sam, as a viewer, one really gets to invest in each storyline and empathize with the characters. Even Sam’s therapist, Julia, has her own narrative, intertwining with the family at many points. Each character is relatable, likable, and shows a humorous side. No persona feels unnecessary or merely used as a prop and their drama never got boring and rarely feels dragged out— the writer kept the plot moving and developing constantly.

While there are many aspects to *Atypical,* the show primarily focuses on Sam and his attempt to not just find a girlfriend, but keep her. However, instead of making the show into a quasi-documentary, Rashid beautifully normalizes the topic by creating an environment in which one does not feel estranged or uncomfortable, giving the show a unique twist.

Similar to many boys his age, Sam focuses on schoolwork and works an after school job, all while attempting to survive the multitude of girl issues in which he has involved himself. He cares about looking handsome to impress the ladies, and has his passions, hopes, and dreams. Sam exhibits many differences from his peers with his monotone voice, strong sensitivity to noise, and particular obsessions that he cannot control, yet it is endearing to be able to relate to him on the level the show portrays.

The show challenges any stereotype that assumes people on the spectrum are not involved in everyday activities. The first episode opens up with a surprising statistic about marriage among people on the spectrum—nine percent get married. Julia, the therapist, insists this low number is not due to lack of desire to get married but rather that they are never taught how to maintain and healthily deal with the social aspects of a relationship. Comprehending this information instantly sheds light on the importance that people view persons with autism as very similar to us, even if externally they may act differently. The show embraces this idea wholeheartedly by ensuring Sam dates a girl not on the spectrum, as it reinforces the idea there can be attraction and communication between two different personalities.

By Ellie Parker

If you’re looking to put your life in perspective, there’s nothing quite like jumping out of a plane at 14,500 feet in the air. Dangling your feet over the edge and preparing to defy all laws of sanity and gravity is a sure fire way to get your mind working overtime. Skydiving is the great equalizer of opposites -- terrifying yet enticing, controversial yet mainstream, high-risk yet potentially life-changing. It embodies every known fear and thrill in one 3-minute freefall.

My fixation on skydiving began when I was 16. I would go on YouTube and watch hundreds of videos of people’s various trips and teach myself different techniques to maneuver and position my body in the air for the full impact of the jump. My parents, not too keen on the idea from the start, fought to avert my attention to any other kind of adrenaline-packed activity, but my heart was set on nose-diving through the sky at 125 mph. For me, nothing else would suffice. Now a college student and capable of risking my life on my own terms, I decided to actualize my dream. I convinced my dad and brother to join in and the three of us bought tickets for the upcoming weekend.

It just so happened that Yom Kippur fell on the day before the scheduled jump. Nothing gets you in the mood to plead for your life in front of G-d like preparing to jump out of a plane headfirst the following day. I can hands down say that I have never read “Who Shall Live and Who Shall Die” quite like I did on this Yom Kippur. However, I rationalized that the best day to put my life in G-d’s hands would be the morning after my clean slate and, with that validation, I finished Neila and studied up on my previously researched skydiving tips.

I did not sleep at all that night. My mind went from worst-case scenario to even worse-case scenario, and I worried if I was making a mistake. But, I had hyped it up so much that I felt I couldn’t back out now, and, as we got ready to embark on this journey, my Dad got a call from the skydiving center. Apparently, winds had picked up and they had canceled all skydiving trips that day. As we looked up at what appeared to be the bluest and clearest sky, I debated whether or not this was a sign. Of all days, this one looked perfect for the experience: there wasn’t a cloud in sight. And, in the 19 years that I have lived in Atlanta, I cannot remember a single time that I had even felt a consistent gust of air, let alone wind strong enough to keep us from skydiving. But weather is unpredictable and, since next week looked just as clear, we rescheduled the flight and marked our calendars.

Two weekends went by with the same outcomes: we would schedule the session for that day and then we would get a call an hour before to find out it had been cancelled. The woman on the phone, sympathizing with the strange sequence of events that we had encountered, informed us that these were the most cancellations they’d experienced in years. So what is to be gleaned from an episode such as this? Judaism instructs us not to believe in signs. But, in that case, how does one label such a series of events? Is this a dream that is better left unfulfilled, or were those weekends simply not the right time for such an endeavor? And how can I ever be sure one way or the other?

As of now, I am scheduled to fly at the end of November. And if the weather abides, I will, G-d willing, be actualizing my ambition. However, the events of this past month have left me with much to ponder as I work toward a decision -- one way or the other. To jump or not to jump? I guess only time will tell.
From The President’s Desk: Innovation in Unlikely Places

By Yehoshua Zirman, SSSB President

On one lonely subway ride last year, I was listening to my favorite podcast series called “How I Built This,” which interviews founders of successful startup companies. That morning I was listening to an interview with the founder of 5 Hour Energy, Manoj Bhargava. When discussing why he went into the energy drink industry he explained, “I had no interest in going into the energy drink business, I just didn’t understand why every single energy drink had so much liquid? Who wants to drink 24 ounces for the sole purpose of energy?” Through careful product placement (it can always be found at the register of the store) and rectifying a gaping hole in an industry (making sure that his energy drink was only one shot), Bhargava’s product quickly hit a billion dollars of annual sales. Bhargava’s explanation of the innovation that helped him succeed really stuck with me. He said “You do not need to be a genius or an expert in a field to innovate, you just can’t accept the status quo. Innovation isn’t something different.”

Whenever I think about innovation, I think about a man I pass by every day along the streets of Washington Heights. There are many individuals on the streets giving out advertising pamphlets for restaurants, bars, and bars, and I typically keep walking, never glancing at the advertisement. However, one man does something a bit different. As people walk by he hits pamphlets against his hand very loudly, causing people to instinctively turn to him and make eye contact. At that point, he wishes them a good morning and asks them to read his ad. I take his ad every morning, not because I am interested in his product, but simply because he does something different than everybody else. This is not exactly what you might of when you hear the word innovation, but it hammers home the point that being different can be incredibly effective. I conclude with a challenge to every student. Don’t be satisfied with the status quo. If you don’t like something, change it. People like you will make YU a better place when you leave than it had been when you arrived. If you need funding or support for your pursuits, just email me or one of the other councilmen and we will do our utmost to make your dreams a reality. Innovation is not just a word for business and startups, it’s a way of life.

"WHEN THINKING ABOUT RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT OF SYMS, THIS LINE KEPT POPPING BACK INTO MY HEAD: 'DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT!'"

inventing something more complex or developing a new technology, rather, thinking differently than everybody around you.” When thinking about running for President of SYms, this line kept popping back into my head: “do something different.”

Judah Stiefel: What are your main responsibilities in your role as student council president, and how does this fit with your idea of what you should be doing?

Zach Sterman: My largest job involves the technical aspects of managing the student council. Ensuring that these events arelogistically planned, well-funded, and fun. I also work on managing the budget, approving clubs, etc. Those are the more technical responsibilities.

I feel that in past years what the student council hasn’t focused enough on is their role as the representatives for the student body to the school’s administration.

JS: In what ways do you see yourself as a representative of the student body?

ZS: Are the voices of the students being heard by the administration? There needs to be a channel of communication between the student body and the administration, so hopefully we’re going to establish more channels that they can speak through.

JS: How much time each week do you put into the job of operating as the President of YSU?

ZS: In terms of meetings we have at least one weekly meeting between all of the Wilf Presidents and the Chairman of the student life committee, but there are a lot more meetings that come up. There are meetings with the canvassing committee, meetings with club heads, meetings with the other presidents to discuss things... And then there’s a lot of time spent just thinking about these things, and trying actively to think of things that we can add and things that they can do differently.

JS: You gave a speech in a cafeteria the other night during Shabbat dinner (first in shabbat of the Fall 2017 semester). Some felt that it was controversial while others were empowered by it. Could you reiterate the message you gave that night? Why did you feel the need to quote the Buddha?

ZS: As for quoting the Buddha, I felt that it was a very relevant quote. It was less about making a controversy and more about making a point. The quote was, “Use these lessons not to be a better Buddhist, but rather to be a better version of yourself.” What I meant was, that you should extract the good from everything that is around you. I felt this message was very relevant to YU students. When you’re in college and when you’re in YU you’ve got these two worlds of Torah and of Middah and secular studies that we’re trying to bring together at YU and sometimes there’s a tendency to do them both while you’re here but they’re compartmentalized. I do Torah in the morning and in the afternoon I do Middah. What I was trying to convey is that there’s sort of a way of blending them so that the secular studies that you’re doing, the Middah isn’t separate but is rather for the purpose of enhancing your Torah perspective. The information you learn is not just in a vacuum.

JS: So now that we’ve touched on the official responsibilities of YSU President, Zach Sterman, let’s delve into the depths of who is Zach Sterman? What are you studying? What do you hope to go into?

ZS: So I am majoring in political science and minoring in marketing. I had an internship this summer in an advertising agency, and I’ve definitely been considering that as a career option. I’ve been caught in between both and taking the LSAT this summer and going to Law School.
It is also crucial to understand a brief history behind the emotionally charged debate surrounding the Second Amendment. In an address given at Princeton University in 1995, the late Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia said to his audience: “What I look for in the Constitution is precisely what I look for in a statute: the original meaning of the text, not what the original drafting intended.” Scalia, a staunch conservative justice, believed strongly in reading the Constitution the way the Founding Fathers originally understood the text. So why does this approach change when it comes to the Second Amendment and “the right to bear arms”? Traditionally, for over two centuries, the Second Amendment was interpreted in a more literal way that the Founding Fathers intended in terms of allowing firearms for the use of “a well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State.” This changed in 2008 with the monumental Supreme Court case District of Columbia v. Heller, which turned the previous notion on its head. The Court ruled that the Second Amendment had two distinguished thoughts, broken up by the second comma in the clause. This redefined the definition of the Second Amendment and changed its meaning to need firearms because “a well regulated Militia” is “necessary” – which was not the original interpretation of the Constitution as the Founding Fathers had intended. Surprisingly, this majority opinion was delivered by Justice Scalia, a known originalist who, as noted earlier, was outspoken about using the text of the Constitution the way its authors designed.

So why is this - an interpretation of the Constitution that necessitates firearms - important, especially when it comes to the Las Vegas shooting? This goes back to 1968, when Republican President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Firearm Owners Protection Act (FOPA). With the goal of protecting firearm owners (as the name suggests), the act ended the recordkeeping of most ammunition sales and limited gunshop inspections to once a year. Most notably, the act banned the transfer or possession of new automatic weapons to non-military, non-police civilian personnel. This included machine guns, and - in the act’s defense - Reagan said: “I do believe that an AK-47, a machine gun, is not a sporting weapon, or needed for the defense of the home.” FOAPA also banned “any part” or “combination of parts” designed to convert a firearm into a machinegun. This act, however, did not ban attachments to the exterior of semiautomatic weapons, such as bump stocks, and to this day, they remain legal.

Meanwhile, uniting the country will not avenge the lives of semiautomatic weapons, such as bump stocks, and to this day, they remain legal. This heinous crime was only made more horrific by the transformation of semiautomatic weapons into makeshift automatic firearms using bump stocks. Since the Las Vegas shooting, politicians have been vocal about stepping up regulations - and even implementing laws - surrounding bump stocks. Even the NRA has spoken out about bump stocks and said via executive vice president Wayne LaPierre that it is “illegal to convert a semiautomatic weapon to a fully automatic one.”

However, regulating - and perhaps banning altogether - the use of bump stocks isn’t a completely bipartisan issue that all politicians agree on. While California Senator Dianne Feinstein is calling for a law to be put in place to ban the use of bump stocks, many Republicans who are opposed to any congressional action whatsoever on bump stocks stand in her way, including Louisiana Representative Steve Scalise - who was wounded by a gunman this past June. Yet, throughout this entire debate, the usually vocal President Trump has remained silent. In a statement made by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders, President Trump is currently focusing on efforts for “uniting our country” during this “time of mourning.” Meanwhile, uniting the country will not avenge the lives of those murdered in the Las Vegas shooting and will not secure preventative measures to ensure such a massacre never happens again.

ATYPICAL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

types of people.
The cast contained some unfamiliar faces, including Brigitte Landy-Paine (The Glass Castle) and Amy Okuda (The Guild) that are relatively new to the limelight, possibly contributing to some of the dry and empty acting scenes. Surprisingly, the experienced actors including Jennifer Jason Leigh (Weeds) and Michael Rapaport (Prison Break) were not much relief from the poorly executed roles. There were moments in which the actors could have put more emotion into their performances, and it was disappointing when it seemed the characters were more concerned with fitting lines in than presenting them as realistic. Anger and frustration often seemed apathetic and dull, and, while reading from a script works for practice, it does not sit well in the actual performance.

To Rashid’s credit, she did a remarkable job casting Kier Gilchrist as Sam, the main character. Gilchrist prides himself in playing unusual and challenging roles, portraying a teen in a psychiatric ward in It’s Kind of a Funny Story and the son of a woman with multiple personality disorder in United States of Tara, and for good reason. Playing a character on the spectrum means he will have to realistically feel overwhelming emotion and respond to social cues in an abnormal fashion, both of which take practice and focus. Gilchrist put much heart and devotion into his character, taking great care to maintain communication with the audience about what is going on in Sam’s head.

Bad acting made some of the characters dislikeable, but, for the most part, there were no antagonists that ruined the fun and warm environment of the show. That is not to say that the show was boring in anyway— rather that the family and friends were humans with flaws, and that was apparent throughout the season.

All in all, it was an entertaining show that could make one question their previous beliefs about how an atypical family might appear, leaving one guessing which path the storyline would take. The protagonists were amusing and casted well, while the acting left a little to be desired, overall, Rashid and the crew did a wonderful job. While I hope Season 2 brings more talent, I would highly recommend taking the time to watch the first season of Atypical. If anything, you will undoubtedly get a good laugh and explore an important conversation.
When Football Gets Political

By Molly Meisels

I don’t know much about football. If you asked me to discuss the differences between Tom Brady and Eli Manning, I would struggle to find the right answer (unless, of course, you were clutching a deflated football.) I’ve never paid much attention to this aspect of an all-American world, full of team pride and fantasy football leagues. But, when Colin Kaepernick took a knee during the national anthem back in August of 2016, football had my full attention.

Here was a famed athlete, kneeling during the national anthem to protest racial inequality. He had everything to lose when he made that move, and he must’ve known it. One cannot comment on race in this country without a considerable amount of backlash. When asked for comment, Kaepernick said, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people and people of color." That statement was bold, and it resonated. Across the country, people were divided on this statement about America’s racial oppression. With today’s proved that he is interested in being more than a body. He

Trump didn’t end his attacks in Alabama. He went on a Twitter tirade (and continues to go on one) demanding that fans boycott the NFL, that the NFL set rules prohibiting ‘taking the knee’, and promising that this issue has nothing to do with race. But it does. It has everything to do with race. The protest started due to race, and Trump is berating the protesters due to race.

After the comments made by Trump, NFL players across the country began ‘taking the knee’ during the national anthem. Entire teams, coaches started kneeling together and locking arms in solidarity. Players who were afraid to join Kaepernick’s demonstration before jumped at the chance to do so now. When the President attacks the right to a peaceful protest, the game changes. It doesn’t matter if all those kneeling agree with the premise of the original protest. What they do agree on is that all Americans, whoever they may be, have the right to protest our government and our system. As a broader issue, it seems like many Americans don’t want black Americans to protest oppression at all. Many have the right to protest our government and our system. It has everything to do with race. But it does. It has infinitely larger than themselves. They are symbols of hope and democracy, not only to white Americans who are content in this country, but to the black Americans who feel systematically oppressed. They have every right to protest the anthem, because this democracy has given them that right. The women and men who fought for this country have granted them that freedom. When we were gifted “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” it wasn’t accompanied by a disclaimer saying: unless it’s Sunday football, in that case just shut up and play. Sports will remain political as long as it is a viable platform for players to voice vital opinions. It is their right, and not Trump, nor anyone else can take that right away from them.

Fast forward to the present day. Kaepernick can’t get signed to a team. He is too controversial. He stands for something. No owner would risk hiring a player who has a political agenda and upset much of their fanbase. Many NFL owners want nothing more than to keep the football fan base away. Apparently, though, what will keep them away is a man standing up for his value system without hurting anyone in the process. I guess this is indicative of the priorities of the NFL and America at large.

As Kaepernick’s ‘knee’ was becoming increasingly politized, it was only a matter of time before President Trump chimed in on the issue. President Trump criticized Kaepernick and others like him at a speech in Alabama, saying, "Wouldn’t you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, ‘Get that son of a b** off the field right now. Out! He’s fired. He’s fired!’”

He then went on to complain about the rule changes in the NFL, making the games less violent, and attributed this to the dip in football game ratings.

Trump didn’t end his attacks in Alabama. He went on a Twitter tirade (and continues to go on one) demanding that fans boycott the NFL, that the NFL set rules prohibiting ‘taking the knee’, and promising that this issue has nothing to do with race. But it does. It has everything to do with race. The protest started due to race, and Trump is berating the protesters due to race.

So where should black Americans protest? If they can’t make a commotion and they can’t kneel, what would those against Kaepernick’s protest like them to do? The answer is nothing. Many Americans don’t want black activists to protest the flag or the country at all. They see this country as a beacon of freedom and hope that has protected and served all who dwell here for centuries, and they are offended that anyone would believe otherwise. However, for many, this is not the case. African-Americans have fought for centuries to obtain equal rights in this nation. They have fought for economic and cultural equality, and the right to be treated humanely by our police forces.

It isn’t up to white Americans to say that they’re in the wrong, and that America has given them all the opportunity in the world, because we don’t know what another’s persecution looks like. If they are pleading with us, we need to listen. But many refuse to. Many refuse to listen when protesters make a racket, and many berate the protesters who take a stand silently and peacefully. It is a reenactment of the Civil Rights Era. Malcolm X was viewed as a danger and a threat to the equality of black individuals. Work within the system, they said. So, that’s precisely what Martin Luther King Jr. did. He worked in the system and protested peacefully, yet was still met with the same backlash. The problem isn’t the method of protest, the problem is with us.

We’ve shoved African-American protesters out of every arena. We’ve refused to listen to their cries for help and their rallying for change. So, for them, the only means of protest left was kneeling during the national anthem at a football game. Fans were livid, how dare these athletes politicize football? Get your issues and your values out of sports. Find another space to hold a demonstration.

But there isn’t any. This is it. Football isn’t a safe space anymore, lacking all politics and social justice, solely because many Americans don’t have the tolerance to listen to the pleas of the persecuted.

The players on the field, protesting, have been entertaining Americans for decades. They work for years, perfectioning their skills so that we can have those Sundays, with a game and beer, that we love so much. It’s our job to listen. It’s our job to realize that the national anthem and the American flag are symbols, representing something infinitely larger than themselves. They are symbols of hope and democracy, not only to white Americans who are content in this country, but to the black Americans who feel systematically oppressed. They have every right to protest the anthem, because this democracy has given them that right. The women and men who fought for this country have granted them that freedom. When we were gifted “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” it wasn’t accompanied by a disclaimer saying: unless it’s Sunday football, in that case just shut up and play. Sports will remain political as long as it is a viable platform for players to voice vital opinions. It is their right, and not Trump, nor anyone else can take that right away from them.


By Nolan Edmonson and the Board of the College Republicans

After failing to repeal Obamacare, Republican lawmakers in Washington turned their sights to tackling an equally daunting task: tax reform. Last month the Republican leadership released a tax reform framework much to the excitement of the Trump administration. The one question that seems to have dominated the conversation around the Republican tax plan is whether or not middle-class Americans will wind up taking on a lion’s share of the tax burden that would come from reform.

As usual, Republicans cannot seem to agree on what their tax plan is. The specifics of the plan are set to remain unspecified. This seemingly bodes well for many lower-middle-class Americans as it allows for them to increase their deductions and provides a much-needed tax credit to households with dependent children. At the same time, however, the Republican plan calls for an elimination of personal exemptions which no doubt will raise the tax bill of the average taxpayer. If the GOP does not wish to raise taxes on the middle class, they will need to find a way to offset that through very scrupulous in the income thresholds they attach to the newly proposed tax brackets.

Beyond the question of whether taxes will increase for the middle class, it should also be asked what impacts a Republican tax plan would have on the growth and vitality of the economy.

Who Really Wins from Cutting Corporate Taxes?

A common talking point on the Left is the flawed notion that Republicans seek to cut corporate tax rates so as to line the pockets of the richest Americans. This claim ignores unspecified amount. This seemingly bodes well for many lower-middle-class Americans as it allows for them to increase their deductions and provides a much-needed tax credit to households with dependent children. At the same time, however, the Republican plan calls for an elimination of personal exemptions which no doubt will raise the tax bill of the average taxpayer. If the GOP does not wish to raise taxes on the middle class, they will need to find a way to offset that through very scrupulous in the income thresholds they attach to the newly proposed tax brackets.

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Getting the To the Heart of the Issue

President Eisenhower once said, “reduction of taxes is a very necessary objective of government.” We all accept that if our form of economy is to continue to succeed, it is necessary to incentivize and initiative and the production that comes from it.” His warning is as true now as it was when he gave it in 1953. The strength of our economy is determined in part by how our government tackles issues of tax reform. Perhaps more importantly, though, our economy is strengthened by how much value our policy makers give to private incentives. In valuing these incentives, Washington sends a very clear message to the middle class: the growth of your wages and the relief of your tax burden matters.

The details of this reform, or the lack thereof, leaves plenty to be desired. That can prove to be a blessing or a curse. The plan could include provisions that would even attract the support of some Democrats who have felt the sting of being in higher tax brackets. Senators Manchin (D-WV), Heitkamp (D-ND) and McCaskill (D-MO) have all agreed to engage in talks with prominent Republican senators about how best to move forward with reforms. Paul Ryan has worked diligently to unite the party behind sound and responsible reforms and remains committed to the idea that legislation can be passed by the November recess. Sound and responsible tax reform—the opportunities it creates, the wages it increases and the burdens it lifts—has always been and continues to be a moral imperative. We cannot afford to see it any other way.

Returning Home

Thank G-d, America is a country that is comfortable for Jews to live in. Life is easy in America; the land, culture, and lifestyle is comfortable for us. America is what we have become used to. However, we must remember that it is our permanent home. Am Yisrael’s place is in Eretz Yisrael. The Maharal explains in Neitzach that the relationship between Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael is much deeper than just a safe haven for an oppressed people. Rather, Rav Kook explains, Am Yisrael has a deep inner connection with Eretz Yisrael, one that is beyond rational comprehension (Eretz Yisrael chapter 1). Yet we have become so used to the galut, to the point that there are still millions of Jews living outside of Eretz Yisrael in a time when Eretz Yisrael is so easily accessible to us. We have forgotten what it is like to be home. We have forgotten our roots. We have forgotten ourselves.

Since the destruction of the second Beit Hamikdash more than 1,947 years ago, which marked the beginning of the final galut, we have continued to beg Hashem “shevuch nes lihakbez geytona bekhefnu gechalk ma’arba kardin karfot haaretz” (raise the banner to gather our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth) every single weekend, three times a day. And we have longed for our own eyes that slowly but surely, Jews from around the entire world are returning to Eretz Yisrael. Klitseh Galuyot is happening before our very eyes! After more than 2,000 years of not having control of our own land, Hashem has given us the chance to return. We must try to open our eyes and see how amazing it is to be living in this time period in history! As Rav Soloveitchik harshly states in Kol Dodi Dofek (p. 24), “Woe unto the beneficiary of a miracle who does not recognize it for what it is, and whose ear is deaf to the echo of the imperative that arises out of this moment and real event. We must try to open our eyes and realize that we are living through ne’uchah (prophecy). The Gemara in Sanhedrin (98a) tells us that the tell tale sign that the geula (redemption) is near is when Eretz Yisrael begins to sprout again from its state of desolation (in the Gemara’s words: “Ain licha keitz megula mi’zeh, shene’emar vi’atem harei yisrael anipchim titnu ufufichem titu li ami yisrael ki keivru lavo”) (see Rashba ibid.). We can see with our own eyes how the Land of Israel has sprouted, how a land which has been barren, has been reborn, and is now bursting with vegetation and greenery. If we take a look at the history of the State of Israel over the past 60-plus years, if we pay attention to the details of its creation, of its wars and of its progress, we will be able to see clearly the Yad Hashem, the hand of G-d. To Me, it is so clear that we are living through the beginning of the geula process. Ain licha keitz megu’a mi’zeh (there is no more of an explicit manifestation of the end of days than this) (Sanhedrin ibid.).

Perhaps the reason we are still in America is because we feel that we have some important role here to help Am Yisrael. Even if we are not able to return home to Eretz Yisrael for valid reasons, do we have the desire to? Do we have the desire to try? Galut is a reality we pray three times a day, “bashanotcha kivnu kol hayom” (we hope for Your salvation all day long)? Will we be able to answer “Yes” when we reach shamayim (Heaven) and we are asked, “Tziputa Lishahuw?” “Did you yearn for the salvation?” (see Gemara Shabbat 31a). Do we truly want to return to Eretz Yisrael? Or, is it possible that we have forgotten Yerushalayim?....
Let Football Be Football

By Yosef Friedlander

"Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, say, 'Get that son of a b**ch of the field right now, out, he's fired!'? "These are the words of President Donald Trump regarding the recent escalation of football players protesting the national anthem and the red, white, and blue flag of the United States.

When one thinks of the National Football League of America, thoughts of grown men grimly giving up their bodies in bone-crushing hits, breathtaking displays of athleticism, and adrenaline pumping action come to mind. Well, those are the thoughts that used to be conjured up.

Nowadays, instead of discussing whether or not the Kansas City Chiefs are finally a team to be taken seriously, people are ranting about President Trump and the complete and utter lack of respect for the national anthem, the flag, and everything the United States stands for. Things that should never even be remotely correlated with the most popular sport in America.

The flag protest spiraled from one which had meaning to a petty bout of immaturity between players in the NFL and President Trump. Trump makes a comment and more players take a knee. Trump retaliates with additional childish tweets and teams stoke the fire by skipping the anthem completely. These protests are beginning to resemble a playground squabble more than anything else.

How did this entire fiasco begin in the first place? On August 14th, 2016, Colin Kaepernick of the San Francisco 49ers sat for the national anthem during a preseason game to protest what he considered racism in America. Kaepernick’s movement spread throughout the league like a wildfire on a dry savanna; more and more players linked arms or knelt as the national anthem played to prove their protest to a petty bout of immaturity between players in the NFL and President Trump. Trump makes a comment and more players take a knee. Trump retaliates with additional

"MEN AND WOMEN DIED FOR THE FLAG OF OUR COUNTRY; SURELY PLAYERS AND COACHES CAN FIND A BETTER MEANS OF CREATING CHANGE THAN BY DISRESPECTING THE HEART AND SOUL OF AMERICA."

Kaepernick told NFL Media in an exclusive interview on their website. "To me, this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way." The entire protest should’ve stopped after these words were uttered. Kaepernick said it himself: “This is bigger than football.” For this reason, why bring politics into the sport at all?

NFL players are among the highest regarded athletes, wielding influence as well as high levels of cash. Just look at J.J. Watt of the Texans who raised $37,098,248.00 for Hurricane Harvey relief. Men and women died for the flag of our country; surely players and coaches can find a better means of creating change than by disrespecting the heart and soul of America.

Many have appeared to jump on the Trump bandwagon when somebody disrespects our flag, say, ‘Get that son of a b**ch of the field right now, out, he’s fired!’? These are the words of President Donald Trump regarding the recent escalation of football players protesting the national anthem and the red, white, and blue flag of the United States.

By Yosef Friedlander

It is definitely not an easy leap to leave a place that is so comfortable and so familiar to a land that has a different culture and language. It is extraordinarily difficult to leave family, friends, and everything else that we are used to. The Gemara (Berachot 5a) states that Eretz Yisrael is one of the three “matanot tovot” (precious gifts) that Hashem gave to Am Yisrael, all of which are acquired only through suffering. We must, however, try to internalize and understand that Eretz Yisrael is a “matana tova,” a precious gift, that is worth acquiring. It is time to return to the land that Hashem gave to us, to Am Yisrael. It is time to return home.

May we all merit to see the complete fulfillment of Yirmiyahu’s nesvuh (31:17) of “Vishavu banim ligeula” (and the children will return to their borders), and to see the completion of the geula and the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash.
Happy Death Day: Cheap Thrills at Best

By Benjamin Koslowe

True, Happy Death Day is narratively nonsensical. True, the acting is subpar, the dialogue is weak, the conflicts are not compelling, and even the scant romance is tacky. But the real flaw in this recent Hollywood slasher film is that it fails even at what it sets out to achieve – to be scary.

Not that Happy Death Day exactly aimed for the Oscars or sophisticated critical acclaim. The $5 million budget film follows college student Tree Gelbman who is a mean person and – well, that's pretty much her only significant feature. Following the shtick of Groundhog Day, the film has Tree trapped in a world in which she wakes up every morning on the same October 18th, as if her own personal "yesterday" that she lived through never really happened. The Halloween-style twist, à la the 1996 Scream, is that a masked psychopath stabs Tree to death at the end of every day in this Kafkaesque predicament.

Happy Death Day's rising action revolves around Tree's attempt to identify her murderer and to live one day where she successfully shirks pointy weapons of death. Along the way she learns that being nice is good, reconsiders her fraught Daddy relationship in around five sentences of conversation, and falls in love with some random bro who picked her up at a frat party the night before.

If the film sounds stupid, it's because it objectively is such. But the film at least excels in scaring the bejesus out of viewers, right?

Not right. And here's why: The notion of an insane person murdering you in a dark alley is horrifying, but completely unrealistic. Jump-scares in a dark theater might engender heart thumping or even a small shriek, but the fear, like a sneeze, dissipates quickly and leaves little impression on anyone's consciousness. And that's really all that Happy Death Day has going for it. The content of the film belongs to the same set as shark attacks, zombie apocalypses, or evil spirits: scary prospects to be sure, but too ridiculously absurd to merit enduring anxiety.

Surely the creators of Happy Death Day don't deserve too much slack. After all, the success of similar scary movies like Friday the 13th or When a Stranger Calls suggests that there is some market for the genre. Perhaps there is a sufficient amount of young couples looking for an amusing, cheap, mildly thrilling date night to fill enough theater seats and help studios earn back their small budgets.

But it is important to realize that these films are the muck of horror stories. Putting aside cut-rate psychopath slashers, there is good storytelling to be found in this realm.

In the Saw film series, victims of the eponymous Jigsaw Killer are forced into gruesome torture apparatuses that relate to the characters' personality flaws and basic fears. While there is a personified villain, the real horror of the films derives from relating to characters forced to combat their own evils. This truer type of horror strikes a deeper chord whose relatable echo lingers in vulnerable viewers long after the credits finish rolling.

Stephen King, the undisputed master of horror fiction, likewise skillfully taps into real, natural fear in his many novels. While his heroes (and antiheroes) often face supernatural enemies, the monster is never just some unconnected psychopath, but is rather always somehow symbolic of deep qualities or traits within the characters. Jack Torrance in King's The Shining faces some spooky stuff in the haunted Overlook Hotel, but the horrors all in some way or another represent the very real and stronger demons – which are, unfortunately, all too common in the lives of many readers – that are his temper and alcoholism.

The shapeshifting clown in It (subject of a recent good film adaptation) never sneaks up from behind with a bloody knife, but rather embodies different forms that touch on the protagonist children's deepest insecurities. It is scary because, after all, who can't relate to the terrors involved in growing up?

And to finish off the logical extension, consider horror stories completely devoid of psychopaths or supernatural monsters. In King's Apt Pupil, a perfectly normal high school boy rapidly descends into the depths of moral abhorrence after befriending an elderly ex-Nazi in his community. The novella is not only compelling, but also extremely scary. The only "monster," as it were, is the evil within the fabrics of the human condition. What if I were in the protagonist's shoes? the reader asks, Would I too become like that?

Readers and viewers hold onto fearful stories, and society makes them endure, when they are relatable. Happy Death Day, failing to do so, will most definitely be forgotten.

1/5 Stars. 0 Screams.
Don’t Let Them Fool You: How Israel Lost Her Soul or False Promises of the Promised Land

By Aryeh Schonbrun

A little over a year ago, I boarded an El Al flight to Israel and began the ugly process of immigration. Immigration does not generally confer feelings of homecoming and acceptance. Immigrants worldwide and from time immemorial have needed to undertake the difficult task of re-accloration, absorption and assimilation. My case, while still in its relative infancy, has not differed from the myriads of similarly afflicted men who have set out for a new land. I have suffered over the past few months, straining to adjust to a strange new place, and while I persevere, I uneasily await what the future may bring.

Before I continue, I wish to begin with a disclaimer. I do not harbor ill will towards the subjects of this essay. I do not feel as if I have been conned or forced into making a decision that has jeopardized my current state of mind and future prospects. I undertook this mission with nearly full consciousness of the ensuing consequences, and I have only myself to blame for it. However, I would be amiss, if not myself an accessory, if I were to sit silently and suffer. I feel that, as well as writing this might bring me closure, it may help others understand the situation. To that end, I invite you to hear what I have learned of Israeli society in my encounters with it and attempt to understand what I now deal with daily. I do not ask for your sympathy, just for your discerning ear.

Since its inception, Israel has defined itself primarily as a Jewish-centric country. There does not exist any constitutional basis for considering Israel as chiefly a Jewish state, though some of its laws do prove conducive to yiddishkeit. The Law of Return, for instance, guarantees the right of any Jewish individual (including myself), anywhere in the world, to immigrate freely and gain automatic citizenship. The Government, regardless of governmental authority, still retains [largely] ceremonial control over the marriage registry, controls the kashruth and rabbinic certification in Israel and still forbids most Israelis from travelling on public transit on the Sabbath. Most Israelis continue to feel a connection to traditional Judaism, to the ritual, religious and spiritual aspects, and the general public does seem to endearingly cling to some of our traditional practices and beliefs. Circumcision remains widespread, resisting the onslaught of the neo-Hellemism that now sweeps through the West, and people tend to be down to Earth and value-driven. Compared to the West, many indicators still signal that Israel has remained vital and healthy (low mental illness and high fertility rates continue to surprise experienced anthropologists), a functioning society, that considering the challenges it must face, appears to succeed against the odds. Israel’s economy grows slowly but steadily, having recovered from the shocks of conflict, and the Israeli population has known no quieter times. Terror still retains the right of any Jewish individual (including myself), nor the naqsa, nor the continued occupation of the West Bank. Israel has painfully learned that nothing can be done. Failure after failure to reach a compromise, to assure our guilt, to encourage coexistence with our gentle neighbors, have led to more bloodshed and a loss of our faith in ourselves and in humanity. One can say much about the ignorance of Oslo. One can ridicule the anti-democratic manner in which it came about, the utter illogical thinking that fostered its promotion and promise, but you can’t argue with the fact that those in favor of trying at least tried.

Michah Goodman, in his book Catch 67, writes that the socialist idealism of the early settlement and state gave way to the pacific fervor of universal peace. The Left became interested in the kibbutznik and his return to the land. The Right, on the other hand, did not bear fruit, and, thus, they have despaired of both utopian dreams. The Israeli Right, as Goodman points out, also suffered setbacks. The Right does not demand all of Trans-Jordan anymore, nor does it demand even the biblical cities of Hebron, Shchem (Nabulus), Bethlehem and Jerusalem. No longer will the right-wing clown politician from the Jewish Home party would argue that it makes sense for Jews to live in Bethlehem, as much as most serious politicians from the Left would not voice their support for a significant engagement. The inability of the Left to gain political/demographic traction in most of the West Bank has made the Right helplessly lost and so too despair. Instead, I propose that the Right has become mainly interested in the failed policies of the Left. As the Left’s support for tax-cuts and austerity, as they have become the most vocal supporters of tax-cuts and austerity. Additionally, the religious revival that plagued society for most of the last generation has largely dissipated, and we witness increasing rates of secularization from within traditionally religious and religious communities. Children leave religion, secular Jews marry non-Jews, cohabitate, practice casually Jewish, and religious tensions, long simmering, have begun to take hold of society. It ranges from the Inquisitorial cries of hadatullah (forced exposure to religious training), to overtly caustic gestures by public institutions (e.g. the IDF) to impose a secular code on society, clearly intended to further inflame the situation, to media-driven witch-hunts on the part of an “enlightened” elite, and the parallel closing-off of religious societies to vast swaths of humanity in order to escape it all (with it the severe economic consequences of failing to educate the youth). As we have seen in America, chaos and dysfunction can only lead to corruption and baseless hatred, and I can bear witness to this breakdown in Israeli society that has now widened and threatens its future.

More concisely, and to paraphrase Shakespeare: Something is rotten in the state of Israel. To be fair, the world in general suffers from lack of stability. In response to Brexit, Trump, Catalonia, Syria, ISIS and on and on, we accustomed ourselves to expect less of humanity, and of ourselves. It should not surprise you, then, that these forces of chaos and destruction have come to infect Israeli society as well. Why should Israel be any different?

In response to this existential confusion, Israelis (and, as you may have noticed, most of the West) have double down: Israel must remain a Jewish state, though a state that accepts all forms of Judaism, all “Jewish” immigrants, never mind their halachic status, and, above all, medinat kol eretz, a pluralistic, universalist state. Out of frustration, and in an attempt at keeping some coherent identity, Israelis as a whole have become less Jewish and more Israeli over the past two generations, and, as a result, have foregone much of what historically made Israel Israeli. A secular Jew may now have more in common with an Israeli gentile than with me! What is Israel without Judea, what is Israel without Judaism? How can I consider myself Israeli if my peers do not? Personally, I do not maintain high expectations for most, but when I observe that an Israeli Jew, overtaken by his inability to identify as a Jew, in fear of reprisal from the gods of pluralism and conformity, condescends and regards me in a xenophobic light as an “other,” it pains me. It drives a wedge between us, and leaves me cold, isolated and lonely. I feel alienated by much of Israeli society, as I have become aware of my differences, and upon encountering the skyscrapers of Tel Aviv or the Bourgeois societies of the Mercurz, I feel a compelling sense of disaffection and anomie. I lack identity and familiarity.

That what happens over there (in the diaspora) to the native-born and foreigners alike, and so I have foregone much of what historically made Israel Israeli. I count myself lucky that I speak Hebrew well, feel comfortable culturally and religiously, and have wonderfully helpful friends, but I also know that I am privileged. Privileged to have actually paid attention in Hebrew class, to have experienced authentic Israeliness in ways most don’t. Privileged to have met people who care about me and help me along, and privileged that my parents have for now decided to support me in my crazy adventure. I also know that most don’t feel comfortable when they come visit. Most don’t even feel comfortable after living here for years. Some think that the army might allow me entrance into Israeli society, but they err. The army would just reinforce what I already know: Israel needs help.

So to my friends still entrenched in the depths of exile, I offer my sympathy. Sometimes I even envy you for having it all. I do not ask for your sympathy, just for your discerning ear.

Monday, October 23, 2017  -  3 Heshvan 5778

Opinions

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If You WILF It, It Should Be No Dream

By Esther Stern

The woman told me that mine would be $21, which was fine. There was a lightness in my knapsack, both tangible and otherwise, a void that my aching shoulders knew could only be filled by the likes of a shus Vitla hachodesh. $21 would buy me a front seat to the Shakhia Vetarya, the give and take of the gemara, and an inside view of our mesorah on each page, pages whose columns could be filled with my own ‘knutra’ scribbles. I also needed one for Rav Kalfin’s shiur and astra tea, joining in, would be difficult in the absence of my own gemara. The investment would surely pay off many fold. This gemara in each page, pages whose columns could be filled with my own knapsack, both tangible and otherwise, a void that my acheless shoulders knew could only be filled by the likes of a Knutra or be tossed out like Beren’s meat leftovers.

And about that she couldn’t have been more right. YU is the real embodiment of Torah U’maddah. It’s not only the tagline, but they practice what they preach, supporting Torah and secular studies. Their motives behind subsidizing gemara Sukkah are clear, meant to inspire others to further develop their place in avodat Hashem, and that’s a big deal. They’ve made it so clear, in fact, that they’ve hung their banner high, in the highest of Heights actually, unreachable to the midtown laymen, so that the entire world should know “Torah U’maddah.” And maybe thats a good thing. People should know that ki mit-YU teizei Torah, that it is from YU that Torah emanates.

I wish that someone would do some cost benefit analysis on those three dollars, cost as in the non-monetary cost. Seeing as there are 57 women registered for advanced and regular Talmud classes on Beren campus, it would take a whopping $171 to prevent the overheating of the Beren students at the expense of their self worth. A campus where although I am a First-Year, has extended outstretched arms to welcome me, and one which I am proud to say that I attend as a third generation SCW student. Yes, my Bubby is very proud of me.

I know that I’m not the only one writing about the need for this kind of change in YU, but behind my spilled ink is the impetus to continue the conversation. I’m not saying it should be shagur b’yfinu, to have a fluency in our mouths, to revolt against the impending peril of patriarchal ideals. But given things go in and out of vogue, it is important that this topic not fly away with the winnowed chaff, mysteriously disappear like the people of Roanoke, or be tossed out like Beren’s meat leftovers.

Are You Crazy?

By Michelle Naim

I think I’ve been called crazy approximately 43 times in the last two years. Let me explain. See, I come from a Middle Eastern background. For those that don’t know the connotations of this, imagine My Big Fat Greek Wedding on steroids.

My father left Iran when he was thirteen and started high school in New York, and my mother left Iran when she was eighteen years old to live with her aunt, uncle, and cousins in Sunnyvale, California. Like most Persian families, I was brought up with traditional Jewish values such as a love for Israel and being with family during prominent holidays such as Passover and Rosh Hashana. I went to Jewish school because my parents valued Jewish education. However, when it came to observing Judaism in my home, my father worked on the Shabbat and we drove to my grandmother’s house for Shabbat dinner.

So of course, when I told my parents I wanted to spend a year in Israel with the rest of my classmates, one can imagine that it didn’t go over so well. Many of my Persian counterparts were moving on to four-year universities or community college so my idea of where I’d be spending the year after twelfth grade wasn’t the norm to my parent’s standards, to say the least.

Before I decided to take the step to go to Israel, though, I asked myself if this was really worth it. Do I really want this, and more importantly, why do I want this? And although I was (and still am) too proud to admit it, I knew exactly why I wanted to go so badly.

I confess that even after ten years of Jewish education, I still didn’t get it. I was in all the higher-track Torah studies classes and I could open up a Chumash or Navi and intellectually understand Rashi, but I couldn’t answer bigger and more fundamental questions such as: Why Judaism? Why is this important to me? Is this even true? Can I even prove that God exists? If I was Christian, Muslim, or Hindu would I still believe as strongly as I did in my religion? Do I only take it as truth because it is the only truth I have ever known? I had all this education under my belt and yet I could not answer these basic questions. If I met an atheist on campus could I defend or have a rational argument about my beliefs? Could I have an honest conversation about my faith with Jews and non-Jews alike?

I pleaded and fought to go to Israel for months- it was not a given for me like most Jewish day-school graduates. After many “tea meetings,” which I organized approximately three times a week to speak to my parents, I also brought one of my greatest influencers to the table. One of the many ways I tried to convince my parents was by asking my Rav, Rabbi Lieberman, to speak to my parents. Once Rabbi Lieberman, a trusted Rav in my high school community and one of the many reasons I am who I am today spoke to my parents, they began to open their minds to the possibility that their only daughter might spend the next year of her life in the Land of Israel.

In the fall of 2015-2016, I attended Sha’alim for Women, and I think I can call it one of the best experiences of my life. I made life altering and long lasting relationships with some of the greatest minds in Torah, and I was introduced to teachings of Rav Soloveitchik, Rav Lichtenstein, Rabbi Lamm, and Rav Kook. I made a siyum on Sefer Hukkatur, one of the most important Jewish philosophical works, and began observing new halachot after reading Halachic Mix. Despite the attacks in Israel and the numerous calls from my sobbing grandmother begging me to return to Los Angeles, I refused and finished my learning in good health.

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The End of the Movie Industry?

By Sarah Torqueman

When was the last time you took a trip to the movie theater? People are less interested about going to the movies than they have been before. As a result, movie theaters across North America are experiencing significant declines as the film industry is being forced to revolutionize itself. The domestic box office has seen lousy returns this summer, indicating the dire need for Hollywood to take action. According to the media measurement company comScore, North American box office revenues were down more than 14% this summer compared to last year. For the first time since 2006, movie ticket revenue during the summer failed to top the expected annual $4 billion, according to Box Office Mojo. This slowing movie market has resulted in consequences across Wall Street, as well. Forthcoming technology newsletter reported that stock prices for America’s top three movie theater chains have plummeted by the end of summer 2017. It indicated that AMC Entertainment’s stock dropped by almost 56%, Regal Entertainment dropped by 35%, and Cinemark dropped by almost 23% since the start of Hollywood’s summer season, which spans from the first Friday in May through Labor Day weekend. Further, the IMAX company has plummeted nearly 40% over the same period of time. This summer’s box office disappointments substantiate the growing trend of fewer people buying movie tickets or going to movie theaters. To compensate for low movie ticket sales, movie theaters have hiked up ticket prices, which has increased ticket price substantially the growing trend of fewer people buying movie tickets or going to movie theaters. To compensate for low movie ticket sales, movie theaters have hiked up ticket prices, which has increased ticket price substantially.

The film industry has contributed significantly to the overall United States economy. According to the Motion Picture Association of America, the industry contributed $131 billion in sales to the overall U.S. economy in 2015. Moreover, its research pointed out that as an American dominated industry, film and television production has been one of America’s most powerful exports, with nearly $18 billion in worldwide exports in 2015. These figures represent sales generated by various distribution channels for film and television. They include box office sales, which continue to diminish over time.

Modern film has been revolutionized while movie theaters maintain their traditional movie model. In the past, films would open in theaters for a few weeks, then they would be distributed as VCR tapes or DVDs, and later they would be exported for international showings. In the instance that the movie would evolve into a media franchise, producers would release additional movies such as prequels, sequels, or reboots and those would undergo the same process as the traditional model. This was the single most popular movie distribution channel as of about a decade ago. This movie paradigm is characterized by distinct steps and movie theaters haven’t budged from it. Media technology has and continues to develop in the new digital age and has changed movie distribution tremendously. Movies began bypassing theaters altogether as producers released their films directly to television outlets like Video On-Demand. Most notably, movie producers have been distributing films to the streaming service, Netflix, where consumers view movies and television series through the application on a subscription basis, as well as to other streaming services such as Hulu. Streaming services have replaced the almost extinct DVD’s that used to be a mode of distribution after a film’s theater debut. Producers have bypassed movie theaters, showcasing their films directly on streaming services, too. Additionally, Netflix has produced its own media for its subscribers. It aims to have its forty feature films lined up for release by the end of this year.

“The Domestic Box Office Has Seen Lousy Returns This Summer, Indicating the Dire Need for Hollywood to Take Action.”

The new age of media technology has created substitutions for film distribution and diminished the relevance of movie theaters. By competing in the crowded media marketplace with Netflix and other digital entertainment options, a movie at the movie theater doesn’t seem as attractive anymore. While movie theater chains try to compensate for declining sales by raising ticket prices, streaming services have expanded their market share by providing more cost-effective options. For example, according to the Motion Picture Association of America, the average adult movie ticket at the AMC Entertainment chain is almost $14, while the monthly subscription fee for Netflix’s “Standard” plan is about $10 with unlimited access to Netflix’s digital media selection of movies and television shows.

The steps within traditional movie distribution have also changed due to piracy. Illegal distribution of recently released films has aggravated declining box office revenues. When a movie is pirated, it is copied and distributed illegally and people almost everywhere have access to viewing, usually for a fraction of the price or even for free when uploaded online. The traditional method of showcasing a movie in theaters and only then moving to other distribution channels hurts the movie. Instead, shortening the film’s transition time between its showing in theaters and its showing through other distribution outlets may generate more sales for the film and diminish piracy benefits, according to Vulture Entertainment News. Another way the film industry has been revolutionized is the availability of equipment today. It’s cheaper and easier to produce and shoot a standard film today. What used to require tens of thousands of dollars to purchase movie equipment about 10 or 20 years ago is now only a few thousand dollars to produce a quality film ready for the big screen. These films tend to be distributed directly to streaming services, while bigger film production companies such as Sony Pictures and Warner Bros. maintain agreements with theaters.

Digital media distribution makes it easier to distribute and switch films at almost no cost. Producers used to ship physical copies of their movies to the box offices. However, that is not the case today. Films are sent through a click of a button. This allows for flexibility with substituting relatively unsuccessful movies with successful ones based on revenues generated by the film. Streaming services change their selection of films relatively often, while movie theaters have been sticking to outdated distribution methods, continuing to showcase films that appear to be unsuccessful on opening weekends. Globally recognized for his extensive research on the film industry, Professor Abraham Ravid, Sy Syms School of Business’s Chair of the Finance Department, provides insight:

“In principle, I think that they could and should change this [the traditional film model] and do a much more dynamic flow of films. If I open a new film and no one comes to see it, I should be able to close it the same day and if I see people want to see another movie, I should be able to just close another and show this one, instead. This is a revolution that hasn’t happened yet and the main reason is because of the agreements between theaters and studios that haven’t been revamped the way they should be.”

While modern entertainment channels have been continuously emerging, they open the door to uncertainty. Producing a film has become increasingly difficult with these new distribution channels, especially streaming services. Due to the fact that streaming services are relatively new to the movie industry and some don’t have a sufficient infrastructure yet, producers aren’t certain of the projected income for their films that are distributed via streaming services. The uncertainty from streaming services has made estimating revenues unreliable, which has in-turn made financing and budgeting films difficult tasks as well. Additionally, since many of the production companies are publicly-owned, the increased uncertainty has affected how public market investors view their prospects.

While box office ticket sales were significantly slow this summer, the film industry has been undergoing much change throughout. This has required Hollywood and movie theater chains to adapt and remodel their distribution structures in reaction to the ever expanding world of digital media technology. If these efforts are successfully implemented, the movie business may experience a comeback and regain its stature as an important business and cultural industry within America.

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Surging NYC Market Becomes Biotech Hub

By Nathan Feifel

New York City, the nation’s most populous metropolis, is in the process of undergoing a biotechnology renaissance, and is quickly making a name for itself as a hub for the future development of the life sciences field.

Just last year, the city generated over $139 billion dollars from biotechnology companies that are situated within the city. Historically, New York City’s biotechnology presence has taken a backseat to many other U.S. regions, namely the Bay Area and Greater Boston. However, the Empire State’s emergence in the biotech playing field has been up and coming for many years, and now it is finally in competition with the other industry mainstays that have received most of the national recognition until this point.

New York City might be a little late to the scene, but it has slowly developed into a location that boasts one of the most thriving venues for creating breakthrough products and technologies that combat the world’s diseases. Like any industry hub or cluster of a specific discipline, decades are necessary to build up a legitimate market that is able to compete with the predominant industry hubs already in existence. While the growth of the biotechnology industry sped up in the mid 1970s and 1980s, New York City didn’t really establish its footing until the past couple decades, largely due to a lack of state and city funding, in addition to the limited affordable lab space the city had to offer. Though these issues still exist to some extent, both the state and city have come a long way in providing better funding and more accessible workspaces, ultimately lending to the birth of the latest lab space the city had to offer.

Two recent life science investments have aided the growth of New York City’s biotechnology sector. At the end of 2016, Governor Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio joined together to commit over $1 billion to advance the biotechnology businesses and medical technology in the Big Apple. Their joint effort was expected to attract new biotech firms, and has gone on to create a world class innovative complex that specializes in building facilities for technology and science companies, which and currently provides workspace for many pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms.

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"We welcome to Milwaukee" is not among the phrases a person would like to hear on an airplane—assuming you intended destination had been LaGuardia. But this and a variety of other amusing one-liners and pleasantries are frequently offered by the spirited and upbeat flight attendants on Southwest Airlines.

The Dallas-based company and its friendly staff have consistently ranked amongst the highest in customer satisfaction—which is far from a given in the airline industry—and has grown into the 4th largest airline in the U.S., servicing 100 million fliers a year. The secret to its success appears to be an employee-focused philosophy stressing that happy workers leads to happy customers. As the airline industry works to improve its customer experience, it is worth while to consider some of the company policies that have contributed to Southwest’s success in this regard.

What exactly motivates a SW flight attendant to be “happier” or more “upbeat” than other airlines’ workers? One might be tempted to suggest economic factors; that wage and employee-attitude are sufficiently correlated and thus, Southwest provides their employees with greater incentives for stronger performance. Indeed, according to data found on “Glassdoor,” a website that provides salary information for various firms, Southwest does seem to offer the highest hourly wage for flight attendants compared to American, Delta, and United Airlines ($34, $31, $30, respectively). However, lacking more comprehensive income and benefits data, it is impossible to say that a higher wage-gap cited by Glassdoor is not closed in the form of other employee benefits like vacations or bonuses provided by other airlines. Further, if customer satisfaction and employee-attitude were only a function of salary, it is difficult to imagine how a lower-cost operator like Southwest is able to rival far more expensive companies like Delta and United who could seemingly shell out the extra dollars for stronger employee morale.

Instead, it is Southwest’s commitment to hiring the right people, valuing their ideas, and instilling a sense of appreciation within its workers that most strongly contributes to its employee performance and by extension, customer satisfaction.

It would be too ambitious to argue that the “bags fly free” airline somehow makes its flight attendants into compassionate comedians, but they still deserve recognition for recruiting such a crowd. According to Julie Weber, a Southwest Executive Vice President, “we talk about hiring not for skills but three attributes: a warrior spirit (that is, a desire to succeed, act with courage, persevere and innovate); a servant’s heart (the ability to put others first, treat everyone with respect and proactively serve those in need); and an aversion to taking oneself too seriously.” For the 50-year-old airline, an employee’s personality is often worth more than a resume or technical knowledge. Due to Southwest’s commitment to hiring such individuals, it is not surprising that passengers still find a way to smile a long delay or a lack of overhead space.

However, a group as exceptional as this deserves to feel like they are valued, appreciated, and acknowledged and valued at their job. For example, in redesigning its company uniform, the airline did not seek suggestions from an outside firm or even from members within the boardroom. Instead, all 40,000 employees were asked to submit a drawing of their/her idea. Later, each of them voted on their favorite ideas. The airline then selected the most popular designs and commissioned local artists to create the new uniforms.

"FLYING HIGH: CHECKING-IN WITH SOUTHWEST’S SECRET"
designs and their artists—comprised of pilots, technicians, flight attendants, and crew—sat down to produce the new uniform.

By promoting this culture in which all of its employees feel respected and valued, Southwest ensures that its workers are happy and motivated to stand out. The effects echo throughout the entire corporation: If the servicemen sense that they are appreciated, then naturally they will work as efficiently as possible and with maximum effort, in order to ensure the flight can take off on time. The same reasoning holds true for the custodians, operators, pilots and staff. And while it is the flight attendants who are ultimately remembered for their wisecracks and compassion, their attitude can—at least somewhat—be attributed to the benefits of a clean and functional aircraft provided by other employees. The company values each of its many “links” and the end result is a flight full of passengers who in turn, feel valued.

Finally, in line with the southern values from which the company draws as its core principles, the company always remembers to say “Thank you” to its workers. The 50 year-old company has remained committed to job security and according to CNBC has never issued a pay-cut. In addition, SW has always structured its finances to allow for its employees to take part in the company’s profits. This past year, that number amounted to $586 million, or an average of a 12.6% pay increase per-employee. The company culture seeks to impart on its employees that each of them are vital to the team’s success and this philosophy encourages them to always play their best.

There is evidence that other airlines in the industry are seeking to adopt Southwest’s commitment to customer satisfaction. For too long, fliers have rightfully complained about delayed flights, irritable personnel, and luggage weight limits and its possible that these grievances have finally met the ears of those in the boardroom. A 2016 study conducted by Wichita State University and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University found that the likelihood of lost baggage or a delayed flight has dropped along with the quantity of customer complaints and that these improvements have contributed to higher customer satisfaction (It is worth noting that Southwest receives the lowest number of customer complaints among the major airlines). Dean Headley, the co-author of the report, writes “People don’t look at numbers. They just care about what happened to them.” In other words, the staff, gate check workers, and flight attendants all contribute to the actual flight experience which could determine if a flier chooses a specific airline. It seems to be the case that a passenger’s experience is inextricably linked to the behavior and actions of the employees on board.

In an economy that has been wholly transformed by automation, the airline industry remains one of the few that is still very much dependent on quality, face-to-face, employee-customer relations like those of Southwest. And while some airlines have taken steps to improve their flier experience, there is still a long way to go. If airlines want to ensure that their clients are satisfied, they ought to implement—or build upon—a system that encourages the highest degree of employee performance. Attention Airlines: Southwest’s philosophy is ready for take-off.

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