

Palette

Painting the news one stroke at a time



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Our Mission

Palette, the student magazine of Atlanta Jewish Academy High School, provides a platform for High Schoolers to express themselves through writing.

Palette is dedicated to reporting on the stories that matter to the High School community and the Atlanta Jewish community more broadly. *Palette* is a reflection of the values of the student of AJA High School.



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Check out our live-updating *Palette* website at palette.atljewishacademy.org, where we post articles as soon as they are completed — weeks and sometimes months before they appear in print. You will find stories about time-sensitive topics while they are most relevant as well as the rest of our content. We encourage you to make our website your #1 source for AJA news!

Palette invites readers to send a Letter to the Editor to voice their opinion on any issue regarding *Palette*. Please note that the *Palette* Editorial Board reserves the right not to publish letters, as well as edit them for length and clarity. You have the option to remain anonymous, although signed letters are preferred. Please limit your letter to under 500 words, and email the letter to aja.palette@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

Editor's Note

It's really kind of crazy, when you think about it. I don't know about you, but internally, it still feels like March of my junior year. March 13, to be exact, was our final day of in-person school last spring, nearly nine months ago to the day.

Now that it's Chanukah, we have now traversed the entire Jewish calendar of holidays (save for Tu B'Shvat, but who really counts Tu B'Shvat?) that have been impacted, to varying degrees, by the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects have ranged in severity from the harsh lockdowns of Pesach to Mr. Kalnitz's "Corona beer" costume from Purim, and everything in between.

Looking back, it's astounding to recall our naivete from that time. We were shocked when one of the first outbreaks in the United States occurred in a Jewish community in New York, anxiously tracking when those schools closed but assuming the virus would stay up there. In that fateful final week of school, I remember debating in Morah Livnat's Hebrew class about the possibility of being sent to online school; I distinctly recollect expressing my skepticism about the prospect. When we received the news at baseball practice about a transition to remote learning, we celebrated, assuming that life would remain the same in the absence of school. Based on the consensus "15 days to stop the spread," we figured that coming back in the three weeks before Pesach seemed unlikely but a return shortly thereafter seemed certain.

Needless to say, we were quite wrong. But as we take this jaunty down memory lane from nine months ago, it is also worth reflecting on some other differences in our situation since then.

When the first reports of a coronavirus in China came out, the public's first reaction was to buy up all of the hand sanitizer. Everywhere. Yet we now know that surface-to-surface contact is not the primary vector for disease spread, and as such, hand sanitizer has little effect on the spread of COVID-19. Similarly, school closings originally influenced how many of us perceived the seriousness of shutdowns. By all metrics, there exists a greater prevalence of viral spread in our community than back in March, yet AJA continues in-person instruction. However, we now know that most schools seemingly don't significantly contribute to viral spread. The mass production of an effective vaccine within months also indicates the rapid pace of new scientific discovery.

Yet despite that, many talk about the existence of some "new normal," where human society will forevermore limit social interactions

and obscure the facial gestures that allow for interpersonal connection.

I am neither a public health expert nor a social scientist, so take my words with a grain of salt, but I categorically reject this "new normal." If we are being honest with ourselves, we now have first-hand experience of the inadequacy of technology to replace in-person interactions; more than ever, we understand what's lost when we try to live solely through a screen.

I am confident that at some point soon, we will go back to the "old" normal. But just as quickly as we built this facade of a "new normal," we will fall back into our old way of life as we put this experience behind us. As I have already experienced firsthand in trying to maintain the added appreciation for communal prayer that I felt in the spring, it is really difficult to keep in mind how vastly life had changed when we go back to normal or even semi-normal. When our masks eventually come off, it will be nearly impossible to appreciate seeing a smile for long. But if nothing else, we need to try to remember how our lives changed, so we can better appreciate the little things in our day-to-day routine.

I'll use the rest of this space to highlight a few things that might not catch your eye in a quick perusal of the Table of Contents. Firstly, the topic of appreciating davener reappears in this issue as one of the eight pages in the Torah Section, a length reflecting the length of Chanukah. In addition, the always-entertaining Quote-UnQuote returns to headline the Fun Section, along with an interactive crossword puzzle and a satire that Rabbi Houben rolled his eyes at and called snarky, if that counts as a seal of approval for you. In the Features Section, we caught up with ExQ founder Sucheta Kamath to discuss Fido and pals. And finally, in case you missed it online or just want to read it again, we reprinted the results of our October politics survey in this issue.

Happy Chanukah, and enjoy reading!

Matthew Minsk
Editor-in-Chief

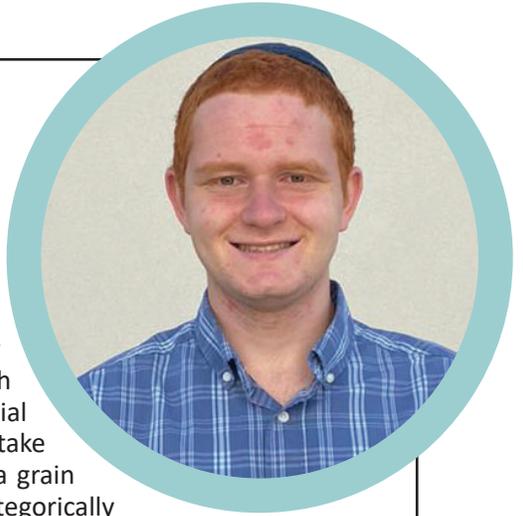


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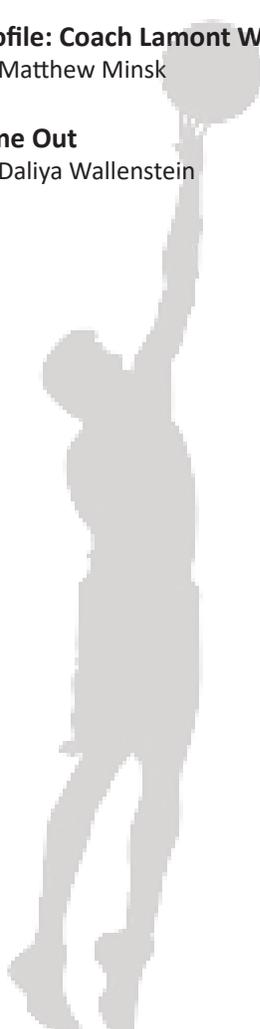


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Why Does the Schedule Keep Changing?

An Insight into the Multiple Schedule Changes

Nina Flusberg

Since AJA returned to school about four months ago, the High School has undergone three different schedule changes. In this time of uncharted territory, the school is testing different methods and systems to see what works best, although these multiple changes in such a short time period have been difficult for some students to adjust to.

At the beginning of August — when the administration decided to start the High School in remote learning — students received a schedule that encompassed both their immediate remote and future adaptive schedules. At the time, no one knew when the High School would allow an in-person option, so the administration designed a remote schedule that it intended to replace with a different adaptive schedule in the future, according to High School Team Leader Ms. Franeen Sarif.

Once the High School switched to its adaptive model, which allowed for in-person instruction, the administration made several tweaks to the schedule. Some changes, such as different start and end times, were made simply because of logistics concerning a return to the building versus working at home. Others, such as advisory groups meeting once a week instead of twice, were made after reviewing and rethinking ways for students to

maximize their productivity at school. Ms. Sarif explained, “Once we were face to face, we wanted to make sure we maximize the amount of time that teachers could work with students.”

The administration made a more significant change less than a month after in-person school began. After assessing multiple issues that came up particularly this year, it identified challenges with carpool. For families who had to pick up multiple children in different carpool zones



corresponding to different segments of the school, the 25 minutes that the High School ended later than the rest of the school made carpool a very time-consuming task. This meant that some parents waited over an hour from the time they left their houses to the time they picked up their last child.

In order for the High School to end at the same time as the rest of the school, the administration shortened the time between classes and the lunch period. “This does seem to be helping the carpool wait lines,” said High School General Studies Instructional Team Leader Mr. Joel Rojek. The administrators also hoped that students getting home earlier would give them more time to work on their asynchronous assignments and cut down their amount of work outside of class.

However, while aligning the closing times appealed to parents in the carpool line and their children, it created an entirely new problem for other students: student drivers. Mr. Rojek addressed this situation, explaining, “Where this is complicated is that you’ve got a lot of different groups — a lot of different people who are affected by a change like that.”

When the High School ended after the lower school, the carpool line was mostly gone by the older students’ dismissal time. Student drivers entered their cars easily and pulled out of their parking spots. But when the entire school’s end-times coincided, the carpool line clogged up, and these student drivers had trouble getting out of their parking spots. To prevent students from attempting to squeeze out of their parking spots, the school then required

For families who had to pick up multiple children in different carpool zones corresponding to different segments of the school, the 25 minutes that the High School ended later than the rest of the school made carpool a very time-consuming task.

student drivers to remain at school at their 'designated areas' until 3:45.

"Something we take really seriously is student safety," Mr. Rojek said. "When we're talking about student drivers and not letting them try and back out into the carpool line it's because all of our drivers are young drivers with a limited amount of driving experience." As for students who also drive home siblings from the lower school, they must wait for the entire carpool line to finish coming into the school before entering it themselves.

Junior student driver Dalya Silverman expressed, "It's really stressful, especially for teenage drivers because we are so new to driving." She compared her carpool experience to "a New York City type of environment" and called it "really hectic".

"I was really excited to get out of school earlier so that I would have a little more time to get started on homework," said junior Ella Goldstein. "But, now that we typically can't pull out of our parking spots until about 3:50, it really doesn't make a difference in terms of getting out of school earlier." For these students, their carpool experience hasn't been improved by these adjustments; rather it's been made more difficult.

Mrs. Catherine Brand, a science teacher, observed that students "feel like even though [they] are physically leaving classes earlier than before, they aren't physically leaving school earlier." Mrs. Brand addressed that the schedule changes did not drastically change her classes much as the start and end times are still the same. If anything, she said, it even gave her some benefits teaching-wise. "The nice thing about student drivers [not being able] to leave is sometimes I've got a couple of extra minutes to wrap up a lab" — in upperclassmen classes where most of the students drive themselves.

While the schedule changes solved certain issues, they also caused new challenges. "There are a lot of things that are unique to this particular



The unique circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are bound to cause stress and create problems that require careful consideration to solve. The administration has found that they are trying to play a game of whack-a-mole, where they head off one issue only to be confronted by others that pop up as a result.

school year," Mr. Rojek reflected. Due to the constant changes because of COVID, the school has also had to make several large adjustments. The most recent schedule change has been one of them, and Mr. Rojek mentioned that the administration was testing it out for two weeks before revisiting and reevaluating the outcomes.

The unique circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic are bound to cause stress and create problems that require careful consideration to solve. The administration has found that they are trying to play a game of whack-a-mole, where they head off one issue only to be confronted by others that pop up as a result. Their task is to find an equilibrium that benefits as many people as possible.

Editor's Note: Starting Monday, November 30, students gained the option to park in parking spots farther from the school building and closer to the Zone B gate. Carpool clears those spots much sooner, so students could leave closer to 3:30 dismissal. Students with siblings in younger grades received new parking spots in the front of the school to better facilitate their leaving on time. ♦

Why Is the Freshmen Skills Lab Different?

A Look into the Freshmen Skills Lab Period

Nina Flusberg

Transitioning from middle school to high school is often a stress-inducing and challenging time for students. The reasons for this include social changes, an increased workload, a shift in academic rigor, and many structural changes to the students' daily schedule. More than just a shift to another grade, high school represents an adjustment to an entirely different environment.

To ease the change into high school, the AJA administration implemented a transitional program for freshmen, called Skills Lab, that focuses on training students in skills necessary to succeed in high school. These skills range from social-emotional advice to mental health information to self-care instruction. For example, they had a class focused on self-calming strategies which they practiced through meditation, coloring, and group discussions. According to Ms. Amber Gardner, High School Learning Specialist and English teacher, "This need was heightened, along with the need for executive functioning focus in the upper grades, with the pandemic." The pandemic generated additional anxiety and stress for all students, especially for Freshmen, as it forced them to be more self-sufficient in a remote world.

"The transition from middle school to high school was interesting because we were on Zoom," freshmen Yulie Maimon explained. "We had to get used to learning with teachers before meeting them." The Skills Lab period gives students the opportunity to build relationships with their teachers who give them instruction to take ownership of their learning.

Assigned advisory groups that meet once a week already provide academic help, so the study skills period aims to guide students in their

work habits, self-awareness, and their organization and planning. While the rest of the High School students spend their Skills Lab period developing these skills on a different program called EXQ, the freshmen follow a separate curriculum.

Ms. Gardner described the class period as "a curriculum of topics that we felt are necessary for students to learn and have as they move into high school." While the teachers identified specific skills that are critical for new incoming freshmen to learn, they also asked for input from students about topics they were interested in covering throughout the year. Interestingly enough, Ms. Gardner explained, "Many of the topics freshmen listed were already set to be covered."

In the first quarter of the year, the freshmen focused on skills needed for the beginning of their transition into high school. "We have talked about taking ownership of their learning, various study skills, developing relationships with teachers to feel comfortable using teachers as resources, note-taking skills, and critical and strategic thinking," Ms. Gardner said. In her opinion, these skills are essential to master if a student strives to succeed in high school.

This year, as the school faced many schedule changes, so have the regular concepts and information shared with the freshmen. Teachers provided additional guidance, such as managing time with asynchronous classes and remote Fridays. Taking ownership of learning has been essential for students to manage and maintain, especially with the year starting off remotely.

Remote classes provide a unique opportunity for the Skills Lab class period. Ms. Gardner said that the period "allows us to take advantage of ... Zoom for guest speakers to come



and speak to a group of students at a time about a given topic, so we can take advantage of experts outside of the building as well." Providing a specific time period to discuss these topics allowed more time, focus, and care towards them, too.

With the help of the Skills Lab period, AJA hopes freshmen will be able to experience a smoother transition into high school, despite any added challenges of starting their high school years online. Administrators and teachers anticipate that recognizing and approaching concerns and difficulties that students face as they move through high school will help them identify solutions and ultimately produce a stronger group of students. ◆



Students Compare Remote Learning Last Year to This Year

Eliana Leubitz

As we are aware, COVID-19 has impacted various aspects of all our lives. Not only have the simple things changed, such as going to the grocery store, but COVID-19 has also altered our education. Heading into our fifth month of the new school year, AJA students have noticed drastic differences between remote learning last year and this year. The entire student body learned remotely from the start of the school year through Sukkot, and now school is in-person for the majority of students. Although we are now in face-to-face learning, our time in remote learning has greatly impacted our education. Students have found that these changes specifically relate to their social, academic, and emotional experiences.

Student Council co-president Emily Gavrielov described the social differences between the years to be extreme. Emily expressed a large difference between Community Time this year and last year. "Last year, during remote learning, we were not experimenting with in-person events yet; we were not gathering together, and everyone was stuck at home on lockdown," she said. This year, the student council has taken on the responsibility of creating numerous socially distant events and trying to bring the high school community together. For instance, student council created a movie night where students could come together and participate in something enjoyable while staying healthy and safe.

"It's really hard to participate in activities while having to be socially distanced and coming together as a community," junior Leah Houben expressed. "I think that the school

has done a really great job trying to help the community come together, but we cannot change the fact that we can't come together the same way that we did before."

Numerous students have shared how their academic journeys have differed between remote learning this year and last year. The High School altered remote learning this year by adding new instructional time such as skills lab and asynchronous classes. The remote schedule this school year also has more classes each day than last year's remote schedule. Because of this many students feel additional stress due to increased schoolwork.

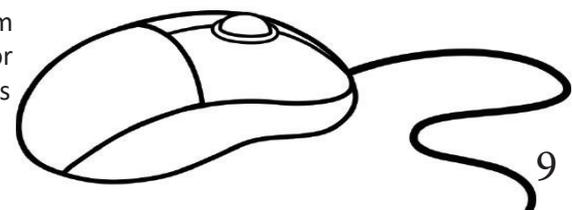
With their workload piling up, many feel that they are unable to keep up with the growing expectations. Senior Katherine Cranman voiced, "For some reason teachers are holding us to an extremely high standard, especially compared to [on campus] and remote learning last year." Additionally, junior Miriam Bregman explained, "I feel that teachers are doing everything in their power to help us be as successful as possible, but sometimes I feel that we are being drowned in work and it is really hard to keep up." Students feel like classes have become more difficult for students due to increased rigor and seriousness in their classes. Although the changes were made in order to give students the best possible education and opportunities, many students feel as if the workload is too much to handle and almost not possible to keep pace with.

Many teachers have shared their empathy and understanding with the students, and have offered them explanations as to why it is important for them to continue to push them. Teachers

have shared that because of remote learning starting off the academic year, curriculum plans have fallen behind.

Although many students are excited to now learn on-campus and in person, some students have opted to continue remote learning. Jemima Schoen, a sophomore who chose to stay with remote learning, expressed, "Remote learning is a bit challenging, especially for things like math and science." Remote learning can be extremely burdensome for those who have chosen to continue on with it, but it also has many contrasts between this year and last. Senior Gefen Beldie stated, "I like virtual school this year, but a lot of people are having a really hard time focusing on their important classes." Gefen expressed that she feels that it is extremely difficult to focus on her classes while being at home. She feels as if she gets distracted by the world around her and the environment that she is learning in.

During these unprecedented events, students all around the world have suffered in terms of their social life and education. As a result of the turbulent experience with new scheduling, students have found themselves occupied with more work than in previous years. It is crucial that we all come together during these strange times, take note of the drastic differences between remote learning, and work together to form the best possible educational experience for all students. ♦



ExQ: Exercising Executive Functions

Sivan Livnat

Since the beginning of the school year, 10th to 12th-grade students have spent their designated weekly Skills Lab time working on strengthening their executive functioning skills through an online platform called “ExQ.” Created by Sucheta Kamath, ExQ aims to “bridge the gap between what you know and what you DO with what you know,” as explained on the company’s website.

ExQ focuses on developing executive function through “game-based personalized training.” The program assesses each student based on seven executive function skills that are essential to functioning in life and beyond: self-awareness, focus, working memory, organization and planning, prospective memory, problem-solving, and mental flexibility/perspective-taking.

These assessments are based on a variety of interactive games

that students play each lesson. The lessons go through various stages designed to improve executive function. Introspective activities also occur in each lesson.

The lesson starts with a couple of games. These games are designed to tackle and challenge one of the executive function skills mentioned above. While playing the game, ExQ calculates the accuracy score, self-awareness score, and game strategy score. After the games, students will watch a video of someone else playing the game and in some way messing up. The student will then be prompted to choose the mistakes the video made and relate it to other mistakes they might make in their day-to-day life without that executive functioning skill. Finally, the student will complete META (Mindful Examination of Thinking and Awareness) Training. This training comprises looking back on previous work and strategizing new ways to achieve executive function goals. Students make a video scripted by previous answers to questions asked by ExQ. This process is repeated up to five times for the five lessons students were encouraged to complete.

For over seven weeks, students have been engaging with the online program intended to “develop and [nurture] Executive Function skills that assist with focus, problem-solving, mental flexibility, and self-awareness,” High School Guidance Counselor Dr. Pam Mason — who introduced ExQ into the Skills Lab curriculum — explained. She further described that “Executive Function skills allow students to learn to think, self-reflect, and act according to future goals and not just immediate ones.” The Skills Lab period was designed to provide an opportunity to “teach skills not directly addressed in the curriculum that students

need to master in order to thrive in the classroom and beyond,” and ExQ fit that description perfectly.

In an interview with Palette, ExQ founder Kamath explained the program metaphorically: “At the heart of the training program is something called metacognition... it’s like a flashlight.” She detailed how ExQ uses metacognition to turn the flashlight inwards to “shine light” on a student’s current executive functioning skills; therefore, because of the blinding flashlight in one’s eyes, there is a “level of discomfort that comes from doing self-work.”

When AJA partnered with ExQ, Dr. Mason was one of the teachers who enrolled in the program, taking Lessons 1 and 2 just like the students. Similar to Kamath, she described how having her “weaknesses highlighted” was an “uncomfortable and vulnerable experience,” but she nonetheless “embraced the opportunity for self-growth.”

Conversely, students seemed to express a much different approach to ExQ than Kamath and Dr. Mason. “I think that it was never really explained very well when we started,” senior Kira Mermelstein said. “I’m not putting my all into the games and into the journal entries and the videos because I don’t see the purpose, so I’m just trying to get it done so that it’s over with.” This sentiment, plus or minus a few expletives, has been echoed by several other AJA students.

These students feel that ExQ isn’t serving them, and not only that, but it is considered a mundane or even excruciating chore. Kamath gathered this reaction toward the program and said, “So one thing that [I’m sensing] is that the kids are being facetious, being snarky, being smug and... thinking that they’re smarter than a system.” She elaborated and explained how when ExQ shows information about a student’s approach, students



“might feel frustrated with it, rather than developing a mutual relationship with [the] process.”

This “mutual relationship” is one that many students struggle with when they feel the program does not accurately assess one’s skills. Sophomore Jemima Schoen explained, “I do not enjoy the patronizing tone of the program, nor the system errors. How can we determine someone’s value and skills based on whether or not they can sort shapes and animals?” Jemima struggled with the platform that ExQ operates on, which uses simple games to determine a student’s executive function. Similarly, senior Matthew Kaplan said, “I dislike ExQ and the way it assesses your capabilities. The message that I have picked up is that there should be one strategy all should follow to everything, which seems absurd.”

Some students questioned how their game strategy score was high while their self-awareness score was low. Kamath described this as a gap between how students do something and how they arrive at that. Meaning, a student might be able to perform a task easily, but if they are unable to introspect and understand how they got to the point, their self-awareness score would be lower.

Senior Matthew Minsk described how the simplistic nature of the games he was playing prevented him from engaging in the building of his executive function skills.

“I understand the value of executive function skills, but I can’t build those skills when I... can’t

engage my brain [in] the ‘task’ I’m supposed to be doing.” The set-up of ExQ hindered any progress because of how “mind-numbingly boring” the interface was.

Dr. Mason acknowledged student perception of the program, saying, “Yes, some of the interface has felt juvenile at times, but that can be deceiving because the lessons themselves are challenging and adjusted for every individual’s self-growth.” When the games and challenges are suited to individual students, Kamath described how a student can experience discomfort when being told something about themselves, so the student is “going to have incredible resistance to that process.”

A different form of resistance to the process resulted due to technical difficulties when trying to work on the program. Dr. Mason said, “ExQ is a relatively new technology. Like any new technology, there have been more technology glitches than we anticipated. I... was frustrated when we were encountering these obstacles.” These obstacles included students being unable to submit videos, move on to different lessons, or log in to their accounts.

Regardless of the student opinion of the program, both Kamath and Dr. Mason feel strongly that ExQ --

and more broadly, developing executive functioning skills -- will serve the students well in high school and beyond. Kamath said, “I have great hopes for ExQ. If I lived in an ideal world, I would like a school experience where students learn math and Hebrew and literature and executive function, so they are provided with information about who they are; how their brain works; what should matter to them.” For Kamath and Dr. Mason, executive functioning skills are imperative to understanding oneself. ◆



TEACHER'S CORNER: FEATURING MR. GILLIN

Daliya Wallenstein

“I kind of fell into teaching, believe it or not,” physics teacher Mr. John Gillin says. One day, some time after deciding he did not want to continue work as an engineer, he opened The New York Times to an article that said, “If you like the outdoors, and if you have a science degree, and if you think you might want to teach -- call this number.” He fit all three criteria and was looking for a change, so Mr. Gillin called the number. Soon after, he found himself working in an environmental education center in Charlton, Massachusetts. “That’s when I really started down the road of teaching,” Mr. Gillin says.

The education center would rent several camps organized to run programming throughout winter, and each week a new group of students would come to stay. He describes the experience for students as a cross between “a day field trip and

summer camp.” The days were filled with hikes, ropes courses, trust falls, and other team-building activities. Each afternoon, Mr. Gillin would teach a science-related course. For around

“At first, he believed that relaying the content to his students was his chief responsibility... Now he sees more value in teaching his students skills, responsibility, work ethic, and how to learn and study.”

two years, he would travel between the camp locations in places such as Cape Cod or islands on Boston Harbor.

Yet, as the name suggests, the environmental education centers typically involve extended amounts of time outdoors. Located in the Northeast, this meant the weather was pretty harsh. One weekend, Mr. Gillin went down to Washington, D.C., to visit his brother. Tired of the extreme cold, he decided to put his name in an employment agency. He ultimately ended up teaching in a private school, Stone Ridge School of the Sacred Heart, in the D.C. area for 13 years.

Now looking back, Mr. Gillin reflects, “I didn’t realize how bad a teacher I was the first couple years.” At first, he believed that relaying

the content to his students was his chief responsibility. Over his 31 years teaching physics, his perspective on teaching has shifted. He explains,

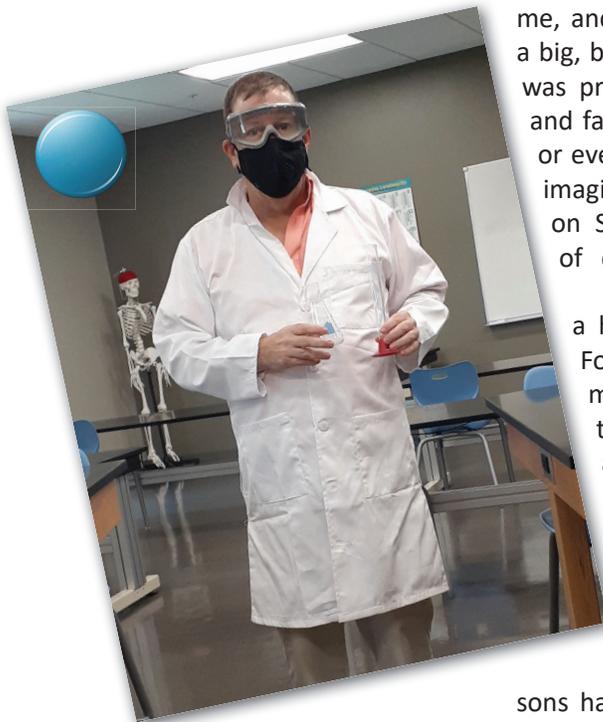
“Although I teach physics, I realize that if all I do is teach physics then I’m wasting everyone’s time.” Mr. Gillin realized that the curriculum he should be teaching is not limited to the information found in a textbook. Now he sees more value in teaching his students skills, responsibility, work ethic, and how to learn and study. “[Those are] so much more important than whether they can solve a circuit problem or not,” he says.

He also notes that everyone learns differently. “You want to try and put yourself in other people’s shoes,” he explains. “Some people would rather learn through hands-on labs; some people would rather just do lectures and tests.” He fills class with a variation of activities to meet his students’ varied needs and keep class fresh.

Teaching was never Mr. Gillin’s long-term plan for the future. He explains that he always would think, “When I grow up and figure out what I really want to do, then I’ll switch to something other than teaching.” Thirty-three years later, he still “can’t imagine doing anything else.”

Teaching worked well for Mr. Gillin because it allowed him to continue working the summer job he loved. As a child, the summer camp Camp Integrity had been an important part of his life. He says, “I was a suburban kid who





was a little naive. I grew up in this nice, little protected community on Long Island... and the summer camp was run by the electrician union out of New York City. And meeting the kids who grew up in NYC changed my understanding of the world and how things worked. It's a whole different culture, a city kid's life." Beginning in high school, he would spend his summers working at Camp Integrity. He remembers, "The things that they would let me do at seventeen years old -- no one would have trusted me to do that stuff anywhere else." In the outside world, a seventeen year old is treated as a kid in many regards; at summer camp, a seventeen year old manages many of the responsibilities of an adult. From that first summer on, Mr. Gillin spent his summers working in different camps. Eventually, Mr. Gillin returned to Camp Integrity as its assistant director.

It was actually at camp where Mr. Gillin met his wife. She grew up in Ireland and came to work at the camp on a visa. Mr. Gillin says, "She kept coming back, and we hit it off. When she graduated from college, she moved to Washington, D.C., with

me, and we got married. And we had a big, blow-out wedding in Ireland -- it was pretty epic." Most of his friends and family had never been to Ireland or even out of the United States, "so imagine touching down in Dublin on St. Patrick's Day with a bunch of crazy New Yorkers," he says.

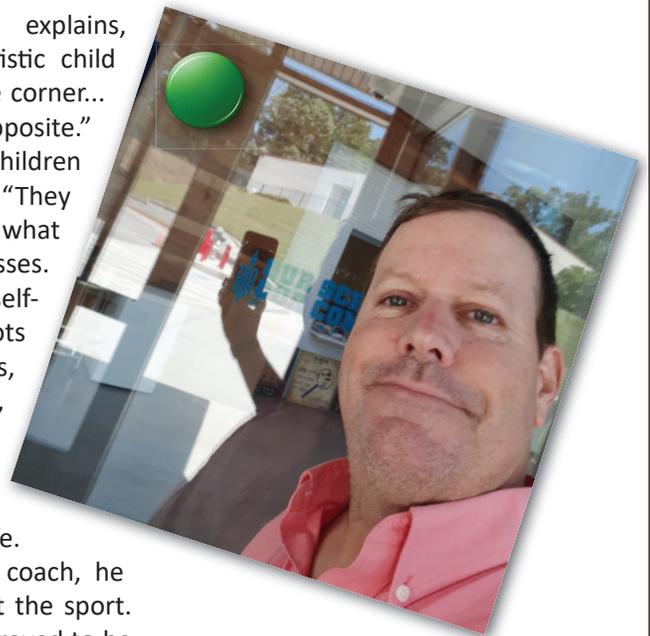
This wedding continues to be a highlight for Mr. Gillin's family. For Mr. Gillin, family is one of the most important values. He hopes that above all else, his children are happy and satisfied. On the weekends, he and his daughter go hiking or do things for her Girl Scout troop. He explains how it can be "harder for me to interact with my sons than it is my daughter." Both of his

sons have high functioning autism, so his sons connect with people in different ways. His middle son, whom Mr. Gillin lovingly calls Mr. One-Word, much prefers to be alone than with friends. Mr. Gillin shares, "It's so different than who I am that I have to remember that his brain just isn't wired the way mine is." In contrast, his eldest loves to talk to anyone, anytime. He used to joke that his son would say, "Oh, your name is Satan? Sure, I'll come over and play with you!" Mr. Gillin explains, "Everybody thinks the autistic child is the shy, quiet child in the corner... But my son is just the opposite."

None of Mr. Gillin's children care much about sports. "They probably don't even know what a touchdown is," he guesses. However, Mr. Gillin, a self-described sports fanatic, roots for the Minnesota Vikings, Washington Nationals, Washington Capitals and Liverpool F.C. Also a swim coach for 29 years, sports play a large part in his life. When he became a swim coach, he knew almost nothing about the sport. In a certain way, coaching proved to be

very different than teaching. Mr. Gillin points out, "Usually, when people are on a sports team, it's because they want to be there. Not everyone I teach physics [to] really wants anything to do with physics class, other than they have to show up every day... It's so much nicer to do something when everyone is there because they enjoy it."

Understanding that a physics lab isn't always students' favorite place, Mr. Gillin makes an effort to see his students in other environments. He says, "I always think it's important to find some way of seeing the students outside the classroom. That's why I try to make it to a number of [sports] games." He enjoys getting to see students in their element. As for his element, the classroom, he tries to make it as conducive, enjoyable, and rewarding for his students as possible. So far, Mr. Gillin has found AJA to be "a good fit." He has enjoyed the students he has had to teach so far. He says, "I hope that my students have found that it's been a positive experience for them, too." ♦



those who did not did not participate. For all we know, the sample could be representative, although we cannot assert this with any degree of confidence. We can only analyze the data that we have — and we certainly will — but it is crucial to understand the nature of the small sample size, which dictates that these 39 students likely differ in unknowable ways from the other 42.

Related to the issue of response rate, the upperclassmen responded to the survey at a significantly higher rate (58%) than the lowerclassmen (40%). This could also lead to bias in the results since, as detailed in another article here, there are fairly large splits in ideology and opinions between different grade groupings. On the other hand, boys and girls responded at roughly equal rates, both overall and within the grade levels: By way of example, 9th and 10th grade girls responded at about the same level as 9th and 10th grade boys.

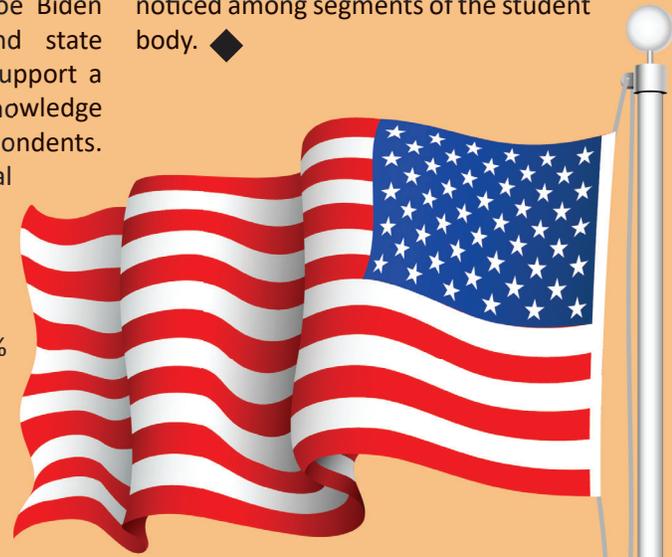
The groups of respondents displayed a high level of political literacy — on many counts, far higher than expected and one indicator that the sample does not accurately represent the remainder of the student body. All of those who filled out the survey correctly identified President Donald Trump as a Republican, while

95% knew Republican Brian Kemp is the current Governor of Georgia. 74% and 66% of respondents accurately chose which party controlled the Senate and House of Representatives, respectively, while only 8% and 5% respondents misattributed the respective chambers; the remainder were unsure. A slim majority (54%) knew that Georgia will hold two senatorial races in 2020, while 15% thought there will be only one seat up for grabs, and 30% didn't know enough to answer. Furthermore, 72% of AJA students could pick *Roe v. Wade* out of a set of four landmark court cases as addressing abortion, and 72% of students also correctly identified that former Vice President Joe Biden currently leads national and state polls. All of these numbers support a high level of basic political knowledge among the survey respondents.

The *Palette* political survey was conducted between Monday, October 12, and Friday, October 16. The survey has a 90% confidence interval of +/- 10% given the population size of 81 students and 39 respondents, which means that we can expect our findings, plus or minus 10% on either side,

will capture the true percentage of students who support a given position 90% of the time. It is worth bearing in mind that with such a small population, an even smaller sample, and concern about response bias tilting the results, even a larger gap than 10% in either direction should be taken with a grain of salt, to a certain extent.

To find the complete results in semi-raw data format, check out our website at palette.atljewishacademy.org. We encourage you to keep reading for presidential head-to-head numbers, party affiliation, specific opinions on certain policies and politicians, and our deeper dive into specific trends we noticed among segments of the student body. ◆



dramatically on social issues. For example, 90% of respondents said that “homosexuality should be accepted by society” and just one respondent said it should be discouraged. AJA students agreed with “immigrants today strengthen our country because of their hard work and talents” more than “immigrants today are a burden on our country because they take our jobs, housing, and health care” by 77% to 10%. Nearly 50% more students (72% to 23%) agreed that the United States “needs to continue making changes in order to give black people equal rights with white people.” 66% of students either “strongly” or “somewhat” supported stricter gun laws, compared to just under 16% who expressed some level of opposition. 50% of respondents supported Medicare-for-All with just 20% opposed — a smaller gap, but perhaps more striking since such a policy is unpopular among the general public (54% think it is a “bad idea,” 41% think it is a “good idea” in a Marist poll). 71% of students said that abortion should be legal in “most” or “all” cases, compared to the 24% who argued abortion should be illegal in most or all cases.

While a liberal economic outlook remains the norm among AJA students, that is true by a smaller margin when compared to the aforementioned social issues. For example, just 36% of students agreed with the statement, “Government regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest,” while 31% chose, “Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good.” On arguably the most pure-economics question

asked, only about 54% of those who knew enough to answer the question answered with the liberal option.

A similar pattern appeared regarding questions about government waste, the ability of people to “get ahead,” the fairness of the American economic system, and the government’s ability to take on additional debt “to help needy Americans.” The first two of those questions featured about a 17-point margin between the two answers; the second two had about a 35% margin. Even a 35% difference is significantly less than the 50% that social topics featured.

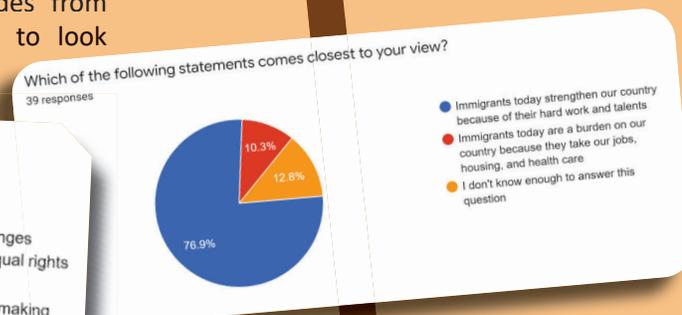
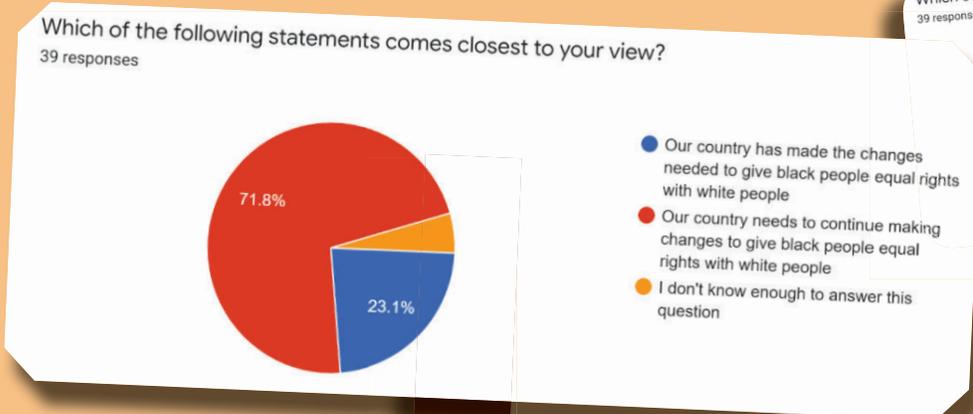
In any case, the responses to both the social and economic “political topography” questions reinforce the understanding that the student body of the High School is liberal on nearly all survey topics. As mentioned earlier, this was expected due to age factors and President Trump’s dismal standing among educated and suburban white voters, who, as parents, are naturally heavy influences on AJA students.

It would be impractical to continue to dissect the results of every single question of the survey in this manner. We noticed that girls responded that they didn’t know enough to answer the question at higher rates, which you can read about on page 18. Elsewhere, we have written about an overall shift to progressivism, particularly with Democrats (page 20) and some trends we noticed about tribalism and oppositional, negative partisanship, especially among Republicans (page 21). Besides from that, we encourage readers to look

at our full results, including helpful visuals and crosstabs broken down by grade, gender, party identification, and more, accessed online.

Before perusing the data, it is important to note quirks about two questions. Survey-takers’ gave feedback that the question about homosexuality was confusingly worded, since “accepted” and “discouraged” are not strictly opposites; while this phrasing didn’t seem to concern Pew, it could have tainted our results. A similarly important caveat applies to the favorability to the “protests in response to the death of George Floyd,” which a few students — liberal students, per their other answers — described as pushing respondents to support the demonstrations, since it excluded any association of violence and riots in conjunction to the protesting.

To conclude with a few interesting tidbits that will perhaps spark the reader’s interest: For all that progressive Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is regarded as possessing outsized influence among young voters relative to her stature as a first-term congresswoman, she garnered the second-most “don’t know” answers of any of the politicians tested, ranking only behind Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell; and speaking of Sen. McConnell, a full two-thirds of AJA Republicans don’t even know enough about him to formulate an opinion. For more of these nuggets, the reader is once again invited to look through the full results. ◆



ANALYSIS: The Dunning-Kruger Effect and How It Is Reflected in Students' Confidence

Examining Why AJA Girls Reported Lower Levels of Political Knowledge

Ella Goldstein

During the modern age of instant information, more and more teenagers are showing interest in politics and becoming politically active, a trend which seems to be true at AJA. Even so, based on the results of a *Palette*-administered politics survey, girls at AJA were more likely to say that they knew less about politics and that they didn't know enough information to answer a question. Survey-takers were asked about their own political knowledge on a scale from 1-10, with 1 meaning the least knowledgeable and 10 meaning the most. For girls, the most common response was 5, followed by 8 and 1. Not a single girl who filled out the survey claimed that their political knowledgeability was 10/10, while 10% of boys claimed

that their political knowledgeability was at the maximum. Additionally, none of the boys who filled out the survey marked their political knowledgeability at 1/10, while more than 10% of girls

did. We have no reason to suspect that girls at AJA are less knowledgeable than their male counterparts, yet the imbalance exists in the reported numbers. This dynamic doesn't just exist among the girls at AJA, but represents a widespread phenomenon.

Cornell psychologists David Dunning and Justin Kruger conducted studies on self-confidence. Their theory, eponymously named the Dunning-Kruger effect, explains "the tendency for some people to substantially overestimate their abilities." The theory states, "The less competent people are, the more they overestimate their abilities." Later, Dunning and Washington State University psychologist Joyce Ehrlinger found that the effect was

"Not a single girl who filled out the survey claimed that their political knowledgeability was 10/10."



Republican Views: Political Policy and Figures

Republican Students Lean Left But Dislike Liberal Figures

By Daliya Wallenstein

A methodological note on the statistics in this article: For numbers reported from the Palette survey used in comparison to Pew Research Center findings at the beginning of this article, students who answered “I don’t know enough to answer this question” were removed from the percentage. This was done to more easily compare the numbers, since Pew removed “I don’t know” responses from the published graphs from which Palette pulled the statistics for this article.

The majority of students who responded to the survey identify as Democrats. Within the 48% of the student body who responded to the survey, just 35% identified with the Republican Party. However, many of these students’ views align closer with the views of the Democratic Party than with the Republican party. Republican students at AJA approve of the concept of bigger government more than average Republicans. As many as 69% of Republicans said that “government is almost always wasteful and inefficient,” according to a 2017 Pew Research Center poll, while only 58% of Republican AJA students agree. Compared to an average pool of Republicans, the Republican students within AJA also support government regulation more. The Pew study found that just 31% of Republicans said that “government

regulation of business is necessary to protect the public interest,” yet up to 50% of Republican students believe so. According to the same national survey, only 36% of Republicans said “stricter environmental laws and regulations are worth the cost.” In contrast, 50% of Republican students would approve of costly environmental laws.

Republican students also lean left in the matter of immigration. Around 60% of these students say that

President Donald Trump. Within AJA, 84.6% of Republican students would do the same — giving President Trump a slightly less, but similar, level of support.

When questioned whether “the government should spend more to help the needy even if it means going deeper into debt,” only 24% of Republicans asked by Pew approved of this additional spending. Similarly, only 27% of Republican AJA students agreed with this allocation of resources.

Republican students and the general population of Republicans view social inequality roughly the same. In the study, only 36% of Republicans believed that “our country needs to continue making changes to give black people equal rights with white people,” a proportion relatively in line with the 38.46% of AJA students who agreed. Furthermore, 63% and 64% of Republicans in the study and at AJA, respectively, said that “obstacles that once made it hard for women to get ahead are largely gone.”

Only in one case did Republican students lean more right — and in this case, less populist — than the general Republican population. Up to 46% of national Republicans in the study said “the economic system in this country unfairly favors powerful interests.” However, only 33% of Republican students believe in this imbalance. Despite a tendency to lean left, Republican students often view liberal figures as “strongly unfavorable” -- to the extent that Republican students are much more likely to view liberal figures as “strongly unfavorable” than to view Republican figures as “strongly favorable.” The majority (58%) of Republican students (excluding those

“Despite a tendency to lean left, Republican students often view liberal figures as ‘strongly unfavorable.’”

“immigrants strengthen the country because of their hard work and talents,” compared to only 42% of the Republicans in the study. And while just 39% of Republicans said “it is best for the future of our country to be active in world affairs,” a whopping 82% of Republican students are in favor of international involvement -- 26% more than even Pew’s sample of Democrats. Republican students in AJA differ greatly from Republicans in the Pew study on homosexuality. Just 51% of Republicans in the study believed “homosexuality should be accepted by society,” while 91% of Republican AJA students were in favor, with only one response in opposition.

On other questions, Republican students fit more in line with the average Republican. According to a recent national poll conducted by *The New York Times* and Siena College, 91% of Republicans would vote to reelect

- Democrats
- Republicans
- Independent / Other



“If Only We Could Pray the Entire Day!”

How a Mindset Shift Can Help Us Avoid the Doldrums of Davening

Matthew Minsk

On more occasions than I would like to admit, I have walked into shul with something on my mind and gone through the motions of davening fighting to clear my head of the distraction. When I left, I was none the more connected with Hashem or the prayer I just prayed. In one ear and out the other, in essence: It is as if the service I just participated in never happened.

Thankfully, this does not happen every time. Many times, I can have *kavanah* (intention) throughout davening, concentrating on the words and my prayers. But all too often, I do not. It is clear that the thrice-daily frequency of davening leads to routine, a paradigm antithetical to deeper meaning. Obviously, *kavanah* is much easier to come by during *neilah* of Yom Kippur than Wednesday afternoon mincha in mid-November. Ideally, this should not be. Perhaps we can strive to reduce (because I am skeptical that I can eliminate) these doldrums of davening by reframing how we look at davening: An opportunity we need permission for, rather than a chore or responsibility.

Really, in some theoretical respects, we cannot daven at all. The Gemara (Berachos 33b) tells the story of someone who continues to add excess words of praise to Hashem in the first blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei, beyond the standard “*hakeil hagadol hagibor v’hanora*” (The Great, Powerful, Awesome G-d). After he finishes, Rabbi Chanina chastises him, asking if he has sufficiently exhausted all of the possible praises of G-d? Rather, he concludes, the man’s prayer was like praising a king who owns mountains of gold for his lowly silver: What a disgrace!

Elsewhere, in Megillah (18a), the Gemara understands a verse from Tehillim (106:2) to instruct rhetorically that only one who can cover “all of the praises of G-d” — which is, of course, impossible — can invent and use his

own praises. In the first example, we only have the limited capacity to praise Hashem for His “silver,” and in the second, the Gemara tells us that we don’t have the wherewithal to praise Him at all.

WAIT! Do not stop reading and take what I have written thus far as an excuse to skip davening: I have been somewhat dishonest by omitting crucial context. The previous lines of the Gemara in Megillah provided Scriptural sources for each of the 19 blessings of the Shemoneh Esrei: Without them, we would not be able to recite that prayer — but we do have those sources! Through those verses, Hashem gave us permission to use those limited blessings before Him.

Going back to the story of Rabbi Chanina (Berachos 33b), the man is only rebuked because he went beyond the four attributes we do say in the Shemoneh Esrei. For those four, Rabbi Chanina says, while one would not think he should be able to say them, Hashem gave us permission by having Moshe write them in the Torah (Devarim 10:17). Since Hashem Himself gave us instruction and guidelines for how to pray to Him through *pesukim*, we can use those — but no more, since if we were to go beyond what He explicitly supplied us, we could never stop.

Implicit in the reasons of both the Gemara in Megillah and Rabbi Chanina is, of course, that we would *want* to daven all day, if we could. The issue of supplicant in Berachos 33b is not that he added praises, per se, but that he stopped. In Megillah, the obstacle is that we, as humans, physically cannot say all of His praises — but we would want to.

Similarly, Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik offered (*Halakhic Positions of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik*, Vol. 2, by Aharon Ziegler, p.64-65) that we recite Adon Olam at the conclusion of davening as a way to flip back to the

beginning of the siddur, so to speak. The Rav equates Adon Olam to a symbolic showing of wanting to keep going, if we could. In the words of Rabbi Ziegler describing Rav Soloveitchik’s opinion: “It is only because we are finite human beings that we cannot go on and on... We close our siddur not because we are finished. We show that we want to continue, but unfortunately we cannot, so we merely close with Adon Olam.”

Rabbi Shalom Rosner, in his “Famous Gemaras” WhatsApp chat, adds to this idea that Aleinu serves a similar purpose. Aleinu should happen at the beginning of davening, as an exposition: “It is incumbent upon us to praise the Master,” but instead we say it at the end to show that we wish to continue our praise.

More succinctly, the Gemara (Berachos 21a) famously summarizes this idea: “If only we could pray the entire day!” Obviously, we cannot daven all day. We have other matters — both holy and mundane — to attend to. However, we want to: Praising Hashem is truly above our paygrade as finite beings — What can we add to the Infinite? Where can we even start? — but He gives us a special dispensation to exceed our mortal bounds. It would be foolish to toss away the privilege we bargained for by not making the most of it.

On that note, what we can do is make the most of the time we do set aside to pray. We want to pray twenty-four hours a day, but normally we only daven for about an hour and a half a day (or less, at a seven-minute-Mincha pace). If we are aware that we are squeezing so many praises — privileges unto themselves — into so little time, it makes sense to ensure that the little time we do have we make count. Perhaps that’s a message we can tap into as our mind begins to wander. ♦



Spreading the Light

Selected Ideas of the Late Rabbi Sacks z"l on Chanukah

Kayla Minsk



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z”l, former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, passed away last month. As a way to honor him, we wanted to share some of his ideas about Chanukah, which he originally published in 2013. Rabbi Sacks wrote up eight thoughts to be shared for each night of Chanukah. By relating different stories to Chanukah, Rabbi Sacks conveyed relevant lessons we can benefit from. We decided to share three of them in *Palette*, but we encourage you to read the rest through the link below.

Night One: “Inspired by Faith, We Can Change the World”

To begin the holiday, Rabbi Sacks retells the Chanukah story that many of us are familiar with: Antiochus IV, a ruler during the 2nd century B.C., forbade the Jews from practicing Judaism; a group of Jewish rebels, commonly known as the Maccabees, fought — and beat — one of the most powerful armies of this time. The Maccabees reconquered the Beit HaMikdash in Jerusalem, lit the menorah from a small jug of oil which miraculously lasted for eight days, and restored their religious freedom. This was “a victory of the few over the many, the weak over the strong,” Rabbi Sacks explains. The Jews, who were a small, unprepared army, were able to beat the powerful Greeks. Rabbi Sacks teaches us not to doubt a small group of determined fighters. Just like the Maccabees had faith, we too can change the world when inspired by faith.

Night Two: “The Light of the Spirit Never Dies”

For the second night, Rabbi Sacks poses the famous question of the Beit Yosef (Orach Chaim 670): “What was the miracle of the first night?” On every night of Chanukah, we make the blessing over miracles, “she’asah nissim lavotenu” (Who performed miracles for our forefathers). It makes sense that the second through eighth days were miraculous since the oil was only meant to last one day; however, oil that was meant to last for one day lasting for one day hardly seems surprising or miraculous.

Rabbi Sacks answers that the miracle was finding the oil at all. The Greeks destroyed the Beit HaMikdash, so it seemed nearly impossible for anything to have survived. It was the Jews’ faith that led them to continue searching for the oil, which they finally found. Rabbi Sacks explains that many times in Jewish history, “There were times when any other people would have given up in despair... but somehow Jews did not sit and weep.” No power on earth can extinguish the everlasting light of the Jewish people. It is our job as Jews to continue the everlasting and indestructible light of the Jewish people.

Night Five: “The Light of War and the Light of Peace”

The idea for the fifth night delves into the importance of the peace in our homes. The Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Megillah and Chanukah 4:12) writes, “The command of Chanukah lights is very precious... One who lacks the money to buy lights should sell something, or if necessary borrow, so as to be able to fulfil the mitzvah.” Then the question arises of in a case where you only have one candle Friday afternoon and have to choose between lighting the Chanukah candles or Shabbat candles, which lighting takes priority? You may think that logically, it would make sense for the Chanukah candles to take priority because there is no law saying that you have to sell or borrow to light Shabbat candles. However, the law states that Shabbat candles take priority.

To explain this ruling, Rabbi Sacks uses another statement of the Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Megillah and Chanukah 4:14) that explains how the Shabbat candles symbolize peace in the home. He then explains that “the Shabbat light takes precedence because in Judaism, the greatest military victory takes second place to peace in the home.” Chanukah is more than the celebration of a military victory. Judaism values “the home more than the battlefield, marriage more than military grandeur, and children more than generals.” The light of peace is more important than the light of war. Rather than just celebrating the military victory of the Jews, take a moment to value the spiritual component of the Chanukah story as well.

As we celebrate Chanukah this year, let us connect with these valuable lessons that Rabbi Sacks has given us and find inspiration this holiday.

For further reading:
<https://rabbisacks.org/8-thoughts-8-nights/>



What are Pas and Chalav Yisrael?: Part One

Diving into the Laws of Bread Baked by Non-Jews

Matthew Minsk

If you spend enough time at Rabbi E's weekly lunch mishmor or mishmeret, someone — usually a freshman — inevitably will offer Rabbi E to scoop him some ice cream or grab him an oreo. Politely, Rabbi E explains that despite the OU logo on the carton, he cannot eat it; he holds by something called *chalav yisrael* (lit. Jewish milk), but the student should go ahead. What is going on? Rabbi E certainly would not (and does not) feed his students non-kosher ice cream.

The rabbis of the Mishnah, as recorded in Maseches Avodah Zara 35b, forbid certain categories of foods — even if they contain entirely kosher ingredients — if they were prepared by non-Jews. One of these categories is *chalav yisrael*, or milk and dairy products, which we will delve into next issue; this article will focus on *pas yisrael*, which refers to bread baked by a Jew. Nowadays, various leniencies (and stringencies) apply to the rabbis' blanket restrictions on eating foods produced by non-Jews, including with regards to bread.

As always, nothing contained in this article should be understood as halachic guidance of any sort; I am a high school student and exceedingly unqualified to render any sort of ruling whatsoever. I only intend to try to explain some potentially unfamiliar terms. For reference, all sources come from the author's Yoreh Deah section unless otherwise noted or not applicable.

The most direct place to start with *pas yisrael* is the aforementioned mishnah on Avodah Zara 35b, which prohibits eating bread baked by a non-Jew, called *pas akum*. The gemara on the same page (and confirmed by Rashi) pins the reasoning of the decree to intermarriage: Specifically, if Jews "broke bread" with non-Jews, their fraternization might lead to marriage, an outcome the rabbis sought to avoid.

The halachic authorities are

pretty much in consensus that the decree against *pas akum* stems from a desire to avoid intermarriage, chief among them the Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Forbidden Foods 17:9). The Ran (Avodah Zara 13b) cites other authorities (such as the Raavad) who relate *pas akum* to *kashrus* concerns as well and argue, for example, that the non-Jew's cooking instruments might have come in contact with a non-kosher food; nevertheless, the Ran also rules like the Rambam and the plain reading of the gemara.

Possible Leniencies

What if Marriage Does Not Pose a Concern?

As mentioned, the decree against eating *pas akum* is based on a concern about marriage. Therefore, an astute reader might wonder if the bread of a non-Jew would be permitted if marriage isn't a possibility — for example, the Shach (112:4) suggests the bread of a priest, whose vows forbid them to marry or have children who could marry, would fall into this category. Nevertheless, the Rema (112:1) and Shach (112:4) maintain that the rabbis forbid *pas akum* even if we are not concerned about marriage in the specific case.

Pas Palter

Although the lack of possibility for marriage in the previous example didn't generate any leniency, other (potential) exceptions to the prohibition of *pas akum* do exist. The gemara (Avodah Zara 35b) creates a distinction between regular *pas akum* — or more precisely, *pas baal habayis*, indicating bread baked by a private individual for his family (Rema in 112:2) — and *pas palter*, which is bread baked by a non-Jewish baker in his professional capacity. The Tur (112) explains conceptually that, according to those who would want to create a distinction

and allow *pas palter*, a baker and a customer will not result in marriage.

Looking inside the gemara (Avodah Zara 35b), Rabbi Yochanan comments that the Beis Din (Rabbinic Court) did not permit *pas akum*; the gemara extracts from his statement that some opinions would argue that the Beis Din did, in fact, permit *pas akum*. The gemara explains that this opinion came from a supposed misunderstanding of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, who first asks why the rabbis prohibited *pas akum* and then asks for a baker to provide bread to the students in the Beis Midrash. According to the conclusion of the gemara, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi was trying to discern a reason — not cast doubt on — the prohibition of *pas akum*, and he was actually asking for a Jewish baker (not a non-Jewish one); the Jewish baker's bread would clearly have *pas yisrael* status.

In the next line of the gemara, Rabbi Chelbo and Rabbi Yochanan each provide limits on *pas palter*. They argue that even those who permit *pas palter* only do so in the absence of a Jewish baker — perhaps implicitly validating a leniency when it comes to *pas palter*.

The Ritva (Avodah Zara 35b) comments in the name of the Maharam m'Rutenberg and his teachers that the misunderstanding about Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi's opinion is just that — a misunderstanding. Per the Ritva, when Rabbi Chelbo and Rabbi Yochanan acknowledged the existence and difference of *pas palter* as compared to other forms of *pas akum*, they were only explaining what the minority view held, not espousing it.

On the other hand, the Ritva admits that the majority of the Geonim and Tosfos (Avodah Zara 35b), as well as the Rif (Avodah Zara 14b), understand the gemara differently. They think that the limitations of Rabbi Chelbo and Rabbi Yochanan confirm the general allowance for *pas*



palter even within the original decree.

The Shulchan Aruch (112:2) rules like this second opinion, allowing *pas palter* if a location lacks a Jewish baker since the essence of the decree was against marriage. The Rema (112:2) adds that some allow *pas palter* even in a place with a Jewish baker. Both the Shulchan Aruch and the Rema are clear that the rabbinic enactment prohibits *pas baal habayis*.

Did the Decree Ever Even Take Effect in the First Place?

The gemara later in Avodah Zara (36a) states that the rabbis only institute a decree if the majority of the Jewish people can abide by it. The medieval authorities tell of the difficulty in obtaining *pas yisrael* in many of their communities or other outlying communities; based on this, Tosfos (Avodah Zara 35b) argues that the decree against *pas akum* was never truly and comprehensively accepted by the Jewish people. As such, according to Tosfos, a later Beis Din can (and did, in the later times of the gemara) revoke the previous decree against *pas akum*. Other commentators and authorities take a similar track, although even within this path, a dispute arises. The Rosh (Avodah Zara 2:27) rules that while the decree as a whole took effect, that was only in places where one can easily find *pas yisrael*; where *pas yisrael* is too difficult to obtain, the Beis Din allowed people to rely on *pas palter* since the nation never really could accept the decree against *pas akum* in the first place.

The Tur (112) took the same approach as his father, the Rosh. He also explains that the Rosh did not differentiate between *pas palter* and *pas baal habayis* in places where *pas yisrael* is too difficult to find, since the entire decree itself never applied. The Shach (112:8) writes the same in the name of the Mordechai.

The Shach also brings that some poskim hold that the decree against *pas akum* did originally take effect, but Beis Din later realized it was too difficult for people to reasonably comply with and

allowed the consumption of non-*pas yisrael* bread. The Ritva (Avodah Zara 35b), who earlier took the stringent approach in applying the gemara without an exception for *pas palter*, allows for a leniency on similar grounds. A source from the Talmud Yerushalmi says that since the people in remote areas were unable to find *pas yisrael*, the Beis Din allowed them to eat *pas palter* for human need. While we normally wouldn't rule with a Yerushalmi, the Ritva grants it as an acceptable leniency in a case of great difficulty.

The Aruch HaShulchan (112:17) recounts and summarizes these opinions and concludes that if one can avoid it, he should not eat *pas baal habayis* and instead eat *pas palter* when possible. He adds that if one can access a Jewish baker, *pas yisrael* represents the preferred option.



Special Occasions

Whether one generally holds to the higher standard of *pas yisrael* or not, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 603) writes that one should act with care not to eat *pas akum* — both *pas palter* and, of course, *pas baal habayis* — during the *aseres yemei teshuva* between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The Mishnah Berurah (242:6) holds that one should try harder on Shabbos and Yom Tov to only eat *pas yisrael* in honor of the day. The Tur (112) takes the opposite approach, saying that one should make sure they have any type of bread, including *pas palter*, to celebrate Shabbos, even if one normally would not eat *pas palter*.

The Bottom Line

Everyone agrees that if *pas yisrael* is impossible to obtain, eating (kosher-certified) *pas palter* is permissible. The two practical differences are: whether one can eat *pas palter* in a place with a Jewish bakery and *pas yisrael* available, and whether one can eat *pas baal habayis* in a place where they customarily eat *pas palter* because it is too difficult to find *pas yisrael*. The former appears to be a disagreement between Ashkenazim and Sephardim, with the Shulchan Aruch (112:2) taking the stricter approach and the Rema (112:2) granting leniency, although other Ashkenazic *poskim* are more strict. The latter would depend on if *pas palter* was later allowed by the Beis Din only in places where finding *pas yisrael* is impossible, or whether the decree against *pas akum* was never really accepted and enacted with full force (so the decree against *pas baal habayis* would not have been either).

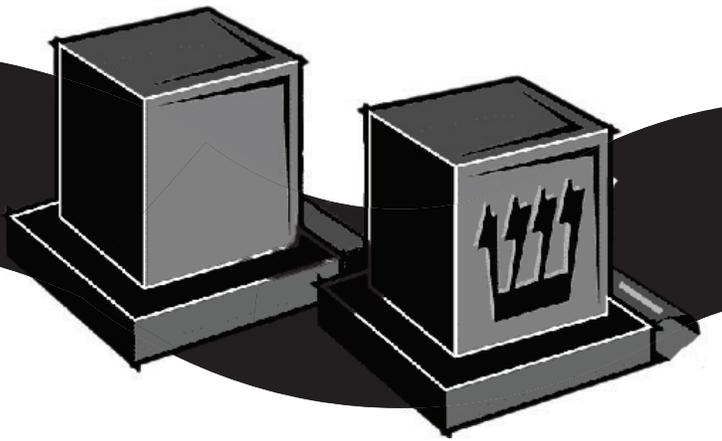
Rav Moshe Feinstein (as told by his son Rav Reuven Feinstein and quoted in Rivevos Efraim 5:596) added one factor with regards to the limits and applications of *pas palter* today. He held that the entire decree against *pas palter* never applied with regards to factory-baked bread, and as such, eating it would be permissible according to all opinions, even for those who would otherwise act stringently. Rabbi Avi Zakutinsky of the Orthodox Union writes that OU Kosher does not rely on Rav Moshe's leniency regarding machine-baked *pas palter* by itself, but will if there are other questionable circumstances.

Make sure to check back next time for an explanation of *chalav yisrael*. While it might sound similar — they both have the word “*yisrael*” in the name, they come from the same mishnah (Avodah Zara 2:6), and their inverses are described as *akum* — the halachic factors that come into play are wildly different. ♦



Obscure Halacha

Ella Goldstein



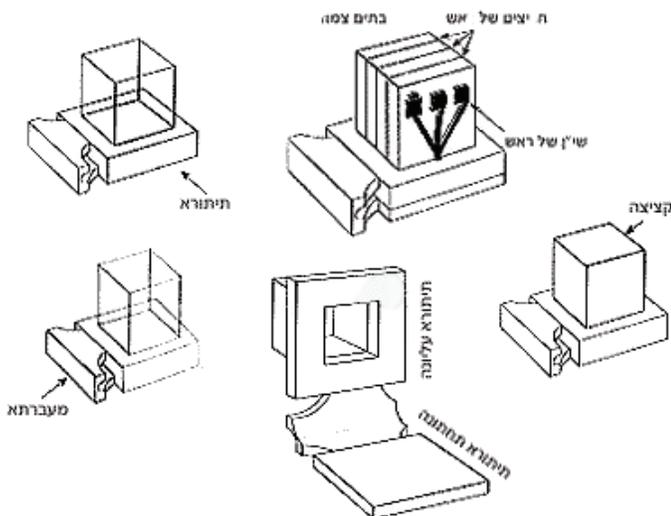
As Jews, most of us don't bat an eye at the idea of someone wrapping small boxes with leather straps around their head and lower bicep during the morning prayers. To others who are not as familiar with this mitzvah, witnessing a bunch of people dressed in these phylacteries might seem a bit strange by itself. But the obscurity of the discussion around tefillin in Halacha doesn't stop there; I bet you didn't know that there are halachot that discuss wearing tefillin upside down! Let's take a look.

Aruch HaShulchan, Orach Chaim 27:17

“אם האיטר צריך לשאול תפילין מאינו איטר – יהפוך המעברתא לצד חוץ, ובוזא יבוא לו הקשר לצד גופו
“If a lefty needs to borrow Tefillin from someone who is not a lefty, he should flip the מעברתא (the passageway that the leather straps run through) on the Tefillin shel yad (Tefillin placed on the arm) to face the outside, [contradicting the typical ruling that the knot should be facing inside]. With that, the knot itself is facing the body.

דאילו יניחה בדרכה יהיה הקשר שלא לצד גופו, ודבר זה אי אפשר בשום אופן. אבל על המעברתא ליבא קפידא כל כך.
If he put [the Tefillin] on the usual way, the knot would be facing away from the body which cannot happen under any circumstances. But, if the מעברתא has to be moved, it is not so bad.

וכן מי שאינו איטר ששואל תפילין מאיטר יעשה כך.”
The same goes for when a non-lefty has to borrow Tefillin from a lefty.”



Even with Mr. Byron's gentle reminders echoing through the halls of AJA on Thursday afternoons, I'm fairly sure that a few students have managed to "FORGET THEIR TEFILLINNNNNN!" in the Phylactery Learning Center (PLC). Although said students may have slightly thwarted Byron's vision of an empty PLC, if they are able to get their hands on a set of tefillin, no matter what hand they are supposed to be worn on, the student should be all set after learning these rules!

Editor's Note: Palette is not advocating for students to leave their tefillin at school. Borrowing tefillin is never ideal, and certainly not when wrong-handedness is involved. These laws should only be exercised if no other correct-handed tefillin are available. ◆



Where Do Chanukkah Gifts Come From?

A History of The Commercialization of Chanukkah

Racheli Seeman

We are all familiar with the practice of giving gifts each night of Chanukah; parents, grandparents, and even siblings present their loved ones with cards, toys, candies, etc. This is a widely variant tradition: some families give money, some give presents, and still some don't give anything at all. But for those families who do, where is this custom from? The answer might — or might not — come as a surprise: Chanukah gifts are almost a direct result of the commercialization of the holiday season.

When examined closely, the practice of giving Chanukah gifts is most common in North America, where Jews are surrounded by other, heavily commercialized cultures, specifically Christianity. The United States Office of Personnel Management classifies Christmas Day as a federal holiday — the same classification as Independence Day or Martin Luther King, Jr., Day — on which all government buildings are closed and federal employees receive a day off of work. American companies began taking advantage of this nationwide “observance” of Christmas beginning in the early 1840s, marketing everything Christmas-themed, from cards to toys to food (the first-ever Christmas card was sold in 1843); while religious traditions predate this, the commercialized celebration only began in the mid-19th century. The number of American Christians compared to American Jews (70.6% versus 1.9%, respectively, according to the Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Study) means that because companies market to the largest, most profitable population, the vast majority of products advertised and sold leading up to the ‘holiday season’ — starting as early as November 1st — are Christmas merchandise.

This is not to say, however, that Chanukah-themed merchandise is not sold. In fact, Chanukah decor and Menorah-stamped gift wrap (and

even Chanukah-themed Christmas ornaments) are becoming more and more popular since the 1950’s, when the commercialized celebration of the Jewish holiday began to gain momentum. When Jewish kids see their Christian friends and classmates sharing tree-shaped cookies leftover from the holiday meal and showing off the new red and green toys that they received, one can only imagine the sense of isolation and loneliness

“Jews have created a parallel seasonal universe of Jewish praxis that allows them to coexist with other Americans in the United States, despite Christmas’s status as a [federal] holiday.”

they feel. Parents, seeing a simple, logical solution for their children, began observing Chanukah in parallel ways, such as giving gifts, so their children didn't feel left out. Rabbi Joshua Plaut explains in his book *A Kosher Christmas*,

“Jews have created a parallel seasonal universe of Jewish praxis that allows them to coexist with other Americans in the United States, despite Christmas’s status as a [federal] holiday.” He argued, “This strategy has made it easier for Jewish parents to influence their children to avoid celebrating Christmas in favor of celebrating Hanukkah.”

While commercialization has helped bring Chanukah into the mainstream, it has also shifted the focus of the holiday from pride and celebration to buying and giving presents. Fundamentally, the practice stems from a long-lasting fear of assimilation that the Jews have known from the days of Egypt, when Yaakov and his family agreed not to change their names, language, or clothing in order to protect their Jewish identity (Pesikta Zutra on Devarim 41a). But in actuality, it might just be the most non-Jewish practice in Judaism. When interviewed, a local rabbi expressed that commercialized Chanukah gifts (things like store-bought cards, blue and white chocolate, etc.) make the celebration “seem too much like Christmas.” He continued, “I am in favor of getting presents, though. So I guess that kind of contradicts what I said.”

So I conclude with a warning: The exchange of gifts can be deeply beneficial in maintaining American Jew’s practice and participation in Jewish festivals. However, we must be careful that this practice does not undermine the entire message of the Chanukah celebration: Jewish pride.◆



This Month in Jewish History: 11 Tevet

Changing American Law to Allow Jewish Military Chaplains

Sivan Livnat

In 1861, upon the outbreak of the Civil War, Congress adopted a bill allowing each regiment to appoint their own Christian-ordained chaplain but prohibiting non-Christians from serving as military chaplains. Soon thereafter, the YMCA (under whose authority military chaplains worked at the time) discovered that Michael Allen, a Jew, had been elected from the Pennsylvania 5th Calvary's 65th Regiment to become its chaplain. To avoid a disgraceful military dismissal, Allen resigned from his post. Although he was not an ordained rabbi, Allen was well-versed in Jewish *minhag* and taught at the Philadelphia Hebrew Education Society.

Instead of simply giving up after Allen's resignation, the same regiment elected Rabbi Arnold Fischel, a Dutch immigrant serving as the rabbi of New York's Congregation Shearith Israel, to test the constitutionality of the religiously-discriminatory law. By electing Rabbi Fischel, the officers of the regiment created a situation that only challenged the religious qualification and not the ordination qualification of the chaplaincy law.

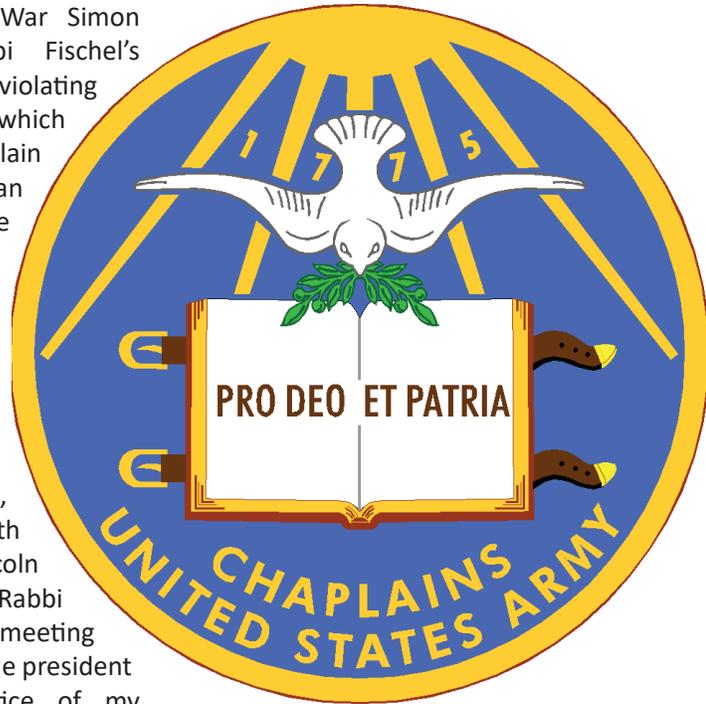
Secretary of War Simon Cameron rejected Rabbi Fischel's appointment as violating the same law, which specified that the chaplain must be "of some Christian denomination." In response to the rejection, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites invited Rabbi Fischel to lobby with them to change the language of the law that led to his rejection. Throughout his lobbying, Rabbi Fischel met with President Abraham Lincoln to discuss the situation. Rabbi Fischel wrote about his meeting with Lincoln, writing that the president "fully admitted the justice of my remarks ... and agreed that something ought to be done to meet this case."

Although the case was never brought to court, Rabbi Fischel ultimately succeeded in changing the wording of the law from "Christian" to "religious" only seven months after his meeting with President Lincoln, which had occurred on the 11th of Tevet. This resulted in appointing more Jewish chaplains in the future.

After the law changed, two Jewish chaplains were installed in the Union Army, Rabbi Jacob Frankel in Philadelphia and Rabbi Ferdinand Leopold Sarner in New York. Now, after over 150 years, there are 11 active-duty Jewish chaplains serving in the US Army.

In historian Bertram Korn's opinion, Rabbi Fischel's "patience and persistence, his unselfishness and consecration ... won for American Jewry the first major victory of a specifically Jewish nature ... on a matter touching the Federal government."

In a similar case involving



Jews and the US military, the Supreme Court ruled against the Jewish plaintiff, but once again, after much lobbying, Congress amended the law. In *Goldman v. Weinberger*, the Court ruled that Jewish officers were denied the right to wear religious head coverings while in uniform; two years later, in 1988, Congress enacted legislation to allow "neat and conservative" religious head coverings.

These religious victories display the great importance of advocating for one's rights. The United States Constitution guarantees the "free exercise" of any religion and prohibits the "establishment" of a state religion. Under these protections, Jews have been able to flourish in America. It is incumbent on us to exercise our legal rights to ensure this continues.

"These religious victories display the great advocating for one's rights."



The Future of Asara B'Tevet

Bringing New Light to a Lesser-Known Fast Day

Jemima Schoen

Asara B'Tevet is one of the more obscure fast days of the year. It happens right after Chanukah, a more major event on the Jewish calendar; and is often confused with other fast days like Shiva Asar B'Tammuz, Tisha B'Av, and Tzom Gedalia. These four fasts share a common historical context, quite unfortunately, considering the fact that these are all days of mourning. Like these other fasts — which Zechariah (8:19) connects to the collective destruction of the Temple — Asara B'Tevet commemorates the Jews losing to a larger and stronger army and being forced to live in fear and deprivation. This specific case saw the Babylonian army lay siege on Jerusalem around the year 600 BCE — the beginning of the end of the era of the First Temple; Shiva Asar B'Tammuz commemorates the actual breach of Jerusalem's walls. Tisha B'Av marks the full completion of the First Beit Hamikdash era, with the destruction of Jerusalem and the eventual expulsion of the Jewish people. Adding insult to injury, the remaining Jews killed one of their own after the Babylonians put him in charge of them. All of these fast days center around the same time period in history, but what else connects these days?

In Zechariah 8:19, Hashem tells the prophet that when the Mashiach comes, all of these fasts “shall become occasions for joy and gladness, happy festivals for the House of Judah.” But how in the world does that make sense? As Rav Hana bar Bizna teaches in the name of Rabbi Shimon Hasida (Rosh Hashanah 28b), fast days are meant to evoke feelings of sorrow and

pain. Even if the requirement to fast in itself does not indicate that it should be a sorrowful day (Yom Kippur, for example, focuses on repentance and judgement), the placement of these fast days on some of the most devastating times in Jewish history would certainly indicate that these were not meant to be days of “joy and gladness.”

Nonetheless, Rabbi Shimon Hasida does provide an explanation as to why these fast days would be happy. “When there is peace in the world, they will be times of joy and gladness,” he says. This means that not only should these days serve as

“To properly honor the spirit of the day, we must look at ourselves and those around us and find ways to live in harmony.”

commemorations for dark times in our past, but they should also serve as an inspiration to better ourselves so that this future of joyful days comes sooner. Rather than remember these events as distant memories, we must draw from these pieces of history to inspire us to make our world a better place. We must take these days to love a little more, and hate a lot less.

Perhaps we can see a similar concept in a holiday we celebrated a few weeks ago: Veterans' Day. Originally, this holiday was called exclusively “Armistice Day,” to commemorate the truce between Germany and the

Allied Forces in World War I. Why was it changed to Veterans' Day? President Woodrow Wilson's proclamation changing the name of the day declares, “To us in America, the reflections of Armistice Day will be filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory.” If we simply looked at November 11 as a day in history, that would be well and good, but what difference would it make? We study history to learn from our mistakes and identify what is important to us. When many of the Allied Forces looked at Armistice Day,

they did not just see a day in history; they saw an opportunity to honor those without whom the day would not have been possible. Armistice Day is now a national holiday, honored by the entire country. It gives us the opportunity to truly thank our veterans for their service and for working towards the greater good, like a worldwide cease-fire.

Looking back at the terrible events that we commemorate on these four fast days, we can both mourn and draw hope. We know who we are as a nation now, and we will stand stronger and more united than ever, making sure to give each and every person kindness and respect. On Asara B'Tevet, Shiva Asar B'Tammuz, Tisha B'Av, and Tzom Gedalia, we need to look closely at the root of these terrible experiences, and of all oppression, which is a lack of kindness. To properly honor the spirit of the day, we must look at ourselves and those around us and find ways to live in harmony. Only once we capture this spirit of peace, can we finally have these joyous days. ♦



A Volley of Changes

Volleyball Adapts Several Times Throughout Season

Daliya Wallenstein



At the beginning of the year, if you were to look for the volleyball team, you would have had trouble finding them. You might first check the gym; the gym would probably be locked, dark, and empty inside. At this point, you might notice some people running across the soccer field, but that is just the boys flag football team. You know the team must be practicing somewhere, but they don't seem to be in any of the normal places. Yet if you look a little closer -- maybe tilt your head and squint a little -- you could find the girls volleyball team, playing in the far, small corner of the field.

Initially, during the summer,

AJA did not plan to offer any fall sports. Yet, as understanding regarding COVID-19 continued to develop, AJA adjusted its plans accordingly; around mid-August, AJA decided that they could indeed arrange for fall sports. By the beginning of the school year, AJA girls could count on having a volleyball season -- in some form or another. Initially practices would be held outside on the field; eventually, the team moved outside.

As the school year began it was still unclear how to best approach

“Over the past year the volleyball team went from a nice, large gym to a small, grass corner. Of course, safety concerns because of COVID-19 dictated some of these changes, but Coach Zimmerman felt that the fall sports nevertheless did not receive equal treatment.”

COVID-19 in athletics, so the school's medical committee continued its process in collecting data. To err on the side of safety, the school held all sports outdoors (this provides open air circulation that helps prevent the spread of the virus).

While flag football, the other fall sport, is typically played on a field, volleyball is another case entirely. Much of the sport is dependent on the ability to slide on a gym floor using knee pads -- something grass just cannot accommodate. Furthermore, during a particularly rainy season, volleyball practices were often cancelled because “there are times that you can get away with playing flag football in

the rain, but you can't do that with volleyball,” Athletic Director Rodney Zimmerman explained.

In addition, the vast majority of the soccer field was doled out to the boys for flag football. Over the past year, the volleyball team went from a nice, large gym to a small, grass corner. Of course, safety concerns because of COVID-19 dictated some of these changes, but Coach Zimmerman felt that the fall sports nevertheless did not receive equal treatment. “We didn't feel that it was set up respectfully,” he said. “Why does football get a whole field and volleyball gets a corner?”

Coach Zimmerman went back to the drawing board and revisited the idea of conducting volleyball indoors. Based on various factors, Coach Zimmerman ultimately decided that volleyball would move inside the gym. Firstly, the weather: Ongoing rain and increasingly cold temperatures continuously impeded practices. Secondly, safety: Coach Zimmerman explained that playing indoors is “considered under CDC guidelines as



safe.” In addition, parents fill out the Parent Locker on a daily basis, keeping the school up-to-date on each student’s health status. Furthermore, since volleyball did not include any people outside the “AJA bubble” (the team did not play matches against other schools due to the lack of other schools willing to match AJA’s COVID-19 protocols), playing inside the gym did not drastically differ from learning inside the classroom. Lastly, Coach Zimmerman stated, “We can’t just run for the rest of our lives.” At some point, he believes, we must face the risks and return indoors.

The girls had understood the precautions of playing outside. “There’s still a pandemic going on, volleyball or not,” remarked co-captain Kira Mermelstein. Yet when they moved inside the gym, the team was excited and grateful. “Playing outside was very unconventional and harder than I expected, so I was eager to get back inside,” said junior Ella Goldstein. In a survey, co-captain Emily Gavriellov similarly said she felt extremely happy to be back on the court.

Unfortunately, their time inside the high school gym was short lived. Back in the beginning of the school year, when all sports took place on the field, Coach Zimmerman and the administration began looking for ways to bring in revenue for future athletics. Since at that time the gym wasn’t in use, the school planned to rent it out to others. By the time the girls planned to move back inside the gym, the

contracts were already in place. After two practices inside the high school gym, schedules conflicted and the girls had to move to the middle school gym.

The volleyball team found this second transition upsetting. Co-captain Miriam Frances expressed frustration in needing to use a gym not built according to high school regulation sizes. Sivan Livnat said that the whole situation “kind of begs the question, ‘What’s the point of a high school gym if the high schoolers aren’t able to use it?’” Ella felt similarly, saying, “It’s our gym and our school, so it was a little annoying because we felt like this is our home court, but we’re not even allowed to use it.”

Ella believes that this fits in a pattern of less-than-equal treatment towards volleyball. “There have been a few instances during my time playing volleyball at AJA where I felt like volleyball and a lot of other sports, like baseball or soccer, don’t get as much recognition or equal treatment as other sports, like basketball or boys flag football,” explained Ella. For example, she said, the school has never organized Saturday night games for volleyball, though these are staples of the basketball season.

Moving locations a total of three times, the volleyball team went through multiple major changes this season. From no season, to an outdoor season, to an indoor season, the season continuously adapted to changing situations. And throughout

the season, the team felt they received the short end of the stick. While Coach Zimmerman says, “Equality is big. Girls and boys should have the same opportunities as each other,” the girls on the volleyball team seem to feel this is not their reality. ◆



Profile: Coach Lamont Watkins



A Look into the Basketball Past of AJA's Boys Basketball Head Coach

Matthew Minsk

After a Saturday night win last year, a friend of boys basketball head coach Lamont Watkins came into the locker room. After briefly addressing the team, the visitor praised his old teammate, calling him one of the best basketball players he had seen play. The players had little experience to judge the claim; Coach Watkins seldom participates in practice — it seems he has only once, his first year at AJA, when only three players were able to make it to practice. When asked about why he doesn't shoot around in practice, the coach laughed and simply said, "I just don't anymore."

Nevertheless, Coach Watkins's friend appears to be on solid footing. Jokingly, Coach Watkins described himself as "Steph Curry before Steph Curry," recalling when he beat then-NBA player Trent Tucker in a shoot-out during high school. (Tucker was a career 41% 3-point shooter in the NBA over 11 seasons.) His alma mater would also agree; Coach Watkins was inducted into the Salem International University Athletic Hall of Fame in 2016.

Growing up in Mount Vernon, New York, Coach Watkins' first love was surprisingly baseball. But, he said, "everyone gravitates to basketball" in New York since you can play basketball indoors year-round, so he dropped baseball.

Coach Watkins played his first three years of high school basketball at Mount Vernon High School before transferring to nearby New Rochelle High School for his senior year. Throughout his basketball career, he

played point and shooting guard. At the collegiate level, he averaged 19 points and more than 4 assists per game at Salem International, which put him at fourth and sixth in school history, respectively, at the time of his graduation.

After a brief stint in the NBA Summer League with the Los Angeles Clippers, Coach Watkins took his talents to Japan, where he played professionally for a year and a half. He explained that as part of his one-year contract, he could also work another job for six months of the year. During the second six-month period, he worked as an English teacher in addition to playing basketball; after his basketball contract was up, he finished up his year teaching.

Coach Watkins shared a funny story about his very first night in Japan. He described sitting in a hotel room with some friends on the 31st floor of a high-rise building when they felt the buildings starting to sway. It turned out Japan experienced an earthquake, and they were instructed over the hotel intercom to take cover in their bathtub.

When he returned stateside, Coach Watkins got into coaching almost immediately. On his second day back, a friend who served as recreation director at a children's home offered him a basketball coaching gig, which he accepted. From there, he coached at a few schools in Yonkers, Brooklyn,

and his own high school in New Rochelle before moving down to Atlanta, where he coached at the Weber School and now at AJA. He has also coached AAU travel ball teams.

Throughout his playing career, Coach Watkins played under coaches who impacted him and now influence his coaching style. In eighth grade, Coach Watkins said, Coach Grabiano taught him the fundamentals of basketball: how to shoot a layup, how to square up for a shot. Coach Watkins confessed, "That's how I fell in love with [basketball]." Coach Tony Forentino, his high school coach for three years, similarly taught discipline. "If you were in practice, and you wasn't (sic) ready to practice," Coach Watkins remembered, "he would just [throw] you out." Coach Watkins added that Coach Forentino helped him embark on "the regimen of always being ready."

Coach Watkins' next high school coach, Jim Bostic, approached the game differently. Already steeped in the mantra of hard work and fundamentals, Coach Watkins benefited from who he described as a "player's coach." He explained that with a "player's coach," a player can

“just sit and have a conversation” with their coach, even outside of practice. Although his head coach in college acted more like Coach Forentino, he called Assistant Coach Andy Sorine “the ultimate player’s coach.”

As a coach, Coach Watkins has tried to pull from the best of both worlds. While he has tried to instill discipline — for example, a player tardy to practice runs laps until Coach tells him to stop, if at all — he sees himself as a player’s coach. He said as much, using his relationship with his players to elaborate on what it means to him to be a player’s coach:

“Like how you guys come talk to me all the time... [How] sometimes I joke with y’all on the bench -- that’s a player’s coach,” he remarked.

Coach Watkins said that one of his favorite parts of being a coach is the “opportunity to help kids grow” and see them mature. Now in his fourth year at AJA, this year’s seniors (the author included) started with Coach Watkins in their freshmen year, which was also his first at the school. Looking at this year’s batch, he said that he has seen the “process [of them] as [people] just continuing to get better.” He explained that it “is always rewarding to see that your work, you know, isn’t in vain,” when he looks at his graduating players every year.

A large part of Coach Watkins’ contribution to players’ development comes from his connection to the players and how he embodies his role as a “player’s coach” — even beyond basketball. He views attributes like patience, accountability, responsibility, and dedication to help student-athletes both on the court and in life. Just like “you can’t always just go at one speed” on the court, he taught, the same applies in life; similarly, a person owes his employer or employees accountability and mutual respect, and “you got to be dedicated to your craft” — regardless of what it is. For that reason, he said, “Basketball is nothing more than a tool — that’s it — for whatever you aspire

to be in life.” Coach Watkins wants his players to have the attitude of, “You know what, forget about basketball. I just like talking to Coach. I like learning something about life from Coach.”

This attitude seems to have trickled down to the team in the way the players relate to their coach. Players know that a boneheaded mistake will likely result in a quick hook — Coach Watkins recalled calling a timeout to remove Oron Porat (AJA ‘19) from the game after a poorly-shot wide-open layup — but as long as they show effort, they will soon return to the game.

“He views attributes like patience, accountability, responsibility, and dedication to help student-athletes both on the court and in life.”

In a signal of a strong connection, the team seems to have adopted many of Coach Watkins’ distinct mannerisms and sayings and taken to some of his more creative nicknames. Junior Yered Wittenberg has proudly adopted the “road dog” moniker he earned from Coach Watkins during the lengthy drives to the Cooper Yeshiva High School Invitational Tournament in Memphis, and the dribbling antics of Gabi Gadelov (AJA ‘20) became widely recognized as the “Gabi Show.” Beyond that, the team group chat for the last four years has borne the name “9 TIMES OUT OF 10” after Coach Watkins’ oft-used expression that if a player commits a certain mistake or successfully executes, then a certain result will follow “nine times out of ten.” After each drill, Coach Watkins selects a player from the victorious squad to shoot a free throw to “validate” the drill; if he makes the free throw, then the other team has to run a down-and-back, but if he misses, then his otherwise-winning team receives the punishment. In the latter case, players know that they will be greeted by a “you won, but you lost.”

This dynamic plays out in post-practice and post-game team meetings. Coach Watkins names all of his seniors

captains and allows the team after he does. This Noah Chen has often fallen pattern of reinforcing Coach W’s mantras. The senior captain has urged the team to “invest in a jump rope” to improve their cardio stamina, instructed them to make “aggressive mistakes” because “you can’t coach effort,” and plead with them to avoid “burning the midnight oil.” Noah cautioned players that it is better to ask if they don’t know a play instead of making a fool of themselves in a game that would require Coach Watkins’ characteristic quick substitution.

Besides being removed from the game, making a mistake from not knowing the playbook well enough or displaying a lack of a basketball IQ brings an even more dreaded punishment. After a particularly freshman mistake, Coach Watkins will walk over to a player, look at them with a sigh, and simply ask, “What grade you in?” Then, he will look over to the rest of the team with an exasperated smile and, like he is telling an inside joke, will ask them the same question about their teammate — just one part of Coach Watkins’ close relationship with his team as a “player’s coach.” ◆





Time Out

Girls' Basketball Takes Season for Practice Daliya Wallenstein

Coach Alex Prince calls the team over and tells us to take a seat. The seven of us (now five) form a circle on the gym floor and look at Coach Prince. I am unsure of what to expect, but I have the sense that something is up.

Coach Prince tells us that she is “just going to be real” with us: Our girls basketball team does not have the numbers or skills to play competitively this season. With only seven players -- all still learning the game to some extent -- we will lose if we compete. We should cut down on our games and focus on practice, she suggests.

Her mind is made up, but she wants to hear our thoughts. Going around the circle, we each share our opinions. I am caught off guard; at my turn, I just share that I am still processing this new plan. Regardless of my uncertainty, after making it around the circle, the consensus is clear: The majority of us accept the plan. It is official: Our team has taken a time out.

During this year's season, Coach Prince changed the direction of her focus. She said, “My goals -- they have nothing to do with [the team's] record. They have to do with [the players] being mentally stronger, physically stronger, and being able to understand and articulate the game.” As the season began, Coach Prince knew that in order to reach these goals, she needed to start from scratch. “Basketball is extremely complex,” Coach Prince said, “and in order to be successful we need to have a strong foundation. Fundamentals [are] the foundation of anything.” With the original schedule for the season, there

simply was not enough time to master the fundamentals before the games.

In addition, Coach Prince wanted the team “to feel comfortable within the four lines” of the basketball court. She hoped that the team could feel at ease asking questions and making mistakes. To do this, she planned to treat everyone -- regardless of their actual experience -- “as if it is day one.” This does not mean Coach Prince went easy on her players -- Coach Prince will never, ever waver in her demand of drive, dedication, and communication, she said. However, she presumed nothing in terms of prior knowledge or skill. After years of coaching, she knew that “different teams have to be coached differently,” and Coach Prince believed this approach can take the team far.

All in all, the team had mixed emotions after establishing the changes to the season, due to a conglomeration of disappointment and relief for many. Regardless of understanding -- and even liking -- the new plan, removing games from the season came with feelings of loss. Junior Racheli Seeman said, “Even though I know that [Coach Prince] knows what's best for us,” the lack of games feels disappointing.

Senior Noa Mishli explained that she will miss how games give a chance to implement the results of hours of practice. In addition, the desire to win games provides a source of motivation during practices.

For freshman Tova Bregman, practicing for what feels like the sake of practice offered less motivation. She admitted, “If we were coming [to practice] and we had a game next Saturday, I would be pushing myself a little more.” But she wondered, “By the game, would I be ready? Maybe not.”

As a senior, Noa especially mourned the loss of games from the season. This season is her last playing for the Lady Jags, and she wished the team could compete. However, her feelings weren't so clear cut. She stated, “I want games, but I want to win them,” and she doubted the team's capability to do so. “I don't think we are ready to play a full game yet,” she believed. “But I'm scared we will never be.”

Concurrently, Coach Prince's new approach offered relief for many on the team. For Tova specifically, the focus on practice and low expectations felt alleviating. New to basketball, leading up to the beginning of the season Tova worried she lacked the skills needed to keep up with the team. Taking off the pressure of competing eased the stress of learning the ropes of the game. Racheli also appreciated the elimination of Sunday practices: “I have a lot going on this year and a lot of work. So being able to have my Sundays open is something that will really benefit me.”

The team also believed that, in the long run, this time to practice can make a big difference. Junior Aviya Mishli said, “It will be better for the team next year because we will be developing our skill.” Racheli said, in a similar vein, “It's what will benefit us the most... Next year, or when we do start playing games, we will be much better equipped.”

Just weeks into practice, the improvement was apparent. Coach Prince believed that “the energy is already different.” Tova saw an increase in her stamina within the first week, and Noa felt that this year she “can talk more openly.” This season's schedule differs from a typical season's, but the team does their best to “trust the process,” as Coach Prince always urges. ◆

“Regardless of understanding -- and even liking -- the new plan, removing games from the season came with feelings of loss.”

The Atlanta Cultural Corner: Midtown Madness

Get Your Artistic Inspiration Flowing!

Dalya Silverman

The Atlanta Cultural Corner is a new Palette feature exploring cultural establishments and opportunities in the Atlanta area. This enables our readership to learn more about our city and discover places they may not have known before.

A popular area for tourists and locals alike, Midtown Atlanta has much to offer if you wish to spend a day in the city. The Beltline and Ponce City Market — both notable in Atlantan culture — are two highlights.

The Beltline used to be a railway corridor that snaked around the core of Atlanta, near Ponce De Leon Avenue, about 15 minutes away from Toco Hills. It was later transformed into a walking path -- perfect for relaxing strolls and biking. Ryan Gravel developed the idea to convert the railway corridor in his master's degree thesis at Georgia Tech in the late 90's. This plan connects 45 different neighborhoods to city schools, cultural destinations, and shopping districts, all on one "life-affirming transit greenway," as stated on Gravel's website. Although the path remains unfinished — only half of its projected 22 miles have been completed — the Beltline has already become extremely popular.

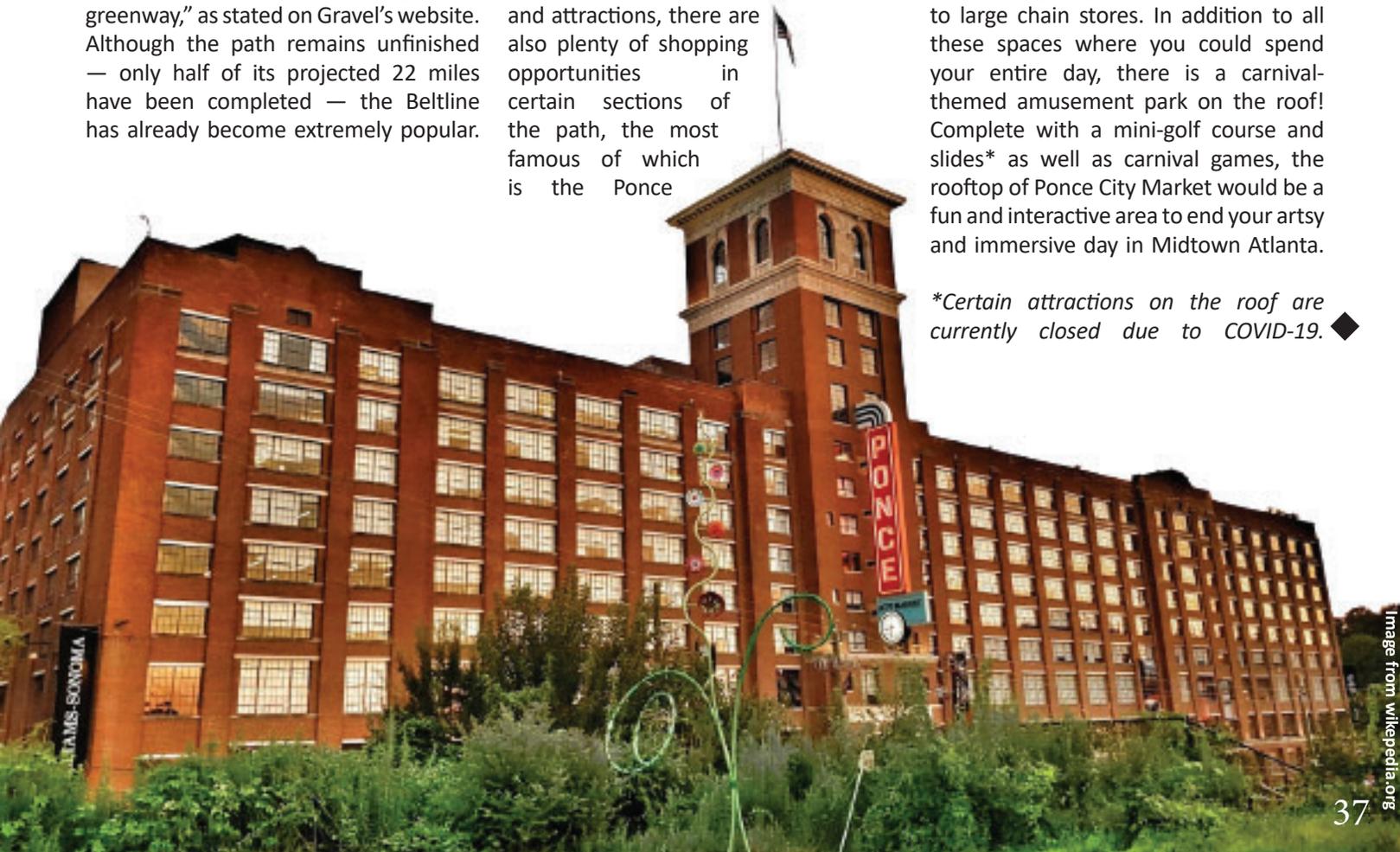
On the Beltline, residents and visitors rent electric scooters to traverse the Beltline, and there is usually a plethora of options to choose from. Skaters can practice or show off their skills on the path or in the skatepark. The artwork surrounding the Beltline adds a special touch: whether it's graffiti or donated sculptures that line sections of the Beltline, everyone can enjoy the artsy atmosphere. Amateur photographers take advantage of the giant murals painted on the walls of the underpasses to snap some really unique shots. Street performers add to the ambiance; reggae and jazz are the absolute best background music for your time on the Beltline.

In addition to the great artwork and attractions, there are also plenty of shopping opportunities in certain sections of the path, the most famous of which is the Ponce

City Market. Ponce City Market emerged from the shell of a Sears retail store, warehouse, and regional office that operated from 1926 until the late '80s. In 1990, the City of Atlanta bought the building and sold the space to private-equity group Jamestown. The group, along with developer Green Street Properties, worked together to transform the building into a mixed-use development. This granted the space much more versatility and brought with it many new patrons and visitors.

The options Ponce City Market has to offer are immense. The mixed-use building contains shops and restaurants, but also offices and residential living spaces. The shopping opportunities in the building range from local boutiques to large chain stores. In addition to all these spaces where you could spend your entire day, there is a carnival-themed amusement park on the roof! Complete with a mini-golf course and slides* as well as carnival games, the rooftop of Ponce City Market would be a fun and interactive area to end your artsy and immersive day in Midtown Atlanta.

**Certain attractions on the roof are currently closed due to COVID-19.* ◆



Screaming

Asher Lytton

I wish I were brave enough to scream.
To fill my lungs with air,
To release one torrent of suffering, torment, longing,
To stand on the blinding white driveway,
And howl at the black void of space,
At the sparkling, winking stars.

Screaming is transparent.
Screaming is bold.
Screaming is simple.

In one motion screaming reveals you to the world,
It says:
“Look!
This is my pain!”
It captures the attention of the universe.

Surely my reverberating cries will reach God.
He will hear my hidden plea.
Maybe he will reach down and fix life --

Fix me.

Maybe something will scream back.
Maybe the ground will open up and swallow me.
Maybe the dark tendrils of the night sky will reach out,

And lift me into the darkness.

But I am too scared to scream.
Because what if I scream at the night sky,
And nothing happens.

No eyes suddenly notice me.
No God suddenly answers me.
No lightning comes to strike me.

Because after all,
It's nighttime,
And everyone is asleep.

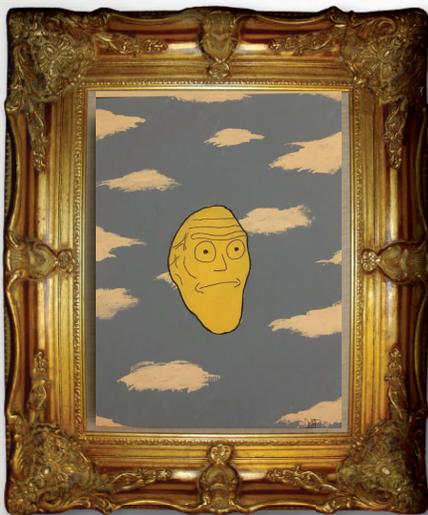


Student Art Submissions

The incredible creativity and talent showcased in the student art submissions section highlights our students' love and dedication to the arts. If you are interested in submitting your masterpieces, email the Arts and Culture Section Editor (dsilverman@atljewishacademy.org).



Dalya S., 11



Donny, 10



Gefen, 12



Recipe of the Issue

Ella Goldstein

Lentil Vegetable Soup

As the weather gets colder, one of my personal favorite ways to warm up is with a nice, hot bowl of soup. This delicious, quick, and easy lentil vegetable soup is the perfect meal that will get you nice and toasty in no time.

Ingredients:

- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 cup lentils
- 2 cups water
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 ½ zucchini, cubed
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- 2 bay leaves
- 5 cups chicken bouillon
- 2 large carrots, diced
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- 1 can stewed tomatoes
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- Salt to taste



Combine the onion, celery, garlic, olive oil, and 3 tablespoons of bouillon. Cook over medium heat stirring frequently, until the onion is tender. Add all of the remaining ingredients except for the salt. Bring to a boil and lower heat. Simmer for 25 minutes or until lentils are tender. Add salt to taste. Enjoy!

Emoji Fun

Ella Goldstein

Emoji Rebus Puzzles

Easy

🏠 +2 + 🏠
🙏 +U+ (⭐ -r+ff)
R+(💡 -r +d) 🗣️

Hard

W+💡 Y+ (🐯 -b) 😊
🔑 +p A 🎲 + 🧑
(🌊 -ve)+sh Y+ (🐯 -b) H+(🐯 -t)+d

1. Back to school; 2. Thank you staff; 3. Read Palette; 4. Wear your mask; 5. Keep a distance; 6. Wash your hands.



Emoji of the Edition

These times are unpredictable, strange, and different for everyone. Just like the “Man In Suit Levitating” emoji, nobody expected this, but when we really try our best and work together, we can make the best of our situation. I hope everyone has had a great transition back to school and a great first semester!

Ticklishness

A Look into the Science of Tickling

Kayla Minsk

We all have most likely been tickled or have tickled someone else at some point in our lives. Maybe your response to tickling is uncontrollable laughter while someone else may not seem phased at all. There have been many studies and formulated theories as to why we are ticklish. Let's take a look at some different ideas.

First off, there are two types of tickling: knismesis and gargalesis. Knismesis is the reflex we get from a light irritation. The discomfort and adrenaline following by the tickle causes our body to involuntarily want to remove the source of discomfort (in this case, the tickle). For example, when a bug crawls on our arm, we flinch and brush at the irritated spot.

Gargalesis is the intense tickling that causes people to laugh when touched in a sensitive area. Gargalesis is the type of tickling that stimulates the hypothalamus, the part in your brain in charge of emotional reactions and the "fight or flight" response. This led to the birth of the

theory that our squirming response is an automatic reaction when touched in our most vulnerable places for attack, such as our neck, feet, and rib cage or stomach. Similar to the fight or flight theory, researchers believe that this reflex-like response is an instinctive defense mechanism that compresses our body, making it less open for attack.

Places like our feet and other common ticklish spots are packed with nerve receptors that are linked to the somatosensory cortex, a part of the brain that receives sensory information from the body. It is believed that this sensitivity makes it easier for us to react faster when threatened.

The emotional side of tickling, such as uncontrollable laughter, is thought to be an instinctive emotional response. Your laughter, rather than indicating actual happiness or enjoyment, is just a response to the hypothalamus being stimulated.

Another aspect in tickling someone is the element of surprise. The

reason we can't tickle ourselves is because we are anticipating it, and since no immediate threat is detected, the fight or flight response isn't triggered. Similarly, if your friend tells you they are about to try and tickle you, you're expecting it and may not have an intense reaction.

Again, researchers and scientists don't fully understand why some people are ticklish while others are not. However, there have been studies that suggest a person's emotional state can contribute to their reaction when tickled. For example, someone who is upset, anxious, or angry may not be as ticklish in that moment as someone who is in more of an upbeat mood. As we continue in school, remember to stay in an upbeat--and ticklish-- state of mind! ♦



Quote Unquote

"Enough about bread, let's talk about Communism."
-Sivan Livnat

"If you find an eyeball rolling around the school, don't worry, it's mine."
-Mr. Gillin

"I only use the word 'tyrannical' because it sounds like a dinosaur."
- Yered Wittenberg

"Stop! You're hurting the Cheerios!
Ow ow ow ow ow ow ow."
- Margalit Lytton

"I have so much friends now!"
-Yael Yankelevitch

"Yeah she could teach us about NASDAQ." -Sivan Livnat
"Is that an Among Us code?"
- Josh Asherian

Horoscopes

Ella Goldstein



Aquarius

January 28th -
February 18th

Jumping into a pile of leaves. When thinking of fall activities, playing in the leaves is one of the first things that comes to mind. We've all seen it in the movies, but only some of us are fun enough to try it out. Aquarians love classic festive activities, so playing in the leaves is perfect for you!

Reflecting on what you're grateful for. With Thanksgiving a few weeks in the rearview mirror, you still reflect on the past and what you are grateful for. Your friendliness and compassion have blessed you with much to be grateful for, and you are quick to recognize that!



Pisces

February 19th -
March 20th



Aries

March 21st -
April 19th

Going to a corn maze. A corn maze combines the great outdoors with a difficult challenge- perfect for Aries. Map? You don't need one. Your energy and courage help you find your way to the end of the maze.

Cozying up with a hot drink. As the weather gets colder, your favorite beverage gets warmer. Your warm-heartedness pairs perfectly with a warm drink. Taurus live in sweaters and fuzzy socks, and have definitely been awaiting the fall season since springtime. So grab a blanket and get cozy!



Taurus

April 20th -
May 21st



Gemini

May 22nd -
June 21st

Reading by the fire. You're one smart cookie who takes advantage of every free minute in your schedule. Geminis are very curious and love to watch a story unfold. When you're reading, you immerse yourself in every page of the book. Although you like to leave the house and hang out with friends, having some R and R is your guilty pleasure.

Baking pie. Cancers are the ideal roommate: They pour love and compassion into everything, including pie crusts! The sweet smell of pie that wafts through your home represents your caring nature. Whether it's apple, pumpkin, or pecan pie, your culinary skills take the cake — or pie — every time.



Cancer

June 22nd -
July 22nd

What is your favorite fall/winter activity based on your zodiac sign?

Leo

July 23rd -
August 22nd

Carving pumpkins. You might not always take the time to express your creative side, you are extremely artistically talented. Although not everybody would (or should) trust a Leo with a knife, your daring and courageous qualities will help you create beautiful designs on each seasonal gourd.

- Apple picking. Not only is apple picking a fun outing, but it is a practical experience; by picking your own apples, you save a trip to the grocery store.
- Plus, the ability to hand-pick your own bushel will satisfy your perfectionist side. You often find a balance between fun and responsibility and manage to work hard while still making time to play hard.

Virgo

August 23rd -
September 23rd

Libra

September 24th -
October 23rd

Going on a hayride. Your best friends would describe you as a very chill person. Don't get me wrong, you aren't lazy, but you value your quiet time and love to relax. During the fall season, the perfect place to relax while enjoying nature is on a hayride!

- Going on a hike. Being the multitasker you are, you have found a way to accomplish multiple tasks all in an hour, give or take. A hike is a perfect way to get some exercise, watch the leaves change color, and, because of your sociable nature, hang out with a friend in a safe and COVID-friendly environment!

Scorpio

October 24th -
November 21st

Sagittarius

November 22nd -
December 21st

Updating your fall wardrobe. Although some may not think that shopping for clothes is a fun way to burn some time, you respectfully disagree. Your responsible qualities push you to make the most out of your time, which, for you, means updating your fall wardrobe! Happy shopping!

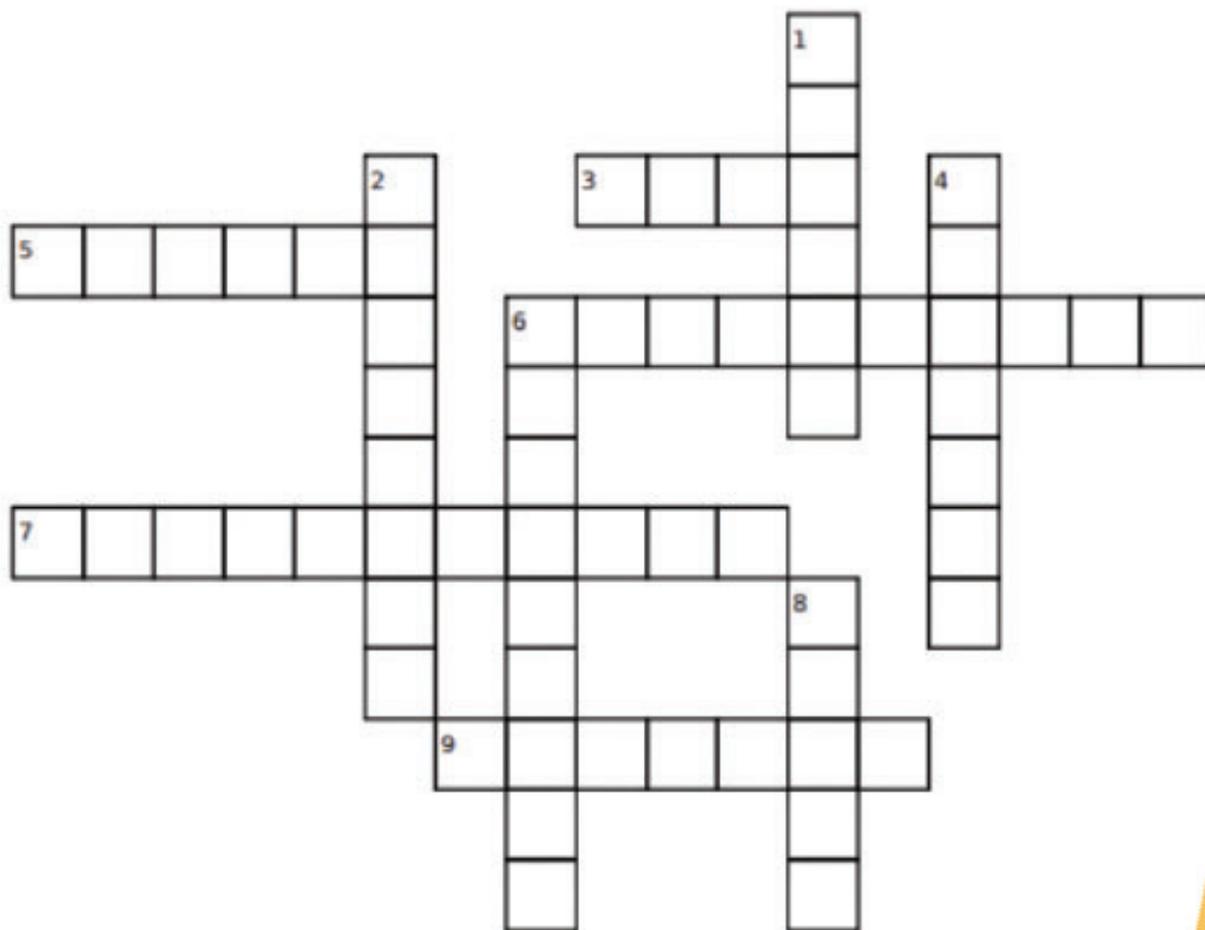
- Learn to knit/crochet. You're very patient and practical, so you are always open to trying new things, especially creative activities. Although it's a bit tedious, knitting or crocheting provides you with a side hobby and maybe a new sweater or two. If you get stuck, Dr. Stephenson and Mrs. Hecht are right around the corner to help you out!

Capricorn

December 22nd -
January 27th

Crossword Puzzle

Ella Goldstein



Down:

1. Falcons starting Running Back
2. First Jewish SCOTUS justice
4. Helper candle that is used to light the other candles on the channukiah
6. King during the time of Chanukah
8. 17th Parsha in the Torah

Across:

3. Maoz ____ Yeshuati
5. Jewish high school basketball tournament in Memphis
6. Common topping for latkes
7. Maccabeats Chanukah song
9. 2020 Chagiga production



Answers: Down: 1. Gurley, 2. Brandeis, 4. Shamash, 6. Achashverosh, 8. Yitro
Across: 3. Tzur, 5. Cooper, 6. Applesauce, 7. Candlelight, 9. Shmaltz

Satire: New School Policies

Sivan Livnat

With a single step into the High School this year, one can see the stark differences from previous years. These differences come in many shapes and sizes, but all revolve around enforcing COVID-related safety protocols. This helpful guide will cover the intricacies of each protocol so that all students know exactly what they must do to stay safe.

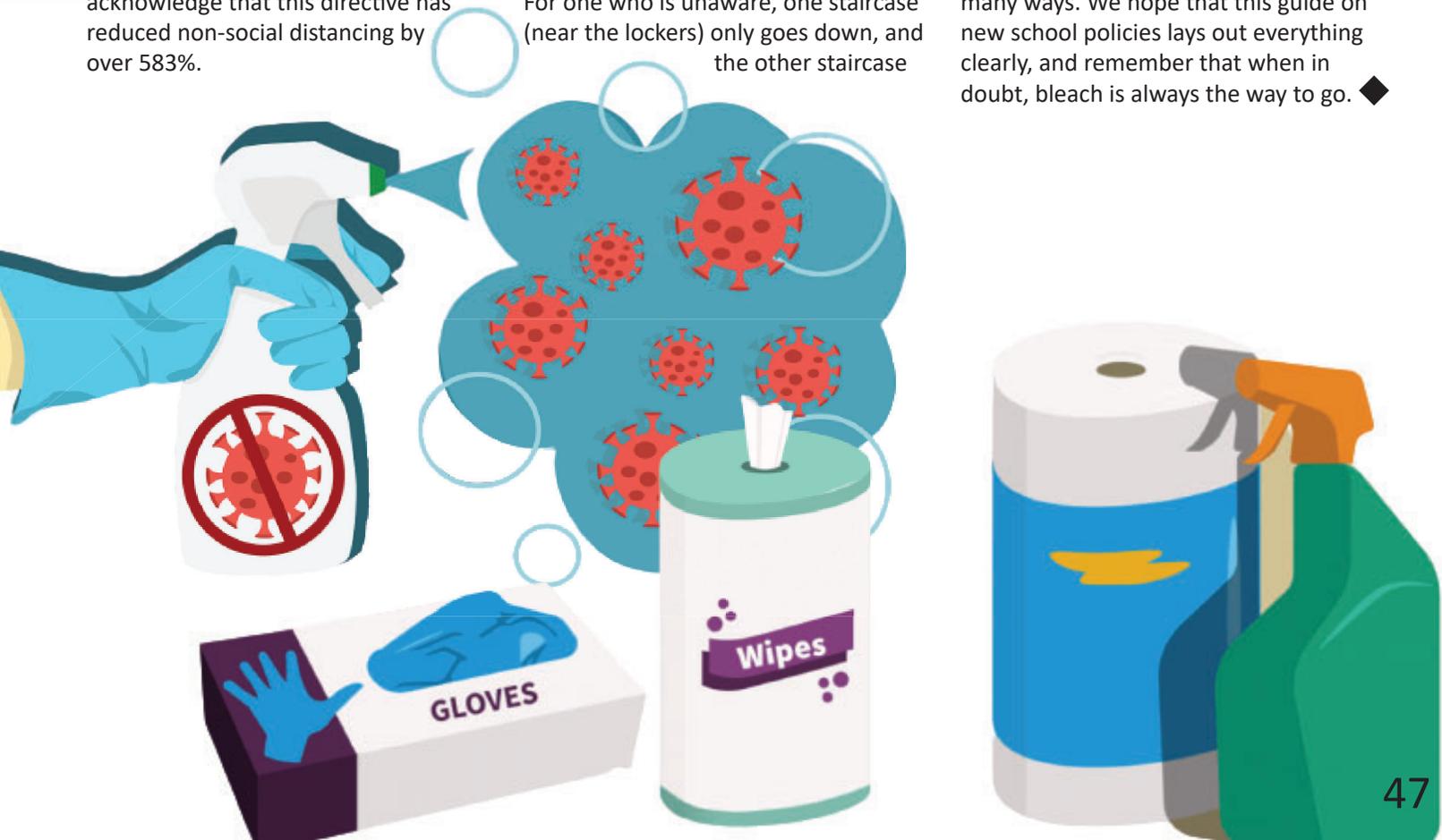
The major issue teachers have faced during these trying times is students not social distancing. While this problem is readily apparent, countering social distancing infractions is easier said than done. Thankfully, *The Teachers Pandemic Playbook™* outlined the response succinctly. *Palette* managed to take a glance at a copy of the protocol: “To break up social distancing, one must come up as close as possible to the students breaking social distancing. Hold their face lightly in your hands (*shomer negiah* appropriate of course), look deep into their youthful eyes, and kindly request that they separate themselves.” Students acknowledge that this directive has reduced non-social distancing by over 583%.

With social distancing violations curbed by over 500%, the next school policy ensuring student safety is of the utmost importance: cleaning of desks. When entering a classroom, students promptly sit at their assigned desks which have been cleaned by the students before them. When class ends, the students are each assigned a bucket of bleach and a mop to clean their desks and areas around them. The acrid smell of bleach haunts the classrooms of the High School, but students can be sure that their learning realms are sterile. The downside to the bleach is that some students have -- accidentally or purposefully -- used the bleach to dye their hair. Administrators are investigating these incidents to ensure students are appropriately using the bleach. An anonymous administrator was quoted saying, “I don’t care if they bleach their hair, but if it’s ugly, we can’t let them portray the school in a negative light.”

A third COVID policy this year are the two single-direction staircases. For one who is unaware, one staircase (near the lockers) only goes down, and the other staircase

(near the vending machines and Mr. Byron’s classroom) only goes up. This simple system was set in place to ensure that students don’t cross paths when walking up and down staircases. Studies by the Center for COVID Protection (CCP) show that if someone is walking upwards with another person walking downwards, their risk of transmission doubles by twofold. To combat this, the one-way only staircases prevent more cases. But, following the yellow brick road has its downfalls too. Many students have been known to miss the Byron Learning Center on their way to class, only to have to make a u-turn in front of the partition “show-er curtain” between the high schoolers and the third graders. Similarly, for AJA’s less direction-oriented students, a new program has developed named “MaZe.” MaZe is an app available on all phones that directs students to their classes. This electronic helper has helpful maps, diagrams, oral commands, and more!

COVID has changed our lives in many ways. We hope that this guide on new school policies lays out everything clearly, and remember that when in doubt, bleach is always the way to go. ◆





AJA's Unique Menorahs

We asked AJA Upper School students to submit pictures of their unique menorahs--here are some of the results!

