

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 students of AJA High School.



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“Congratulations to the entire *Palette* Staff for another great year, led by a fantastic Editorial Board!”

-- Alan Minsk and Julie Kaminsky

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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!

Issue 3

Editor's Note



After learning about my schedule, some people have asked me why I ever bother to come into school. Because of online classes, independent studies, and other schedule oddities, I only have one in-person class on Monday and Wednesday. On Tuesday, that number doubles to two, hitting a high-water mark of three on Thursday. Coach Z, only half-joking, calls the seat at the end of the Senior Lounge table my “office” because of how often he finds me there.

The short answer is that I love the culture of AJA (no, Mrs. Gal did not write this for me), and I would probably be pretty bored otherwise. As for the long answer: A few weeks ago, administrators asked students to share their thoughts on remote-learning Fridays. Among other reasons, I pointed out that from my experience, the spirit of the school — Shabbos dancing breaking into class, random cholent, and “Don’t forget your tefilllllliiiiinnnnn!” — comes out on Friday. Without in-person instruction, I feel, students — and freshmen, in particular — have been deprived of those unique experiences.

After talking to AJA Medical Committee members and doing research for my article in this issue, I’ve accepted that in all likelihood, I won’t attend any more Rabbi E Friday night Onegs as a student, a staple of my first two years of high school. However, I still want to pass on these traditions that I experienced and that really make the

school what it is.

As a senior and a journalist, my aims coincide. Newspapers are famously the “first rough draft of history.” In Daliya’s Teacher Corner, Mr. Rojek mentioned how looking back at decades-old newspapers can give perspective about that time period; similarly, *Palette* tries to chronicle the culture and events of the AJA High School. Flipping through issues from two years ago, I found reporting about minimester, Battle of the Classes, and even a Shushan Purim video game truck about which I had completely forgotten.

In this issue, almost every writer on the *Palette* staff contributed to documenting school activities — such as Chanukah celebrations, MLK Day commemorations, and even the boys who play basketball in the gym at lunch — that may not seem like groundbreaking news. It happened, everyone knows about it, let’s move on. But writing about it now means recording the atmosphere of the school for a time when perhaps that feeling isn’t as fresh.

Culture is ever-evolving. For better or worse, singing the days left until Shabbos after davening seems to be gone, and the meat club disappeared about the same time that I wrote about its history last year. On the other side of the ledger, my dad has told me about when his classmates would sing during Rabbi E’s class thirty-five years ago; Rabbi E’s upperclassmen boys Gemara class joyously continues this tradition.

AJA is a special place, which is why I come to school every day to take most of my classes online or individually. The culture of the school is its lifeblood: I want to pass on the past traditions as a senior and report the vibe of today’s student body as an editor. I recognize what the daily shenanigans of AJA mean to me, and being stuck at home for a week last month made it even clearer.

The spirit of AJA has, for me, always shown through the brightest on Purim. From Purim Night Live my freshman year to whatever other names “Purimpalooza” has acquired since, Purim — based on levity and happiness — offers a natural outlet to revel in “shtick”. I encourage all students to put themselves out there for whatever form Purim this year might take, even if you haven’t in the past. You won’t regret it.

And for readers who won’t be in attendance, I hope our coverage will offer a glimpse into the spirit of the school, as this issue and everything else we write does.

A Freilichen (Happy) Purim and Happy Reading!

Matthew Minsk

Editor-in-Chief

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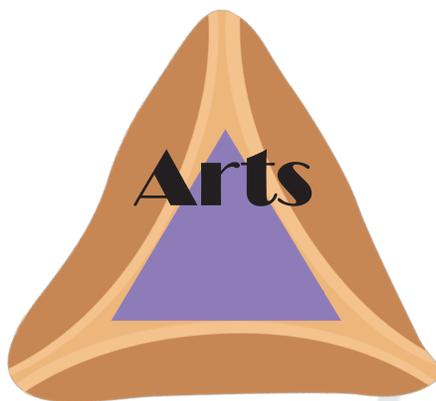
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AP Government Students Meet Dick Gephardt

The Former Majority Leader Spoke about His Time in Congress

Sivan Livnat

On Monday, December 14, former House Majority Leader Dick Gephardt spoke to AJA's High School AP Government classes about his time in Congress. A member of the Democratic Party, Gephardt represented Missouri's third district for fourteen terms, from 1977 to 2005. Gephardt's extensive political career included running for president twice.

Gephardt came to speak as a result of his relationship with Karen Chen, the mother of AP Government student Noah Chen. Mrs. Chen works with Gephardt's son, and when Noah Chen was talking to his parents about what he was learning in class, his mother "thought it would be a great experience to hear from someone who lived the politician life."

Gephardt began the meeting by telling the classes a brief synopsis of his career. He spoke about his childhood and what drove him to enter the arena of politics -- mainly his role in canvassing for the Democratic Party in St. Louis before he ran for office. After his introduction, AP Government students asked Gephardt prewritten questions. These questions ranged from his voting records to his day-to-day life as a congressman. "Being in Congress is a wonderful opportunity to learn," Gephardt said. "What I loved about it is you had to work with other people all the time... even people you violently disagree with on issues."

Reflecting on the hardest decision he had to work on, Gephardt said, "To balance a budget you have to both cut spending, which is very hard to do as a politician, and then you also have to raise some taxes because you have to work on both sides of the ledger." He explained the difficulties of

letting constituents know that he was cutting a program or raising taxes and the challenge involved with balancing the budget in a way that fosters economic growth.

"It was very eye-opening to learn about the US government and politics in practice."



"Sometimes, I saw members of Congress stay too long," Gephardt noted when discussing why he didn't run for reelection in 2004. "We all get older; we all lose a step or two. I just think you need to be at the height of your game when you're in Congress. It's a really hard job." He described how draining the job is and emphasized the importance of being at one's prime when serving in Congress. He also acknowledged the monetary benefits of entering the private sector; after he left Congress, he started his own lobbying firm, as many retired members of Congress do.

To conclude the Q & A, Gephardt told his personal account as House Minority Leader after the attacks of 9/11. He explained how important "implicit" trust between law enforcement agencies was after that fateful day. "We didn't do enough to prevent that attack, and we cannot allow that to happen again," Gephardt said, reminiscing on what he said in a meeting with then-President George W. Bush and other high-ranking members of the staff post-9/11.

Reflecting on the speech, junior Ella Goldstein commented, "It was a unique opportunity to hear from him and to understand the perspective of a government official." She noted that it was very eye-opening to learn about the US government and politics in practice.

The meeting ran for the entire 50 minute lunch period, but senior Noa Mishli would have listened for longer. "I didn't want it to end," she said. "I wanted us to keep asking him more questions." ♦

Despite Vaccine Approval, Ending to Pandemic Protocols Not Yet in Sight

AJA Medical Committee Unwilling to Commit Due to Uncertainties

Matthew Minsk

On December 11, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued an Emergency Use Authorization for Pfizer-BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine, the first to gain any sort of approval; a week later, Moderna received the same status. With 95% effectiveness in clinical trials — and even stronger protection against severe infection — both vaccines appear to offer a fairly straightforward path towards herd immunity. As the end of the COVID-19 pandemic approaches, the temporary “new normal” of COVID-19 precautions will slowly recede. AJA and its Medical Committee will have to determine the time-frame of lifting restrictions in school.

While they use different actual molecules, both vaccines utilize a first-of-its-kind mRNA technique. Conventional vaccines inject a significantly weakened version of the virus, allowing the immune system to fight off the half-dead pathogen by making the antibody, and then storing that antibody for future use if it were to encounter that pathogen again.

These mRNA vaccines work differently. They contain instructions for the body itself to create an imitation of the “spike” protein the SARS-CoV-2 virus uses to latch onto the cell.

The immune system can then destroy that disconnected spike protein-replica, even while no actual viral cells have entered the body at all.

However, as Dr. Josh Guttman explained, a novel response to a novel coronavirus — including historically-fast vaccine development — has its drawbacks. Despite the overwhelmingly positive infection prevention data, the scientific community faces more uncertainty than normal in pinning down some of the more secondary effects. Dr. Guttman, a member of AJA's Medical Committee, specializes in Emergency Medicine at Emory University and Grady Memorial Hospitals.

Because of this uncertainty, Dr. Guttman, AJA Head of School Rabbi Ari Leubitz, and fellow Medical Committee member Dr. Amy Wolkin, an epidemiologist at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), were unable to offer up specific benchmarks for unwinding current COVID-19 protocols, even when pressed repeatedly.

Population Scale and Transmission Muddy Threshold Estimates

Rabbi Leubitz and Dr. Guttman both emphasized the vaccination rate in the “AJA community” — meaning parents and teachers — as a determining factor for reducing risk, which could lead to relaxing mask-wearing and distancing. They said that community numbers would play a larger role than the corresponding figure for the state, or even local counties. However, Dr. Guttman would not answer “definitively” where that percentage might fall, saying he “prefer[s] not to guess” and would “have to see numbers and trends in the right direction.”

Two major factors

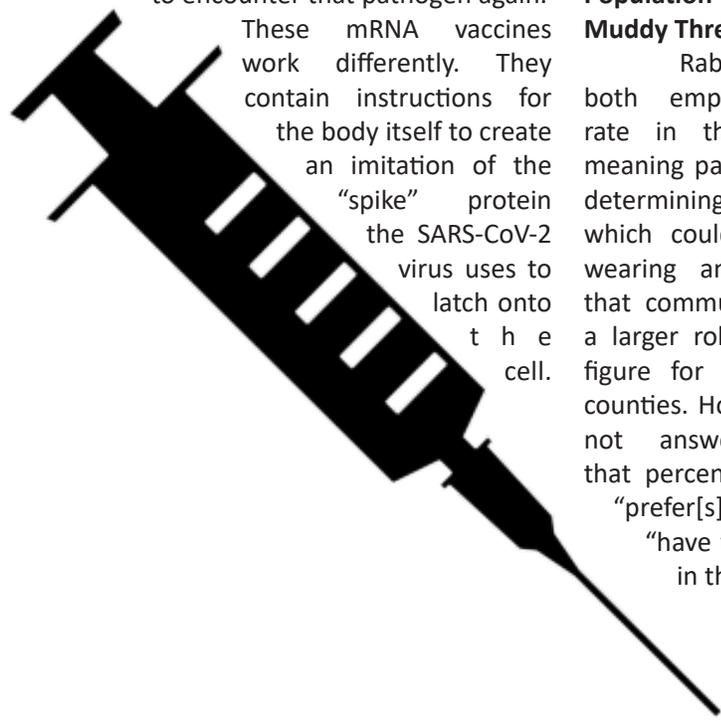
stood in the way of setting a benchmark for rolling back COVID-19 restrictions: how the vaccine will fare in a larger population, and how effective the vaccine is in stopping transmission (as opposed to preventing infection, the data point measured in the trials).

Although more than 70,000 people took part in either the Moderna or Pfizer trials with an impressive effectiveness rate, Dr. Guttman wasn't comfortable assuming those vaccines would work exactly the same way in an entire population of more than 300 million people. He said that because of small variants in the way each individual's DNA makes proteins, “everyone is a little bit different, [and] just because the vaccine makes my body make antibodies that prevent infection doesn't mean it will do the same to yours.”

The other outstanding uncertainty involves transmission, which is also a key reason why Dr. Guttman doubts that even individuals who are fully vaccinated will be able to walk around without following protocols (such as masking and social distancing) before the broader restrictions are eased up as the school approaches herd immunity.

Because of the new mRNA technology used in the COVID-19 vaccines, there has not been enough testing to conclusively prove, in a controlled study, that a vaccinated person cannot pass on the virus even if they themselves are not infected.

However, an absence of evidence doesn't necessarily indicate whether a claim is true or false, just that it hasn't been proven or disproven yet. In a “Frequently Asked Questions” column in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, Harvard Medical School



Professor Dr. Paul Sax wrote, “There are several good reasons to be optimistic about the vaccines’ effect on disease transmission.”

He cited data from the clinic trials and other studies that indicate that asymptomatic carriers (which a vaccinated person would be) transmit less of the virus. Dr. Sax also considered it biologically unlikely that “a vaccine [would] prevent disease and not also prevent infection,” stating, “If there is an example of a vaccine in widespread clinical use that has this selective effect — prevents disease but not infection — I can’t think of one!”

Dr. Guttman of the AJA Medical Committee was less optimistic. He did agree, “I can’t imagine it won’t prevent transmission to a certain degree,” but he argued that more data is required. For his part, Dr. Sax did recommend continuing precautionary protocols for the time being.

A preliminary study from the Sheba Medical Center in Israel seems to indicate that the Pfizer vaccine (at the very least) confers “sterilizing immunity,” which would prevent transmission in addition to infection, but it is still too early to draw conclusions from those initial findings. Dr. Guttman wasn’t sure when there would be sufficient data to conclude if the vaccine stops transmission (one way or the other), but he expected it would be published soon. With these pieces of unsettled science — community effects and vaccinated

transmission — Dr. Guttman and Rabbi Leubitz hesitated to commit to a specific vaccination-rate time-frame.

Vaccinated Individuals in a Vulnerable Herd

Even if and when it is clear vaccinated people do not — or very rarely — transmit the virus still presents

complicating factors.

For an individual who is vaccinated before the school reaches the to-be-determined benchmark, the considerations may be similar to the currently-mandated behavior of a previously-infected person. Right now, someone who previously tested positive is required to follow the same restrictions as somebody who has never been infected. (It should be noted that the CDC claims reinfection is rare, but possible.)

From a public health perspective, according to Dr. Wolkin, having certain groups of people acting in different ways complicates matters and makes precautions more difficult to follow and enforce.

Rabbi Leubitz channeled the Judaic concept of “*lo plug*,” avoiding a separation that would just cause confusion. “One of the things that

makes it very easy in our school to do masks is that everybody does it without any [exceptions]... so it’s very clear this is just what we do, [and] it makes it easier on students,” he said.

Rabbi Leubitz also brought up difficulties in obtaining documentation to prove vaccination or prior infection. He explained that with established

“There will almost inevitably exist a timeframe in which teachers are vaccinated, but most parents are not.”

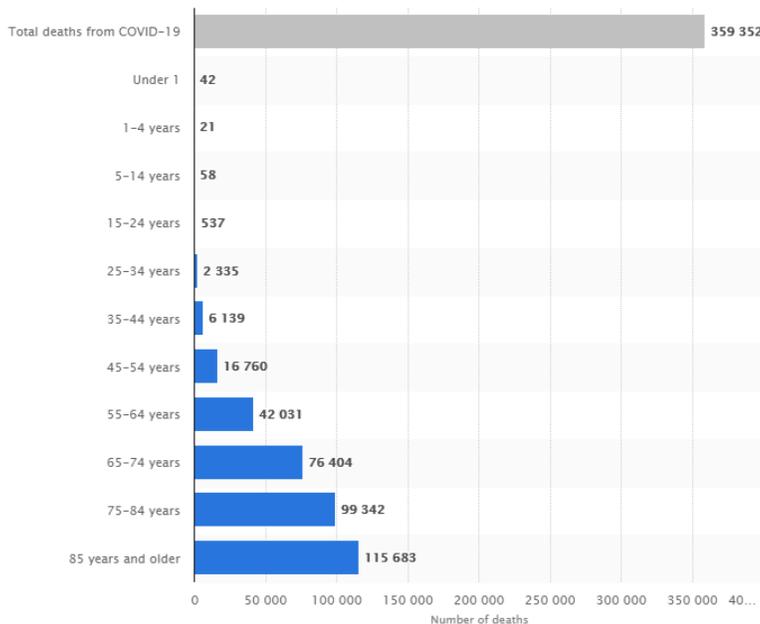
vaccinations against measles, for example, state law allows him to demand proof from students and teachers; given the evolving circumstances, he was uncertain if he had a similar ability to require documentation of COVID-19 vaccination.

Rabbi Leubitz further expressed a desire to avoid putting a “target” on the back of students and teachers who choose not to get vaccinated — “for good or bad reasons.” He said it “opens up a can of worms.”

For Once, We Don’t Have to “Think of the Children”

Per current state regulations, teachers are set to be vaccinated in “Phase 1B,” before most of the general public. As such, there will almost inevitably exist a time-frame in which teachers are vaccinated, but most parents are not. Therefore, AJA’s community-wide standards won’t have been met, so school-wide standards will not have been relaxed yet. (Students, who fall in the youngest age brackets, will be at the back of the line once they are eligible.)

Most seasonal influenzas impact the population with a “u-shaped” curve, disproportionately impacting the youngest and the oldest. While COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on the elderly, children have been almost entirely spared. According to an American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) report on January 14, while more than 2.5 million children have been infected



Graph from Statista.com

with the virus in the United States, just 191 have died of it, a minuscule number for a country with about 75 million children.

With this in mind, while Dr. Guttman was careful to specify some high-risk children, he confirmed that “household adults and teachers are the main concern” when assessing in-school precautions.

Because of this dynamic, Rabbi Leubitz speculated that there exists “a distinct possibility” that after all teachers (and faculty) have been vaccinated, “that would be a good time to consider rolling back the COVID protocols in the building.”

Dr. Guttman took a different approach. Even while acknowledging the limited risk to children, he argued that if children are infected at school from their classmates, they risk spreading it to parents and grandparents who are more susceptible.

Dr. Wolkin further rejected the premise that children are mostly unaffected by COVID-19, pointing out that while very few children suffer severe cases, some do. During an interview, she noted that multiple children were hospitalized at that time at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta. According to the AAP report, about 10,000 children have been hospitalized at one point or another over the course of the pandemic.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Although millions of Americans have already been vaccinated, don’t expect any near-term changes. Everything Rabbi Leubitz and members of the Medical Committee told Palette was prefaced with, in essence: “We haven’t sat down and made any policies, so this is all subject to change.” On multiple occasions, Rabbi Leubitz clarified he was musing on the spot, as opposed to declaring thought-out and finalized policy.

A lot will depend on the vaccine’s capability to stop transmission, and Rabbi Leubitz and Dr. Guttman emphasized that community infection rates will remain a factor even heading into the post-vaccine world.

On multiple occasions, Medical Committee members refused to be pinned down on any specific numbers or dates, deflecting with “We will know more... when more data is collected.” Dr. Guttman and Dr. Wolkin declined to specify when they anticipated that data would become available.

“Although millions of Americans have already been vaccinated, don’t expect any near-term changes.”

To give some sort of time-frame, Dr. Guttman did say “it is unlikely we will change protocols through this school year.” He detailed, “The vaccine needs to be available to all adults in order to reach any level of herd immunity.”

Rabbi Leubitz initially struck a more optimistic tone, guessing that teachers could be vaccinated by March or April. However, since Rabbi Leubitz spoke to Palette in December, vaccine distribution in the United States has failed to hit some of its expectations. As late as December 13, officials hoped for 40 million distributed doses by the end of December, but as of a month later on January 28, only 25.6 million shots have been given, per Bloomberg’s tracker.

Even if President Joe Biden continues the current pace to hit 100 million vaccines distributed in his first 100 days in office, less than a third of the country vaccinated is unlikely to trigger herd immunity. Furthermore, eligible students will find themselves at the very end of the line as low-risk individuals — and that’s only for some sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Moderna’s original authorization only covered adults 18-years-old and older, and even Pfizer’s dip into adolescents only went down to age 16. While the manufacturers have signaled they intend to conduct trials for younger

children (12 and older) relatively soon, it will be a while before vaccines are approved for most middle school (and some high school) students.

Beyond that, Dr. Guttman wouldn’t commit to eliminating all protocols before all children can be vaccinated, despite the lower risk. He said, “It’s possible, but it’s way too early to tell,” a sentiment Dr. Wolkin concurred with. Vaccines likely will not gain FDA approval for young children by the end of 2021.

As teachers receive vaccinations in the next stage, it would seem some aspects of COVID-19 protocols are ripe for change. However, from conversations with Rabbi Leubitz and two members of the AJA Medical Committee, it appears that might not be the case.

As Dr. Wolkin noted, different members of the Committee possess diverse backgrounds, and factors that contribute to policy decisions include “science, what’s happening in the community, and personal behaviors.” While she approaches topics with a broad, population-level public health background, she acknowledged physicians like Dr. Guttman might have an individual patient-first attitude. Furthermore, she noted that Rabbi Leubitz has both a broad and focused perspective of school-wide dynamics, and all that entails.

Moving forward, these different priorities will sometimes contradict, and the merits will have to be weighed on a case-by-case basis. Regardless of how COVID-19 precautions are eventually rolled back — and Dr. Guttman had all confidence that it will happen at some point — it isn’t going to be in the immediate future. As Brown University Professor Emily Oster noted, this distorted “pandemic life” will end “not with a bang, but with a whimper” of gradually easing restrictions, to repurpose the words of the poet T.S. Eliot. At this point, nobody is willing to venture when that whimper might be heard. ♦

Rabbi Leubitz Addresses the Riots at the Capitol

AJA Head of School Preaches Unity and Seeing the Best in Others

Sivan Livnat

On Wednesday, January 6, rioters stormed the Capitol building in Washington, DC, forcing House and Senate members to go into lockdown and interrupting the counting of the electoral voters. The next day, Rabbi Leubitz spoke to the High School over a Zoom assembly, where he shared brief thoughts about the previous day's events.

Rabbi Leubitz started off his speech by describing the occurrence of the prior day. He said, "As Americans, we love our country. We affirm, we cherish, we hold dear what she stands for." He continued, "What happened yesterday is not about being on the right politically or on the left politically, it's not about being a Republican or a Democrat. It's a message; it's a teaching about what happens when people forget how to have civil discourse. When people forget how to disagree with somebody and have kavod and decency at the same time."

Then, Rabbi Leubitz offered a comparison, *lehavdil* (indicating a distinction between the secular and the holy), between the storming of the Capitol and the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. He explained how both the Capitol and the Beit Hamikdash were breached aggressively. "The Beit Hamikdash for Jews wasn't just a place. It represented an ideal. It represented sovereignty, our ability to be in control

of our own destiny. The Beit Hamikdash represented what spirituality should look like." Both the attack on the Capitol and the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash deep into the souls of our respective nations.

Commenting on the assembly, junior Yered Wittenberg said, "I was a little frustrated and didn't like what

"Both the attack on the Capitol and the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash deep into the souls of our respective nations."

Rabbi Leubitz had to say about it. I prefer when our school doesn't talk about politics as a whole. I like when we do it in smaller groups... so everyone can voice their opinions if they'd like." Yered also was less than fond of the Capitol-Beit Hamikdash analogy, and he thought that by comparing the two, Rabbi Leubitz "kind of made light of the situation" at the Capitol.

With no disrespect intended, freshman Yulie Maimon felt that Rabbi Leubitz "didn't cover enough." She explained, "I felt like the antisemitism that was going on in DC was something that needed to be covered, as a Jewish school." While she understood that antisemitism wasn't the driving force of the riots, she still felt that the virulent acts of antisemitism -- such as shirts that said Auschwitz Camp and 6MWE (six million weren't enough) and Nazi flags -- present at the Capitol were important enough to discuss.

Rabbi Leubitz concluded his speech by preaching unity and seeing the best in others. He urged, "Can we find a way to lean in and see the goodness and the humanity and the *tzelem elokim* in every person that we encounter? Can we find a way to do that? ... Can we find a way to assume the best intentions in each other? Can you, high school students, find a way to love more, and judge less?" ♦



Is It Best to Not Have a Test?

The Reason Behind Having No Assessments on Chanukah

Kayla Minsk

To ensure that students have ample time to enjoy jelly doughnuts and other scrumptious delicacies with their families, AJA High School policy prohibits assessments during the week of Chanukah. High School Team Leader Ms. Franeen Sarif said that as far as she knows, the policy predates her two years in the High School. Ms. Sarif explained that the policy aims to allow students to enjoy the holiday without the stress of school work.

Junior Margalit Lytton commented that "[she] really appreciated the lighter workload during Chanukah. It gave me time to relax in the evenings so that I could light candles with my family and focus on the holiday."

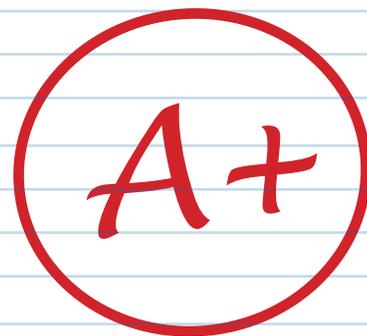
Because teachers could not give assessments during Chanukah, many decided to give tests the week before. Judaic Studies Instructional Team Leader Rabbi Allan Houben explained to a group of freshmen that the weeks leading up to Chanukah were a "peak time" for assessments, especially since Chanukah fell

right before winter break, and that "it kind of just ends up being that [teachers] want to give assessments before a break." He clarified that next year, when Chanukah falls right after Thanksgiving, it is "unlikely to have the same impact." Regardless of when the holiday falls, teachers will usually give tests before winter break.

Zellik Silverberg, a freshman, appreciated the policy. "It's really relieving," he said. "I actually get to spend time doing what I like. Even though there is some crunch beforehand, I think it's worth it."

On the other hand, freshman Elisha Feit Mann noted that "teachers tried to jam in as much content as they could before Chanukah, which left little time [for me] to look forward to Chanukah."

Ms. Sarif also explained that different students handle work and pressure differently. With many students having individual schedules, it can be complicated to ensure every student doesn't have a combination of assessments



on the same day. Despite this intense time, Ms. Sarif expressed that she thought "students reacted extremely well and advocated for themselves when they were feeling overwhelmed. That is what [the school] encourage[s]: Students to have a voice."

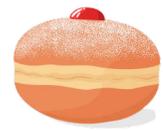
Having to work around the policy from the other end, English teacher Mr. David Byron said, "It can be challenging to work [students'] schedule[s] around the holidays, but at the same time, I totally support it and I am happy to give that extra time for [students] to enjoy the holiday."

Overall, the policy forbidding tests and quizzes on Chanukah ensures that students are able to relax and enjoy the holiday with family and friends without having the major stressors of school. ◆

"The policy aims to allow students to enjoy the holiday without the stress of school work."



Chanukah Events Around School



Saturday Night Bonfire

Nina Flusberg

Student Council (STUCO) hosted a bonfire at school Saturday night, December 12 to kick off the following week's Chanukah activities. Although rain fell only 30 minutes earlier (and intermittently throughout the night), STUCO built a large bonfire on the pavement outside the High School gym with plenty of space for students to surround the fire and still maintain social distancing. Senior Katherine Cranman said, "This bonfire is such a nice event to bring us all together."

To preserve the holiday spirit, students sang and socially distantly danced to Chanukah songs. STUCO also brought out a Chanukiah to light. "It's great that we can have a bonfire and be outside and enjoy each other's company on a holiday after Shabbat and during COVID," STUCO Cabinet Member Yered Wittenberg commented. STUCO aims to plan activities for the entire week of Chanukah that are both safe and fun, despite challenges posed by COVID.

As a safety precaution, STUCO put together individual bags for each student which consisted of graham crackers, marshmallows, chocolate, and a stick to roast them. To add to the bonfire feel, several students brought instruments from home and played songs around the campfire. "[STUCO Co-President and senior] Emily [Gavrielov] asked me if I wanted to bring my guitar, and we came up with a bunch of songs over the weekend that we thought people would like," senior Gefen Beldie explained. "We just wanted to make sure it was an option for people."

The Saturday night bonfire was both a transition into the upcoming week of activities and an event to bring students together for the holiday.



Ice Skating

Kayla Minsk

AJA High School students gathered at Atlantic Station on Wednesday evening, December 16, to participate in an ice skating Chanukah event run by STUCO. Students had the opportunity to skate and enjoy hot cocoa and sufganiyot.

Senior STUCO cabinet member Noah Chen explained, "We decided to have this event because we thought we needed something to get everyone out and having fun again." He elaborated that ice skating is conducive to social distancing, and the outdoor rink was similarly COVID friendly, which allowed students to feel "like things were almost back to normal."

Junior Kiki Starr felt that this event was "a way [for students] to bond during these times" while staying safe. Yael Mainzer, a freshman, agreed, saying, "I thought it was a nice activity that was COVID-safe and fun at the same time."



STUCO Advisory Event

Sivan Livnat

On the fourth day of Chanukah, Monday, December 14, STUCO conducted an activity for the student body during first period Advisory and half of second period. First split up by grade and then into smaller groups, students played a STUCO-created game of Panoply. Panoply is a quick-thinking trivia game where players work together to answer questions with their team, such as filling out a list of the first twenty presidents or recognizing brand names from their slogan.

The game lasted for a little over an hour, with STUCO leading the various challenges. Co-president Emily Gavrielov said, "Panoply was a really fun way... to get everyone interacting and working together and having fun doing it." While having to adjust to a few changes, such as bad weather moving the game indoors, STUCO worked to energize the student body in preparation of the week of upcoming Chanukah activities.

According to junior cabinet member Yered Wittenberg, the main goal of the STUCO Advisory session was about "happily enjoying an activity."



Faculty-Led Chanukah Activities

Daliya Wallenstein

On Tuesday, December 15, (the fifth day of Chanukah), high school students spent their second period class participating in various Chanukah-related activities led by the faculty. Divided into six groups, students rotated between three different stations.

In the gym, groups competed in relay races. The teams raced to complete puzzles, throw beads into cups, and score free-throws.

Meanwhile, outside on the soccer field, groups faced off in dodge-ball matches. One team represented the Greeks, wearing laurel wreaths and table-cloth togas, and the other the Maccabees, donning paper shields and headbands with Jewish stars. Festive Chanukah music blasted from speakers as the teams competed.

Inside the Beit Midrash, groups competed to accumulate the most points through correctly answering questions related to the laws of Chanukah. With each question worth one point, the winning team earned over 50 points.

Through the holiday festivities, students disconnected from regular school work for a little while to enjoy and learn about Chanukah.



MLK Day: Yom IyUnity

The Day-long Programming for MLK Day

Kayla Minsk and Asher Lytton

Historically, the Friday before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Day at AJA has been a day for students to volunteer in the community. With traipsing around Atlanta for service learning projects off the table due to COVID-19, AJA instead designated Friday, January 15 (Dr. King's actual birthday) as a Day of Learning in his honor -- a "Yom Iyun." Friday's learning kicked off with a quick introduction from AJA Head of School Rabbi Ari Leubitz and Senior Grade Representatives Gefen Beldie and Simmy Wilson.

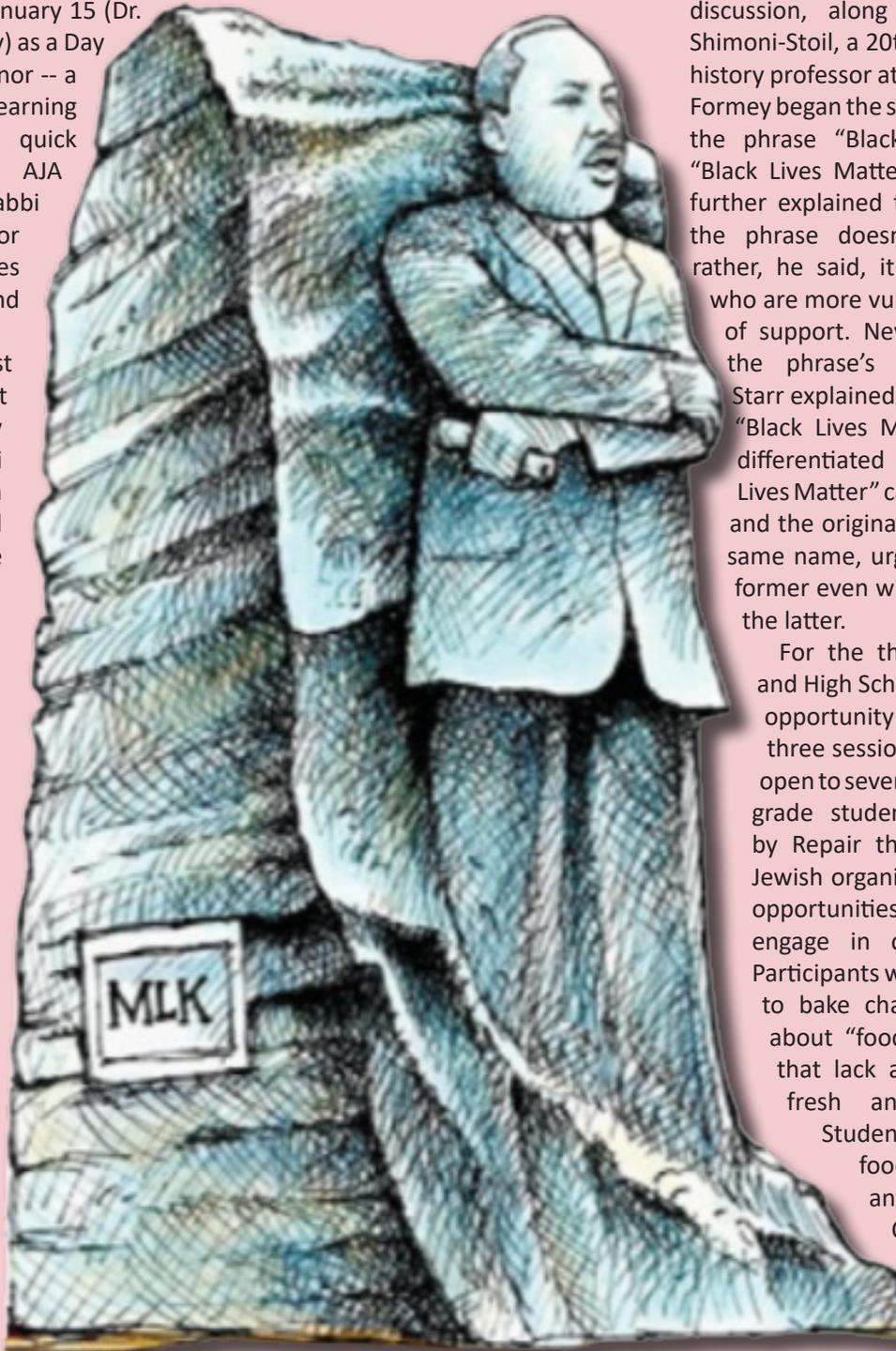
In the first session, titled "What Makes This Jew Different," Rabbi Shai Rishon and Reuben Formey discussed their perspective of life as African-American Orthodox Jews. Middle School history teacher Mr. David Karpel facilitated the discussion. Rabbi Rishon, also known by his pen name "MaNishtana," grew up in the Chabad movement and now serves as a Rabbi for the New City Minyan in New York City. He spoke about the way people assume he is not a Jew or treat him differently in the Jewish community because of his race. Reuben Formey, a local Jewish rapper and AJA

parent, recalled similar experiences. This discussion was followed by a Q&A based on questions that fifth- through twelfth-grade participants flooded into the chat.

After a ten minute break, students gathered once more on Zoom for the "Black Lives Matter and the Jewish Community" session. Formey and Rabbi Adam Starr of Congregation Ohr HaTorah participated in the panel discussion, along with Dr. Rebecca Shimoni-Stoil, a 20th Century American history professor at Clemson University. Formey began the session by re-defining the phrase "Black Lives Matter" as "Black Lives Matter Also." Rabbi Starr further explained that, in his opinion, the phrase doesn't exclude others; rather, he said, it focuses on people who are more vulnerable and in need of support. Nevertheless, to avoid the phrase's divisiveness, Rabbi Starr explained that he avoids using "Black Lives Matter." Formey also differentiated between the "Black Lives Matter" cause and movement, and the original organization of the same name, urging support for the former even without prescribing to the latter.

For the third session, Middle and High School students had the opportunity to choose between three sessions. One option, only open to seventh-through twelfth-grade students, was presented by Repair the World Atlanta, a Jewish organization that provides opportunities for volunteers to engage in community service. Participants were given the option to bake challah while learning about "food deserts," or areas that lack access to affordable fresh and healthy foods.

Students learned about the food deserts in Atlanta and the impact that COVID-19 has had on citizens living in food deserts. Limited public transportation



has made it difficult for those who rely on busses to get to grocery stores, and lost jobs have made it difficult for some to afford enough substantial food. Students learned about ways they can serve the community, especially as a way to honor MLK's legacy.

In another session, AJA Athletic Director Coach Rodney Zimmerman and Basketball Hall of Famer Dikembe Mutombo discussed black relations in sports. Mutombo started with explaining the impact basketball has had on his life and that "if it was not for the game of basketball, I would not have been able to accomplish as much as I've done." He talked about the importance of serving the community and leaving a legacy to help others regardless of the color of their skin or the language they speak. Due to scheduling constraints, Mutombo conducted the session from his car on the way to the airport, so the connection was a little choppy, making it difficult for participants to understand at points. After Mutombo left the call, Coach Zimmerman picked up the conversation and talked about his experience as a black basketball player at UCLA and in Europe. He explained how he has worked in the athletic sphere to emphasize the importance of understanding "our common differences," concepts he has tried to integrate at AJA as well. This way, he said, athletes (or other participants) can work together no matter their race and learn from each other, creating a "common humanity."

A third option open to all students and mandatory for the AP Government students, was a session with UCLA Law Professor Eugene Volokh, a First Amendment expert, about the right to peacefully protest. Volokh gave a brief explanation of the amendment as a whole, and then moved on to the topic of freedom of speech. He explained why it is that the terms freedom of press and assembly have historically fallen under the broader term freedom of speech. He then focused on the right to protest. AP Government students then asked questions they had prepared beforehand about the First Amendment,

a topic they had been learning about in class. This gave an opportunity for students to learn about more specific and nuanced topics, like flag burning or the First Amendment's application to the recent events at the Capitol. Many students walked away from the session with a better understanding of the First Amendment. Freshman Zellik Silverberg explained that he thought Professor Volokh managed to cover the complex First Amendment in a "concise and informative" manner

"The N-word has no justifiable use because it carries with it well-earned connotations of racism and violence."

However, Junior Micah Feit Mann, an AP Government student, spoke for most of his class when he expressed frustration that the session included a wide age range, from fifth grade all the way up to seniors. "I found that the combination of grades made it challenging for the speaker to know the best way to phrase things and he often had to simplify what he had to say," he said. This frustration partially stemmed from the questions that many younger students filled the chat with while Professor Volokh spoke.

The day concluded with a panel discussing "The History, Evolution, and Reclamation of the N-Word." Dr. Leroy Zke Zimmerman, the father of Coach Zimmerman, spoke about his experience with the N-word throughout his life, from growing up as a sharecropper to his career in the US military and his work as a public school principal. David Sneed, a lawyer, spoke of his own experience with the N-word growing up, and how he has to prepare his two teenage daughters to understand it and face it in the real world. With time running short, former Savannah Mayor Otis Johnson did not get to speak as much as planned. All three panelists

emphasized that the N-word has no justifiable use because it carries with it well-earned connotations of racism and violence. The N-word was used when African-Americans, including some of the panelists, were attacked and mistreated. They described it as the ultimate

American insult. They also explained that despite what some people may say, the N-word, because of its history, should not be used, no matter the situation.

In the concluding session, Rabbi Leubitz urged students and teachers to reflect on the speeches' relevance to their lives. He left participants to consider how they can take action themselves, and how the community can affect change. ♦



Redesigning Programming to Honor MLK's Legacy

MLK Day Behind the Scenes

Nina Flusberg

Typically, AJA's Middle and High School faculty and students take a break from their studies and spend the Friday before Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day engaged in hands-on community service. Historically, high school students split into groups and took buses to help at soup kitchens, clothing donation centers, or local parks. After a few hours spent helping at places in need, the students and teachers are filled with a sense of gratitude and accomplishment. In previous years, students spent their time involved with both on- and off-campus service; this year they spent their day having conversations over Zoom.

Due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, this year's service-learning day had to look different. AJA's administration were tasked with planning a day that could be safely interactive while incorporating the values the day is meant to instill. As both the Middle and High School were faced with planning the day entirely different from other years, several 5th-12th grade faculty and administrators came together to plan a new curriculum for the day. "I really enjoyed working together [with the Middle School] to produce a great opportunity for our students," High School General Studies Instructional Team Leader Mr. Joel Rojek said. "It was two totally different divisions of the school working together with a common purpose, and [that] was very enjoyable and rewarding."

According to Sylvia Miller, Early Childhood, Lower School, and Middle School Counselor, "The administration had unanimous feelings that due to [COVID-19] and our inability to go out into the community safely, a Yom Iyun [Day of In-Depth Learning] would be a perfect opportunity to celebrate the values of this 'national holiday.'" To prepare for the panels on Friday, all

students were assigned a choice of movies to watch and write reflective journals about, and Judaic Studies classes taught about related topics the previous day.

"How we decided on the panels [of guest speakers] was really...a collective brainstorm in terms of who had contacts that might be interesting or who had ideas for panels," High School English teacher Mr. Dave Byron explained. "We thought it would be neat if we had different people coming in to discuss [subjects] like race and identity from different angles," Mr. Rojek added.

Ms. Miller said, "We are looking to open up our minds and

"Due to [COVID-19] and our inability to go out into the community safely, a Yom Iyun [Day of In-Depth Learning] would be a perfect opportunity to celebrate the values of this 'national holiday.'"

hearts to address race and educate our students and community as we navigate our complex world as Jews and human beings." Similar to the typical service learning day, which had multiple locations students could choose from, the teachers wanted students to have the option to choose from a panel of speakers based on their personal interests. Using different contacts, the teachers were able to have a total of eight-panel options that ran throughout the day.

For example, the school set up a session with a professor from UCLA who is an expert on the Bill of Rights. In relation to MLK Day, Professor Eugene Volokh discussed the right to assembly and protest protected by the First Amendment. Mr. Rojek explained that "timing-wise, it felt really fresh" in relation to the riots that occurred at the Capitol just days before.

"We were hoping that there was a nice variety in the topics, while still sounding thematically similar," Mr. Rojek said. "We were also hoping that there were different voices... We didn't have teachers teaching sessions; we wanted it to be people who were external."

While planning out the schedule, the teachers also acknowledged that it can be very difficult to sit at a screen for a few hours and stay invested in the topic at hand. Therefore, they set twenty-minute breaks between each 40-minute session to give people the opportunity to get up and move around before their next session.

This year's schedule was very different from this day in the past, but the teachers felt that it was very successful in what it was intended to do: spark conversations and discussions. In regards to how MLK Day looks next year, Mr. Byron said that he hopes to continue with what has been done in the past. "Going out and being active in clearing the trails or working with your hands helps you feel good about accomplishing something concrete and something different during the day," he explained. However, he also recognized the panel's success and said, "I think that the panels were so great, so if we could just have one or two panels of this strength in the morning" that would incorporate the benefits of both models in one day.

After a few hours of presentations and conversations, the administration hopes seeds have been planted and that students will continue having these discussions. The goal of this day is to reflect on different ways to be better people and dig into difficult issues with hopes of improving ourselves and our communities. ◆



Reaping the Benefits of Sleeping

Examining AJA Highschoolers' Sleep Habits

Asher Lytton

Sleep is one of the most important parts of our day. It helps our bodies and minds relax and re-energize for the day ahead. It helps process memory and clears toxins from the brain. A good night's sleep refreshes us and keeps us physically and mentally healthy.

Unfortunately, many high schoolers do not get the amount of sleep they need. According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, the developing minds of teenagers between 13 and 18 years old need an average of eight to ten hours of sleep every night. However, a Centers for Disease Control study found that 72% of high schoolers do not get that much sleep, and 20% of high school students report getting less than six hours of sleep on a regular basis.

At AJA, the story is no different. 80% of the students surveyed by Palette said that they felt like they did not get enough sleep. Of the 55 students who responded, 31.5% reported going to sleep between 11 o'clock and 12 o'clock on a regular basis. Another 31.5% said they went to bed between 12 o'clock and 1 o'clock. Over 90% of students reported that they woke up between six o'clock and eight o'clock. Based on this, the conclusion can be drawn that quite a few students are operating on less than eight hours of sleep.

Most students cited school and homework as the main reason they struggle with getting enough sleep. "My sleep mostly depends on the workload we have each week, so on very busy weeks I'll get much less sleep than on weeks I don't have as much work," explained junior Margalit Lytton.

This lack of sleep could be the root of many problems for AJA students. Students expressed that tiredness leads to an inability to concentrate in class

or absorb material for school. As junior Racheli Seeman put it, "It's a vicious cycle. [The] teacher gives a ton of work, [and the] student stays up late to finish work. [The] student can't focus in class because they're tired from staying up doing work, [and now] the student has to stay up late again doing work because they weren't able to focus on the material during class."

Fatigue doesn't just affect academics. In addition to causing hazards, such as sleepy student drivers, sleep deprivation can also drastically impact students' emotional wellbeing. Many students attribute many of their bad moods, headaches, and days with the inability to function to a lack of sleep. High School Counselor Dr. Pam Mason warned, "Over time sleep deprivation can impact a teen's mental wellbeing, increasing their risk of depression and anxiety."

Many students are aware of the effects of sleep deprivation. When asked, Dr. Mason said that she felt that AJA has worked very hard to promote good sleep habits. She explained that not only has the topic been addressed during the Skills Lab and Advisory periods, but the school has also tried very hard to assign homework only when needed so that the workload is manageable. However, she acknowledges that AJA is not perfect, but is always working to improve in this area.

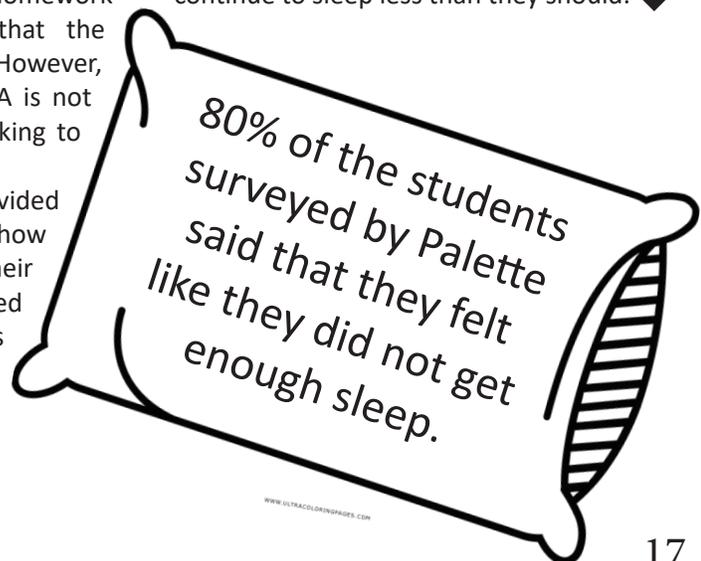
Dr. Mason also provided a number of tips on how students could improve their sleep patterns. She explained that keeping sleep times consistent is important, and keeping a schedule around when a student goes to sleep can help

them. She also explained that exercise is vital to sleeping well. Additionally, she suggested "jotting down your worries" before you go to bed, so you can more easily slip into sleep. Another important recommendation is to limit screen time before bed and keep your phone off when you sleep.

Some students, after acknowledging to themselves the mental health and academic effects of sleep deprivation, have decided to take steps to try to get more sleep. Freshman Zellik Silverberg commented that he was hoping to soon implement a deadline for getting into bed.

However, many students explained that they couldn't just fix the problem on their own. "It's not like I like being sleep deprived, but there's nothing I can really do about it without sacrificing school work and other facets of my day which are important to me," explained junior Sivan Livnat.

Without large structural changes, sleep deprivation, and its negative impact will continue to affect many high school students. Some students will continue to feel incapable of focus. Some students will continue to feel drained. Many students will continue to sleep less than they should. ◆



A Look into Student Knowledge of Personal Finance:

How Much Do Students Know?

Nina Flusberg

Did you know that across America, the average amount of college debt among students is over \$32,000? Did you realize that 29% of Americans are not adequately prepared financially for retirement? Were you aware that 80% of Americans have some sort of consumer debt? Picture yourself walking down the street: statistically, eight out of the ten first people you see are in debt. Chances are that you will be, too.

Given this not-so-pretty picture, it would seem beneficial for everyone to receive a better personal finance education. According to CreditKarma, an American multinational personal finance company, two in five American adults say that they had to teach themselves about personal finance. How does this trend compare to AJA students' knowledge?

In a Palette survey sent out to AJA high school students, 10% to 20% of the 37 respondents thought they have a pretty good understanding of personal finance topics such as

student loans and debt, credit card debt, mortgages, taxes, investments, compound interest, and the stock market. However, the other 80% rated their financial literacy as little to nothing. According to High School General Studies Instructional Team Leader Mr. Joel Rojek, personal finance is "something that's so [valuable]," but most people only realize its importance once they have a credit card or when they have to pay the rent. Wouldn't it be better if students had a greater understanding of these topics before they actually deal with them?

After taking the survey and rating their knowledge about personal finance topics, many of the students acknowledged that they would benefit from learning about them. With around 91% of surveyed students wishing for better education in personal finance, it is evident that there is significant interest in adding financial topics to the curriculum.

Survey respondents were mixed in regards to how the school could implement financial education. Almost 70% of students suggested that a formal class would be the best method for learning about personal finance at school.

On the other hand, 28% of surveyed students expressed interest in a teacher-run elective. Junior Margalit Lytton said, "I think it would be beneficial for the school to have an optional financial literacy class/ elective, but I don't think it should necessarily be mandatory." The remaining

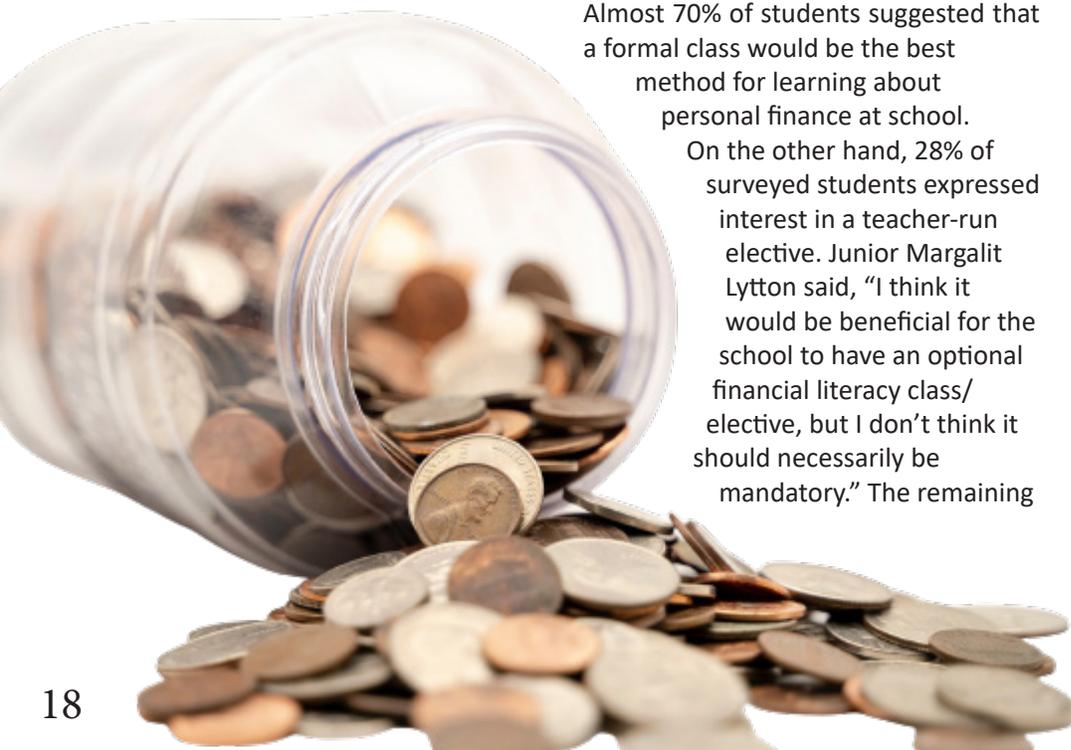
3% voiced that they would rather learn through a student-run club.

In order for the administration to offer a year-long financial literacy class, which would satisfy the majority of students, it needs to have room in the curriculum. There is a limited number of courses that can be offered, and the school has to prioritize state requirements when deciding which classes can be offered. "I would love it if we could offer personal finance as a math credit," Mr. Rojek said. However, "We're bound by the state of Georgia, which just doesn't allow for that to count as a math credit." Without personal finance counting for a core credit, "it makes it tougher to make it a class that runs throughout the year... When we fill our schedule, we have to prioritize [which courses students] need to get a diploma and graduate."

Fortunately, the school did not use this as an excuse to completely disregard having any sort of financial learning. In previous years, when AJA had Minimester (a week-long course of extracurricular subjects taught by AJA staff), it was common to have some sort of personal finance course. Now that the school does not hold a Minimester week anymore, personal finance lessons had to find a new home.

"We're hoping to find a [place] for some personal finance [lessons] in Skills Lab," Mr. Rojek said. Skills Lab is a new one period per week course that focuses on training students in topics that the school deems valuable but are not part of the regular curriculum. Earlier this year, it was mostly dedicated to ExQ programming, but it has branched out more as of late.

"We've got some initial financial sessions that we've got scheduled for [this school year]," he said, explaining, "It probably makes sense for it to be



geared more towards upperclassmen sessions than underclassmen.” As of January, the Senior and Junior classes have received a 45 minute session with Davi Kutner, a parent and wealth advisor at Aprio in Atlanta. He gave a brief overview of several finance-related subjects to students and answered some questions at the end. Jodi Wittenberg also ran a session for the Junior class that covered starting a business, running a budget/payroll, and other financial issues, too. Although there are future finance sessions planned for Skills Lab, it is difficult to determine their effectiveness since there have only been a few so far. In addition, to fill the gaps in their knowledge, some students have taken matters into their own hands and found other approaches.

Junior Ella Goldstein took a week-long personal finance course over the summer. Wealthy Habits, the financial literacy program she participated in, claim on their website that “the subject of personal finance is intimidating to most, but is something we all need to understand in order to have a comfortable life.” They introduce their campers to essential money practices through games and engaging discussions. “They made [finance] relevant to my life which is important because being [financially] literate could help me in my current life, and not just in the future,” Ella said. “Because the class was targeted to people my age, I was able to engage more and enjoy learning about financial literacy in a fun but also formal setting.”

Other students seem to be gaining literacy in finance through personal research or talking to friends or family. Freshman Adiel Livnat mentioned that his dad educates him on financial topics, specifically the stock market, while Junior Daniel Gadelov said he learns through videos that give basics which then lead him to go into detail.

These high school students seem to have taken their personal finance

education into their own hands, but others have not. Some may not even see it as something important enough to do outside of school learning. As Mr. Rojek phrased it, “Sometimes high school students don’t know they’d benefit from knowing about it because it’s just not on their radar.”

He said, “We want to find ways to do even better, and some of that is just with getting feedback from student interests.” Mr. Rojek explained that there has been interest, but “it’s not been something where I feel like there [have] been dozens of people making requests.” Yet, the survey results show that the majority of students think it would be beneficial to the students if AJA taught more about these topics.

Hopefully, students will realize that financial literacy is not just something that they could learn but something that they should learn. The earlier you learn it, the better you will be positioned in the future. ◆

“I think most people realize they’d like to know more about it when they have a credit card or when they have to pay the rent.”

“Sometimes high school students don’t know they’d benefit from knowing about it because it’s just not on their radar.”





or



Ensuring History Remains Preserved and Valued Daliya Wallenstein

At this point, many of us are getting tired of living through historical moments. Yet even without politics and pandemics erupting all over our lives, we live through history just by going about our regular daily lives. As strange as it seems, one day students might study our tweets and TikToks as primary sources in history class. Hydro Flasks, coated with dust, could sit encased in glass inside a museum. For show-and-tell, a first grader might bring in her great-great-great-great-great-grandmother's selfie stick.

But history is not automatically preserved. Without deliberate care, there is no guarantee that our Hydro Flasks and selfie sticks will live on for our descendants to see. History often lies forgotten in attics, basements, and closets. Other times, history ends up in the trash.

For the past thirty-five years, century-old Yiddish and Hebrew records have sat in Mr. Eric Cohen's basement. Years ago, his father used to play these 78 vinyl records. Though mostly indecipherable to Mr. Cohen, the music held meaning for his Yiddish-speaking father.

Packed inside boxes, these records' value goes unused. Though Mr. Cohen himself does not have any use for them, he said, "It would just be a shame to throw them away... it just wouldn't be right." He hopes to give them to someone who would enjoy their historical, religious, and musical

value. "I wanted to do something with them for years," he explained. A while back, he considered sending them to an organization in Florida that studies Yiddish history, but he said, "I was afraid they would just get broken" in the shipping process.

This situation is not unique to Mr. Cohen. Many face the dilemma of owning a significant or historical object, but do not know anyone to give it to so that its value is appreciated and lives on. In the 1980s, the Georgia

He explained, "Our founding is tied to people wanting to donate their materials to someplace where it will be preserved indefinitely, and not be stored in their closets, basements, or attics... Our focus is to honor that mission." Initially founded by the Atlanta Jewish Federation, the archive began "in a closet." Now an element of the Breman Museum, Mr. Katz stated, "We are now the largest repository for Jewish history in the region."

The archives work to document

"History often lies forgotten in attics, basements, and closets. Other times, history ends up in the trash."

Jewish community advocated for the establishment of a Jewish archive to provide a solution to this issue. For the sesquicentennial of Jewish life in Georgia, an exhibition collected historical objects from people around the state. After the exhibition, however, people did not want to reclaim their belongings. They felt that an archive or museum would best preserve and value them.

"That was really the seed that was planted to start the archives," said Mr. Jeremy Katz, Senior Director of Archives at the Breman Museum.

the history of Jews in the state of Georgia, Mr. Katz said. "A lot of things that you think about Atlanta -- Coca Cola, Georgia Tech, Emory, Mercedes Benz Stadium, the Atlanta Braves -- all these iconic things have roots in the Jewish community. So we focus on collecting those stories and showing Jewish contributions to Atlanta, as well as throughout the region." A prized possession in the archive is the correspondence among the Minus family -- one of the first Jewish families to settle in the South -- from the colonial period through the civil war.

The archive preserves thousands of manuscript collections, over a thousand artifacts, hundreds of textiles, over a thousand oral histories, and roughly fifty-thousand photographs that document Jewish life in Georgia and surrounding states. The ability to find historical objects almost anywhere contributes to this huge collection. "Through just the strangest methods and ways people find history," Mr. Katz explained, listing possible locations such as basements, attics, estate sales, and even eBay. People continuously stumble upon historical objects, and the Breman Museum continues to engage with donors daily.

The environment of the archives specifically caters to the needs of preservation. "Our archives [are] climate controlled... we try to maintain 70 degrees Fahrenheit and 50% humidity really across the board. That's kind of what the sweet spot is for documents, photographs, metals, things like that," said Mr. Katz. Without these accommodations, documents and objects absorb and release moisture which causes deterioration. Mr. Katz continued, "And even beyond that, we try to create as many buffers between the materials and the environment -- light, temperature, humidity -- so we want to enclose everything in boxes and folders or cabinets." Even just layering documents upon one another can cause discoloration.

In addition to simply preserving the archives, the Breman Museum continues to value and make use of the historical objects. They display some of the archives in their three rotating exhibitions. In addition, students, researchers, and community members can access the rest of the papers and objects in the archives. "We want to be as accessible as we possibly can. Because once you collect these materials and preserve them, they don't really do any good if they're just sitting on the shelves not being utilized," notes Mr. Katz.

There exists a concept in Judaism of preserving a valuable or holy object. Many families continue to use or keep their ancestors' old menorahs, siddurim, or candlesticks. Rabbi Adam

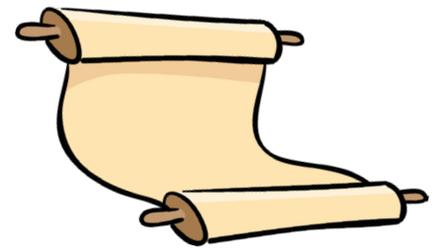
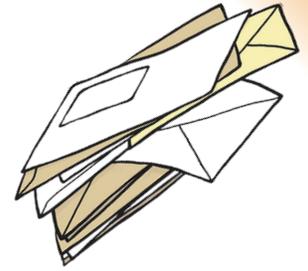
Starr of Congregation Ohr HaTorah said, "I think people want to feel, when they practice Judaism, that there is a link in the chain -- that this connects to something that happened before."

While passing down these religious objects makes a nice family tradition, Judaism actually obligates us to preserve some religious items. For example, someone cannot throw away a Torah. Rabbi Starr explained, "There's a strong sense of keeping it around until literally it's too old." Only once it reaches this point it becomes permissible to bury the Torah -- but it is never permissible to place it in the trash. He adds that even "anything that touches something intrinsically holy," such as the covering of the Torah, can never be thrown away.

In addition to preserving old religious items, another strong custom in Judaism is to preserve someone's memory and values through a new religious item. Shuls often receive Torahs in memory of lost loved ones. "It's really this idea of keeping the memory of the people alive through a way that's expressive of some of the most important things in life," Rabbi Starr said. "If you go to the shul and you open up the aron kodesh... every single [Torah covering] says in Hebrew, 'Leilui nishmat -- for the elevation of the soul -- of so and so.'" Rather than keep an object itself, this preserves memories and values.

Historical objects contain value, but unless they receive intentional care, they end up in the trash, forgotten, or destroyed by exposure. Often we might not even realize the value of some of the belongings passed down for generations. To just throw them away or leave them in closets deprives others of their potential.

If you are interested in receiving Mr. Cohen's records or would like further information about them, reach out to *Palette* at palette@atljewishacademy.org. If you own or know of something with historical value, contact Mr. Katz at jrkatz@thebreman.org. ♦



Teacher's Corner: Featuring Mr. Rojek

Daliya Wallenstein

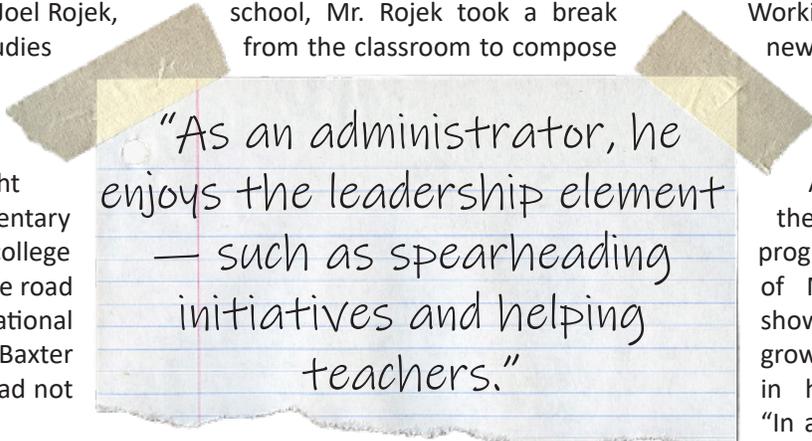
In Athens, Georgia, an elementary school sits on one end of Baxter Street. Further down the road lies a middle school, and a little past there is a high school. The street continues on, eventually leading into the campus of the University of Georgia. For the first two decades of his life, Mr. Joel Rojek, High School General Studies Instructional Team Leader and an English teacher, followed this path down Baxter Street, a straight trajectory from elementary school all the way until college graduation. At the end of the road in college, Mr. Rojek's educational journey continued beyond Baxter Street, turning in ways he had not expected.

From a young age, Mr. Rojek planned to follow in his father's footsteps and become a college professor. As a history major, he assumed he would teach history. Yet after each of his college history courses, he found himself thinking, "Okay, I've studied that. What's next?" Mr. Rojek knew history professors have to specialize in a very specific realm, yet he loved studying new, diverse topics. "I didn't want to study the 1700s for the next three decades of my life," he said.

Realizing that specializing in history would not suit him well, Mr. Rojek reflected on what aspects of history did interest him. Eventually, he realized he was drawn to its writing element. He explained, "I liked writing these big, complex papers... I liked challenging compositional situations;

I liked building arguments and shining light on things that most people don't know about." Once this became clear, he planned his next step in his educational journey: pursuing a writing degree to become an English professor.

Between college and graduate school, Mr. Rojek took a break from the classroom to compose



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a strong portfolio of writings to showcase when applying to graduate programs. During this time, Mr. Rojek also started working for the Georgia Newspaper Project through the University of Georgia, which tries to document every single newspaper through Georgia.

In the sub-basement of the school's library, Mr. Rojek would supervise undergraduate students preparing the newspapers for preservation, which would then be photographed, and ultimately documented on microfilm. In addition to the current newspapers, they also preserved old donated documents. Some papers detailed historical events, which he would try to read with the limited perspective of those during

the time period. In addition to tracking wars and major history, he would also compare the writing and comic strips between the time periods. He recalled, "It was neat to see what was similar and different about media back then and when I was reading it at the time."

Working on his writing and the newspapers provided Mr.

Rojek with "the bridge I needed for that point in my life," he said.

Afterward, he attended the graduate writing program at the University of Montana. The program showed him all the room for growth and development in his writing. He stated, "In a very good way it was a humbling experience. I felt

like I was in a room where

often I would feel like there were really talented and intelligent writers and amazing people around me."

Through a Teacher's Assistant position, he also taught introductory English classes to college students. He said, though, "Educationally, for me, [the graduate program] was an awesome experience... [whereas] the teaching part was a different journey." He explained, "I found teaching freshmen college students English to be incredibly frustrating and not very rewarding. They all thought they knew how to write well because they graduated from high school. And I was trying to point out to them that, in fact, no, there's a lot of room to grow."

As he had with history in

college, Mr. Rojek reflected on what aspects of teaching college students appealed to him and which did not. “I realized that I still very much wanted to focus my life on something related to writing,” he said.

However, he recognized he missed “seeing people grow and develop and start in one place and then hit a really impressive finish line.” He could not guide students through this same degree of growth while teaching college students, whom he only saw for one semester. In contrast, he said, “In a high school... you can get to know somebody in ninth grade and then really appreciate who they turn into by the time they walk across the stage at graduation.”

Mr. Rojek decided to switch directions and teach high school English. Having never taught high schoolers, he was looking for a mentor to “show [him] the ropes.” He recalled, “At Yeshiva Atlanta at the time, there was an English teacher who was the head of the English department who had a really nice resume — he ranked as one of the top 100 teachers in Georgia by the *[Atlanta Journal-Constitution]*.” Mr. Rojek applied to YA and then excitedly signed a contract. Two weeks later, he heard that the teacher resigned.

At this point, Mr. Rojek was the only person in the English department.

This made him the most veteran staff member, while never having taught a single class. Typically, new teachers are assigned the classes that the more experienced teachers did not want. In Mr. Rojek’s case, however, he stated, “I got to just choose what classes I got to teach — it’s almost absurd.”

Without a mentor, Mr. Rojek said, “I had to learn a lot of things the hard way because I had to do it on my own terms. There was some trial and error and there were some ups and downs. But, honestly, that suited me pretty well, and I really enjoyed the challenge.”

Mr. Rojek was not entirely on his own; he had “a lot of great support since [he had] been on board.” In addition, he said, “I was fortunate to get really high quality professional development early in my career.” After his second year teaching at YA, Mr. Rojek attended the Klingenstein Summer Institute through Columbia University, a program that provides courses directed toward assisting new teachers at independent schools. A few years later, he went to Harvard University’s Leadership: An Evolving Vision program during the summer through the AVI CHAI Foundation, a Jewish philanthropic organization. Mr. Rojek remembered, “It was really cool to hear... what’s universal with Jewish schools throughout the country regardless of background or orientation, and what’s unique or different about each of those institutions.”

Working at AJA proved to be especially unique. After teaching English for several years, Mr. Rojek took on a role as an administrator in addition to teaching. “Usually, you have to be all in as a teacher or all in as an administrator,” Mr. Rojek explained. However, he enjoys “having a foot in both worlds” instead of choosing one path. He said that “being a teacher keeps me grounded as a teacher and



realistic as an administrator. I know exactly what teachers are going through because I’m teaching classes at the same school.” As an administrator, he enjoys the leadership element — such as spearheading initiatives and helping teachers. He said, “Just like I enjoy watching students grow... it’s really rewarding to watch teachers grow and to refine their craft and get stronger and better over time.”

Having dynamic roles causes Mr. Rojek to constantly adapt. He stated, “I feel almost like I’ve worked at five different schools because my role has grown and shifted and changed over time.” Furthermore, the school he first applied to has gone through many modifications, some as major as merging with another school. Yet Mr. Rojek appreciates the need to reinvent himself: “For me, that’s fuel; it helps keep me motivated.” ◆

“Having dynamic roles causes Mr. Rojek to constantly adapt.”





The Transformation of the Tu B'Shvat Seder

Daliya Wallenstein

Parents are not kidding around when they tell their children to eat their fruits and veggies. In the World to Come, Hashem will judge us for the times we've passed up opportunities to eat fruits, according to the Talmud Yerushalmi (Kiddushin 4:12). Parents may value fruits for their healthy benefits; however, in Judaism, fruits' significance stems from their potential to increase the world's spirituality.

It is taught (Chemdat Yamim 2:3:108) that an angel holds power over every life form — fruits included. Saying a bracha over a fruit strengthens the angel's providence over that type of fruit. By contrast, for every fruit uneaten (resulting in the loss of a potential bracha), the world loses potential spiritual influence.

For the majority of the year, we tend to forget and neglect fruits, but on Tu B'Shvat, we celebrate fruit's spiritual role. Over the years, many Jewish people have taken to commemorating the holiday with a Kabbalistic Tu B'Shvat seder. During these seders, one acknowledges and appreciates the individual spiritual aspects of a variety of fruits.

One section of the Kabbalistic seder particularly mirrors the better-known Pesach seder. Everyone at the table drinks four cups of wine: the first white, the second white with a drop of red, the third an even mixture, and the fourth red with just a drop of white. The Zohar (1:192a) analyzes the two colors of wine: The pure white represents kindness, while the harsher red symbolizes strength and judgment.

Most people appreciate kindness; on the other hand, judgment is usually met with hesitation and fear. In this section of the seder, participants focus on accepting, and ultimately appreciating, qualities one tends to view with contempt. As the seder progresses, while the wine transforms from white to red, one learns not only to appreciate Hashem's kindness, but His judgment as well. Throughout the

“The goal is not to discard the traits we dislike, rather, we should see how to use each part of us positively.”

seder, fruits accompany the wine and foster a similar transformative process for a variety of personal character traits.

After pouring the cup of white wine, the table brings the first group of fruits containing an inedible shell or peel. The outer layer represents impurity, while the edible fruit inside symbolizes holiness and perfection. At this point, everyone at the table pauses to meditate on a personal trait they dislike. As one throws away the fruits' impure outside, they should mentally discard their negative trait.

Then, a drop of red wine is added to a second cup on white wine, and the participants eat fruits with an

inedible center. In contrast to the first fruits, the tainted pit is surrounded by pure fruit. This represents the possibility of holiness growing out of impurity. One should think back to their unwanted trait, but try to imagine it developing into something great. The trait can transform from a fault into an asset.

Next, everyone pours a cup of red and white wine. This time they enjoy fruits with edible seeds. While the fruit does contain seeds, these seeds no longer represent contamination. All parts of the fruit, just as all personal traits, have become virtues.

Lastly, each person drinks a cup of red wine with only a single drop of white. With this wine, it is time to bring out the best-smelling fruits. These untainted, fragrant fruits symbolize true spirituality. After all, the sense of smell is the purest and most elevated: Hashem gave Adam his soul through his nose, as the Torah says, “God breathed into man's nostrils a breath of life” (Bereshit 2:7).

The Tu B'Shvat seder guides participants through a spiritual transformation. One realizes that their characteristics require no change, rather their perspective. By altering the way we view, approach, and work with ourselves, we realize that ultimately we control who we are. However, the goal is not to discard the traits we dislike, rather, we should see how to use each part of us positively. Hashem intentionally created us in a specific way. Each part of us was deliberately given; our job is to determine for what purpose. ♦

When considering the many different aspects and rituals of Purim, some may notice a motif of *seudot* (meals). In fact, Megillat Esther opens at King Achashverosh's lavish banquet, followed by the mention of Queen Vashti's banquet for women. Other examples include Queen Esther's inaugural banquet, the two feasts that Esther sets up to expose Haman's evil plans against the Jews, and the mitzvah to have a *seudah* on Purim.

Of course, the most important part of any *seudah* is the food. While some foods, such as hamantaschen, are well-known customary foods eaten on Purim, there are plenty of others that you may not be familiar with. Let's take a look.

”לא־הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־עַמָּתָהּ וְאֶת־מִוְלַדְתָּהּ כִּי מְרַדְּבֵי צִוְּהָ עָלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִגִּיד:”
 “Esther did not reveal her people or her origin, for Mordechai had told her not to reveal it.” (Esther 2:10)

While living as Queen in Achashverosh's palace, Esther was told by Mordechai to hide her Judaism. However, Esther was still a very righteous Jew who wanted to keep practicing her religion, but she knew she would have to do so in secret. When it came time to eat meals, Esther was faced with a dilemma: How could she maintain her standards of kashrut while keeping her Judaism a secret?

The Gemara (Megillah 13a) explains:

”וְרַבִּי יוֹחָנָן אָמַר: זֵרְעוּנִים. וְכֵן הוּא אֹמֵר (דְּנִיאל א, טז) וַיְהִי הַמְּלָצֵר נוֹשֵׂא אֶת פֶּת בָּגַם וְנוֹתֵן לָהֶם זֵרְעוּנִים”
 “Rabbi Yohanan said: She was given vegetables and seeds/legumes, which did not pose a problem with regard to the kosher laws. And so it states with regard to the kindness done for Daniel and his associates [when they were similarly attempting to keep kosher]: ‘So the steward took away their food and the wine that they should drink, and gave them vegetables’ (Daniel 1:16).”

Esther saw herself between a rock and a hard place; she would either have to reveal her true identity as a Jew or betray her standards of Kashrut. But even so, our astute heroine found a way to circumvent both of these situations: posing as a vegetarian. This way, Esther was not fed any meat and could be sure that she was keeping kosher.

The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (142:5) records that we honor Esther's predicament by our food choices on Purim:

”יֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים, שֶׁיֵּשׁ לֶאֱכֹל מִיְּבֵי זֵרְעוּנֵי בְּפוּרִים, זָכַר לְזֵרְעוּנֵי שְׂאֵבְלוֹ דְּנִיאל וְחֻבְרָיו בְּבָבֶל, וְזָכַר לְזֵרְעוּנֵי שְׂאֵבְלָהּ אֶסְתֵּר.”
 “Some authorities say to eat different kinds of seeds on Purim to commemorate the seeds Daniel and his friends ate in Babylon, and also to remember the seeds that Esther ate.”

So when you sit down to have your Purim *seudah*, maybe eat some peas, beans, or seeds just like our #trendyqueen (literally).

Re-Accepting the Torah on Purim

A Lesson from Rav Soloveitchik's Approach to Purim

Matthew Minsk

Straightforward *divrei Torah* generally follow a basic pattern: Introduce a question on the simple reading of a section of Torah, hone in on a commentary that resolves it with a nice takeaway message, and explain how it connects the reader to the initial story. While the lessons of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik could be squeezed into this framework, I often encounter difficulty finding a classic philosophical resolution in his Brisker method of analysis. However, this more technical approach allows us to forge a stronger connection to Hashem. The Rav's dissection comparing the reading of Megillas Esther and Hallel in his Sefer Hararei Kedem provides an illustration.

The Gemara (Megillah 14a) famously asks why Hallel isn't recited on Purim, which commemorates a miracle and should logically necessitate singing Hashem's praise. Among other opinions, which carry interesting implications in their own right, Rav Nachman responds that reading the Megillah counts as praise and supplants Hallel.

Normally, someone preparing a *d'var Torah* would use this gemara to launch into discussing how retelling a favorable event reinitiates our gratitude or elicits praise. However, Rav Soloveitchik (Hararei Kedem 1:217) takes a different approach. The Rav begins his exploration into the topic by quoting the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 689:5), which states that a reader can only fulfill another learned person's obligation of Megillah with ten men present. He then turns to the Magen Avraham (Orach Chaim 689:10), who explains the aforementioned rule by likening the Megillah to prayer, which requires a *minyan* for certain functions; the Rav concludes that the Magen Avraham drew this comparison from Rav Nachman's aforementioned statement about the Megillah and

Hallel.

Even from there, the Rav doesn't expand on the philosophical implications of the Megillah serving as a form of prayer immediately. Instead, he spends the remainder of the first section of the *siman* (chapter) placing the repetition of the four verses of the Megillah (Biur HaGra 690:17) into the framework of repeating verses in Hallel (Sukkah 38b). The Rav then moves on to breaking down a dispute from Megillah 4a over reading the Megillah both at night and during the day. From that discussion, the Rav presents the *svara* (lit. explanation), tying the disparate concepts together with a more emotional message regarding the role of praise and prayer.

What stood out to me from learning Hararei Kedem is the emphasis that the Rav places on using halachic lenses on every topic, regardless of how conceptual the topic may originally seem. While more than a quarter of Maseches Megillah details Midrash-style stories full of inspirational morals or interesting tidbits from Esther, the Rav instead analyzes the holiday with his tried-and-true halachic nitpicking. The Rav's focus on intense *lomdus* (halachic-style learning) — even when addressing a holiday known for its physical obligations — serves as a guide for our year-round approach to engaging with Judaism.

Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman (as quoted by Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky) similarly emphasized the importance of Torah study to building a connection with Hashem. He explained — in line with the Rambam (Laws of Teshuva 10:6) — that the more one learns Torah, the more one will know and love Hashem. However, this intimate knowledge of Hashem doesn't come from surface-level observations, but from really understanding the logic of the Torah, Gemara, and halachic

process, or in short: *lomdus*.

Purim is an apt day to recognize the underlying importance of engaging with Hashem through Torah, despite its superficial appearance as devoted entirely to physical revelry. Shabbos 88a tells that when Hashem offered the Torah to the Jewish people at Har Sinai, He held the mountain over them and threatened to bury them if they declined. Only in the days of the Purim miracle did the Jewish people take on the Torah of their own volition, as the verse states, "The Jews accepted and took on (*kiymu v'kiblu*)... these two days [of Purim]" (Esther 9:27).

In a *Jewish Press* article from 2018, Rabbi Hershel Schachter explains that because of "*kiymu v'kiblu*," Purim is, at its core, a day of reaccepting the Torah. As the Rav shows in Hararei Kedem, halachic analysis represents the way we relate to Hashem, and Purim contains a bounty of details to dissect. While I won't go as far as Rav Schachter to suggest we stay up all night learning Torah, perhaps it would be worthwhile to crack open a *sefer* and give some time to in-depth Torah study this Purim — at least between all of the other celebrations. There's plenty to learn, and a greater understanding of our connection to Hashem awaits. ♦

"Purim
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Purim Trivia

Asher Lytton



How many provinces did Achashverosh rule?

- a. One hundred and twenty seven
- b. One hundred and twenty
- c. Fifty two
- d. One hundred and twenty five

1



What tribe is Mordechai from?

- a. Yehuda
- b. Levi
- c. Binyamin
- d. Virgo

2

Who was the messenger between Mordechai and Esther?

- a. Bizeta
- b. Bigtan
- c. Hatach
- d. Amazon.com

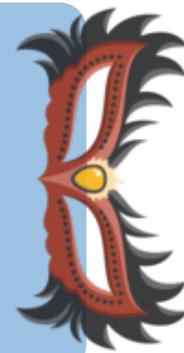
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What of the following lines is from the Megillah and appears in Havdalah?

- a. ... ליהודים היתה אורה...
- b. ... הנה קל ישועתי...
- c. ... דורש טוב לעמו ודובר שלום לכל זרעו...
- d. ... יתגדל ויתקדש שמיא רבא...

4



Which of these was one of Haman's sons?

- a. Adalia
- b. Admata
- c. Haman Jr.
- d. Mihuman

5



What year of Achashverosh's reign did Haman cast his lottery?

- a. 2019
- b. 3rd year
- c. 127th year
- d. 12th year

6

What was Haman's fathers name?

- a. Hamgata
- b. Hamdata
- c. Hamrata
- d. Hammurabi

7



Defiance: The Untold Story of Queen Vashti

Jemima Schoen

Megillat Esther is one of the most dramatic and resonant scrolls in all of Judaism. It tells of an underdog story, a planned genocide of the Jewish people, and even female empowerment. Esther is one of the most iconic female personalities in Judaism to this day. However, there is another female character who is frequently misunderstood and deserves the spotlight as well: Queen Vashti.

We first meet Queen Vashti as her husband, King Achashverosh, makes a rather inappropriate request of her (1:11). She refuses to do what he asks, and Achashverosh gets rid of her. (Whether he killed her, as per Rashi on Megillat Esther 1:19; exiled her, following the Ibn Ezra; or sent her to a convent of some sort, according to Josephus at the end of his first chapter of Megillat Esther, is up to interpretation.) This is all Megillat Esther tells us of Vashti, but with the help of commentators like Malbim, we can fill in the lines of who this intriguing “antihero” really is.

According to Midrash Esther Rabbah 3:5, Vashti was descended from Nebuchadnezzar, making her royalty, while Achashverosh, born a commoner, had to fight his way to the top, possibly in the Persian army. It is implied that Vashti and Achashverosh are in a forced marriage for political gains. For Achashverosh, of chronically low self-esteem, Vashti was a double-

edged sword of sorts: Her hand in marriage signified to Persian nobles Achashverosh’s legitimacy, but at the same time, Vashti was a constant reminder of Achashverosh’s inadequacy and lower status from birth. The difference of their backgrounds and Achashverosh’s lack of confidence led to an extreme power struggle within their marriage.

Now, pan to the fateful feast that sealed Vashti’s fate. Achashverosh is hosting his long party for the men, and Vashti is hosting one for the

grew a tail. The implication of this Midrash is that if these supernatural events had not happened to her, she would have gone without question, as she was very arrogant and wanted to show off her beauty.

Another possibility that I believe the *p’shat* (simple reading) more readily suggests is that Vashti did not want to go, and that it had nothing to do with an external event. Perhaps Vashti wanted to stay and host her own party. Perhaps Vashti did not want to be shown off. Perhaps this was a severe expression of disrespect towards her that had become too much of a pattern. She was the rightful queen, after all. She deserved respect that, according to Malbim’s commentaries on Megillat Esther 1:12, Achashverosh did not show her; his fragile ego distressed at the thought of his wife being better than he.

There were very specific rules of etiquette in ancient Persia, and these rules were universally known. Malbim asserts that Achashverosh committed a series of displays of disrespect towards Vashti. For example, his very sending of his own chamberlains was an act of disrespect towards Vashti; traditionally, he would have sent Vashti’s own maids to make the request. In making the request, Achashverosh also calls Vashti “*Vashti Hamalkah*” (Vashti the Queen), rather than “*Hamalkah Vashti*” (Queen Vashti). Calling a royal official by their first name

“Strictly from just the *p’shat*, Vashti is a strong woman who fought for her rights under an aggressive patriarchal society.”

women. This is ostensibly expected of her as the queen, or maybe she just wanted to have a party of her own. According to the Talmud in Megillah 12b, as the men of the party began speaking about which women were the most beautiful, Achashverosh said that his own wife, Queen Vashti, was the most beautiful woman, and he would prove it. Megillah 12b claims that when Achashverosh sent his chamberlains to retrieve Vashti, she suddenly came down with a skin affliction and even

and then their title was highly improper and perpetuated Achashverosh's patronizing attitude towards Vashti. However, it seems Vashti tried to give her husband the benefit of the doubt, as she responded with "*Hamalkah Vashti*," but it was obvious at that point that Achashverosh had purposefully disrespected her.

Finally, the breaking point for Vashti in this relationship: the request itself. Achashverosh, born a commoner, was now asking Vashti, a direct descendant of royalty, to show off her beauty to all of his friends. Wanting to show off her beauty completely negated her role as a royal and political power in her own right. Achashverosh's insecurities had gone too far. Vashti did what no woman could do at that time: She stood up to her husband.

You might be thinking, *Purim already has a female hero, why try to make another woman look better? Isn't this one positive female figure enough?* And I am very grateful to have Esther as a celebrated role model, but that is not the point. We need to do justice to every woman, and person, and Vashti was framed unfairly. Saying that she only refused because she had a skin affliction and a tail is rather a grand claim to make, even if she is a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, thus predisposing Chazal against her. To me, her lineage is possibly not the only cause for these commentaries. From her highly abnormal behavior for the time period in defying her husband, Chazal might have considered this "rudeness" indication of a cruel personality.

Additionally, we can view Vashti and Esther as foils: Vashti refuses to come and gets punished. Esther comes without being asked and gets rewarded. Esther boosted Achashverosh's ego, Vashti quashed it. Esther came into this position by being uprooted from

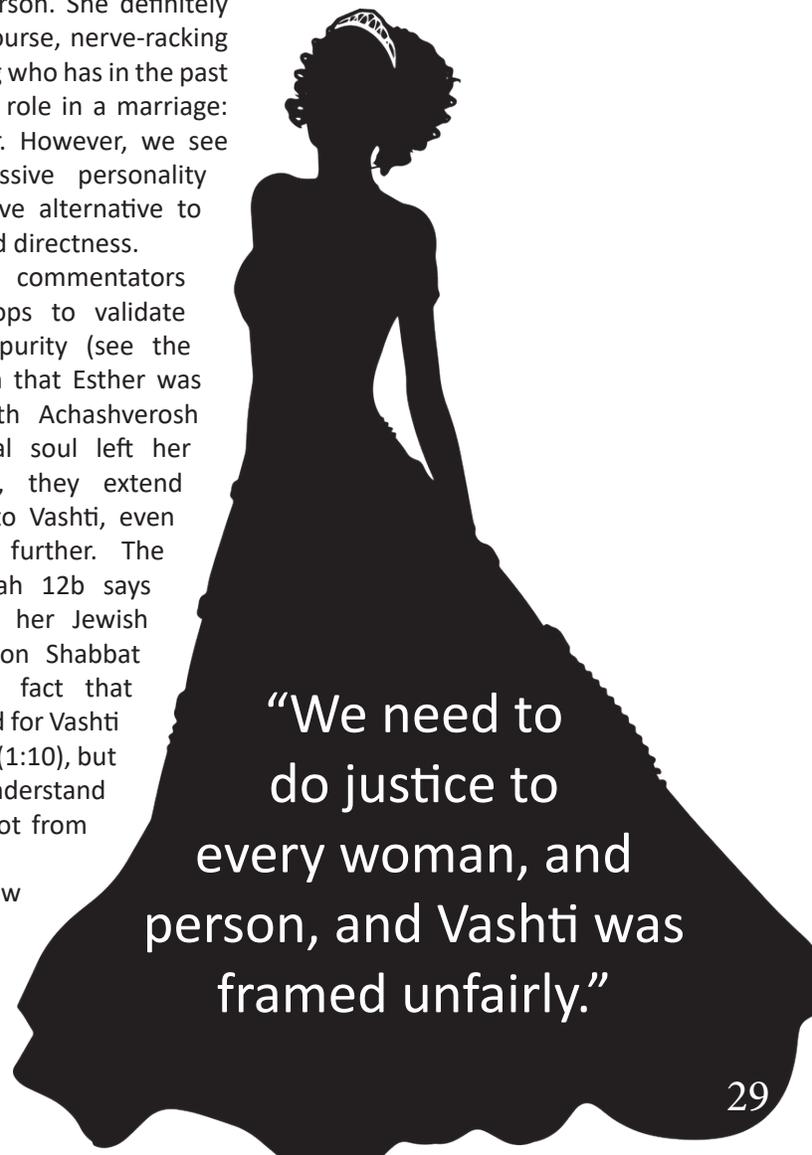
her home and was rushed along the process, having had no prior experience or knowledge that this would happen to her. Vashti was raised as royalty; she had been taught about it all her life. Both are women living in a society ruled by men, even when they themselves are proven to be more virtuous or fit. But mainly, one succeeds in a patriarchal society, and one fails.

This is no coincidence. Throughout the Megillah, we see Esther as more of a passive person. The thing she does most often in the Megillah is "find favor" in other people's eyes. She is forced into being queen and is obedient and quiet. It takes a great deal of convincing from Mordechai to get her to go to the Achashverosh and ask for help. This is not to say that Esther was not an amazing person. She definitely was, and it is, of course, nerve-racking to stand up to a king who has in the past expressed his ideal role in a marriage: that of the master. However, we see Esther's more passive personality framed as a positive alternative to Vashti's courage and directness.

While commentators jump through hoops to validate Esther's absolute purity (see the Zohar's explanation that Esther was allowed to lie with Achashverosh because her actual soul left her body temporarily), they extend no such courtesy to Vashti, even incriminating her further. The Gemara of Megillah 12b says that Vashti forced her Jewish servants to work on Shabbat based off of the fact that Achashverosh called for Vashti on the seventh day (1:10), but I find it hard to understand how the Gemara got from point A to point B.

All we know from the *p'shat*

about Vashti at all is that she defied her husband. Any commentaries on her will be based off of this fact, this action. This is the problem with the portrayal of Vashti — there is no real proof that she is a bad person who deserved to die or be exiled. Of course, sources such as Chazal and Agadot are quite prolific. They must have come to their conclusions through logic, and there have been various traditions passed down through the generations, but strictly from just the *p'shat*, Vashti is a strong woman who fought for her rights under an aggressive patriarchal society. Now what could be wrong with that? ♦



"We need to do justice to every woman, and person, and Vashti was framed unfairly."

What are Pas and Chalav Yisrael?: Part Two

The Government Strikes Fear into the Heart of Dairy Producers, and Other Factors Relating to Kosher Milk

Matthew Minsk

My defense for owning a shirt bearing the phrase “*chalav stam*,” simple milk, is that high school boys are weird. After campers chanted it for a month, including at a minor league baseball game in Hagerstown, MD, the phrase — which refers to an intermediate halachic category of milk neither *chalav yisrael* (Jewish milk) nor *chalav nochri* (non-Jewish milk, also called *chalav akum*) — appeared on the NCSY Camp Sports end-of-summer t-shirt three years ago.

Last issue, we inspected *pas yisrael*, laws covering the status of bread baked by non-Jews and the concern that its consumption would lead to intermarriage. Alternatively, *kashrut* underlies the differentiation between Jewish and non-Jewish milk.

Since I haven’t earned rabbinic ordination since the last issue, I am still eminently unqualified on halachic issues. As always, I encourage you to go to your local halachic authority with any questions or even learn through the sources, which can be found in the Yoreh Deah section of their respective works.

The Mishnah (Avodah Zara 2:6) forbids milk produced without Jewish supervision, which the gemara (Avodah Zara 35b) attributes to a fear that the non-Jew might switch the kosher milk with milk of non-kosher animals. It explains that no reliable way exists to visually discern cow milk from that of a non-kosher animal (like a pig).

A few pages later (Avodah Zara 39b), the gemara offers two possible exceptions to allow milk milked by a non-Jew: the flock only consisted of kosher animals, or a Jew was sitting nearby and could get up and look at any point, so the non-Jewish employee wouldn’t dare pull any shenanigans.

The Shulchan Aruch (115:1)

accepts both reasonings to permit the milk, while the Rema (ibid.) rejects the former. (As Rabbi Chaim Jachter notes in his article on the topic in *Kol Hatorah*, this first argument is subject to a halachic dispute that falls outside what this article will address.) The latter leniency, known as *mirtas*, bears further discussion and is ultimately the source for the primary allowances today.

In the example of the gemara, the non-Jewish milker feared being exposed by the Jewish part-time observer if he were to try anything nefarious. Nowadays, the Chazon Ish (41:4) and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe 1:46-47) argue, the government fills that same role. Since government agencies verify the origin of labeled cow milk and violators face steep consequences, the status of *mirtas* applies, according to these two great halachic authorities of the twentieth century. *Chalav stam* colloquially refers to this type of milk, which doesn’t neatly fall into the categories of *chalav yisrael* or *chalav nochri*.

The Chasam Sofer (107) and Pischei Teshuva (115:3) take a different, more stringent approach. They put forth that the Jewish people accepted the decree against non-Jewish milk not watched by a Jew as a vow which can’t now be broken, floating the possibility of a Biblical injunction against breaking vows. The Chasam Sofer further invokes the rule of Beitzah 5a: Something decreed by a vote of the Beis Din can only be nullified by a subsequent equal or greater Beis Din (i.e. the Great Sanhedrin, which we no longer have), even if the underlying circumstances no longer apply.

The Aruch Hashulchan (115:5) strikes a middle ground. He rules that none of the aforementioned leniencies hold water and chastises Torah scholars

who follow them; nevertheless, he acknowledges that the masses utilize these allowances after seeing leaders of the generation use them. He cautions that anyone interested in “guarding their soul” should take care to only consume *chalav yisrael* products. Similarly, Rav Moshe (Igros Moshe 1:47) writes that although relying on *chalav stam* certainly falls within the acceptable halachic bounds, he, personally, only consumed *chalav yisrael* and encouraged the same of others.

Lastly, an important disclaimer to government-inspired *mirtas*: Rav Moshe only ruled based on the rigorous labeling process enforced by the United States government. In other countries, where governments may not enforce food laws as closely, one should consult a knowledgeable authority. Even in Israel, the Chief Rabbinate generally rules stringently against unsupervised milk for a variety of reasons (see former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Eliyahu Bakshi-Doron in *Techumin* 23:463).

Although the concepts of *pas* and *chalav yisrael* come from the same place (Avodah Zara 2:6), they were enacted for different reasons, leading to exceptions that apply in different circumstances. In any event, even the more lenient authorities encourage eating *chalav yisrael* products as a stringency, which is why Rabbi E won’t take you up on an offer to eat the ice cream at mishmor. However, those decisors make clear that there is no problem relying on *chalav stam*, which is why Rabbi E provides it to students in the first place. ♦



Lunchtime . . . For Ballers

Jemima Schoen

If you walk into the gym on any given school day at 11:45, you will likely see several AJA students playing basketball. They do this for many reasons, and they show a profound devotion to the sport.

When asked why he plays basketball at lunch, junior Elliot Sokol said, “First of all, I just love basketball, and I want to play it whenever I really have the chance. Second, I don’t get to play in the gym very much so this is the chance. Third, I think it’s like more of a recess than a lunch.”

Sophomore Ezra Feen explained, “I love basketball and I think after two long classes when you work hard, it’s good to have a fun break and I really enjoy it with all my friends there.”

Junior Daniel Gadelov responded that he likes to play basketball at lunch because “I get slowly better at it, and it helps me out a lot.” Playing basketball at lunch combines a beloved pastime, an active outlet, camaraderie, and practice.

Speaking of practice, many of these students are already on the basketball team, yet they still specifically take this time at lunch to play basketball. Ezra posited that a

love of basketball can never fully be satisfied. He said, “I love basketball that much, so anytime I have the chance to play, I’m going to play.”

Elliot raised another aspect of playing in the gym: the fun of it all. “When we play with the basketball team that’s like serious, you know, practice is serious, games are serious. We play at lunch, it’s just for fun, it’s just with the boys.”

Continuing in his vein of self-improvement, Daniel said, “I don’t believe that I can really get enough time. I just try to improve myself a lot, so like whenever I’m on the team I get a lot of playing time.”

Junior Gavriel Singer stated that he enjoys playing basketball at lunch even though he’s not on the team. He explained that it gives him a chance to be “active in school” and play with his classmates who he otherwise doesn’t get a chance to play with.

Additionally, according to these students, playing basketball at lunch contributes to their high school experience. “It makes it seem like less work, work, work,” said Elliot. “There’s a little break in between. It’s nice to play some ball, you know? And you get good memories from playing that much.”

Daniel agreed, adding that some of his favorite parts of playing basketball in the gym are “hanging out with friends and playing basketball with them to get a deeper connection with them.” Basketball can indeed be a bonding experience.

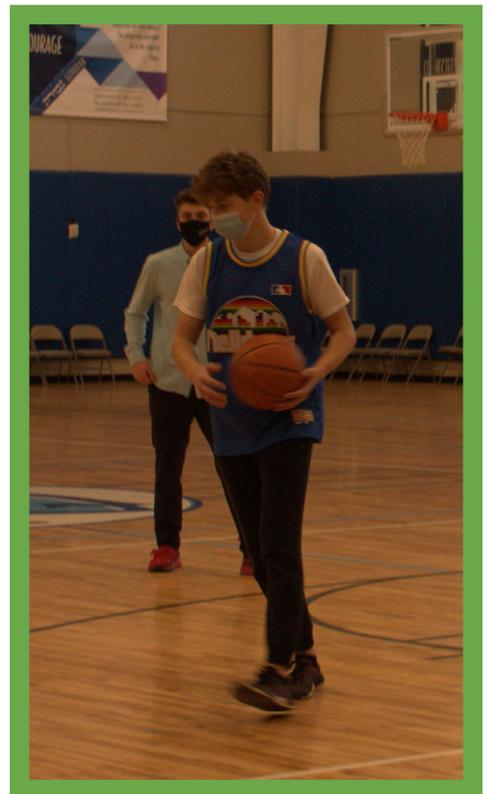
Playing the same sport at the same time every day may seem tedious, but the students who play basketball at lunch find ways to keep it interesting. Ezra provided a glimpse into the day-to-day of basketball at lunch, “Sometimes we play five-on-five, three-on-three,

whatever. Now, we are mainly playing king of the court which is a one-on-one base game.”

When it comes to making up for lost lunchtime, these ballplayers consider the sacrifice to be well worth it. “Thankfully, now we have ten minutes between each class, so I will go outside and I will eat something,” explained Ezra.

Gavriel proves that he is all about the game, as he makes time for playing basketball, even when it cuts into his eating time. “I also eat during lunch, I just eat really fast.”

The cadre of students who play basketball at lunch love the game, love to spend time together, love to be active, and love to improve at their sport. ♦



An Empty Gym Is Nobody's Idea of a Good Time

Fans Haven't Been Allowed to Attend Games, Instead Stream Broadcasts from Home

Matthew Minsk

Broadcasters Matthew Kaplan, a senior, and Joey Wilson, father of senior point guard Simmy Wilson, mulled over which player should win that night's "Kedem Grape Juice Player of the Game." Should junior forward Elliot Sokol's backward spinning layup carry the day for him, or did senior forward Noah Chen's two drawn charges tip the scales in his favor? Scorekeeper Mike Chen, Noah's father, made his way across the gym to read out each player's point total; Matthew and the elder Wilson decided that Elliot's greater point total won him the tiebreaker.

Before signing off, Wilson elaborated on the origin of the Kedem Grape Juice Player of the Game Award, which recognizes AJA's "most valuable player" for that game. He explained that his classmate, Binyomin Cohen (YHS '93), had coined the award back when he had played basketball for Yeshiva High School, AJA's predecessor.

This short discussion was emblematic of boys basketball games this season. Broadcasters Matthew and Wilson try to engage their audience with tidbits and factoids, some present and some historic, with the elder Chen supplying statistics. At the same time, other than the occasional Yearbook photographer and timekeeping maven Scott Forbus, the three of them were the sole spectators in the empty gym not intimately involved in the game as players, coaches, or referees.

Since the beginning of the season, fans have been unable to attend basketball games in person. Unlike flag football, which is played outdoors on a large field, AJA felt that an indoor gym was cramped and less conducive to following COVID-19 protocols. Leading up to the game against the Weber School on December 19, Athletic Director Rodney Zimmerman circulated a sign-up sheet for 20 parents and seniors, but that game was canceled the day before because of a COVID scare on the Weber team. Coming back in January, Coach Zimmerman was instructed to "hold off on fans" for the "school health committee and administration... to gauge COVID number increases," he wrote in an email interview. Therefore, parents and other fans have resorted to watching the games live broadcast, first on Zoom and more recently on AJA's Facebook Live page.

While players don't enjoy playing without fans in attendance, they were split on how much it affected their play. Noah Chen said, "It's just less exciting... because you don't hear a big

cheer when you block somebody... I guess it's kind of deflating." Even so, he argued it "is not really that big of a deal because you can still motivate yourself."

Sophomore guard Ezra Feen concurred. Normally, "classmates and fans are all giving you energy. Cheering... gives you momentum, [which] would definitely help," although he maintained an empty gym did not really affect his play.

Josh Asherian, a junior combo guard-forward, disagreed. "Once a team — especially ours — go on a run, they go on a run," he explained, emphasizing the role of momentum in a basketball game. "The crowd, the hype, the cheering, it all gets us going. It really helps get our team motivated and hyped up to play." Granting a larger role to the positive effects of crowd energy and the comparatively-negative effects of their absence, he said, "An empty gym definitely affects the way we play."

Noah added that as a senior, "It's kind of a letdown. I've been waiting for this for four years... I still enjoy it, still get to be with a great team of guys and have a great time playing basketball. But it's just not the same as it would have been in a non-COVID world."

For their part, parents want to attend games. Shari Sokol, a middle school teacher and junior Elliot's mother, said, "It brings me joy to watch [Elliot] 'get into it.' I want to be able to watch him play too because he will soon, G-d willing, be off to Israel and college."



Watching at home does present certain positives, such as avoiding drive-time, multitasking with dinner, and “the ability to airplay it on our big TV,” which Mrs. Sokol described as like “watching the NBA!” But for parents, attending games in-person outweighs the silver-lining on the dark cloud that is watching a game virtually.

Jodi Wittenberg, center Yered’s mother, said, “I think you miss out on the *ruach* [spirit], you miss out on the camaraderie, and I think these sports games bring school spirit and they bring families together and build community.” She also mentioned a “community and connecting factor” between families and parents that Zoom and Facebook Live inhibit just by the way they operate.

Similarly, Mrs. Sokol added, “Seeing the action in person, feeling the energy, watching it with your own eyes, cheering for the team, complaining about bad calls, socializing and laughing with fellow team parents — that’s all missed a great deal.”

Both Wittenberg and Mrs. Sokol strongly believed that fans should be allowed to attend games. They argued that the gym is large enough to fit fans inside while socially distanced, and people are now accustomed to following restrictions. Furthermore, if anyone does not feel comfortable with the situation, they expressed, then those who feel that way do not have to come, but they would like to have the option.

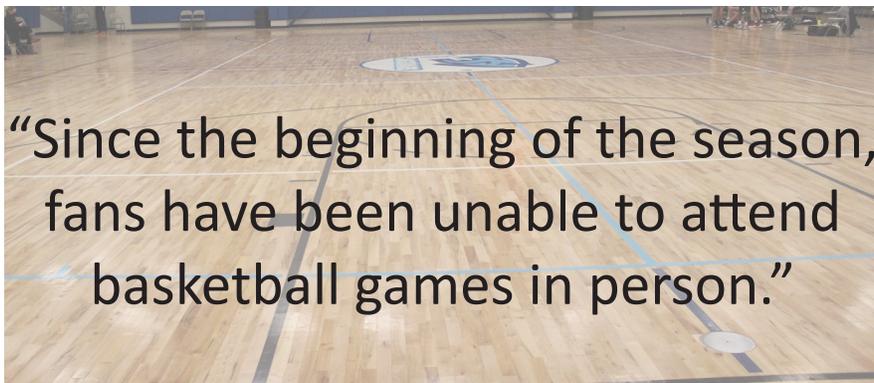
Joey Wilson was another parent who wanted to be able to watch his son play in person, and instead of resigning himself to wait until the school changed its policy, Wilson decided to take proactive steps. He approached Coach

Zimmerman with what he called a “win-win-win” deal.

Wilson said it was evident from the first game that Coach Zimmerman “is a busy guy, he has a lot of other things to do,” and filming a game probably didn’t rank highly on his list of priorities. He also thought that by filming and announcing the game, he could help the viewers at home follow the action. He elaborated, “The ultimate goal of a

difficult to tell exactly what is happening in the game without narration.

Unlike most broadcasters, however, Wilson hopes his online audience soon shrinks. That would mean that parents and the occasional student who tunes in online were allowed to attend in person, an outcome preferred by players and fans alike.



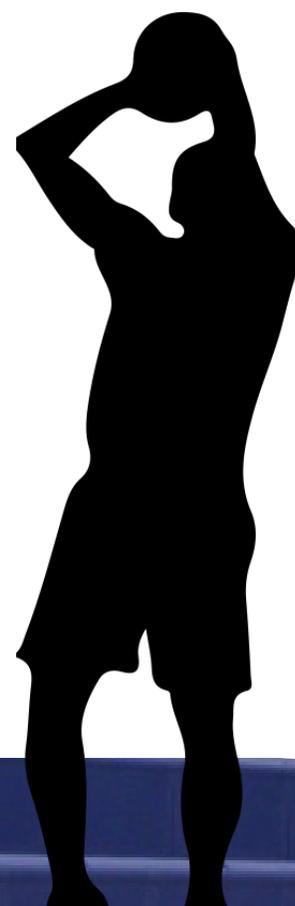
In a January 21 email, Coach Zimmerman said that the school-imposed hiatus imposed on fans after winter break was nearing an end. At the time, he hoped that fans would be allowed into the gym in the coming weeks, at least in a limited capacity.

broadcast is to make it feel like you are sitting at the game and you can follow what’s going on. That’s what I tried to do with my own broadcast in addition to just streaming it.”

Around the same time, Admissions Director Mrs. Erica Gal had recruited Matthew Kaplan to take over videoing from Coach Zimmerman. Wilson and Matthew opted to team up as a duo in the so-called broadcast booth.

Wilson explained that Matthew can add an “inside-man” perspective as a student: As a friend to the players, he knows what their mindset and what they talk about before and after the game, which Wilson thinks the audience appreciates. Having played for Yeshiva High School in his own high school days and talking largely to a group of parents, many of whom are alumni, Wilson thinks his insights can add to the viewers’ experience as well, in addition to the play-by-play commentary. Watching on a small phone (or even a larger computer or TV), it can be

Even if and when that comes to pass, it seems unlikely everyone wanting to attend will be able to, so the broadcast seems likely to continue for the rest of the season. ◆



Handmade Jewelry

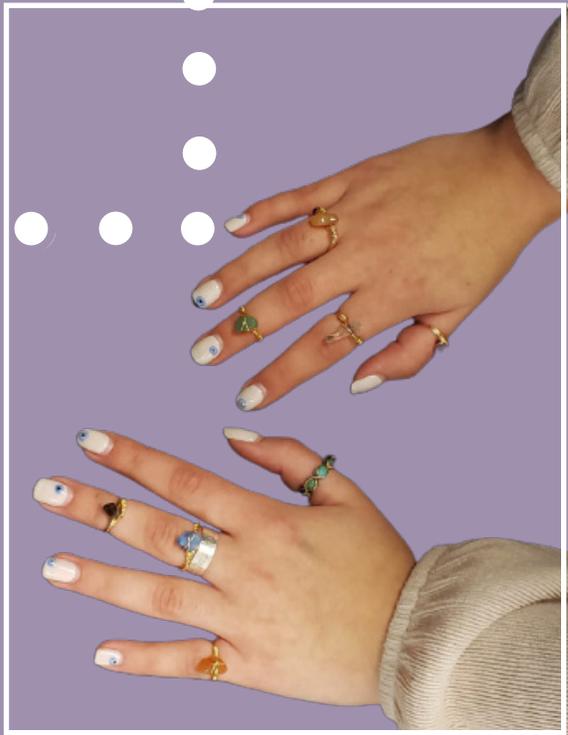
The incredible creativity and talent showcased in the student art submissions section highlights our students' love and dedication to the arts. If you are interested in submitting your masterpieces, please contact *Palette* at aja.palette@gmail.com.



Kira, 12



Dalya S., 11



Emily, 12

Anarchy

Asher Lytton

Had it been a dragon? No, that can't be right.

The electronic clock in my car beams a brilliant blue 2:18 A.M. The windshield wipers beat furiously at the streaming water. Street lights flash hazily through the fog. I pull up to a sudden stop as the traffic light blinks unexpectedly from yellow to red. I guess I should have known it would do that. Green, yellow, then red. Back to green again. I run my right hand through my singed hair as I wait for the stop light to resume its ceaseless cycle and revert to a go light.

What a night. It had all happened so fast. One second I was sitting on the couch with my buddies crunching on party mix, the next, the hair on the left side of my head reduced to charred stubble.

I pull my hand from my smoky mane and accelerate through the now yellow traffic light. Was it supposed to go from red to yellow? I didn't think so. I must have missed the green. What a night.

I speed around the corner onto Highfield Street. The pizza place on the corner there has a blinking, rotating sign, "Open," that I speed past. Hold on. I spin around in a U-turn, hurled against my seat belt and screech back up to the pizza place. Something about it.

It is a dilapidated, little building sticking out onto the street. What paint there once was is peeling off, revealing what looks like concrete patched together with fading bricks. The lighted sign above the door must

have at some point read "John's Pizza." Now, it's something more along the lines of "ohn' Piz a." Ancient lettering on the door spells out "grease and cheese, pizza please!" The windows are vacant, like angry voids, except for that one blinking sign, announcing to the world, in no uncertain terms, that despite what you may think, this pizza place is open for business.

I check the clock. Hmm. 2:04 A.M. Weird. I step out of my car.

I mean really, no one expected that thing to come out of the TV! Like I said, we were just sitting around in the living room, minding our own business, and scrolling through Netflix. Just a bunch of friends relaxing late at night. And then that massive reptilian head -- with the capability, we later learned, to breath fire from its nose -- has the nerve to just explode through the television and start conversing with Jeremy in tongues.

I hop out of my car and approach the door. I check my watch again. Man is it weird that it's open at 1:30 at night! I rap loudly on the door. It swings open.

There on the other side are three, almost identical men in black suits, pale as can be with black hair sticking out from under their top hats. Black pants, jackets, suits, and ties all glow in the night. The one on the left has a bright green handlebar mustache. The one on the right has a bright red one. The middle one has a fine, perfectly curled, bright blue one.

"Interesting," begins the man in the middle pulling out a clip

board. "What are you doing here after midnight?"

The right man's mustache flashes from red to glowing orange. "Intriguing," begins in a monotone voice before I can even respond to the first question. "Are you aware that it is already 11:35 at night?"

The one with a vibrant purple mustache hops on the bandwagon, pulling out a notepad of his own. "And how are the kids? The missus?"

"I think something is wrong," I blurt out before I can be interrupted again.

"Whatever do you mean?"

In the corner of my eye, I catch a glimpse of what appears to be 20 tiny horses. I spin around. No. It's just one massive duck. How the mind plays tricks. I turn back to the men in suits.

"I think something is terribly wrong!" I glance at my watch to make sure I'm not late for my next appointment. No, it's just barely past noon.

"No, this is just life," begins the first man.

"Hasn't anyone ever told you that life is confusing?"

"Life just likes to flip a person on their head."

"Am I hallucinating?"

"You're just opening your eyes."

"I think you better come inside with us."

And, in I march, hair still ablaze like a beacon, the sun rising behind me. ◆

Fashion

Dalya Silverman

Trending Color: Brown!

It would be a disservice to say that brown hasn't been the most trending color of this season. Just Google: "Brown North Face puffer." Vogue UK wrote an article about the infamous jacket. Brown is so versatile and can fit into many different aesthetics -- you can go hippie, indie, grunge, you name it!



In this picture, Shayna is dressed in an earthy and ethereal outfit. By layering a gauzy dress with a crocheted vest, Shayna expresses a whimsical and fantastical vibe. If you grew up playing Pixie Hollow (like me), this fairy aesthetic is a dream come true for our younger selves.



Jewelry is one of the most fun accessories to style. Sticking to only gold or silver jewelry is a staple, but in 2021, we can make our jewelry collections much broader and funkier. Featured here, senior Shayna Shapiro is styling wooden bangles and a textured bracelet with a green beaded necklace. Playing around with different materials in jewelry can elevate any outfit from great to amazing! Of course, any jewelry can't replace the best accessory of them all: COVID-safe face masks!

Photos by Kira Mermelstein. All photos taken safely according to AJA's COVID-19 policies.



2021 is all about new beginnings following... well, you know. To spice up your closet for the new year, have fun playing around with new patterns and mixing them as well. Junior Ella Goldstein is pictured here layering a floral dress over an adorable kitten baby-tee. She pairs the cutesy look with zebra high top converse. Some may be wary of mixing patterns in the fear of clashing, but by sticking to conventional fashion norms, you might be robbing yourself of an eye-catching fit.

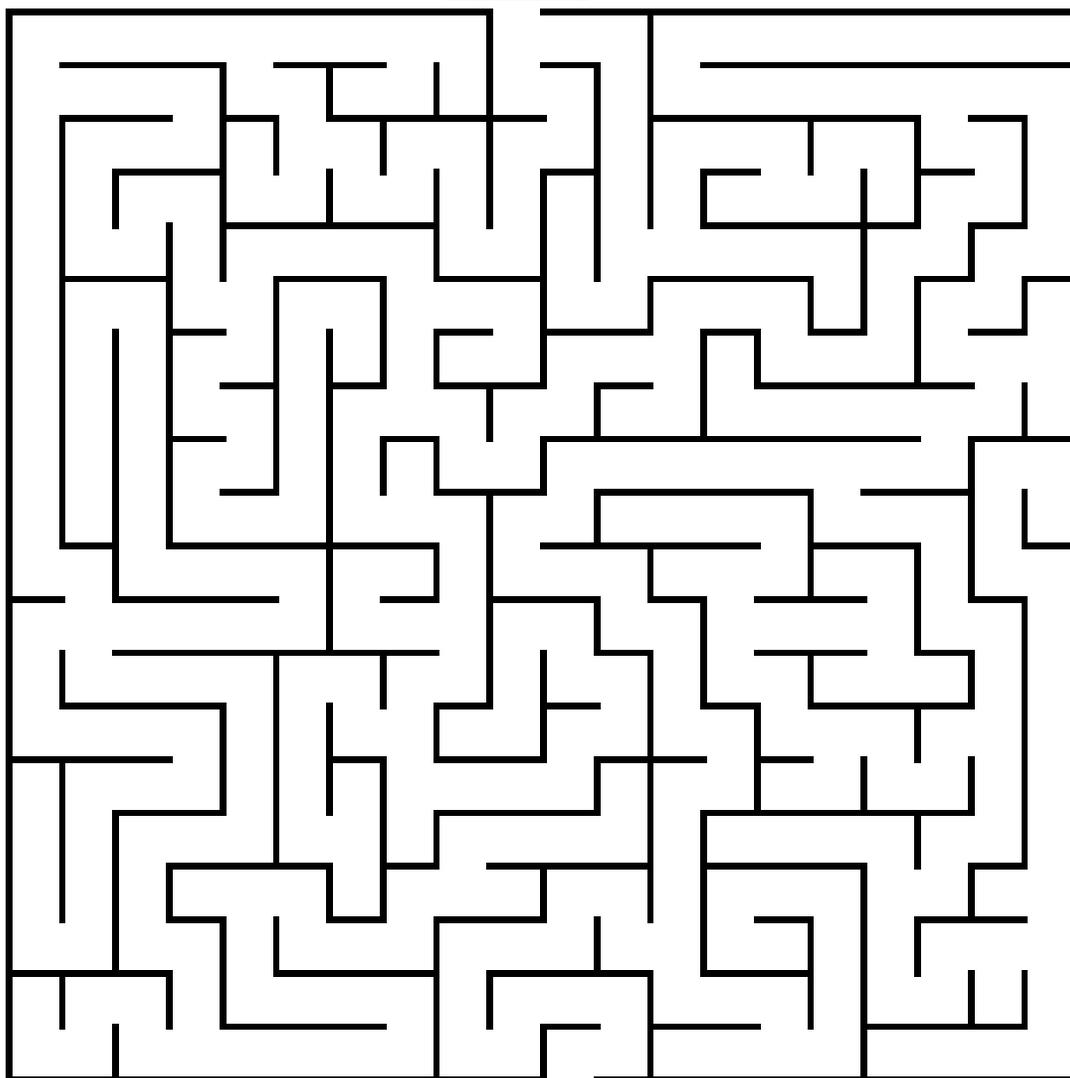
Fine gentlemen of AJA, this cold winter is the perfect opportunity to up your fashion game. Dressed here in the dark academia aesthetic, freshman Elisha Feit Mann showcases how you can mix sophisticated style with a more edgy feel by pairing his pinstripe trousers and chocolate turtleneck with a leather blazer and chains. Dark academia outfits are simple to style and might just lead people to assume you go to Oxford. Pairing collared shirts with sweater vests is a cult favorite in the aesthetic as well as donning plaid, houndstooth, or argyle patterns. By sticking to a neutral color palette, you can style an effortlessly cool outfit in the mornings without too much deliberation.



PURIM MAZE

Ella Goldstein

Help Timothée find the yummy foods so he can have a Purim seudah!



Quote Unquote

[While discussing *Canterbury Tales*]
“It was a fart joke, and I’m glad we could all experience it together”
-Mr. Byron

“The least you could do was peel some turnips!”
- Mrs. Hecht

“Bananas need a harder shell because this is just unacceptable.”
- Yered Wittenberg

[During precalculus]
“Wait a second, there are numbers?”
- Miriam Lynn

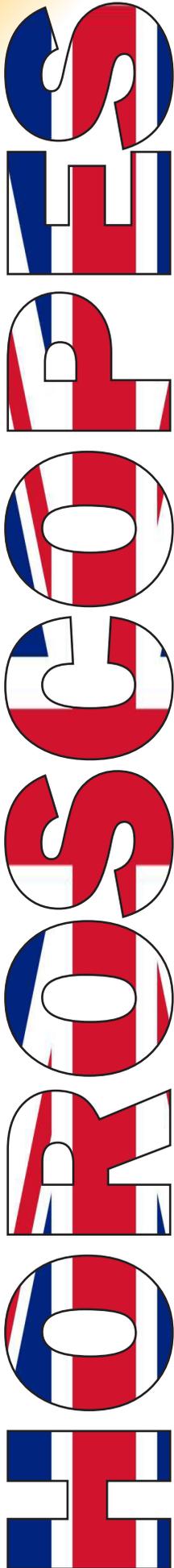
“You guys are missing the ultimate solution, okay?
Adultery!”
- Zellik Silverberg

“Oh no! I lost a chromosome!”
- Racheli Seeman

“I’m not scared of *you*, I’m scared of your omens!”
- Nina Flusberg

“I bought like 20 turtlenecks”
- Sivan Livnat

“Well what are you going to do with only the necks?!” - Galia Magen



Which part of British culture are you?

Ella Goldstein



Aquarius:

January 28th -
February 18th



Shakespeare: As an Aquarius, you value hard work and determination above all else. With a collection of works consisting of 37 plays and 154 sonnets, I think it is safe to say that William Shakespeare was a very hard worker. Additionally, you are very original and love to get creative, so when your peers groan at the idea of reading one of Shakespeare's plays in class, you start practicing your lines!

Pisces

February 19th -
March 20th



Her Majesty Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of her other realms and territories, Queen: Often referred to as a social butterfly, you love being around people and immersing yourself in interesting conversations. And who meets with more interesting people than the Queen? You are very intuitive and curious which drives your love of learning and experiencing new things.

Aries

March 21st -
April 19th



Hogwarts/Harry Potter: As Harry Potter himself once said, "I don't go looking for trouble. Trouble usually finds me." Your intrepid spirit pushes you to explore all kinds of new things--maybe even wizardry! Just like Harry and his friends, you are dynamic and courageous. While sometimes you may be a little mischievous, you make sure to live life to the fullest.

Taurus

April 20th -
May 21st



Afternoon tea: Complete with scones, cookies, and finger sandwiches, afternoon tea is the ultimate British snack. Just like high tea, you're considered to be very "extra" and you love to go all out for your family and friends. You're warm-hearted like a cuppa tea, but you never let someone get between you and a fresh pastry.

Gemini

May 22nd -
June 21st



Double-decker buses: The saying “all good things come in pairs” rings true in your mind. You love to have options in all aspects of life, which makes the double decker bus your preferred method of transportation. As the great Louis Tomlinson once said, “I love Big Red Bus!”

Cancer

June 22nd -
July 22nd



Scones: Originating in Scotland, scones have become a staple in British cuisine. Just like these pastries, a word to perfectly describe you is “sweet.” You are very adaptable and flexible, another similarity between Cancers and scones, which taste great when topped with butter, jam, clotted cream, and other accoutrements.

Leo

July 23rd -
August 22nd



The Beatles: The Beatles are arguably the most influential band of the 20th century, setting the stage for future musical, stylistic, and cultural eras to come. Your innovative nature and verve go hand in hand with the unconventional ways of the Beatles and the everlasting influence that followed. Leos love to celebrate both the highs and lows of life. It’s not rare to catch you in your feels while listening to “Let It Be” or busting a move to “Twist and Shout”!

Virgo

August 23rd -
September 23rd



Harry Styles: For someone as inventive as you, it only makes sense that you embody the qualities of a musical genius like Harry Styles. However, Mr. Styles is not only known for his award-winning music, but also for his moralistic mantra “Treat People With Kindness.” Virgos have strong moral compasses and while some may call you an over-thinker, you like to find purpose in even the smallest aspects of life. Your confidence to try new things and your scrupulous nature pair nicely with Harry’s trailblazing fashion choices and attention to detail.

Libra

September 24th -
October 23rd



Phone booth: Having a great group of friends to talk to is always a priority for you, which is why a phone booth is the perfect place for you! While some may call you a chatterbox, your sociability and charm make you quite the conversationalist. You always give great advice and guidance to your friends, and your glass-half-full approach to life keeps you and those around you thinking positively!

Scorpio

October 24th -
November 21st



Emily Blunt: If you don’t know who Emily Blunt is, you’re missing out. From *Mary Poppins Returns* to *Gnomeo and Juliet* to *A Quiet Place*, Emily Blunt has shown the world that she can play any role with passion, imagination, and charisma. Just like Emily, you are a determined creative who can accomplish anything when you put your mind to it.

Sagittarius

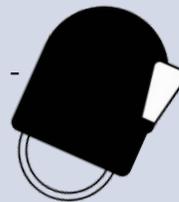
November 22nd -
December 21st



Big Ben: Saggittarii are fun-loving and optimistic people. Just like how Big Ben stands out of the London skyline, your fiery personality stands out of any crowd. You’re a very good friend who gives practical advice, so it’s only fitting that Big Ben informs the citizens of London what time it is.

Capricorn

December 22nd -
January 27th



Beefeater guards: Whether or not you knew that they were called “Beefeaters,” these renowned guards take their jobs very seriously. Similarly, you are a very determined student who prioritizes getting your work done so that you can make time for fun! You have big ambitions for the future, but with your persistence and dedication, they will surely come true!



Satire: A Model STUCO Campaign Speech

Asher Lytton

People of AJA! If you vote for me to be your next STUCO President, I promise immense policy reform. I will bring AJA back together with statutes to fix pencil poverty and wheely desks.

Now many of you may have heard of the recent rise in dress code enforcement within our school. 1 in every 5 students have faced dress code penalties in the last year. And not only that! The dress code disproportionately affects women. Infinitely many more girls will be informed that they are wearing too long a skirt for every single boy who is told the same. This is outrageous. It's almost like the school doesn't care what length of skirt the boys wear! 80% of teachers' disciplinary skills are now required to deal with dress code issues, relegating almost no time to enforce other important policies like social distancing, keeping quiet during davening, having videos turned on when on Zoom, and not going up the wrong flight of stairs for fear of death. This phenomenon of mass skirting infractions has gone too far. I say we need to focus less of our effort on enforcing the dress code, and more on addressing the underlying social issues that lead to dress code violations.

Another important issue that has resurfaced recently is pencil poverty. Some AJA students lose or leave at home their pencils and must struggle to survive in the harsh school climate without one. I say no more! I will impose a tax on everyone who buys

a pencil, and use the pencils collected this way to give to those in need of pencils. We must help our brothers out of poverty, and redistribute the pencil wealth! 1% of students control 10% of the school's pencils!

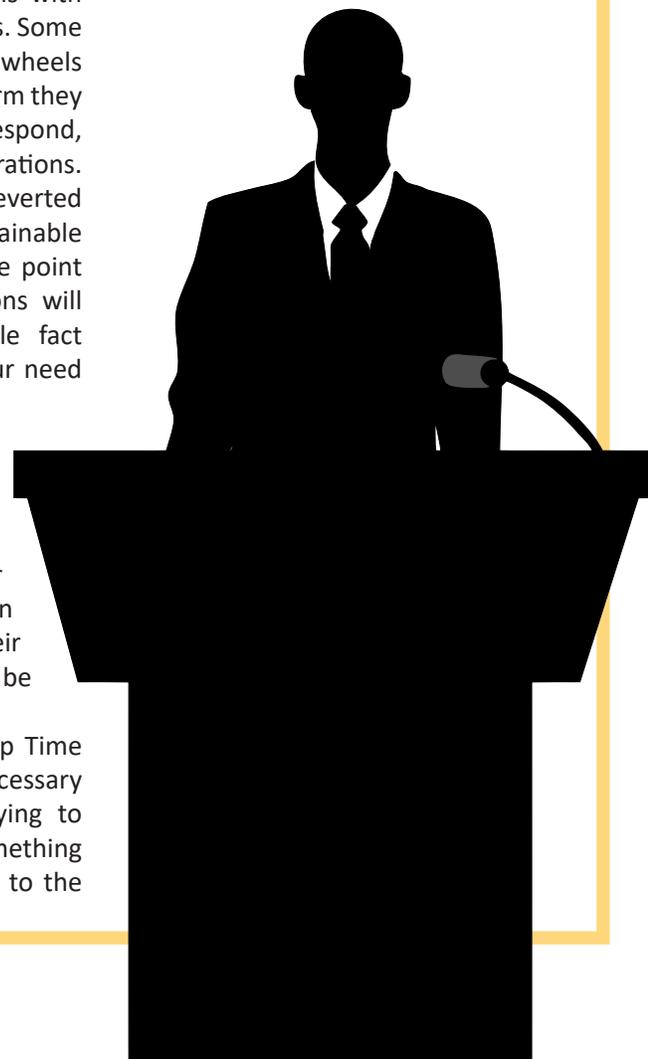
And I know, lately the No-Wheel New Deal has gotten some bad press. People falsely claim that it will leave us without adequate desks and stools. I will reiterate that the No-Wheel New Deal will leave nobody desk-less. It will only replace wheely desks and stools with more sustainable non-rolly desks. Some people argue, "So what if the wheels scratch the floor? In the short term they are more fun!" Well to them I respond, we must think of the future generations. If in two years, we have not reverted to 90% scratchless and sustainable desks, we will have reached the point of no return. Future generations will have to suffer the inescapable fact that they have no floor. That our need for instant gratification has led us to roll around, gradually disintegrating the entire floor.

Other re-organization of classroom programs that I will enact will attempt to gather data on the mysterious pillars in rooms 418 and 419 and what their purpose might be. Can they be removed?

Finally, I will "Make Mincha Nap Time Again." It will replace the unnecessary amount of time we spend trying to connect with our creator with something more enriching. Naps! A return to the

kindergarten days when sleeping in school was mandatory not illegal, this initiative will involve dimming the lights and filling the classrooms with sleeping mats.

I leave you with one question. Will you vote for reform of inequality, or will you vote for stagnation and inaction? ◆



Idiom Origins

Where Does “Beat Around the Bush” Come From?

Daliya Wallenstein

The words “let the cat out of the bag” would seem to relate to freeing packaged cats. The phrase “take it with a grain of salt” appears to describe a chef demanding more salt. “Under the weather” could refer to someone taking refuge from a storm underground. Yet, these phrases mean none of those things.

Idioms, such as the previous phrases, are notoriously baffling. This is because the message of an idiom does not match the literal meaning of the words that form the phrase. For this reason, idioms seem without rhyme or reason.

However, at one point, an idiom’s literal meaning did connect to the phrase’s intended meaning. For instance, some believe that “to let the cat out of the bag” originates from dishonest merchants hundreds of years ago selling bags containing cats instead of piglets. (Apparently pigs had greater value than cats, so this sneaky switch profited the merchants.) The unsuspecting customer would later open up their purchase and see they were fooled. Hence, letting a cat out of a bag came to mean revealing a secret.

As this shows, idioms did come about with some form of sense and intention. Yet in the hundreds of years after their formation, society has developed greatly, abandoning the context the phrases once had. This leaves our language full of phrases with origins that seem amusing and absurd to our modern point of view.

While their perplexing nature can make conversation rather difficult at times, idioms

do provide especially entertaining cases of etymology (or just regularly entertaining for oddballs that don’t find general etymology fascinating). In this issue, we will explore the origin of a particularly nifty idiom: “to beat around the bush.”

In medieval times, some men would accompany hunters with the task of scaring animals into the open. Carrying wooden sticks, these men would yell and whack the dense bushes to startle hiding creatures. The process worked fairly well, assuming only small, harmless animals — such as birds, squirrels, or rabbits — were hiding in the brush. Unfortunately for these blokes, more dangerous animals sometimes lurked amongst the bushes. When men beat bushes hiding these animals, they angered vicious predators. Wild boar would suddenly charge out of the thicket, directing their sharp tusks at the fool who dared disturb them, and the unlucky men had only futile sticks as defense. The boar usually won.

As a result, fearful men would tentatively beat *around* bushes, hoping not to aggravate any menacing creatures. From here, “to beat around the bush” began describing the act of not approaching something head-on. This phrase first appears in print around the year 1440 (when spelling differed from today) in the book *Generydes: a Romance in Seven-Line Stanzas*: “Some bete the bussh and some the byrdes take.” The common variation of the phrase, beat

about the bush, is found in an old poem by George Gascoigne from 1572 (when spelling still differed): “To thinke bowe he abused was, alas my heart it bleedes: He bet about the bushe, whiles other caught the birds.”

Today, the idiom has lost relatively all connection to its initial meaning in hunting. Now, it most often describes someone who talks in circles around their point. However, the idiom maintains a connection to its origin through consistently relating to the act of avoiding the central purpose of a task. While the relation between the modern and original meaning has mostly dissipated, a small link remains.

While idioms’ meaning seems to contain absolutely no association to the literal words, they did initially have a strong connection. Referencing relevant situations of the time period, idioms began as logical phrases -- despite seeming completely nonsensical in the context of today. Through studying an idiom’s formation, we see its forgotten logic and can better understand its meaning.

Note: The origin of idioms are not recorded thoroughly; however, based on multiple sources and usage in writings, these articles present probable origins. Write to Palette to request an idiom to be featured in future issues. ♦

“Idioms do serve society well through providing especially entertaining cases of etymology.”

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