

The BASH

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UNVEILING ULPANA: A GLIMPSE INTO ULPANA'S BASEMENT RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY!

LILY SMOLACK

Last year, after the news broke that Ulpana would undergo a renovation, excitement radiated in the halls. Students were curious about Ulpana's new appearance and what exactly would be changed. On December 21, 2023, all our questions were answered as the ribbon cutting ceremony took place. This day marked Ulpana's first progressive step towards the full makeover that is planned to make BAS history! With gratitude to Hashem, as well as the generosity and hard work of Ms. Eliana Diamond, Ms. Esther Mendlowitz, Mr. Daniel Sternfels, Mrs. Hadassa Pertman, Mrs. Daniella Silver, Mr. Dalton Fuller, and Rabbi Grauer, the downstairs renovation was finally completed.

Anticipation had been building ever since we received the school-wide email informing us about the ribbon cutting ceremony. Of course, as the construction took place, we stole sneak peeks as we passed by the half-renovated basement. Still, nothing could beat the excitement of seeing the final product for the first time. In addition, the students were excited about the ceremony because it would confirm that Ulpana's redevelopment is making significant headway!

After the bell rang for lunch on the speaker-phone, everyone was called down to the basement for Ulpana's very first ribbon cutting ceremony.

Along with the microphone, Tov-Li lunch, black tablecloths, and, of course, the bright red ribbon and decorated scissors, this was a legitimate ceremony. Voices cheered as Rabbi Grauer stepped up to the microphone, and everyone was thrilled to finally roam and enjoy the completely new and state-of-the-art basement level.

As Rabbi Grauer cut the bright, red ribbon, I began exploring the new basement. Not only has the layout completely changed, the attention to detail and design are incredible. Other girls and I looked at each other with the same expression - utter excitement. We were amazed by the style of the pink marble and wood paneled walls, the matte black features, the plant wall with pink accents, the glass classrooms, and all the carefully curated details that create this fresh and modern school vibe. We are also excited knowing that the rest of our high school years will be spent in a school that knows how to provide a fresh, warm, and comforting environment for its students and staff.

As Rabbi Grauer mentioned in his speech, it is their zchut to merit this institution of Jewish education. Knowing that Ulpana will be completely redone reminds us students of the zchut we have to attend this school. I sure am excited to see what is next to come. ■

A NOSTALGIC RETURN TO ULPANAT OROT

MS. ELI YISSAR

As I walked down the same poster-filled hallways that had witnessed my journey from an anxious and uncertain freshie to a confident Grade 12 student, I felt eager to start my new role in the school. I was so excited to begin my teaching that I spent a whole week preparing for everything I could. I outlined my lesson plans for the first week of school, thought of a way to introduce myself to my students, and prepared questions to ask my students to help me get to know them. But there was one thing I had mistakenly completely forgotten to prepare myself for... the staff room.

The staff room is known as the singular most fascinating room in the building, according to the students who are forbidden from stepping even a foot within the room's perimeter. Considered to be the sole oasis for the teachers who have not yet been given an office, the staff room is - for lack of a better word - universally sacred. Silly me had completely forgotten about this fundamental reality.

With fifteen minutes left before the start of second period-and my first ever Writer's Craft class, I made the decision to complete some last-minute tasks in the staff room. Once I reached the doorway to the teachers' sanctuary, I took a deep breath, straightened my back, grabbed onto the left strap of my bag, and stepped into the room, right foot first. Some readers may expect this to be the moment that I describe how everything changed. How I escaped the chaotic atmosphere of the school hallway to the serene room saved for teachers. How I finally completed my transition from Ulpana alumna to BAS staff. How I reached a groundbreaking character development in my personal life, from which I would never return.

In reality, nothing of the sort occurred. There were no groundbreaking discoveries.

As I entered the room, I was greeted by my favourite high school teachers, who asked me how the last three years had been. I introduced myself to the new faces I did not recognize and explained that although I look very young, I am, in fact, a teacher at Ulpana.

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THE PRESENCE OF APATHY IN OR CHAIM

NOAH ROMBERG

As the 100th day of the Israel-Hamas conflict recedes into the distance, many students are losing the motivation and drive they once had. The conflict, which first rallied people to support Israel in any and every way, has become a burden upon the community; the constant intensity is slowly sapping energy and time. After davening, the passionate singing of 'Achenu' and the recitation of Tehillim are now much quieter, with many students talking amongst themselves or spacing out. A Grade 11 student (who wishes to remain anonymous) noted that these "have just become a part of davening." He mentioned that he goes days at a time without even thinking about the conflict. Another student who was nearby agreed and added that "it has lost its importance." The students then went on to point out how those who are singing at the front of davening are usually those who have leadership responsibilities, in particular, Grade 12 and the student council. The school also attempted communal siyums when the conflict began. These are

now non-existent. There is another notable demonstration of the new normal that every student must pass by every day. Down one arm of the hallways there is a sad wall of names. The message alongside calls for students to pledge to pray for a soldier. Beside each soldier's name there is a space for the student to write their name and claim responsibility. This display, which was erected over a month ago, is still mostly empty. It has become one of many displays that have simply faded into the background. There are many more examples of similar reminders such as the board of names at davening, the table in the lunchroom, and blue and white flags still lining the halls.

The commonality between all of these examples is that these initiatives have become part of everyday life, and when something becomes routine it becomes mindless. Ironically, due to the school's fervent support of Israel, students are subconsciously learning to ignore Israel's conflicts as they go about daily life. This clashes with the YOC Mission Statement,

which assures that the school strives to "deepen and strengthen the centrality of Eretz Yisrael." Although Israel is certainly central in YOC and the blue and white everywhere strengthens bonds with Israel, the school struggles to give any real depth to this connection. Creating a deep connection is not something that can be done by a third party; one will struggle to connect with something that they never actually interact with. For a student to truly connect with Israel it should be through the land and its people. The shlichim from Israel are the school's best tool for this. YOC should focus on supporting the shlichim and creating real experiences, not just telling stories.

The development of apathy is severely negative to the wellbeing of all involved. Constantly thinking about terrorism, hostages and war will desensitize students. Spiritually, it will disconnect students from the nation of Israel and those living there. Apathy within YOC will harm students' mental and spiritual health. The root of this problem is that every leader and good samaritan wants to do something when there is a tragedy, which is great, but then each individual creates their initiative and suddenly sign-up sheets are everywhere. In this case, less is more.

YOC's Menahel Rabbi Shostak argues that many of these points are valid but it is still important to have balance. He agrees that people cannot maintain an "emotional outpouring" for extended periods and that routine tends to become like "wallpaper". However, Rabbi Shostak believes consistency is necessary and that YOC should "double down" on these rituals. Any and every repetition can be meaningful and

important but it depends on how each involved individual is feeling, these routines are important so that one can be passionate and find meaning when they are ready, whenever that is. Rabbi Shostak noted special activities and changes are also necessary to help inspire awareness and make people notice. In his case, he has a piece of tape on his office doorway with the number of days since the war began on it. By changing the tape every single morning Rabbi Shostak causes himself to consciously think about the conflict.

Elsewhere in the school, there are some students who argue over Israeli politics with a fiery passion and some teachers who dedicate time for discussion and connection. This is how one can avoid complacency—sporadic, conscious thought. One particularly effective initiative was a recent Mishmar, in which grades 9, 11, and 12 were led in a dialectic discussion regarding the release of hostages in Gaza. More recently, the school has begun saying a soldier or hostage's name and something about them during morning prayers. This is much more personal than just a name, and learning about a unique individual every day will remain fresh and interesting. These events are what create thoughtful and caring people.

The school's policy of routine when it comes to the ongoing conflict may be having unintended negative consequences for the students' health and that of the community as a whole. To create real and lasting connections with Israel on a fundamental level and support the ongoing war with passion, YOC should focus on making every event or program both meaningful and novel, and change routines whenever they get too tiring or forgotten. ■

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As I settled into one of the chairs and opened my laptop to begin some work, I could not help but overhear at least three separate conversations between staff members. They were talking about their weekends, their children, and giving each other advice on their lesson plans. I even had multiple teachers offer me their support, which was incredibly helpful.

At this point, I have been working as a teacher at Ulpana for over a semester. The staff room no longer fazes me. I enjoy sitting at the front of the classroom and writing out parts of my lesson on the whiteboard. In some ways, I can finally fully appreciate the work that teachers put into their class plans. Believe me, keeping track of all the special day schedules that Ulpana has is no easy feat, and ensuring that the class plans for those days still fit into such atypical time frames takes a very talented individual.

All funny tidbits aside, teaching at Ulpana has been incredible and I am grateful for the opportunity to return to the BAS community. I only hope that I leave my students with the same positive impact that my teachers have left with me, not so long ago. ■

THE UO KNIGHTS' JOURNEY IN THE 23-24 BASKETBALL SEASON

MICHAL BEAN

The 2023-24 UO Knights basketball season was one to remember! A strong winning percentage in the regular season catapulted the team to a berth in the semi-finals. We worked well as a team, with excellent chemistry and incredible energy. Even though it was hard to say goodbye to our seniors from last year, we welcomed the additions of four strong freshies to the squad. It was a pleasure getting to know them and bonding together over basketball games. We had so much fun at practices and games, and I couldn't have asked for more for my last year on the team.

As captain, I led our pregame chant every game and ran the pregame warmups and stretches. Giving words of encouragement was an incredible experience as a leader and it was so nice getting closer to girls in other grades. For all of us, it was an awesome way to have fun while supporting our school together. We were proud to represent Ulpana when playing away games, as well as when welcoming other teams at home games. Truly, our team embodied the ideals of sportsmanship, friendship, and teamwork.

Our coaches, Coach Phil and Coach Hanna-Eden, helped make the season light-hearted and fun while also instilling in us the importance of practice and hard work. They supported us, cheered for us, and taught us many new skills. We learned how to communicate better with each other, which is an important skill both on and off the court. By using drills such as the three-(wo) man weave and silent shooting competitions, we learned to trust each other and move together as one on the court. Even though Coach Phil's running drills were punishing, it was such a great experience having him coach us for a second year! We are grateful to Morah Aleeza and Mrs. Weinberg who were essential in helping us organize all our games and were always there to support us on the sidelines!

Even though the season was short, it was definitely sweet. Through countless practices, the Knights basketball team was able to have an incredibly successful season, filled with ruach, sportsmanship, team-building, hard work, and passion for the sport. My experience on the team has had an incredible impact on my final year at Ulpana, and I'm really going to miss my teammates, coaches, and playing basketball for the Knights.

Fortunately, we still have some tournaments and practices ahead. We can't wait to represent Ulpana to the other schools, and hopefully come home with some trophies. Go Knights! ■



TAKE A DEEP BREATH, BLUE JAYS FANS

COBY BERGER

It's December 8, 2023, and the entire Toronto Blue Jays fanbase is in a frenzy. It appears that the Blue Jays have landed the top free agent and only two-way player in the MLB: Shohei Ohtani. Between a private jet coming from Anaheim and multiple false reports from MLB insiders, Blue Jays fans waited eagerly for the plane to touch down and for Shohei Ohtani to walk out, ushering in a new era of Blue Jays baseball. The door to the plane opened and as the excitement reached its absolute climax, a famous person walked outside. But it wasn't Ohtani, it was businessman and television personality Robert Herjavec. Blue Jays fans were gut-punched, and the next morning Ohtani signed with the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Since then, the Blue Jays fan base has lost interest and the team is being considered the fourth-place team in the division behind the Orioles, Rays, and Yankees. But is this true? Are the Blue Jays as hopeless as they seem? I believe the answer to this is a resounding no.

To begin, the Blue Jays have the best starting rotation in the AL East. They finished with the fourth-best ERA (Earned Run Average) in the MLB last season and have their entire starting rotation coming back. On top of that, Alek Manoah, who was a Cy Young finalist in 2022 before regressing in 2023, is primed for a bounceback season, giving the Blue Jays one of the most fearsome rotations in the majors. In contrast, the other AL East teams have major pitching questions. The New York Yankees have reigning Cy Young winner Gerrit Cole, but below him, there are stark issues with a suspect, injury-riddled starting rotation. The Tampa Bay Rays had a great rotation last year but their ace, Shane Bieber, tore his UCL and will be out for 2024, and they traded Tyler Glasnow to the Los Angeles Dodgers. Aside from their top starter Zach Eflin, their once-feared rotation has become a roster of pitchers with little MLB experience. The Baltimore Orioles have an ace in Kyle Bradish and the promising Grayson Rodriguez, and just pulled off a blockbuster trade for Corbin Burnes, but there are still questions beyond that. The Red Sox's rotation is a joke, with two open spots and three below-average starters.

The Blue Jays still have money to spend to improve their offense, which endured a setback last year. Team President Mark Shapiro said that the payroll will be in the same range as last season, which would give them ~50 million per year available to spend. While 18 million of this has already been spent on Kevin Kiermaier and Isiah Kiner-Falefa, that still leaves money to spend. With that flexibility, they could bring in two power bats at around 15 million per year. The recent signing of Justin Turner for \$13 million should also help to significantly turn around their offense. They could also sign a star in Cody Bellinger with that money for a similar effect, or they could pull off a trade for an expensive, but valuable player whose team is looking to shed salary. Perhaps Fernando Tatis Jr, Manny Machado, or Xander Bogaerts from the Padres? Or Mike Trout from the Angels?

There will also be internal improvements from the Jays. We already mentioned Alek Manoah earlier, but what about their other underperformers from last year? Is Vladyslav Kovalenko going to underperform again, even though the underlying numbers show that this past season was mostly a fluke? Even if he doesn't get to his 2021 MVP-calibre heights,

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THE OTTAWA RALLY AND OUR COLLECTIVE VICTIMHOOD

ZACH WALD

The rally in Ottawa was amazing, but it should never have needed to happen.

While not as awe-inspiring as its predecessor in Washington, Canada's Rally for the Jewish People left a profound impact on me. Having lived in Israel for the past two years, I have not encountered antisemitism in a long time. Coming to Canada right before October 7th changed that for me quickly. I was not familiar with rallying against antisemitism. Unlike the Washington rally, where the focus of the rally was on the US and its support for Israel, the Ottawa rally hit much closer to home for me. The very necessity to demonstrate in your own home because you are being victimized for being a Jew was a wake up call for me. In Ottawa I realized the scope of antisemitism, and found myself relearning what it means to be a Diaspora Jew.

The speakers in Ottawa brought to light the injustices faced by Jews in Israel and around the world that Canada refused to recognize. The rally helped me understand that antisemitism can rear its ugly head even in Canada, which embodies freedom and Western values. Unfortunately, this is normal for us, because these experiences of victimization have been passed down to us from our parents, and to them from their parents, and so on. The experience of antisemitism has become normal for all of us. Since October 7th, it has been experiences like the Ottawa rally that taught me why it's so important for us not just to have Israel, but also to live in Israel. While the idea of Israel can provide Jewish people in the Diaspora comfort, *Medinat Yisrael* cannot protect us from the culture of antisemitism. This is a culture where university presidents are unable to bring themselves to denounce calls for Jewish genocide, and where Jews cannot walk the streets of Berlin, Paris, or Toronto without fear of being

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significant improvement should be expected. Maybe George Springer won't get back to his peak numbers, but he should be improved as well next season. Others who have performed well in the past, yet struggled last year, include Alejandro Kirk, Daulton Varsho, and Cavan Biggio. Perhaps not all of these hitters will bounce back, but at least some of them will. Internally, there are also prospects waiting to break into the majors including top pitching prospect Ricky Tiedmann, Orelvis Martinez a power-hitting infielder, and lastly, Davis Schneider, the 2023 saviour of the Jays.

Disappointment is rampant among Jays fans, and rightfully so after they got so close to landing a player who would have single-handedly changed the complexion of the team. However, perspectives need to be shifted; this team has a strong core and will be improved. Just like the past few years, the Jays will be in the hunt for a wild card spot, and potentially even a division title. Don't count out these Jays just yet, because this year is just as good a chance for the Blue Jays to fulfill their promise of going to the #NextLevel. ■

verbally abused. The constant fear and degradation that antisemitism causes us is unhealthy and destructive, no matter how much we try to ignore it.

Living in Israel, I took it for granted that I could live my life freely as a Jew, without fear or shame. Because while Israel can rescue hostages from Entebbe and Gaza, it cannot protect Jews from shooting attacks in Montreal or from being bullied on campus. Israel can bomb Syria when its Prime Minister attempts to build a nuclear reactor, but cannot stop Canada's Prime Minister from denouncing Israel's war in Gaza. In Canada and around the world we can live freely as Jews, but only in Israel can we live proudly as Jews. ■

PROSPECTS OF A 2024 ELECTION

BENJI WALD

There is a Rabbinic aphorism from the Talmud that states that since the destruction of the Second Temple, prophecy was given to fools and children. The aphorism is a pithy reminder of the many pitfalls that lie in attempting to predict the future. This is all the more true in politics, when everything can change in an instant. An infinite amount of things can happen between now and October 2025 (when the next federal election is scheduled), that can change the political landscape many times over. Ego can cloud rational judgment, and can cause politicians to make all sorts of unforeseen decisions. Despite all this, I will offer my amateur's opinion as to whether 2024 will be an election year in Canada.

The current government is a minority government composed of the Liberal Party and the NDP. Both parties are consistently trailing the Conservative Party by a wide margin in recent polling, modeling a hypothetical election. It goes without saying that the Conservative Party is itching for an election as the party is in the best position it has been in more than a decade. It is slated to win a comfortable majority in almost every poll. And yet, an election can only occur if the Prime Minister calls a snap election or if the government fails a Confidence Vote. In my humble opinion, it appears that there is no incentive for Prime Minister Trudeau to call a snap election with his poll numbers so low. Accordingly, the NDP also doesn't appear to have any interest in toppling the government in a Confidence Vote, as the alternatives are far worse for both parties. For those reasons, there doesn't seem to be any reason to believe that the current governing parties will trigger an election that they seem sure to lose, according to all the polls.

With all that being said, politics is the world of the unexpected, and despite everything aforementioned, there are certain plausible scenarios that would trigger an election in 2024. As I wrote above, in politics, ego is prone to distort rational thought. It is not entirely inconceivable that the Conservatives will entice certain right-leaning, disaffected Liberal MPs to either "cross aisles" or at least support the Conservatives in a Confidence Vote. Alternatively, discontent within the NDP could lead to them cutting a deal with the Conservatives to topple their own government, even though such a move would likely be political suicide. The least likely possibility in my opinion is that Prime Minister Trudeau acquiesces to internal party/public pressure and agrees to call an election or at least agrees to resign as head of the Liberal Party, making way for a new leader who may reverse the party's fortunes. All these scenarios are far-fetched to a certain extent but as stated earlier, politics is a business of infinite surprises. As for an election in 2024, only time will tell. ■