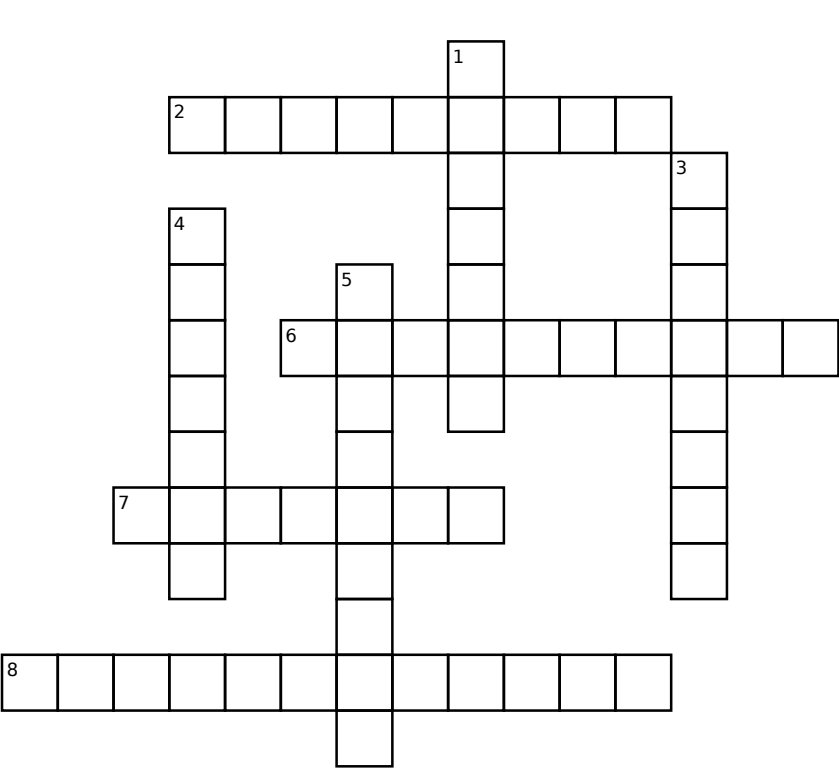




Biology puzzle

By Raphie Sayegh

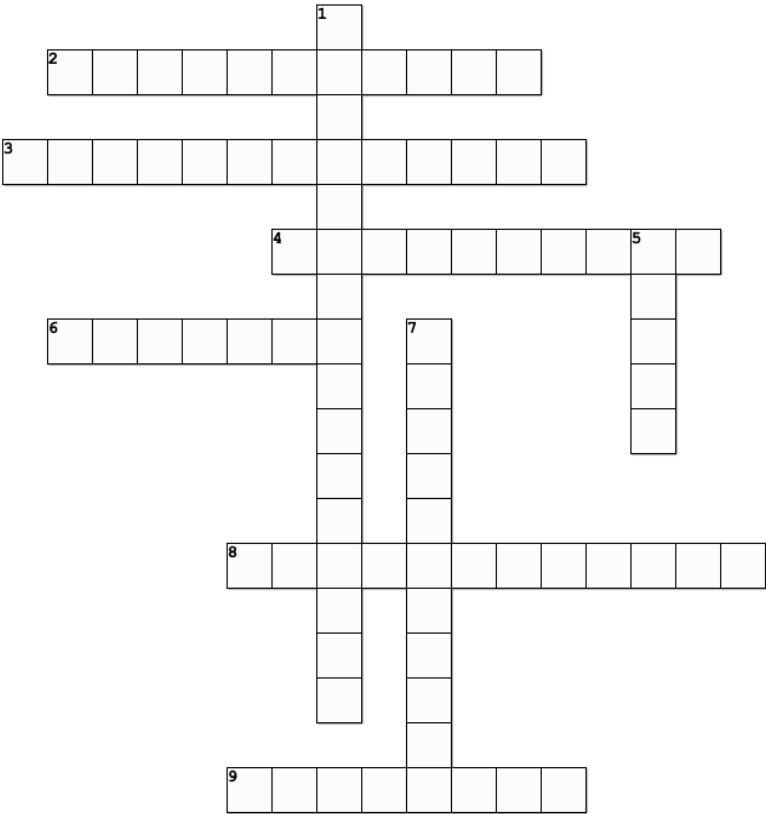
- Down:
- 1. C6H12O6
 - 3. Tracking diseases through squares and circles
 - 4. $1 \div 2 \div 2 = 4$
 - 5. Eating pizza
- Across:
- 2. Helps to increase peristalsis - molecule
 - 6. Rats
 - 7. $1 \div 2 = 2$
 - 8. The powerhouse of the cell

Fine Arts Crossword

By Baruch Gold

- Across:
- 2. The famous Painter of Giverny's painted these .
 - 3.Andy Warhol's famous pop art print of a grocery item
 - 4. Edward Hopper's moody scene of people in a late-night diner
 - 6. Earless painter of a swirling sky
 - 8. Botticelli's goddess emerging from a giant seashell
 - 9.The world's most famous portrait by Da Vinci

- Down:
- 1. Vermeer's famous 'Mona Lisa of the North' portrait
 - 5. Artist whose 'Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer' set a \$236.4 million auction record in 2025
 - 7. famous jewish artist known for his stain glass windows



The BASH

BAS STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



(from back left to right: Netanel Yosipovich, Avinoam Friedmann and Eli Finkelstein. Front: Mrs. Kagan, Coby Berger, Joseph Samson,Raphie Sayegh, Solomon Astroff and Shaindy Weitzner)

YUNMUN - The Truth

What The Winners Are Hiding

Joseph Samson

Since sending its first delegation to the YUNMUN II conference and receiving two honourable mentions, BAS has not had much success at the conference. That all changed this year at YUNMUN XXXVI, where three of the eight delegates who participated returned with an honourable mention, the award granted to the delegates who came second or third in their committee.

In Model UN, delegates are given a country and a committee, and they must represent their country's views accurately while working with other countries in the committee to solve current world problems. Some committees include UNICEF (UN Children's Fund), AS (African Summit), and CSTD (the Commission on Science and Technology for Development), among others, and topics

range from human rights violations in North Korea to microplastics.

Since September, the Model UN team at BAS has been working to improve speaking skills, research skills, and to learn proper procedure for the actual conference under the guidance of our coach, Mrs. Kagan, and the co-captains, Coby Berger and Raphie Sayegh, as well as with the help of Mr. Eitan Markus. Every Tuesday, we met after school and would debate issues on the spot with little preparation, receive feedback on our speaking skills, and practice thinking on our feet.

In YUNMUN, each school is given their own country, along with a number of committees. Each delegate must research deeply into the two topics that their committee

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will be discussing. They must figure out their country’s stance on each topic, as well as general background information of the country, and be prepared to defend their country’s stance even if it is controversial.

This year, BAS received Morocco as our country, and eight different committees were allotted to the eight delegates who were to go to the conference. After months of preparation, the eight delegates, along with Mrs. Kagan as our chaperone, flew to New York for the conference in Connecticut. We arrived at the Armon hotel on Sunday morning, and spent the next few hours before the conference began doing last minute research and socializing and politicking with the other delegates, trying to suss out the potential allies.

When the first session finally started that night, we each went to our committee rooms and spent the next two hours debating with the other delegates about each of our respective topics. These committee sessions continued the next day, totalling in at 10 hours and 40 minutes of committee sessions. In breaks, the work continued as we politicked with other delegates from our committees, formed coalitions, worked on resolutions, and cut others out of them.

At the end of two exhausting days, we were bittersweet for the conference to be over. On the one hand we did not have the stress of constantly having to be at the peak of our game, making sure that we were controlling the coalitions, and acing every speech, but on the other hand, for most of us it was our last YUNMUN. Of the eight of us who went, more than half of us will not return, and if we do, it will not be as a delegate.

When the closing ceremony started the next morning, we were all a little nervous because we knew that we had done well, but we weren’t

sure if we would get an award. With each chair who went up to the podium to give out the awards for their committee, the tension grew, until one by one three of us - Coby Berger, Raphie Sayegh, and myself - won honourable mentions.

When I won the award, I felt that all my hard work and effort had paid off. I had given this conference my all, and even though I knew that I had done well, it was still such a validating experience for my chair to recognize it. Especially after my performance last year, where I thought I might win an award, but didn’t, it was an incredible feeling.

But even better than winning the award was the fact that three of us had won, which made us the most successful YUNMUN team in BAS history. It was the perfect way to end this conference, which was the last conference for seven of us, as well as Mrs. Kagan. Hopefully next year the BAS team will continue to succeed and do even better than this year.

At the time of writing this article it is two weeks before the JCYMUN conference in Montreal. I wish Hatzlacha to all the students who are participating, may you all speak well and have fun.

If any of you are interested in improving your speaking skills, being able to think on your feet better, and meeting new people from other cities, you should consider participating in Model UN next year. It is a really amazing experience, and aside from the serious aspects, it is also a lot of fun and shticky.■

Feel free to reach out to any of us who participated this year for more information, especially to eliyahu.finkelstein@yocstudents.org, next year’s captain.



(from left to right: Raphie Sayegh, Coby Berger, Eli Finkelstein, Avinoam Friedmann, Shaindy Weitzner, Mrs. Kagan, Netanel Yosipovich, Joseph Samson and Solomon Astroff)



(from left to right: Shaindy Weitzner, Eli Finkelstein, Coby Berger, Joseph Samson, Avinoam Friedmann, Raphie Sayegh, Netanel Yosipovich, Solomon Astroff and Mrs. Kagan)



(from left to right: Joseph Samson, Coby Berger and Raphie Sayegh)



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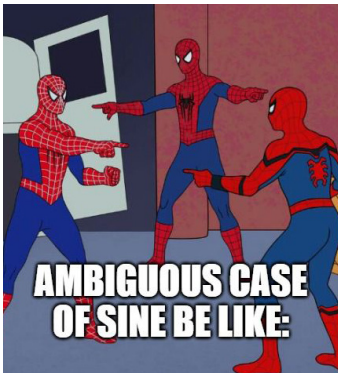
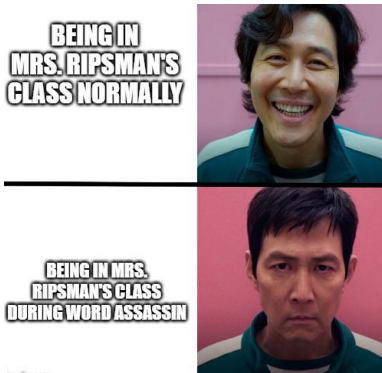
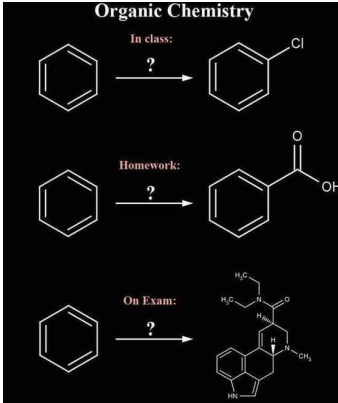
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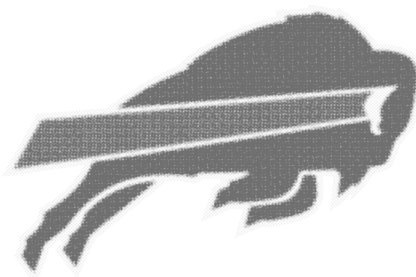
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Buffalo Bills Draft Preview



Jeremy Kanner

The key to winning the Super Bowl is a great offseason. While on-field action has concluded until late August, the time of year when the most action happens in the football world is in the offseason. However, keeping track of all this action is much more complicated for the casual fan, especially the draft. When your team signs a player in free agency, it will be easy to project how he will play for your team, but when your team drafts a player on April 23rd, combined with the amount of variables that come with college scouting like college competition, athletic traits, and effort levels, how well will you be able to project this player to your team? Therefore, this is a small draft guide for the Buffalo Bills, Toronto's most followed team, specifically highlighting three players that are projected around their 26th overall first round selection and who would fit their positions of need.

Following an extremely disappointing playoff loss, the Bills have a fair amount of needs, starting with wide receiver. The production out of their wide receivers has been as lackluster as possible with a QB like Josh Allen, and they are clearly devoid of a WR1 since the departure of Stefon Diggs this past offseason. The Bills are also losing a fair amount of talent in free agency, specifically at safety and at edge rusher. Jordan Poyer, Damar Hamlin, A.J. Epenesa, and Joey Bosa will leave substantial holes at those two positions, making them the secondary and tertiary needs. As such, the Bills should consider drafting these three players in the first round, as they would have an immediate and long-term impact.

KC Concepcion - WR - Texas A&M

The player projected most likely to go to the Bills in the early draft cycle has been KC Concepcion, the wide receiver out of Texas A&M. KC shows great route running ability, shows high potential catching the ball, and he has good awareness and control that help him get open and follow any pass cleanly. After the catch, he's extremely hard to bring down, averaging 7.2 yards after catch per reception in 2025. Using his deep bag of moves, his speed, and his lower body strength, he can break tackles extremely effectively. He can also make tough, eye-catching grabs even when the throw isn't perfect (which won't be a problem with Josh Allen). His routes are crisp and well timed, which helps him separate from defenders. His only real concern as a prospect is that he showed a knack for simple concentration drops, which although coachable, can become a concern in the NFL. Additionally, he's a great kick returner who can dominate in special teams. Other team fits include the Steelers, Seahawks, and Commanders.

Zion Young - DE - Missouri

Another player that would fit into the Bills defense is Zion Young, the defensive end out of Missouri. He's a strong, do-it-all edge defender who affects both the pass and the run. He wins with power, effort, and good use of hands, leading to both pressures and sacks. He's very good at using his hands to get past blockers, both inside or outside, and can knock down passes, force fumbles, and finish plays when given an opening. Against the run, he is tough and disciplined, holding his ground, shedding blocks, and chasing

runners down with real physicality. Top-end speed and strength can be a concern, but it hasn't substantially affected his game at any point in his college career. He has also improved over time, suggesting a solid, reliable player with some limits on the height of his upside. Other team fits include the Lions, Chiefs, and Browns.

Emmanuel McNeil-Warren-S Toledo

A late riser in recent draft boards has been Emmanuel McNeil-Warren, a hybrid safety from Toledo. He's a smart, physical safety with a great feel for the ball. He reads the quarterback well, stays in position, and shows up right as the ball arrives to knock passes away, or grab interceptions. He is a real playmaker, able to cover a lot of ground, trick quarterbacks into bad throws, and come down with tough acrobatic picks. As a tackler, he brings real force, especially near the line of scrimmage and over the middle, and he has a nasty inside punch, forcing fumbles often. Against the run, he plays almost like a linebacker, quickly recognizing plays, slipping through blockers, and filling gaps to clean things up. He can also help near the line as a blitz. In coverage, he's better matching up with bigger players than chasing fast receivers, so he projects best as a strong safety or hybrid defender, with his overall impact depending on how much his coverage continues to develop. Other team fits include the Bengals, Bears, and Jets.

Overall, this is a very deep draft class, so the Bills selection should be able to make an impact, as long as GM Brandon Beane doesn't publicly misfire again - like with Keon Coleman.■



Wide Receiver KC Concepcion during Texas A&M Football's Spring Practice (Adriano Espinosa/The Battalion)



Texas A&M at Missouri Icon Sportswire/GettyImages)



Toledo safety Emmanuel McNeil-Warren has 55 tackles this season, second on the team. (Rick Osentoski / Associated Press)

Allied Voices for Israel -Everything you Need to Know

Sheli Palvanov and Sari Schwartz

If you are interested in an amazing experience, meeting new people, learning how to speak up for Israel, and building up your resume, Allied Voices for Israel (AVI) is the right program for you!

Allied Voices for Israel is a low-commitment program for Jewish students in high school and university from all across Canada that focuses on teaching students how to combat anti-Jewish hatred through fun, interactive retreats, webinars, and hands-on tasks. AVI also provides a great opportunity to hear from amazing speakers from around the world that talk about combating antisemitism, the history of Israel, how Israel affects them and their lives, and share their own experiences usually in regard to Israel.

One common highlight is the winter retreat. AVI takes its students to Muskoka once a year to enjoy a fun, memorable, and educational Shabbat weekend where students learn about antisemitism and experience interactive activities to further their understanding of the history and

current events of Israel. During the retreat, students have the opportunity to connect with participants from across Canada, and build amazing friendships!

On the monthly Zoom meetings, we hear from different interesting speakers who discuss a variety of topics with us in an interesting, interactive way. So far Daniel Koren, who writes for the National Post, the Jerusalem Post, and the Toronto Star, among other news outlets, spoke about media bias. Raheel Raza, a Muslim journalist and activist fighting for human rights and gender equality, as well as an enormous supporter of Israel (having visited 14 times), spoke about allyship. She spoke about her experience as an activist, and the danger she faces for her decision to speak up against radical Islamism (including threats from the IRGC). She also discussed different ways to settle differences and discuss different opinions with different people.

AVI is an excellent program that will change your perspective on productive discussion, and increase your knowledge on the history of Israel, as well as the modern-day conflicts. In high school it will help you grow your treasury of information, and in university will help you begin activism and provide tabling opportunities. It teaches students how to argue effectively, and provides opportunities to hear from different voices.■

Editorial

Raphie Sayegh and Baruch Gold on behalf of The BASH editorial team

Welcome back to The BASH! In this issue, we bring you 10 vibrant and unique articles. From controversial topics such as changing the role of "religious Zionism" to complex issues such as whether Jews are obligated to go to space, this issue has it all. Hear directly from students about what it's like to participate in extracurricular activities such as the Yeshiva University Model UN and new opportunities such as Allied Voices for Israel. Be sure to check out the Arts and Culture section for an amazing essay on post-apocalyptic literature and an analysis of humans' perception of art. We would like to thank all of our writers for the effort and time they put into each article. There is always more to say, so The BASH needs YOU. From the latest political scandals to your in-and-out-of-school experiences, this is your place to make your opinions heard. As always, please reach out to Dr. Saltzman (esaltsman@bastoronto.org) or one of our editors if you have any questions or would like to write in the next issue.■

The Weizmann Safe competition



From left to right: Lily Spiegel, Maya Onona, Sarah Ibghi, and Gabi Breitbart



From left to right: Sammy Simon, Raphael Sayegh, Ilan Weinberger, Solomon Astroff and Noam Wolfe



Left to right: Avinoam Friedman, Joey Cantkier, Joseph Samson and Ezra Goldberg



From left to right: Eli Finkelstein, Shalom-Lev, Binyamin Zahavi, Jeremy Kanner and Justin Beldeb

Jewish Communities
in Moldova

Michal Podcoritov

A population of about 2.98 million people and about 33,800km2, this is the small country of Moldova that I happen to be from. Moldova is a tiny country that was once part of Romania until it gained independence on August 27, 1991. Even before Moldova was a country, Jews were urged to move there. This dates back all the way to the late Middle Ages. Sephardic Jewish merchants used the region as a trade route between the Black Sea and Poland in the 15th century. In fact, archeologists have found Roman-era graves with Hebrew inscriptions in Southern Moldova, indicating that Jews were in the region more than 2000 years ago!

This happened during the 15th-16th century, when the Roman empire conquered Dacia (Romania and Moldova). It was a crossing point between Constantinople, the city of Lvov, then Poland, and a vast number of Jewish traders from the Sublime Gate set up trading posts in Bessarabia, resulting in the first Jewish community in Moldova. In 1812, Bessarabia was taken by Russia. Nonetheless, this didn’t stop the Jewish population from growing to 20,000 at that point (5% of the population) and successfully kept growing during the 19th century. One of the reasons for this was because Bessarabia was included in the “zone of residence” where Jews could get citizenship. Secondly, Russia (mainly St. Petersburg) made a movement to encourage and increase the residents in Bessarabia such as exemption from taxes, levies, no serfdom, military service for new arrivals, and aid on helping farm communities grow.

The situation of the Jews in Bessarabia was comparatively better than in the rest of the Russian Empire. Until the 1840’s the Jews had no restrictions in land rights, possibility



Jewish community center in Chisinau, Moldova, on November 20, 2022. (Judah Ari Gross/Times of Israel)

of operating a drinking establishment, or settling near the borders of the empire. However in 1882 the imperial decree was enforced that prohibited any Jewish rural activity in the empire that forced many Jews to relocate to places such as Kishinev (the capital), Akkerman, and Orhei. The Jews were living in good harmony until their first pogrom in April of 1903.

The Kishinev pogrom of 1903 began with false antisemitic accusations that Jews killed a young Russian boy, seeking for his blood to use for Matzot. This led to 50 deaths and several hundred injured. As a result many European Jews departed to Israel in 1904, known as the Second Aliyah. By 1918, the Jews who stayed in Romania remained Romanian citizens but were never respected. Rather, they were considered suspects of potential spies sent from Moscow.

Mass antisemitism continued through the 1930s and 40,s reaching its peak in the summer of 1941. During the ruling of Marshal Antonescu, Operation Shoah began. There were mass executions by gunshots, extreme violence, and famine, during which more than 100,000 people died. The remain-

ing Jews were sent to ghettos in Transnistria, a region of Ukraine between the Dniester and Bug rivers and occupied by the Romanians until 1944 with co-religionists from Bucovina and the rest of Romania. It was estimated that about 380,000 Romanian Jews were victims of the Shoah.

After the war ended, the country became Soviet again and about 100,000 people who left before the war came back. When the Soviet Jews were allowed to emigrate to Israel, hundreds of thousands made Aliyah. One of the most famous Aliyah-movements was by Avidgor Liebermann, born in 1958 in Kishinay.

Early 20th century Moldova reached a total of 230 000 Jews living there, making up a significant portion of the Jewish population, mostly in its capital, Chisinau. That is where I am from. Some of the biggest communities are Chisinau central Synagogue of Chabad and the Central Synagogue of the Jewish Community Aguduth Israel. That was the shul I went to. Chisinau central Synagogue of Chabad has the community population of 10,000 people of the 15,000 Jews residing in Chisinau. The Central Synagogue

of the Jewish Community Aguduth Israel contains more than 1,000 program participants.

In conclusion, Moldova may be a small country, but Jews have made an impact. Even today there are many Jews in Moldova, residing mostly in Chisinau. The life there is very culturally and religiously more vast and welcoming than it was before. This motivated other Jews to stay or move to Moldova. Moldova progressed with accepting Judaism into their country and making it easier for them to sustain themselves. With the opening of their first Kosher restaurant and a vast range of options of Hehshers from OU to Glatt Kosher, Moldova has made it one of their priorities to keep welcoming more and more Jews.■

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Zionism Without
Torah?

Reclaiming Bnei Akiva
School’s Religious
Zionist Identity

Coby Berger

What if I told you that our school was falling short in one of its core principles? And what if I told you that the aspect that the school is lacking is the most important value that our school holds - its Religious Zionism. You may be confused. After all, does our school not incessantly express its Zionism, and in particular since October 7, whether that be going to the Washington rally, holding commemorations for the Simchat Torah massacre, wearing dog-tags for the hostages, packing supplies for soldiers, and much more? The reality is that while the school has done all these things, and quite admirably I may add, the form of Zionism being pushed by the school is lacking in religiosity, oftentimes portraying itself as simply political Zionism. Even if actions are being done in the spirit of Religious Zionism, like going to Yeshiva in Israel, they are often done without knowledge of the importance of the act. If you asked the average Grade 12 student for a reason why they are specifically studying in Israel they would not be able to sufficiently answer the question. This is not what our school stands for and it needs to change.

Bnei Akiva Schools was started in 1973 with the purpose of providing a Religious Zionist education to those who did not want to attend the secular community Jewish school, and did not desire to attend a non-zionist yeshiva. In fact, Rav Tzvi Yehudah HaKohen Kook ZT”L, one of the founding fathers of Religious Zionism, urged our founding Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yehuda Felix, to return to Toronto, with the purpose of spreading Religious Zionism to Bnei Chutz La’Aretz. This manifest-



Elena Chernyshova / Panos Pictures / Redux

“The reality is that while the school has done all these things, and quite admirably I may add, the form of Zionism being pushed by the school is lacking in religiosity, oftentimes portraying itself as simply political Zionism.”

ed itself through the history of the school, with the school believing in “the centrality of Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael as a fundamental element of our Torah beliefs.”¹We rightly call for one to value Medinat Yisrael and to hold a connection to it, but only as tied to our conviction in the Torah.

If this is the case, and this is what the school prides itself on, how did we get to this point today? How often do we hear about the great Religious Zionist figures, Rav Kook, Rav Tzvi Yehuda, Rav Chaim Druckman, Rav Goren, and many many more? In contrast, I cannot count the number of times we talk of secular Zionist ideas and thinkers. We give seminars on why Israel is our right under international law, instead of insisting that our right to Israel is given by the Torah. We learn about Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and Ben Gurion, while students aren’t taught

about Rav Kook, and do not connect with the ideals of Religious Zionism in their personal lives. I am not arguing for ignoring the contributions of Secular Zionism; Religious Zionism acknowledges their importance and significance in G-d’s plan for the redemption of Am Yisrael. Rather, this must be paired with an understanding of the Neshama of Zionism, the religious underpinnings that support it, in harmony with learning about how the Guf was built.

This is a crisis that our school faces, risking the careful work it has put into strengthening the Religious Zionist community in Toronto over the past 50 years. But the crisis is not without solutions. A simple three-point plan could revitalize Religious Zionism in our school:

1. Mandate Religious Zionism as a course for Grades 9-12: Currently, this is only required for part

of Grade 12, with a new Grade 9 component as well starting this year. Ensuring that the foundations of our belief are supported for every student, through all four years of high school, would be a first step towards rectifying this problem. I’d also like to commend the teachers who as of writing are currently participating in a conference on this very topic,

2. Teaching Torat Eretz Yisrael: Too often, Religious Zionist thought is not even an option to learn! The school must first begin to incorporate these ideas into the Divrei Torah and Shiurim they give over, and then give the students options to study these works; that can be Chaburot studying Orot - Rav Kook’s great philosophical work - or giving out copies of Kima Kima - Rav Druckman’s explanation of the process of Geula and Medinat Yisrael’s role in it - to those who desire. It is not enough to talk about it; we must study and dive into the texts and works that formed our collective Hashkafah.

3. Framing Secular Zionism as a means and not an end. We must acknowledge the contributions of Secular Zionism in bringing the Atchalta DeGeula. At the same time, we must recognize that we are not yet at an end, and Medinat Yisrael is just the beginning of the redemption. We must promote the true concept that it is time for Religious Zionism to come to the forefront, that history calls for the continued spiritualization of the state and that this can only be achieved through bringing our Zionist and religious values into one, rather than in separate hands. This may sound radical, but it is one of the only solutions to this crisis that is plaguing us. As Torah Jews, we connect to what the Torah prescribes for us. And if we see Zionism as a secular endeavour, then what is the point of our connection to Medinat Yisrael in the first place?■

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How can Citizens Hold Leaders Accountable to Fulfill their Promises and Prevent Illegal Actions Behind Closed Doors?

Chana Liya Yagudaev

Many governments and leaders make bold promises of changes during campaigns, yet oftentimes committees delay and erode public trust through unreliable actions. In a perfectly functional government, issues would be minimal and stability would be strong, but that is not our reality. This demonstrates the critical need to hold our government accountable, something that every citizen deserves.

When I speak about holding our government accountable, it means that public officials, elected or unelected, have an obligation to explain their actions to the public. It can be achieved through the use of many strategies and mechanisms. The words “accountable government” mean that in order to prevent corruption, we want to ensure that public officials remain accessible and responsive. If these mechanisms or strategies are absent then corruption will most likely happen.

What are these strategies or mechanisms? Free and fair elections with fixed terms force officials to explain their work and performance to the public. Voters can replace them with challengers if unsatisfied. Certain countries such as North Korea, China, and Russia do not have free or fair elections, which lead to many issues such as illegal actions, prohibition of free speech, breaking the public’s trust, etc. This is political accountability, but this is also a path towards proper governments gaining strength depending on their election likelihood and terms. In the United States for example, the president is limited to two four-year terms by the Twenty-Second Amendment, which was adopted after Franklin D. Roosevelt won four elections. This rule is meant to stop any person from turning the office into a long

term personal power base, and to guarantee regular chances for voters to elect a new leader.

Another way of achieving a mechanism that is corruption free, is by allowing public access to records and meetings. These can be laws such as constitutions, ethics, conflict of interest, and financial disclosures. These are approvable laws that require citizen participation, but provide fair and legal accountability. In addition to enabling citizen participation, appointing acceptable administrators would ensure effective oversight and maintain integrity. Although this idea exists in many governments today, it is not always applied strongly or consistently. Canada is a clear example of how it should work. They use institutions like the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner to oversee public services and spending. These administrators and oversight offices are effective tools against corruption therefore they should expand throughout other countries. This is an internal tool that approves honesty, building the community’s trust not only on their leaders, but for the kind of world we hope to create. These are all productive mechanisms into achieving better governments and leaders. These are all direct mechanisms and strategies that ensure fairness, when citizens invest their time into a proper society.

The solution to this issue may seem obvious to many taxpayers, but the idea of taking personal responsibility takes patience, determination , and time to truly take hold. The solution is to completely destroy our former government institutions and create new, improved, and generally responsive ones. Although this kind of solution may seem extreme, this has happened before and successfully

worked. For instance after the Soviet Union collapsed, some former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe like Georgia rebuilt how their governments and economies worked. They got rid of one-party rule and state-controlled economies and instead created new constitutions, started holding competitive elections, and moved toward market-style economies to reduce corruption and limit how much power one group could hold. This way the abuse of power and illegal actions would be curbed and taking illegal risks would not serve you right if you are considering running for a public position.

Throughout history, and even today, there were countless leaders who prioritized their own interests, blinded by the power they had. A very well known example is Adolf Hitler. He used his own position in Germany to crush democracy, silence and kill opponents, and launch a devastating war to pursue his own extreme ideologies instead of taking care of the well being of his people. No government official ever considered thinking about the severe damages and prices that have been paid in order to preserve something they considered important, but in reality turned out to be ridiculous. Many of us question our leaders’ actions and want a voice in them, yet we are often silenced and ignored. Back to my example about Hitler, not everyone completely agreed with him when he arose in power. After the Reichstag fire, his government passed emergency decrees and then the Enabling Act. It suspended basic rights like free speech and allowed the Nazis to arrest people who criticized them or tried to go against them. Many opposition politicians were jailed, newspapers were shut down, and even “gossiping” or making jokes about the regime could be

punished, so people who wanted a voice were effectively silenced. Through elections, legal safeguards, and internal administrators, we can curb corruption and ensure promises turn into progress. True change demands active participation, transparency, and voting. Every tax payer has the power to build a strong government. Let us commit to vigilance, patience and collective action for a stronger future with real progress.■

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Can Shabbat Save Us From Being Amused?

Influenced by Amusing Ourselves to Death by Neil Postman

Ester Vishnever

Having just read Neil Postman’s renowned novel, Amusing Ourselves to Death, I can confidently say that I have a new outlook on the world we live in. Throughout the novel, Postman continuously proves how humanity is on the verge of “amusing ourselves to death” with the ever-expanding forms of technology and entertainment—and despite the novel being written in 1985, Postman’s theories are more relevant today than ever before. Though the book does an excellent job at answering the questions it raises, there is one question that has been on my mind ever since I picked it up: Are we as Jews exempt from this idea because of Shabbat, or did Postman really mean everyone when he concluded that humanity is becoming an endlessly entertained society? And if we are not exempt, then what does that reveal about humans and our need to be entertained?

At first glance, it may seem that we are exempt. Shabbat forces us to shut off our phones and devices for 25 hours—which can be hard, given that most people spend all their time glued to a screen. But we do not simply re-enter the Ice Age when Shabbat starts. We find different ways to pass the time. Whether that means bringing out some old board games, digging up that one book you’ve been meaning to read for English class, or—if you are truly desperate—you might even engage in a conversation with your family (gasp!).

What I am trying to prove through this is that, even though it seems like we’ve managed to evade the title of “endlessly amused,” we really haven’t. In fact, we might be more deserving of it than others. Shabbat doesn’t eliminate our need to be

Do Jews Have An Obligation To Go To Space?

Misha Vishnever

I know what you are thinking; of course a Jew could go to space! Ilan Ramon did it. Well yeah, but was he obligated to go? Of course space is not even remotely mentioned in Tanach, they probably didn’t even know there were worlds besides our own.

Everyone knows the famous quotation in Torah: “lekha lekha”, Go for yourself. If you think that this is pertaining only to Avram, then you are wrong. It is a message to explore; later on in the same pasuk it says: “el ha’arets asher arak”, to the land which I will show you. You don’t need to

know where you are going, you just need to go.

We’ve heard the famous explanation that this was a test of Avram, but I believe it is a test for us all. As Jews we have to fulfill this requirement; it could even follow from Ramban’s concept of “ma’ase avot siman levanim” . It doesn’t matter if we know where we’re going and it doesn’t matter if when we get there we ask where in the world we are, the journey is also important, not just the destination!

We have achieved medical breakthroughs, technological

advances, and scientific discoveries like robotic arms used in nanosurgery, which exist because of the perseverance of people to explore space. The possibility of colonization of other worlds is only because we first found those other worlds. Just like Avram, we only achieve great things because we are willing to explore.

Overall today people live longer and more prosperous lives than 100 years ago, largely thanks to the discoveries above. If we went back to the time of our great-grandparents they would look at our life spans and living qualities as if we are wizards. Just like Spock - played by Leonard Nimoy, who’s actually Jewish - says, “Live long and prosper.” We live long and we prosper thanks to exploration.

Do I believe that Jews must go to space? No, it’s not available for most people yet. Do I believe that if presented with an opportunity a Jew should go to space? Most definitely. We live to be a light unto the nations; what kind of light are we if we don’t pave the way both spiritually and physically? We should explore and push others to explore, we should search from the darkest corners of the world to the brightest center, and we should continue to strive to become better and smarter no matter what “lekha lekha”■



Nasa.gov

entertained; it simply changes the way we entertain ourselves.

Though Postman’s claim focuses on technology, entertainment is not limited to a screen. Board games, books, and conversations are all forms of amusement, whether we realize it or not. Shabbat may force a technological break upon us, but it can’t stop us from being amused. The second our screens go off, we start looking for something else to fill the silence—proving that Postman was

correct in stating that our need for amusement is constant, regardless of the form it takes. Even though Shabbat might seem like a break from the “endlessly entertained” culture Postman describes, it shows that humans never truly escape entertainment, and our desire for stimulation and amusement is ever-present. This reveals something deeper about human nature: being entertained isn’t just a habit of modern life—it has become one of the most fundamental ways

we engage with the world. And if that doesn’t prove Postman’s theory right, I don’t know what will.■

AMUSING OURSELVES TO DEATH

Public discourse in the age of show business (20th anniversary ed.)

By Neil Postman
Penguin. 2006. 208 pp. \$29.45

The Guggenheim: a case study into how society's perception of “great art” changes

Baruch Gold

Located across from Central Park and steps from the Metropolitan Museum of Art stands one of the most iconic and important contributions to modern American architecture: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1949, the building faced backlash not only from the curator, who swore it would be impossible to hang art in the building, but also from critics who insisted the architecture would overshadow the art. In 1959 when the Guggenheim opened to the public, John Canaday, the chief art critic for the New York Times, declared that the structure created "A war between architecture and painting, in which both come out badly maimed¹." However, years later the Guggenheim had become one of the most celebrated pieces of modern architecture by critics and the general public alike. In 2008 the Guggenheim was designated a national historic landmark² and became a UNESCO³ world heritage site in 2019. So how did the critical perception change so drastically and what does the initial rejection of the museum say about our culture?

To understand the Guggenheim one must first experience a traditional art museum such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, located just steps away. Although both museums serve the same purpose of displaying art for the public, their methods of doing so are distinct. When visiting the MET one is faced with the complex layout of a traditional art museum: one room opens to four more and so on. In a museum layout like this, one is constantly haunted by the fear of missing a room or set of paintings. This fear is one that does not afflict the Guggenheim as it is designed for the museum-goer to follow one path while the art revolves around that path. The result is a single spiral

ramp one takes around the perimeter of the circular building while the slope ascends as one walks around the rotunda. The unique spiral ramp allows the museum-goer to engage with the artwork in front of them while simultaneously catching a glimpse of the galleries to come from across the open rotunda. It is this unique experience of knowing exactly where you are, and where you are going, that links time and space together resulting in peace of mind knowing one won't miss any paintings.

While critics assumed the design would overpower the art (and therefore the purpose of the building), they only realized as they walked through the building that the building's purpose and the art become one. This accomplishment of achieving as Wright would call it “plasticity” where the form and function work harmoniously like a symphony is the exact manifestation of Wright's vision for an “organic architecture”. The ironic thing is once I experienced the Guggenheim, I realized that the idea of “architecture overpowering the art” can be seen in all the traditionally designed museums. In each gallery at the MET the ceilings are grand, the facade is ornate, and the layout is confusing making it impossible to explore the museum efficiently without a map. At the Guggenheim, a visitor won't find a map at the front desk, however they won't search for one to begin with. After seeing the facade and entering the courtyard that reveals the spiral rotunda, one fully understands where they are supposed to go and where they are relative to the whole building. This makes the Guggenheim appear familiar to the visitor even though they have never stepped foot in the building, eliminating the layout and navigation problems that afflict museums.

Throughout history the most innovative works of art and architecture are often the ones that challenge our perception and understanding of the world around us, and that is perhaps why they are so scandalous when first received. When Claude Monet first exhibited his painting: impression, Sunrise in 1874 critics



Images courtesy of: Baruch Gold (2024)

and the public considered the work to be unfinished. In Louis Leroy's review of the show he compared the now masterpiece to “wallpaper”⁴ that had no value beyond decoration. However, this style of painting called “impressionism” would soon go on to become widely admired by the late 1880s and 1890s changing our perception of what “art” is forever. With the Guggenheim Frank Lloyd Wright was doing something similar, taking a decades-old understanding of what a museum should look like and challenging it, changing the way we think about and experience museums forever. Throughout history specifically in the arts but not limited to, we are scared to accept this change. The critics of the Guggenheim perhaps did not want to change their understanding or perception of “good museum layout”.

The Guggenheim stands as one of the best examples of Wright's

goal in architecture, to create true "plasticity" where form and function become one entity, creating a symphony where the art and architecture become one. Its drastic change in critical and public reception highlights our nature to reject change in the arts out of our fear of our perception and understanding changing. In a time where art is constantly changing, the Guggenheim's journey from controversy to cultural icon highlights a timeless truth: our society's initial resistance to new and “radical” ideas are often deeply rooted in our discomfort for change, yet it is through these controversies our outlook gets challenged, and redefines the meaning of “art”. Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpiece is not only a reminder of innovation and architectural change but a reminder of the importance of questioning the status quo.■

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Post-Apocalyptic Novels and Their Importance in Today's World

Eyal Benjamin

Society has fallen. Electricity and connectivity are a fantasy of the past. The streets are filled with empty cars and debris, windows are broken, doors are left open; it looks like life ended suddenly but the world kept existing. Cracks slowly grow across the pavement, buildings collapse or erode. Nothing is fully destroyed, just worn down and failing from the lack of care. Nature has taken over.

Recently, I've been reading a lot of post-apocalyptic novels and I have noticed that they all seem to have one thing in common: when the world is stripped of all its layers, what is left is the basic nature of humanity. The empty space of the world, after everything superficial is removed, offers much space to reflect and think about how the world looks once it is reduced to its skeleton. At the core, post-apocalyptic media are about survival, but through them we learn many valuable insights into human nature. In a normal society, value is measured by an object's monetary or social worth, versus its actual utility; a notion that gets flipped on its head in the post-apocalyptic novels. They also tend to also challenge the idea that morality is fixed. They attempt to demonstrate through their scenarios that morality is a subjective concept.

When resources are infinite, it is easy to be a good person. It is easy to be moral and giving. When even the most basic of things, like food, clean water, shelter etc. is scarce, parting with your possessions and helping others becomes difficult. This seems to suggest that ethics and morality are not fundamental qualities of human beings, but rather a luxury provided by stability. This mirrors the ideas presented in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs; you cannot reach the highest levels of humanity when you do not have the basics. Self-actualization, generosity, compassion and morality all sit at the top

of the pyramid, above physical needs like food, water and safety. If the bottom requirements aren't met, the ones at the top can't be met either. If morality depends on stability, then being a good person may not be an instinct but rather privilege provided by abundance. Stripped of security, even well-intentioned people may find their principles narrowing to whatever ensures their survival. Es-

to create. People still write, sing, and tell stories. Culture and art act as a vital organ to keep people alive and provide meaning equally in the darkest and brightest of times. When structure and safety are replaced with uncertainty, survival does not replace meaning, the need for meaning becomes more visible. Ultimately, “Survival Is Insufficient” seems to ring true in real life. To just survive is

unimaginable wealth. The Last of Us presents perhaps one of the clearest examples: characters value ammunition, clean water, and medical supplies, all things they need to survive, not things of great monetary value. A guitar or a comic book, objects that might seem insignificant and highly replaceable in a normal society, become invaluable because they hold memories from the past. Though this is a concept that I think we all subconsciously know, post-apocalyptic media highlights this comparison. It makes one think clearly, value is not fixed, its something shaped by circumstance.

Post-apocalyptic stories are not only about destruction but also about reflection. By stripping away comfort, stability, and structure, it reveals some of the most basic human qualities: survival, morality, connection, and meaning. The desolate landscapes and empty streets are less warnings about the future than mirrors reflecting the present. They remind us that many ‘set’ processes depend on systems that can change at any given time. What remains when those systems fail is not emptiness, but the revelation of what has really been holding it all together.■

STATION ELEVEN

By Emily St. John Mandel
Harper Collins. 2014. 352 pp. \$23.99

THE ROAD

By Cormac McCarthy
Knopf. 2007. 304 pp. \$24.95

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“When the world is stripped of all its layers, what is left is the basic nature of humanity”

entially, thinking about others can be costly, so altruism is often traded for self-preservation.

One of my favourite novels is Emily St. John Mandel's Station Eleven, a hauntingly beautiful book that switches between before and after the End. The novel follows a group of actors who travel between settlements putting on plays. The motto of the group is a quotation taken from Star Trek, “Survival Is Insufficient”. For them, it is not simply enough to live, they need meaning. They find meaning in their art; their travels between communities to put on a play. Our world is no different. In history, every culture, no matter what state it was in, had its own art, stories, music, and rituals that give life purpose beyond basic needs. Even in times of war, famine, exile and disaster people don't stop

to live in a purely mechanical sense; living requires more than that.

At the moment, if you were to grab the most valuable thing in your immediate surroundings, you would grab your phone, laptop, or maybe a piece of jewelry. But imagine if you were deep in the Amazon rainforest with no way of communicating with the outside world. Would you grab your technology or a bottle of water? The reality is that value is inherently situational. When I am hungry I would rather have food than my computer, yet while satiated it would be the reverse. This is something that is evident in almost every piece of post apocalyptic media. In The Walking Dead, abandoned shopping malls hold nothing of interest except canned food and medicines. In Cormac McCarthy's The Road a hidden stash of supplies feels like