

Alumni Mentors Pay It Forward



Joel Strauss



Dr. Ilana Friedman



Jeremy Lustman

JOEL B. STRAUSS '86YC, '92C

It all started for Joel B. Strauss when Yeshiva University students and alumni began approaching him for career advice. Hearing about his vast expertise with career counseling and generosity with his time, Strauss became known as the “go-to guy” for personalized guidance.

Strauss, a partner at Kaplan Fox & Kilsheimer LLP, a firm focusing on complex securities, consumer, antitrust and class action litigation, feels that if he has the ability to help people navigate their way through the career process, he’s going to use it. “Sometimes it’s hard for parents to give career advice,” said Strauss. “Their insights may come through the prism of 25-year-old information. I spend a lot of time keeping current on the job marketplace within many different career paths.”

For Strauss, this effort is a labor of love. He devotes countless hours to helping others pursue their dreams. “Students are often struggling to decide between careers, and I try to help steer them in the right direction,” he said. “I advise them on what classes they should take to best explore their interests. I get satisfaction from working together with the fantastic Career Center and serving as an additional resource to make sure students are on the path they will find most fulfilling.”

Strauss’s dedication to the YU community runs deep with many family connections. His wife, Blimie (Sternberg) '83YUHS, is an alumna, as are his brothers, oldest daughter, Elana Rosenbaum '12S, and her husband, Judah '11SB. His late mother was also an alumna, and son Avi is currently a junior in the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program at Yeshiva College.

An alumnus of the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Strauss mentors many Cardozo students—his firm currently has three working as interns. “Joel is a one-man career center. Aside from connecting students and professionals to one another, he spends a lot of time guiding students,” said mentee Daniel Danesh '13YC, a third-year student at Cardozo. “On a personal note, I’ve spent numerous hours with him. For a successful law firm partner, that requires a lot of sacrifice, and I remain quite indebted to him.”

Strauss serves as chair of the Career Guidance and Placement Committee of Yeshiva University’s Undergraduate Alumni Council and teaches a course on the U.S. legal system at Stern College for Women. He also serves on the Alumni Advisory Group at Cardozo and on YU’s General Counsel’s Council. In 2012, he received the Alumni Partner of the Year Award from the Career Center.

One of Strauss’s proudest achievements is a program he created five years ago called Being Orthodox in an Unorthodox Workplace, an annual workshop he chairs that brings in alumni from different professional fields as well as guest speakers. The students separate into small groups and are sensitized to issues they might encounter as Orthodox Jews in the work-

place. This is followed by a networking reception. “So many students have developed mentor relationships with alumni and gotten jobs this way,” Strauss said. “This program, done under the auspices of the Career Center, draws so many students, and alumni are excited to participate.”

“Joel has been and continues to be vital to my professional development,” said mentee Basyah Klyman, '11S, '14C. “Without Joel’s help, I could not have gained a position at FINRA (Financial Industry Regulatory Authority). He makes time to speak with me whenever I struggle with a career-related decision, and he generously uses his connections to progress my development. I am fortunate to have Joel as a mentor, and I am so grateful for all that he has invested in me.”

“I find being a mentor particularly fulfilling, and it gives me a lot of pleasure to see students and alumni I’ve mentored pay it forward and mentor others,” said Strauss. “Whether for current students or alumni 20 years out of school, the YU alumni network will benefit you for the rest of your life. I’m proud to be a part of that.”

Strauss Lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, with wife Blimie, son Avi and daughter Talia.

DR. ILANA FRIEDMAN '96S, '01E

Dr. Ilana Friedman got involved mentoring YU students when she met Joel Strauss on a bus. Drawn in by Strauss’ passion for mentoring, Friedman was enlisted to run an interview workshop, and she’s never looked back.

Friedman—assistant professor of ophthalmology and pediatrics at YU-affiliated Albert Einstein College of Medicine, staff member at Montefiore Medical Center and director of the pediatric ophthalmology fellowship at the Children’s Hospital at Montefiore—“caught the bug” and joined the Undergraduate Alumni Council Career Committee.

Working with young men and women, Friedman initiated and oversaw a summer shadowing program to help students interested in medicine learn about the day-to-day, hands-on aspects of the profession and the practice of medicine in general and ophthalmology in particular, as well as the practicalities of work-life balance and the challenges of being Orthodox while practicing medicine. The program, called the YU-Einstein Summer Internship, ran in the summers of 2013 and 2014.

“When I was applying to medical schools, Dr. Friedman was really there for me,” said mentee Elana Molcho '16S. “It was truly great. She helped me consider ophthalmology and gave me the opportunity to spend a lot of time in the operating room. She showed me that it’s possible to have a family and personal life as well as a rewarding medical career.” As the mother of three children, Friedman experienced challenges in balancing her career with motherhood, particularly during the years when she had young children,

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ALUMNI IN ACTION

ON THE FUTURE OF MODERN ORTHODOX EDUCATION (JANUARY 16, 2016)

Yeshiva University hosted a panel discussion on the topic, “Modern Orthodox Education in 21st Century Israel and America: Lessons from the Past, Building the Future” at Heichal Shlomo in Jerusalem, Israel. The event was sponsored by YU in Israel, Office of Alumni Affairs, and the S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program.



(l-r) Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveichik, director, Zahava and Moshael Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, YU; Esti Rosenberg, founder and Rosh Beit Midrash, Stella K. Abraham Migdal Oz Beit Midrash for Women; President Richard M. Joel; and Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh, Ruth Buchbinder Mitzner Chair in Talmud and Jewish Law



ALUMNI BASKETBALL NIGHT (FEBRUARY 20, 2016)

Alumni and their families watched YU men's basketball close out the regular season at the Max Stern Athletic Center. The alumni event coincided with Senior Night, where five graduating Maccabees—Joseph Ammar, Eytan Potash, Shelby Rosenberg, Yosef Rosenthal and Shaje Weiss—were honored.



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and wished she had had access to practical mentorship. “A lot of people, both men and women, need mentors. As a student, it would have been invaluable to have had someone to help me understand what a career in medicine would really be like,” said Friedman. “That’s why I felt strongly that I had something to offer.”

“Dr. Friedman was an extraordinary mentor when I shadowed her during the summer of 2014,” said protégée Sari Joshowitz ’17S. “Although I was only at the beginning of my pre-med journey when I met her, she has had a profound impact on my career path. She also showed me that being a doctor and having a family were not two mutually exclusive realities.”

“I have real-life experience to share,” said Friedman. “Contributions don’t always have to be financial, and I enjoy sharing my experience. I was already mentoring fellows and residents, and I thought, ‘Why not take it back a level?’”

“She really took the time to teach. Before she saw a patient, she would go through their history and explain the medical concepts to me so that I wouldn’t be lost,” said Joshowitz. “Often, even during appointments, she would continue to explain things, and was always happy to discuss any further questions after the appointment. She’s a great mentor, and working with her was an instrumental experience.”

JEREMY LUSTMAN ’96YC

For Jeremy Lustman, much of his profession is built on creating and nurturing relationships. As a partner at DLA Piper US, Lustman spends much of his time in Israel, where he has developed an international network of companies, investors, entrepreneurs, bankers, accountants and lawyers.

“When I first moved to Israel, it was daunting to think about being a professional there,” said Lustman. “When I had the good fortune to find success, others interested in making *aliyah* [immigration to Israel] started reaching out to me for guidance.” He found himself speaking with many Yeshiva University students interested in Israeli entrepreneurial activity and business. “As more Israeli companies have moved to New York in the last two to three

years, Manhattan has exploded with emerging growth companies (EGCs) created by Israeli entrepreneurs,” said Lustman. “The number of EGCs within proximity to YU students has grown dramatically, sparking increased interest. As Sy Syms expanded and upgraded its business program and added Mike Strauss [associate dean and entrepreneur-in-residence], the stars were aligning for mentorship opportunities between students and alumni interested in entrepreneurship. Given my very warm feelings toward YU, this is the perfect way for me to give back.”

After speaking to law students at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law last year about entrepreneurship in law, he found himself becoming increasingly active within his alma mater. “Deciding to mentor wasn’t a formal decision; I had a wonderful experience at YU personally, and several members of my family are alumni, including my father, Mark ’67YC; mother, Elsa (Cantor) ’69S; wife, Tamar (Parness) ’95SB; and in-laws, Chani (Weissman) ’59YUHS and Jacob Parness ’58YUHS. I believe YU serves a critical role in North American Jewry as well as internationally.”

Lustman is particularly proud when he is able to assist a YU alumna in securing a job. He described helping a Cardozo graduate land a position in Israel. “It was a ‘direct connection’ from an event I did at Belfer Hall,” he said. “That’s a great feeling.”

Leora Goldstein ’13C was searching for a job after taking the bar exam. Her brother, Avi Goldstein ’15YC, heard Lustman speak at YU and put her in touch with him. Lustman offered to meet her for coffee and then sent her résumé around to his contacts, resulting in Goldstein receiving several interviews and a number of job offers. Ultimately, she accepted a position at Herzog Fox & Neeman, a top Israeli law firm in high-tech commercial licensing. “Jeremy really just opened the door for me,” said Goldstein. “He wanted to look out for a fellow Cardozo graduate. His mentorship changed my life.”

Goldstein has since assisted other alumni in the process of making *aliyah*. Like Lustman, she too wants to pay it forward. “Jeremy gave me that push that made me successful,” she said. “I’m very thankful.” ■

To get involved and help mentor students or alumni, please contact alumni@yu.edu