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## The Lander Chronicle Volume I Issue I

Lander College for Men

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# Lander College For Men

## The Lander Chronicle

VOLUME I, ISSUE I

MARCH 8, 2001

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## Message From The Dean

### Who Are Our Students?

Although this is only our first year, students at the Lander College for Men and Beis Medrash L'Talmud reflect considerable geographic diversity. They come not only from the New York metropolitan area, but also from across the United States and abroad.

This geographic diversity is matched by a diversity of educational background. Graduates of the great majority of U.S. yeshiva high schools whose students are college-bound attend Lander College. A sample listing includes such schools in the New York metropolitan area as Yeshiva of Flatbush, Torah Academy of Bergen County, Chaim Berlin, Rambam Mesivta in Lawrence, N.Y., Shaarei Torah in Monsey, Yeshiva Chofetz Chaim, Tiferes Torah in Staten Island, Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Edison, N.J., Hillel in Deal, New Jersey; on the West Coast, Yeshiva University of Los Angeles, Valley Torah Academy of Los Angeles; and elsewhere, Torah Academy of Baltimore, Ner Yisrael of Baltimore, Yeshiva of Greater Washington, Yeshiva of Atlanta, Yeshiva of Scranton, Yeshiva of Skokie, Yeshiva Gedola of Montreal, Hebrew Academy of Montreal, Horev in Jerusalem and Hasmonian School in London.

The average SAT score of the typical entering student is 1200, placing the college

in the upper tier of American colleges and universities. In addition to their academic achievements, however, students show a strong background in Gemara study. The great majority spent one or more years of post-high school study in Israel, at institutions such as Toras Moshe, Shaalvim, Kerem B'Yavneh, Medrash Shmuel, Har Etzion, Beis Yisrael, HaKotel, Shaarei Mevasseret Zion, Lev Avraham, Ohr Yerushalayim, Merkaz Ha-Torah, Reishit Yerushalayim, and others.

This diversity of background also reflects a diversity of talent. Lander College students include a National Merit Semifinalist, members of the National Honors Society, a high school valedictorian and salutatorian, several NCSY advisors, the host of a radio show, the winner of a city-wide essay contest, a professional magician and clown, and so on.

The College admitted only a small group of its total applicants. Those that passed the rigorous admissions process represent a superb group of young men who share a deep commitment to Gemara study together with the desire for a college education of the highest quality.

Dr. Moshe Sokol  
*Vice Dean for Academic Affairs*

## Tax Cuts, A Really Bad Idea

I guess I'm jaded. In my younger days, I would be surprised when intelligent – or not so intelligent – people would come up with *really* bad ideas, which they would espouse with great zeal. Maybe it's the "new" Intifada. Maybe it's only the cold, winter weather. Nevertheless, I must say that tax cuts are a *really*, I mean *really*, bad idea.

There ought to be sound moral, pragmatic, or economic reasons for cutting taxes. Among the moral possibilities may be the sound redistribution of wealth. A prag-

matic reason would be the simplification of the tax code. As for economic, tax reductions should be geared toward stimulating the economy.

The new administration's proposals do not redistribute wealth fairly. No respected economist has stated that Bush's estate tax plan will favor the poor. As for simplification, that went out in 1986. In the past, tax cuts were used to boost the economy; indeed this may be Reagan's greatest legacy. Whether he understood it or not, the boom years of the 1980s were attribut-

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(cont. Tax Cuts, A *Really* Bad Idea)

able in large measure to the Tax Reform Act of 1981 as well as the stimulative surge in defense spending. The latter of these gave us Reagan's other great legacy – enormous budget deficits and national debt that were only fortuitously reduced in the 1990s by the technology and productivity booms. It must also be remembered that the 1980s followed the 1970s, that is to say that the stimulative policies came after a decade of recession and hyperinflation.

Not so in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Although consumer confidence is down sharply and should be a matter of concern, unemployment, which is up to 4.2% from its recent low of 3.9%, is still at a very low level historically. In fact, few economists, including Alan Greenspan, would have declared this level, as little as 18 months ago, to be "sustainable" without the threat of triggering inflation. GDP growth is still robust and so is productivity.

Tax cuts advocates claim that we need the stimulation to get the economy moving again – as though it has stopped. Even if this were correct, it is widely acknowledged as a bad idea. To paraphrase Dr. Greenspan, the political process of passing and implementing the cuts would require more time than the economic cycle may manifest. That is to say, that by the time the cuts are implemented, the economy, through its own "self-correcting" mechanisms may be well on the road to or in recovery. Fine tuning the economy is simply best left to the more nimble hands of the Federal Reserve Board and its mandated conduct of monetary policy.

Another bogus argument for reducing taxes has to do with the projected (emphasis on *projected*) budget surplus. "Let's give the money back to the people!" I just love it when modern day republicans talk like 1960s radicals. Budget projections are notoriously unreliable. So here's an idea. Let's use any surpluses to continue reducing the national debt. This will open up options for us later, such as using the interest savings to clean up the environment, enhance primary and secondary education, and expand public transportation including inter-city rails. These activities will be profitable investments for our future. The reduced national debt will give us the option down the road of issuing "social security" bonds, if necessary, to support baby boomers in retirement. The nation will be able to afford it!

Here's another idea. Let the USA be a moral force in the world. People are dying in Africa because there is simply no medicine available for AIDS inoculations. All it takes is some money. A president can choose to tell the people what they want to hear or he can persuade the electorate to follow policies that promote change and innovation. Let's be the global economic force that we are – and more. Ah, but that requires leadership.

Kenneth S. Bigel, Ph.D.  
Chairman, Department of Business

## The Bush Administration's Strategy in Distributive Politics

It is estimated that President Bush's tax reduction plan will give the richest one percent of American families more than 40 percent of the cuts in taxes. But as portrayed by Bush, the plan serves the general interest, not the rich alone. "Everyone who pays income taxes will get relief," said the President in his message to Congress. Moreover, top economic advisors to the President deny that 43 percent of the tax cuts go to the richest families. Though when asked for an alternative estimate of the amount going to the rich, they declined to answer.

The fact that they do not identify the amount provides insight into the Bush political strategy in distributive matters. Quintessentially, it is essentially one of obfuscation of the real pattern of benefits. Bush's statement that "people with the smallest incomes will get the highest percentage of reduction" implements this strategy. It deflects public awareness from the plan's salient distributive feature—that the amount of money to be returned is skewed in favor of the rich.

The President and his advisors want us to believe that the difference between their figures and those of the Democrats is simply a matter of who is doing the counting. David E. Rosenbaum unfortunately lends credence to this view in his article "Doing the Math on Bush's Tax Cut," when he suggests there are legitimate differences between their ways of computing the effect on shares of the national tax burden (New York Times, March 4, page 22). The different sets of figures do not, however, have an equally valid claim to represent the distribution of tax reductions. The outstanding fact—denied by Bush's advisors but undisputed by any alternative numbers—is that the richest one percent get between 22 percent and 40 percent of the cuts.

The President's men have come to a fairly obvious conclusion: to say one is giving away 43 percent of reductions to one percent of families is not a politically viable strategy in a democracy already suffering from high levels of inequality of income and wealth. Under the circumstances, they have apparently decided that the best way to promote their plan is to deny and obscure the facts, lest they lose the budget battle or expend scarce political capital in the process. In either case they can not succeed in budget politics through a competitive strategy, so they have adopted a noncompetitive approach that involves hoodwinking the public. Their approach, in other words, is to try to fool enough of the people to achieve passage of their tax cut plan and, thereby, move the country in a more inequitarian direction.

Ross Zucker, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Political Science  
Co-Chair, Columbia University Seminar on the Political Economy of War and Peace



## Looking At Lander

Before discussing the yeshiva and the secular studies at the college, let me begin by saying a few words about the extra-curricular and social life at the Lander College for Men. Undergraduates' extra-curricular activities play a major role at the college. The Student Government, the Investment Club, and the Political Science Society give our students a chance to participate in the development of the school. The Student Government is responsible for organizing events such as a *Chanukah Chagigah*, a *Purim Chagigah*, and an intramural basketball league. As its name suggests, the Investment Club invests in the stock market, giving its members a hands-on experience of the business world. The Political Science Committee is in charge of establishing the Constitution of the college and holds meetings to discuss different political issues that arise around the globe.

Taking some time to relax is crucial when keeping up a vigorous schedule. Some students use the student lounge to sit around or play ping pong, while others like to hang around their apartments. All of these facets of student life create a healthy social environment at the Lander College for Men.

Beis Medrash L'Talmud is a unique and special yeshiva that provides a high level of learning. Its goal is to impress upon each talmid the importance of learning, making sure a *bachor's* life is focused on Torah. Under the direction of Rav Bronspigel, Rav Parnes, and Rav Schmulewitz, the talmidim become motivated to learn and grow in their Yiddishkeit. This elite cast of rebbeim enables each talmid to make a *kesher* with his rebbe, and to establish for himself a *hashkafa* and a set of learning skills that will prepare him for life in the *derech HaTorah*. The fact that students have morning seder six days a week and night seder five nights a week reflects the seriousness of the yeshiva. Different *mussar chaburos* are available throughout the week, adding to the learning environment.

Shabbosim play a central role in the yeshiva experience. On an in-Shabbos, the *rebbeim* stay in on a rotating basis, adding to the *ruchnius* and *zmiros*. Each talmid feels that the yeshiva is the true center of the institution. With its emphasis on learning and the warm care of the rebbeim for each individual, Beis Medrash L'Talmud is, beyond doubt, a *makom Torah*.

Located on the first floor of the main building, the Beis Medrash is the foundation of the school. Secular studies, though taught on the second and third floors of the main building, are superb; academic standards at the Lander College for Men rival those at America's finest colleges and universities. The professors who uphold these high academic standards understand that classes are being given for a purpose—*l'sheim shamayim*.

Eytan Kamkar  
Vice President, Student Government

## The Way We See It

So you've heard, heard, and heard some more about this place, but come on, whom have you heard from already? You've heard about this place from rebbeim, from Deans and what have you, but you haven't gotten the real deal yet. Allow me to give you the scoop, the way we, the students see things here.

Lander College is a place that caters to every "Jewish-college boy's" needs. If you enjoy learning, this is the place. If you don't enjoy learning, what's wrong with you? As far as the secular department goes, it can't be matched. The individual attention all around is unparalleled. You can take my word on the Pre-law department, but the word around lunch (after the "*divrei Toiyiroh*") is that it's true in all departments. After the day, you can retire to a "luxurious" dorm where everyone always greets you with a smile.

As far as the things you want to hear, a basketball league has been established and it seems pretty safe to say it will be around for a while. Football was "*mamash geshmack*" on those Friday afternoons, and when the weather gets nice, baseball will roll around. But don't fret, the Beis Medrash is always open; I can tell you that first hand.

The neighborhood itself has its upsides. There are restaurants, shuls, yeshivos, the Mets and more restaurants. We, the students "own" this place. We are about to blow the roof off this community with our first annual *Purim Mesibah*. We hope this is the first of many public happenings for Lander College and we'd like you to be a part of the next one.

Avi Stern  
Secretary, Student Government

## More Than Stock. A Bond.

Ten men sit around a table and speak about the week's hot stocks and crumbling corporations. It's an exclusive party but one need not be wealthy to join. The aroma of expensive leather, rich cigars, and strong liquor might elude this group, but it's not missed. No, this club is of a different breed.

Ambition and the thirst for knowledge bring these men together. The Lander College Investment Club started as a vision and blossomed into an organized and respected entity, one worthy of the institution its title bares. The Lander College Investment Club had two goals at its inception. Firstly, for students to learn first-hand about the financial systems that make the world go round. Secondly, for those students to enjoy that learning experience in a no-pressure, fun-spirited manner.

And learning is just what the Club did. From uneducated children the Club members became knowledgeable men of the world of high finance. Indexes, 52-week highs, short



(cont. More Than Stock. A Bond.)

sales, Alan Greenspan, dividends, P/E ratios, these were some of the terms the Club members heard in passing between sports and weather. Now the Club speaks of them with knowledge, with reverence, and sometimes, with unease.

It took a few short months but now the Lander College Investment Club can buy, trade, and invest on a par with any investment group. The members have the knowledge, the will, and now the tools to use these powers. The Investment Club currently possesses a diversified portfolio that is under constant scrutiny by its devoted and talented members. At the weekly meetings thoughts are shared, current issues debated, and new ideas explored. What makes these meetings and its attendees special is their ability to maintain friendships without losing the proper decorum needed to run a successful organization. The serious but friendly environment that houses the Lander College Investment Club certainly reflects well upon its members. The Club's business is business, but its priority is togetherness.

Steven Hornung  
President & CIO, Lander College Investment Club

## A Work In Progress

A meeting's in progress, and it's not surprising that arguments rage and that tensions are rising. For those in the room it is not mindless chatter, talk isn't cheap in this most pressing matter.

A gavel bangs once and silence prevails, instructions are given, their job now entails, the casting of votes, decisions they're making, the sides they are choosing, positions they're taking.

Hands are upheld, then withdrawn, then some others, rise in their place, though opposing their brothers. There is no ill will or bad blood in their role. Divisions dissolve in their united goal.

Although simple words are its only protection, at last it has given the future direction. The product of work, and of toil, and strife, a will made of iron, a constitution of life.

Rami Genauer  
President, Political Science Society  
Chairman, Constitutional Committee

## News Releases

### Lander Dean Honored

On February 28, 2001, Dr. Moshe Sokol, Vice Dean of Academic Affairs at Lander College for Men, received the "National Rabbinic Centennial Award." The honor was presented by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations at its annual dinner. The OU hosted this gala event at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in New York City. In attendance were over 500 people.

### New Book By Lander Professor

Ross Zucker recently published a book, entitled Democratic Distributive Justice, published by Cambridge University Press, 2001. The book explores the nature of economic justice and democracy, and it aims to explain how countries with market economies should deal with the problem of high levels of income inequality. He deals with the question of income inequality through an interdisciplinary analysis that involves extensive use of political, economic, legal, and philosophical theory.

### Professor Evaluates Business Ethics In New Paper

Dr. Kenneth S. Bigel has recently published a scholarly paper entitled "The Ethical Orientation of Financial Planners Who Are Engaged in Investment Activities: A Comparison of United States Practitioners Based on Profes-

sionalization and Compensation Sources." The paper appears in the December 2000 issue of the *Journal of Business Ethics*, a highly prestigious international academic journal.

In the paper, Dr. Bigel uses a combination of survey and statistical methods on the one hand, and ethical and psychological reasoning on the other in order to draw inferences about the practices of the investment advisor population. Dr. Bigel concludes that advisors bearing professional designations such as the Certified Financial Planner marks on average will manifest higher moral development, but that fee-based planners may be no better in this regard than commission-based salespeople. He also concluded that ethical orientation scores go down among those who have been in practice for more than ten years.

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