

Big, Long, and Hopefully Helpful Email to Observant Jewish Freshpeople

Dear freshmen and freshwomen,

I hope you are all getting excited for Yale!

My name is Hannah Otis, and I am President of the Young Israel House at Yale (YIHY). YIHY represents the Orthodox Jewish community at Yale, catering to the needs of observant Jews on campus. As a community, we want to wish you the warmest of welcomes to Yale!

You are getting this because you have some connection to or history in observant Jewish schools and institutions. This email contains helpful advice and information about Jewish religious observance at Yale, specifically with regard to navigating the first couple of days.

We would love to help make this transition as easy for you as possible. If you are interested, read on!

Part I - Things to do right now:

a. **Sign up for kosher-I.** Kosher-I is the mailing list that provides Orthodox davening times, eruv status, and other useful announcements within the observant community on a day-to-day basis. You can sign up for kosher-I by going to <http://mailman.yale.edu/mailman/listinfo/kosher-I> and following the directions there. Be sure to not sign up to receive digests. Email me at hannah.otis@yale.edu with concerns. I can also sign you up for other relevant listserves (email lists) like our "ortho undergrad" listserve—the primary listserve for shiurim, shabbat, and kashrut matters that are undergraduate-specific.

b. **Check up on your Shabbat keys** - Hopefully, you have already sent in the request form asking for non-electronic keys to gain entrance to your dormitory on Shabbat. (All students should have received the form earlier this summer. If you haven't sent it in, don't panic, but contact your college master's office about it immediately). It's a good idea at this point to send a friendly reminder email to your college master's office, just to make sure that they will have it for you when you get there.

c. **Contact your Dean about the activities that occur over Shabbat your first weekend.** As described below, many official Freshman activities and registrations take place over your first Shabbat. In the past, many observant Yalies have skipped some or all of these events. If you are planning to do so, email your Dean to notify him/her about what you will be missing and to ask how you can make up for these events before or after Shabbat.

Part II - At Yale:

Introduction: Yale University continues its long-hallowed tradition of scheduling move-in for a Friday. They do this in an attempt to ensure that you (the freshperson) will have the most un-Shabbostic, paperwork-and-programming-filled Shabbat possible, right off the bat. But not to worry—you can still have a Shabbostic Shabbos if you begin with the following steps:

1 - At move-in on Friday/getting ready for Shabbat:

a. **Meet your Freshman Counselors (FroCos)** - They're really awesome--I guarantee it. And they will be happy to help you with any logistical questions including skipping events on Shabbat and securing your Shabbat key and Shabbat-friendly bathroom lights (see below).

b. **Visit the Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale** - Come say hi! There, friendly and cool Hillel students and staff will welcome freshpeople and their families, answer their questions, show them around the building, etc. Slifka is located at **80 Wall Street**, between College and Temple streets (and right across the street from Silliman College). Note: there is no lunch being served in the kosher kitchen on Friday. However, you can stop for lunch at the kosher (and excellent) Claire's Cornercopia on the corner of College and Chapel streets.

c. **Acquire your Shabbat key** - In addition to your normal room-key, you should receive a Shabbat key to your entryway, as well as to Old Campus (or Silliman or Timothy Dwight College, if you are in either of them). Shabbat keys are within the purview of your college master's office, so you might need to stop by there, but they might also be waiting with your room-key. When you receive your room-key, remember to inquire about Shabbat keys, too. (If for some reason you are given any trouble, ask to talk to Hesh Rosenberg, the Associate Director of Security Project Management at Yale. He has handled our keys in the past.)

d. **Deal with the light in your bathroom** - Bathroom lights are on a motion sensor, so if you don't want to turn lights on and off on Shabbat, you may need to ask maintenance to come. They will either change it to be a switch-light or fix it to be on all the time. Maintenance staff can usually be found on move-in day in a large tent on Old Campus. It is likely that because you have requested a Shabbat key, this will be pre-arranged for you, so you may want to ask the person who gives you your Shabbat key to help with the bathroom light, too. It is even possible that your bathroom light will already be Shabbat-friendly before you arrive, so try to check it yourself first.

e. **Deal with Freshman Registration** - Freshman registration will occur later on Friday night, and its purpose is to officially notify the school administration that you have taken up residence at Yale (think of it as officially reporting for duty). This involves writing. If you have decided to attend this event, a possible way around this is to respectfully ask your Freshman Counselor before Shabbat what your options are. They should offer to allow you to fill out the paperwork before or after Shabbat, or they will offer to do it for you on Shabbat. All of these are options. [The last option works halakhically if it is an *amira le-aku"m* situation AND you talk to the Froco before Shabbat AND you do not directly ask to have the Froco write on Shabbat – you can either 1. ask that they fill it out *whenever it is convenient* or 2. *hint* at the option of them filling it out on Shabbat.] And, if you don't feel comfortable going to the registration meeting on Friday night, remember to e-mail your dean before-hand, so that he/she understands your situation, and so that you can still get whatever information they give out at the meeting.

f. **Have a talk with your roommate about the lights in your room vis-a-vis Shabbat** - All of you brilliant kids got into Yale, so I trust that you are all charming, articulate, diplomatic, humble, and have great social skills. Therefore, I'm not at all worried about this. If your bathroom light is manual, tape it up and explain to your suitemates.

g. **Have a talk with your roommate about putting up a mezuzah** - and you should definitely remember to bring a mezuzah!

h. **Call Jessica Saldinger**. Jessica '15 (former YIHY co-president) can meet anyone in need of assistance on Friday, August 22. Her number is (925) 413 - 2435. She will be happy to hear from any of you.

i. **Get ready for Shabbat** - Set your lights, make sure you have a tissue box or cut toilet paper and liquid soap for the bathroom. Candle-lighting is done in the Slifka Center, where meals are served. There is an eruv around all of our college campus, and if it is uncharacteristically down, an email will be sent to kosher-l. Remember to take your room key and Shabbat keys with you.

2 - Shabbat Schedule

Friday Night

a. **Friday Night Davening** - Friday night davening (Orthodox, Egalitarian/Conservative, and Reform) is at **5:45 PM**. Orthodox services are in the chapel on the second floor of Slifka. Conservative services are in the 3rd floor library. Reform services are in the second floor beit midrash (contact ike.swetlitz@yale.edu for more information).

b. **Friday Night Dinner** – A delicious Shabbat dinner will take place in the Kosher Kitchen (basement floor of Slifka) at **6:45 PM**, immediately following davening.

c. **After that** - We'll be hanging out at Slifka—singing zmirot, talking, playing games, etc., and you're certainly more than welcome to join us there!

Shabbat Morning

d. **Shacharit** – YIHY will begin at **9:14 AM** in the second floor chapel, and there will be Egalitarian/Conservative services beginning at **9:30 AM** in the second floor beit midrash (e-mail nate.swetlitz@yale.edu for more info if you're interested).

e. **Shabbat Lunch** - will be served at **12:30 PM**. There will be grape juice for kiddush and hot food for lunch.

f. **Shabbat Afternoon** - Following lunch (and benching and zmirot), we upperclassmen will be hanging around Slifka, or maybe taking a walk. We'd love to spend time with you in the afternoon if you feel like joining us.

g. **Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier**, the JLIC rabbi on campus, will be giving a shiur at **6:00pm** on Shabbat afternoon.

h. **Orthodox Mincha** is at **7:00 PM**, followed immediately by seuda shlishit, in turn followed immediately by **Maariv at 8:29 PM**. Shabbat ends at 8:24pm (we daven Motzei Shabbat Maariv after Shabbat has already ended in order to leave time for zmirot and brief cleanup). If you have meetings scheduled for Saturday evening, they can be skipped without consequence, especially if you speak with your freshman counselor on Friday or e-mail your dean ahead of time.

And that's it for the first Shabbat! After that, it's all smooth sailing.

Finally, just a few general things to know:

a. The **Kosher Kitchen** starts regular operations at breakfast on **Tuesday the 26th of August**. Until then, kosher food can be obtained at various programs run by Jewish organizations, or at Claire's Cornercopia (on the corner of College and Chapel streets). We'll be in touch with more details about this soon.

b. We have an awesome Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus couple, Chana and Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier. They will be hosting a meal sometime during your first few days and are excited to meet you all. They are copied on this email, and you should feel free to introduce yourselves and ask them anything.

c. Since it is still a month until school starts, some scheduling is subject to change. If some specific meal times or davening times are important to you, please double check with us sometime in the latter half of August. Alternatively, if you stop by Slifka on Friday when you arrive, someone in the front lobby should have all your answers.

Again, welcome! We're really excited to get to know you better over the coming weeks and years. If you have any questions at all, please email me. (My number, for future reference, is (847) 644-9796, but I will be in Israel until August 20th :) If you would like to call/Skype with me in the meantime, I would be happy to set that up over email.) The remainder of the YIHY board is also copied on this email, so that you can contact any one of us. See you soon!

Behatzlacha!

Hannah