

## Poll: Plurality of YU Students Support Trump, 27% Support Clinton

By Avi Strauss

Donald Trump has the support of 37% of YU students, a poll conducted by The Commentator from September 8-11 shows as compared to 27% percent for Hillary Clinton. The poll, which surveyed over 300 YU students, also revealed that 17% of students remain undecided with less than 2 months to go before election day, along with another 8.5% who plan to avoid the voting booth altogether on November 8. Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson garnered 6% support from poll respondents, while the Green Party's Jill Stein failed to garner even a single vote from all those polled.

To put these numbers in perspective, current polling data from the Real Clear Politics average for a 4-way race currently shows Clinton edging Trump by 2 points, 41.9% to 39.9%, while Johnson and Green party candidate Jill Stein collect 9% and 2.9% of the vote, respectively.

When parsing these numbers more carefully, a few interesting things emerge. Amongst the female students polled (24.7% of the total respondents), Trump's numbers actually increase to 44.7% despite claims that Trump has a history of negative or sexist attitudes towards women. Clinton's numbers are also higher among females, jumping to 35.5%. Only 15 of the 76 female respondents opted out of the binary choice between the major party candidates, although most of those who opted out (2/3) remain undecided (none chose Gary Johnson).

Of the male students polled, 35.6% stated an intention to vote for Mr. Trump while 24.0% chose former Secretary Clinton. More than 1 in 10 (10.2%)

SEE POLL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



YU students gear up for the I Am YU fundraising campaign. Students will help raise money for 24 hours on September 20 and 21, with a fundraising goal of \$5 million. Read more on page 8.

## Mixed Reactions from YU Community as Rabbi Berman is Nominated to be the School's Next President

By Doron Levine

As our country is seething with excitement about its upcoming presidential election, our university is similarly anticipating a change in leadership at its highest level. As reported previously by The Commentator, Chairman of the Board and selection committee member Moshael Straus announced via email on September 13 that the selection committee has voted to advance the candidacy of Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman and "it is an-

anticipated his nomination will be forwarded to the full Board of Trustees" for a confirmation vote.

In his email to the student body, Chairman Straus wrote that Rabbi Berman is "a triple alumnus of YU"—but he is in fact a quadruple alumnus. Rabbi Berman graduated from MTA, YU's high school for boys, in 1987. He then attended Yeshiva College, graduating magna cum laude in 1991, and was ordained by RIETS where he studied in the Caroline and Joseph Gruss Kollel Elyon. He also holds a masters degree in Jewish Philosophy from YU's Bernard Revel Graduate School. After receiving his rabbinic ordination, Rabbi Berman taught Talmud in the Stone Beit Midrash Program, joining YU's rabbinic staff at the same time that Rabbis Jeremy Wieder and Elchanan Adler were hired to teach in the Mazer Yeshiva Program.

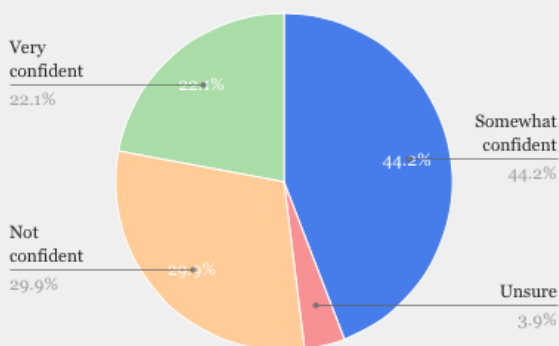
Rabbi Berman also served as the assistant rabbi of The Jewish Center of Manhattan's Upper West Side and then succeeded Rabbi Dr. J.J. Schacter as its lead rabbi in 2000. At the time of his appointment, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, then president of Yeshiva University and also a former rabbi of The Jewish Center, praised Rabbi Berman as "a rising star in the firmament of Talmudic scholars and rabbis. His talents are enhanced by an attractive personality and sterling character."



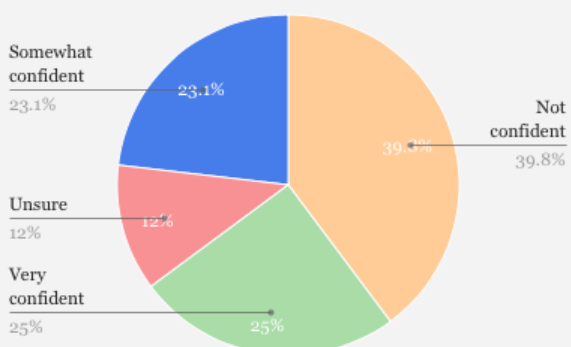
Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman

SEE BERMAN, CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

### Hillary Clinton Supporters Confidence



### Donald Trump Supporters Confidence



# The EDITORIAL

## Red, White, and Gray: Why The Commentator is Fundamentally Boring

By Doron Levine

Anything worth hating is also worth loving. Alessia Cara subtly proposes this principle in her hit song "Here" when she describes a female partygoer "talking 'bout her haters" but quickly rejoins—"she ain't got none." Snide indeed, but Cara's censure of her fellow fridge-congregant implies more than mere malice. Even as she broodingly denounces the scrofulous tactic of lying in the interest of self-aggrandizement, her harsh criticism suggests familiarity with a paradoxical truth about human nature: that people enjoy being hated.

Popularity, agreeability, charm—these are, of course, widely considered to be desirable characteristics. But when a girl boasts about her haters at a party, this maneuver is easily recognizable by the socially astute as an indirect boast. To be hated, she must be significant enough to appear on people's emotional radar. Notoriety is a special luxury, reserved for a fortunate few.

Nobody hates a dishrag. We all know people who are staunchly noncommittal, who see infinite nuance in everything to the point that they reflexively advocate for blind moderation to mask their crippling indecision. Conciliatory to a fault, they manage to avoid all conflict by never asserting anything, preferring to lay out the options without ever actually choosing one.

Not so with celebrities and heroes, with intellectual luminaries and timeless men. The people we venerate and adore, whose specters lurk eternally in humanity's collective memory, always project clear and unmistakable visions of perfection, whether ideological, artistic, athletic, religious, or otherwise. They are people of assertion, people of belief. We can only truly love that which we can dislike.

A similar phenomenon can be observed of colors. White, considered by many a bland and uninspiring color, is seldom loved but seldom hated. Nobody wrinkles their nose at a white-painted ceiling, but neither does anyone lay supine on the floor and gaze up at it in awe. When the YU library was refurbished last year, many marveled at its multi-colored carpets and couches, but nobody waxed poetic about its white pillars. Red, on the other hand, the color of strawberries and roses and Elmo and blood, is downright polarizing: it represents sin in the bible and is typically featured in illustrations of demons and devils, but also symbolizes love and vitality, and, among all colors, features most prominently on national flags.

As the vehicles of sometimes-incendiary ideas, media outlets are often the subjects of passionate reactions from across the spectrum of emotions visible to the human heart. This election cycle has highlighted the ideological tilt of many media outlets, causing an upsurge in both their popularity and notoriety. CNN's online readership has spiked due to the election, but the right-wing press has repeatedly condemned their biased coverage. With its endorsement of Trump, Breitbart branded itself the liberal media's public enemy number one, but its popularity has skyrocketed alongside its infamy.

Humorously, each political camp sees its media outlets as objective and untainted by ideology; nobody seems willing or aware enough to acknowledge media bias as absolutely pervasive and, as long as there are enough shades of it, probably desirable to most readers. Accusing a news source of bias is often just a thinly veiled disagreement with its ideology, a preference for the equally pronounced bias of the opposing camp. In reality, it is possible to not compromise on one's principles but to simultaneously recognize the primacy

of dogma, and to realize that a vilified news source probably has something ideologically foundational, even if incorrect, to say. To be so hated, it must be consistently disseminating something significant, something probably worth reading.

Of course, pursuing controversy for controversy's sake is no virtue. But the strategy of appeasing everyone by having no substantive beliefs is foolish. Ideas are inherently controversial; most things worth thinking about are worth disagreeing with, and if you have said nothing that can be argued with then you probably have said nothing at all. So instead of hurling accusations of bias back and forth, we are probably better off locating the crux of the issue and then consulting our basic beliefs in order to make an informed decision rather than endlessly debating who took whose statement out of context.

This issue weighs heavily on my mind at the moment because of the way I was treated as a writer for The Commentator some years ago by certain editors intolerant of disagreement with their progressive perspective. Not content with publishing their opinions in their own names and recruiting similar-minded writers, they actively worked to exclude opinions held by students whose beliefs they had no respect for. I personally wrote two articles which they repeatedly rebuffed because they disagreed with my message; they only eventually capitulated because I wouldn't back down. But I realize now that what appeared to me then as ideology ingrained in our university's newspaper was as short lived as the tenure of the editors who enforced it. The paper is defined entirely by the students who get involved.

Because at its core, The Commentator is as boring as a white ceiling. It has no set ideology other than the content that its editors solicit and its writers submit, no defining spirit other than the fire that we breathe into it. It is a blank white sheet for us to write on and its editors are mere stewards of a fundamentally unmarked space.

You cannot hate or love The Commentator because of what it publishes. Sure, you can hate or love its writers or editors (or, perhaps more appropriately, the ideas that they advocate), but you cannot dislike the forum – you are as capable as anyone of joining our staff and contributing to the conversation, and our content is shaped equally by those who write for us as by those who don't. We publish what the students are willing to write (given basic standards of writing, journalism, and decency), no more and no less.

So I treat the variety of attitudes towards our official student newspaper with limited tolerance. Many people anticipate, read, and enjoy The Commentator. That's wonderful. Many people simply don't care about our staff writers' opinions and cultural commentary and have little interest in keeping abreast of events happening on campus. That's understandable. But there's one attitude towards the paper for which I have no patience, only contempt. Don't ever complain to me that your perspective is not represented on our pages. Because the pages themselves are a drab gray, the color of cinderblocks and smog, the most dreary of hues. And if the ink that decorates them doesn't form sentences that represent your viewpoint, then the onus is on you to pick up your pen and write.

On these pages, there are no hidden agendas. I personally hold some strong opinions, and I will publish them freely. And if you disagree with me, I invite you to fire back and show no mercy. All you need is love, but I wouldn't mind a hater or two.

**"IDEAS ARE INHERENTLY CONTROVERSIAL; MOST THINGS WORTH THINKING ABOUT ARE WORTH DISAGREEING WITH, AND IF YOU HAVE SAID NOTHING THAT CAN BE ARGUED WITH THEN YOU PROBABLY HAVE SAID NOTHING AT ALL."**

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The Commentator is the official student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

For 81 years, The Commentator has served students and administrators as a communicative conduit; a kinetic vehicle disseminating undergraduate social, religious, and academic beliefs across the student bodies; and a reliable reflection of Yeshiva student life to the broader Jewish and American communities.

The Commentator staff claims students spanning the diverse spectrum of backgrounds and beliefs represented at Yeshiva.

We are united by our passion for living the ideals of Torah u-Maddah, and a commitment to journalistic excellence.



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# Redesigned 185th Street Plaza Coming Soon to Wilf Campus

By Noam Fiefel

The 185th Street Plaza, located in the heart of Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus, is getting a makeover. Situated between Amsterdam and Audubon Avenues, the street was converted into a pedestrian thoroughfare and has been blocked off from traffic for years. A regularly populated gathering spot for Yeshiva students and members of the local community, the plaza is now being redesigned and is currently under construction.

A joint effort by Yeshiva University and New York City's Departments of Design and Construction, the project aims to upgrade the plaza from the underwhelming, relatively dull character that it has exuded for years now, and transform it into a more modern, decorated recreational area.

"The goal of this project is to convert what used to be a temporary linear plaza, with limited seating, into a fully designed area consisting of a series of small and medium size gathering spaces for all," explained Shavone Williams, NYC Department of Design and Construction Officer. "The proposed plaza will largely benefit Yeshiva's students and personnel as well as the surrounding community by creating a peaceful and quiet atmosphere where one can enjoy individual or small groups gathering for passive recreation."

The redesigned plaza will embrace a myriad of new features that will enhance its atmosphere, such as ornamental street lighting, movable seating fixtures, decorative paving band, and new planted spaces.

The refreshed plaza will be home to different types of perennials, native grass and shrubs, trees and ferns. "We're adding a considerable amount of green space," said Michael Michalek of Mathews Nielsen Landscapes, one of the project's architects.

The construction got underway this past summer, and has an anticipated completion date in the upcoming summer, though Joseph Cook, YU's Executive Director for University Operations, shared that the project may be completed as early as the spring.

Students have expressed excitement and eagerness towards the promise of the new landscape soon to be debuted.

"I'm really pumped up," said Syms junior Josh Morrow. "I've been waiting for them to fix that area up. I'm definitely going to hang out there more when it's ready."

Stern sophomore Sammi Plotsker echoed the same anticipation. "I always love coming up to the Heights," said Plotsker. "But now I'm even more excited to head uptown knowing that I can meet with friends and do homework at this beautiful new spot."

Due to its central position within YU's uptown campus, a primary function of the redesigned plaza will be to enhance the college's student life. "The driving force behind the project is what drives YU – to provide the students with a great academic and campus experience," explained Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Yeshiva University Vice President of University and Community Life at Yeshiva University. "This plaza will create a park-like space on our urban campus. Students will be able to enjoy a new place to sit, relax, and engage in conversations with their friends and faculty. Having more greenery will be attractive and, I expect, will enhance our spirit. This is great for YU and our community in Washington Heights."

Little quantifiable progress can be currently seen on the plaza, but the construction crew has been doing daily underground work to lay the foundation for what promises to be a beautiful landscape modification to the Wilf campus. Although students and local residents have to settle this semester for views of hard hats and machinery, they can rest assured that views of greenery and a more beautiful campus are soon to come.



**1 New Securitas Uniforms**  
We can always count on our great guards to start off the new year in style.

**2 Teaneck Rides**  
This is hands down the greatest service on Wilf campus.

**3 Construction on 185th**  
At the pace they're going, the new courtyard will be ready just in time for below-freezing weather.

**4 No Cell Phones in Beis**  
Wtvr, this is nvr gunna last. Lol.

**5 YU Beit Midrash 360°**  
Rabbi Penner's surefire way to catch culprits using their cell phones. And, thankfully, there are now ample power outlets to enable filming Glueck for the whole year.

**6 AC in Rubin**  
Approximately five professors were fired to secure finances for FTOC's to have good sleeping conditions for a few weeks.

**7 Hookahs on YU Benches**  
Props to our neighbors for making our campus feel like Ben Yehuda on a Thursday night.

## 7 UP 7 DOWN

**1 YU Least Diverse College**  
What is this Priceonomics survey talking about? Judging by the ystuds, we have at least 10,000 students of Spanish and Middle Eastern descent.

**2 Mural Planets Replaced with Eyeballs**  
As if this new paint job will stop me from offering incense to Baal.

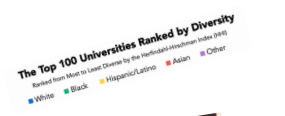
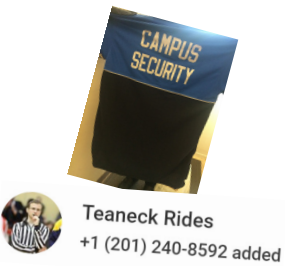
**3 Trump Tower Climber**  
Man armed with suction cups grabs the nation's attention for a couple hours before proceeding to be forgotten about forever.

**4 College Humor**  
Ever watch them recently? They're really not funny anymore.

**5 Pokémon GO**  
Take out your hidden Glueck smartphones and catch 'em while you can, before YU Roshei Yeshiva ban this game on grounds of "evolution" of Pokémon.

**6 Gary Johnson**  
Forgets what Aleppo is.

**7 Gene Wilder R.I.P.**  
You will always be remembered for inspiring our lives with pure imagination.



## Tides of Change Hit Biology Department

By Elliot Heller

Biology. It's the third most popular major at Yeshiva College (based on graduation data from May 2015), and arguably the most prestigious. But the esteemed department, renowned for its consistency and excellence over the years, suddenly finds itself in a period of transition. With the retirement of Drs. Carl Feit and Barry Potvin, two mainstays of the department for upwards of twenty years, and the departure of Professor Yakov Peter, in a surprising last minute move, to Lander College, the Biology department looks quite different than it did just a few short months ago.

Despite these uncertain times, Dean Karen Bacon, who oversees the sciences at YU, is confident in the department's ability to bounce back. "At the end of the spring 2016 semester [we had] three full time faculty members leave. Since then we have hired one full time faculty member and we are recruiting for a second to start in Fall 2017. We also have several new adjunct faculty members with us. Each respected and talented faculty member that leaves has an impact. But change is in the nature of life."

At least one student agreed with this sentiment of confidence. "[I'm] not worried," said junior Biology major Abe Raichman, "as long as the professors that are taking over are good professors that can teach and explain concepts clearly."

Asked specifically about the impact of the retirement of Dr. Feit, who had chaired the Biology department since 1985, Dean Bacon said "Dr. Feit has left his impact

on his many students and I feel certain they will continually share stories about what it meant to be his student. At the same time, Dr. Feit's colleagues are committed to carrying on his tradition of excellence and I know they won't let him down. That having been said, his unique approach to science, informed by Torah U'madda, is not easily duplicated."

It seems that one of the most immediate impacts of the departure of these professors has been the need to reconsider the Biology department's course offerings. While the university did manage to find replacements to teach the three courses that Professor Peter was scheduled to be teaching this semester, other courses that had previously been mainstays in the department are no longer being offered. There is no course in Ecology being taught this semester, and Epidemiology, which had previously

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been part in the Biology department, is now listed and taught as a Sociology course. Nevertheless, this change might also be an opportunity for the university to offer

some interesting new Biology courses. There is already a new course in Psychopharmacology being offered this semester. In addition, Dean Bacon noted that there has been a recent push to establish some interdisciplinary courses together with the Chemistry department "since so much of modern science is interdisciplinary."

Another impact that the summer upheaval had on the department is the loss of several independent research laboratories which had been run on campus. Dr. Peter had run a laboratory on campus in which select students could conveniently be mentored to enhance their research skills as well as their appreciation for science. Following the announcement of his departure, many students have voiced complaints about the current lack of research opportunities being offered at YU. As one student pointed out, "the issue of minimal independent research opportunities for students in YU existed before Dr. Peter left. His absence aggravates the problem even further." Dean Bacon acknowledged this, and said that the department is still working on a solution to the problem. She did point out that new Adjunct Professors Radhashree Maitra and Toni Schwarz operate research labs at other universities, in which YU students may enroll.

While change is never easy, Dean Bacon is confident the Biology department will handle this transition period in stride. "The Biology Department is currently staffed by talented and dedicated faculty and technicians. The instructional and research labs are active and students are being ably mentored. This is a position of strength from which we will only get stronger."

## Wilf "Welcome Back" Tradition Revived by Student Council Presidents

By Eric Shalmon

Wilf Campus undergraduate student councils welcomed students back to campus with an outdoor movie night on the pleasant evening of August 31. Around 50 students sat on the artificial grass of the Tenzer Gardens to watch *Bridge of Spies* on a large blowup screen. Spearheaded by YCSA President Tzvi Levitin, the presidents of the four student councils planned the event with the intention that it would begin the year by bringing the whole campus together.

Screen on the Green, as the event was dubbed, featured the movie *Bridge of Spies*.

Directed by Steven Spielberg and based on a true story, *Bridge of Spies* follows a New York lawyer as he successfully negotiates the prisoner exchange of two Americans for a Russian spy during the Cold War. It received much acclaim by critics and students at Yeshiva University agreed with their reviews. Jonathan Meiner, a freshman, had already seen the movie but came to see it again. "It was a great movie and well worth the rewatch" Mr. Meiner said.

Before the feature presentation, trivia questions were projected on the screen with a lively musical soundtrack. Students enjoyed traditional cinema fare, snacking on popcorn from a popcorn machine, hot pretzels, hot dogs and chicken fingers. Student Leiby Deutsch described the scene as "something you'd expect to see in the 50s and 60s."



Powerade lawn towels, the swag that had been advertised prior to the showing, were distributed for seating in Tenzer Gardens. Max Hoffman, YSU senior class representative, helped distribute the towels. "The swag was really cool and towels were a great move for an outdoor movie night," he said.

In the middle of the movie, though, the blowup screen collapsed, seemingly having lost air. It took a minute or so to re-inflate but even with this slight disruption the

whole event went over well with the student body. One student expressed his satisfaction, stating, "It's a really great idea to have movies here [in Tenzer Gardens]." Another student commented, "they should do this more often. It's a great way to start the year and to get guys together."

Many students appreciated the gesture of hosting the movie outside on the cool, pleasant night. "I'd love to see more events like this, especially because it's so nice at night now," expressed Menachem Benchimol. Ezra Miller was also pleased with the setting of the event, commenting "it's great to see YU doing things for the student body out in the beautiful weather."

The reason for this event? According to Mr. Herenstein, "The Beren campus has always hosted a second 'Welcome Back' event in addition to the BBQ. We haven't had one in over five years. So we decided to do a Wilf 'Welcome Back' event as well." The hopes are that this concept carries over to the future, building the foundation for many more amazing opening week events. Mr. Miller voiced why he liked the event so much: "It's great to see everyone in the beginning when there is a lot of stress from the new year and new classes."

Yosef Kerendian succinctly summed up the event: "great friends, great food, and great movie!"

### POLL, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

male students polled declared their intention to avoid the ballot box entirely, selecting "I will choose not to vote", while 8.4% indicated they would be voting for Gary Johnson.

Overall, it seems students lack confidence in any of

the candidates, with only 25% of respondents saying that they are "very confident" with their candidate's ability to be president. Of those polled, 65% said they were only "somewhat confident" or "not confident" in their choice's ability to serve as commander-in-chief.

However, there was a significant disparity in confidence levels when breaking down the results by candi-

date. Of those who support Hillary Clinton, who touts her years of experience in Washington, 29% said they were "not confident" in her ability to be president, while 39% Trump supporters said the same of their candidate.

**BERMAN, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE**

Rabbi Berman moved to Israel in 2008. He just recently completed a PhD in Jewish thought from Hebrew University under the guidance of Dr. Moshe Halbertal on the topic of “Ger Toshav (gentile who accepts the Noahide Laws) in Jewish Law Codes of the Middle Ages.” He now resides in Neve Daniel, a settlement in the Gush Etzion region of the West Bank, with his wife and five children.

So what happens next? As with all previous stages of the presidential search, the protocol and procedure governing the next phase of the process has not been communicated to anyone beyond trustees and other university elites. In his email to the students, Chairman Moshael Straus wrote, “over the coming weeks, Dr. Berman will meet with trustees, faculty and other key university stakeholders and acquaint himself with the university.” It remains unclear to what extent these various parties will determine whether Rabbi Berman’s candidacy is forwarded to the Board of Trustees for a final vote, though Chairman Straus’s anticipation that he will be voted on by the trustees perhaps indicates that faculty and other university stakeholders will have little or no say at all.

This approach would be in keeping with the tone of the search process to date. The presidential selection committee, which reviewed many candidates for the position and eventually recommended Rabbi Berman, is composed of just ten trustees. Of course, nobody expected YU to choose its next president by popular vote, but other universities have assembled presidential search committees from diverse groups of other university stakeholders such as faculty, administrators, students, and even alumni. So many were dismayed last year when the trustees decided that they alone could serve as members of the presidential selection committee.

Angered over their exclusion from the search process, the YU faculty council appealed to the Board of Trustees, imploring them to include faculty on the selection committee. In response, the Board engineered a sort of compromise. The committee itself remained closed to everyone but trustees, but the Board allowed for the formation of a parallel faculty committee. Selected by the YU faculty council and headed by Stern College Professor of Psychology Josh Bacon, this parallel committee reflects a recognition on the part of the trustees that faculty members deserve at least a nominal role in the process.

But the degree of influence of this committee is not clear. Its formal power is limited – members do not vote on who becomes president, with the trustees alone retaining this right. The faculty committee reviewed resumes of candidates whom the trustees were considering seriously, reading the dossiers and then reported back to the selection committee. But the degree to which the trustees considered and valued the faculty members’ recommendations is unknown.

In fact, many aspects of this process remain shrouded in a considerable degree of mystery. The names of the trustees who are on the selection committee have not been disclosed. And trustees can be difficult to contact, rarely if ever having face time with faculty or students. The Commentator reached out to various trustees but was repeatedly ignored. Faculty might have been more forthcoming, but the parallel faculty committee’s members were all made to sign non-disclosure agreements which forbade them from talking to the press or discussing any details of the search process.

Even the leader of the selection committee repeatedly refused to comment on the status of the search. Through the executive search firm Korn Ferry, YU hired Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, the former President of George Washington University, to head the presidential search. This decision was itself controversial – many faculty members and students questioned the Board’s decision to enlist an outside headhunter with little familiarity with YU and its unique culture. Indeed, the outcome of the search process is prompting many to question the decision to involve Trachtenberg in the first place. Rabbi Berman is deeply connected to YU, having studied in four of

its affiliate schools and having served on its faculty; presumably no consulting firm was necessary or even useful in identifying him as a candidate. Regardless, Trachtenberg refused to disclose any details of the process, let alone what he brought to the table. Wishing to provide students and faculty with some familiarity with the person who is leading the search for their next leader, The Commentator reached out to Trachtenberg but was repeatedly rebuffed.

By choosing Rabbi Berman, the selection committee passed over some potential candidates from within YU’s current administration. But perhaps these insider candidates’ proximity worked to their detriment, as many understandably blame YU’s financial woes over the past few years on its current senior leadership. Rabbi Berman provides a fresh face – his outsider status might enable him to breath new life into the university and perhaps inspire a fresh wave of fundraising.

But certain top lay and professional leaders at YU are concerned over Rabbi Berman’s relative inexperience with management and fundraising. His nomination comes at an uncertain time for YU’s finances. President Joel originally intended to serve as YU’s president for ten years, but he felt that three years ago was “not the right time to step down” because of YU’s shaky finances. Now, though, President Joel has expressed his belief that the university is financially stable thanks to two large donations and the recent relinquishment of financial and operational control of Einstein Medical School to Montefiore Medical Center; by handing over Einstein, YU cut financial ties with the school that accounted for around two-thirds of its annual operating deficit.

But despite President Joel’s cheerful prognosis, the experts are less optimistic. Just this past February, Moody’s Investors Service affirmed YU’s B3 rating which reflects a negative financial outlook and, according to Moody’s, “incorporates ongoing expectations of deep operating deficits over the next few years, despite the transfer of financial responsibility

for its medical school to Montefiore Health System.”

YU administrators recognize that the university’s next president will need to dedicate significant time and effort to fundraising and financial rebuilding. When asked what qualities are critical for YU’s next president, Provost Selma Botman emphasized the financial and managerial role that the next president must fill. She stated that the next president must be “someone who has managerial sophistication and who has a commitment to fundraising. Presidents spend lots of time fundraising, so this must be true of the YU president. This person must also understand that YU changes people and needs to represent YU in the larger Jewish community.” Along the same lines, on February 29th YU published a job listing on chroniclevite.com with a vague description of the qualities that its next president should possess. It stated that the new president should have “a dedication to the ideals, values and mission of this distinctive university...a strong administrative record at a major institution” and “an aptitude and zeal for fundraising.”

In terms of YU’s ideals and values, many are confident that Rabbi Berman would be an effective representative of YU to the larger community and would be dedicated to the university’s distinctive mission. Rabbi Blau, RIETS’s Senior Mashgiach Ruchani, said, “Ari is a wonderful choice. He represents everything the yeshiva stands for and will certainly play the role of the spokesman of modern orthodoxy that YU represents. The rebbeim are very happy.”

Does Rabbi Berman have sufficient experience with management and fundraising? He currently serves as the Rosh ha-Merkaz li-Moreshet Yehudit, the head of the Jewish Heritage Center, of Hechal Shlomo in Jerusalem, a relatively small organization located next to Jerusalem’s Great Synagogue which houses a museum and a 500-seat auditorium. Chairman Straus referred to Rabbi Berman as Hechal Shlomo’s CEO, but it is not clear to what degree his role at Hechal Shlomo involves administration, financial management, or fundraising. And does he have a strong administrative record at a major institution? According to Chairman Straus’s email, Rabbi Berman sits on the executive council of Herzog College. But given that Herzog is affiliated with Hechal Shlomo, it is not clear to what degree his roles at these two institutions overlap and what sort of administrative duties he performs on a day-to-day basis which would prepare him to preside over a research university with four campuses, fifteen affiliate schools, over four thousand staff members, and more than six thousand students.

If approved by the board, when can we expect Rabbi Berman to take over as president? President Joel has stated that, if it were feasible, he would be willing to step down at the end of this semester. But, with some of Rabbi Berman’s children in school in Israel, it seems unlikely that he would be willing to take up the position before the summer. For now, though, YU students and faculty eagerly anticipate Rabbi Berman’s expected appearance on their respective campuses, and look forward to maybe catching a fleeting glimpse of the man who, by some mysterious process, has been nominated to serve as their next leader.

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**“MANY ARE CONFIDENT THAT RABBI BERMAN WOULD BE AN EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATIVE OF YU TO THE LARGER COMMUNITY AND WOULD BE DEDICATED TO THE UNIVERSITY’S DISTINCTIVE MISSION. BUT DOES HE HAVE SUFFICIENT EXPERIENCE WITH MANAGEMENT AND FUNDRAISING?”**

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*Moshael Straus, Chairman of the Board of Trustees*



*Professor Josh Bacon, head of the Faculty Search Committee*

## Golan, Yeshiva University Make Amends in New Omni Dollars Agreement

By Noam Beltran

Golan Heights Israeli Grill resumed its acceptance of Caf Card Omni Dollars this semester after its agreement with YU was suspended last February due to a conflict over Omni Dollars policy.

Golan and YU have turned the clocks back to reestablish their relationship as it appeared before these events, albeit with some slight differences. With the new arrangement between the restaurant and YU, students are now able to purchase food at Golan Heights using their Omni Dollars, the Caf Card funds specifically for use at participating off-campus food vendors, without worrying that they will be charged sales tax. Students can also add funds to their Omni Dollars account when they finish the amount they chose to as part of their Caf Card plan.

A manager at Golan, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said the restaurant agreed to a new Omni Dollars deal because, “too many YU students were unable to eat at Golan. Some may come here on [need-based] scholarship, and only spend the allotted money available on their ID cards” that also serve as cafeteria and restaurant cards. “Our goal is to give the students at Yeshiva as much as we can, while ensuring Golan’s existence for future Yeshiva University generations,” the Golan manager explained.

Paul Oestreicher, Executive Director of YU’s Office of Communication and Public Affairs, said, “YU is very pleased that we were able to work out an agreement that allowed [Golan] to return to participating with the YU Dining Plan. We’re happy to see students have as many options as possible.”

Students were pleased to find when they returned at the beginning of the semester that they could once again use their Caf Cards at Golan. Sara Couzens, a junior at Stern College for Women, relived the moment she discovered Golan was back on the Caf Card. “I was sure it was YU forgetting to update the Caf Card list, but alas, it was true! The favorite hang-out of the quiet take-outers and the late-night partiers was back in business with Yeshiva University,” the BIMA major said. “I felt myself breathe a sigh of relief followed by one of disdain, realizing there was no chance of my restaurant money lasting the full semester.”

This statement seems almost prophetic when considering one minor change in Golan’s pricing. In a move that was deemed “necessary” by Golan management, the restaurant raised the prices of selections

on their “secret” menu—orders not on the menu, but commonly selected by students. Most notable is the amending of the \$6 Sesame/Zadys to a \$7.



“It’s frustrating, but I’d still buy it,” chimed Ariel Saadon, a senior in Yeshiva’s Sy Syms School of Business. Other students responses were more emotionally charged: “I was very upset when I asked for my usual \$6 Sesame and was charged \$7 dollars! I have been at Yeshiva for over a year now and do not like them charging me more than they have in the past,” Junior Shira Osdoba passionately explained. “I am not sure how often I will be eating at Golan this semester.”

The Golan management, however, urges students

to give them the benefit of the doubt, and to consider that these changes might have been a necessary business move for the restaurant. “Lots of secret menu items didn’t make much money because (they were) special for the students – but now, working with YU and giving them a commission, and allowing for refilling of the caf cards, we felt it was necessary to cover the loss on the secret menu,” the Golan manager explained. “We are only working with Yeshiva University for the students, because many employees and management attended YU, and we want current and future students to enjoy our food.”

After conversing with the student body from both campuses, the conclusion is that although the price change is confusing and frustrating, it is understandable and will not stop students from eating at Golan. Other local restaurants that also participate in the Caf Card plan with YU have increased their prices this year as well; seemingly this is just a routine habit of eateries looking to have enough to pay their rent and employee salaries.

The new understanding addresses all the points of conflict between YU and Golan from last winter. As the Commentator reported at the time, Yeshiva felt Golan breached the Omni Dollars agreement by charging sales tax on Omni Dollars purchases. Golan, however, posited that students’ ability to replenish Omni funds was not discussed as part of the original deal.

According to Golan owner Benjy Iszak, the original understanding was that YU was entitled to 15% of up to \$50 spent at his restaurant per student per semester. After the \$50 were used up, students would have to pay with actual cash, and Golan would receive 100% of the revenue from their orders.

“YU never told me anything about students being able to reload their Caf Cards when they run out of Omni funds,” Golan owner Benjy Iszak said at the time. Mr. Iszak said the leap from the original \$50 Omni allowance to \$250 last semester was never discussed with him and cause him an unfair financial loss, which he tried recovering by charging students a “tax” on Omni Dollars purchases.

In the new deal, Golan Heights will continue to give a small cut of all purchases made with Omni Dollars to Yeshiva University. Golan declined to specify the exact percentage.

It is safe to say that for the foreseeable future, Golan and the other Yeshiva-affiliated restaurants will be accepting the Caf Card, and may be making a slightly bigger dent in your wallet.

## RIETS Institutes Two New Innovative Mental Health Training programs for Semicha Students

By Joshua Blicher

The RIETS administration recently announced two new programs that will provide semicha (rabbinic ordination) students with the professional mental health counseling skills necessary for a career in the rabbinate.

In conjunction with the Yeshiva University Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary has created a program that allows semicha students who plan on practicing rabbinics to take courses toward a certificate of completion that focuses on mental health counselling.

Rabbi Menachem Penner, the Max and Marion Dean of RIETS, told the Commentator that this program aims to “combine RIETS semicha with real mental health training—psychology graduate school level training—not just good mental health training.” Rabbi Penner stated that these courses will greatly benefit semicha student who will go on to assume “important rabbinic roles, and will help positively change the rabbinate.”

This optional program comes in addition to the two mandatory courses in pastoral counseling that all RIETS semicha students must take prior to their matriculation. Eligible semicha students must apply to the joint program and aim to pursue a career in the rabbinate.

The second program allows RIETS semicha students to receive counselling from mental health professionals, enabling them to achieve greater emotional intelligence and self-knowledge that they will use to better help the Jewish community at large. Rabbi Penner compared this initiative to “therapy

that psychology students receive in graduate school to become more self-aware individuals and effective therapists.”

These two exciting initiatives will equip pulpbound RIETS graduates with the practical mental health counseling skills needed to effectively provide their congregants with spiritual and emotional guidance. Rabbi Neal Turk, the Director of RIETS Mental Health Counselling, stated that these two programs will “add another layer to the semicha program.” Yeshiva University President Richard Joel, echoing the positive words of Rabbis Turk and Penner, stated that the “Yeshiva produces wonderful scholars who engage in a lifetime relationship with us.” He also asserted that these programs will “help RIETS graduates better assist their communities and understand themselves.”

These programs demonstrate YU’s deep commitment to provide its students with the very best Torah and secular education possible and creating the next generation of leaders.

**“[THESE PROGRAMS WILL] HELP RIETS GRADUATES BETTER ASSIST THEIR COMMUNITIES AND UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES.”**

**- PRESIDENT RICHARD JOEL**

## Students Assist in Baton Rouge Flood Cleanup on YU Service Learning Mission

By Zev Behar

The first thing we noticed stepping out of the car was the smell. It washed over us like a cold shower, causing us to shiver and wretch in the street. Piles of garbage sat in front of every house, a lifetime of possessions, tossed to the wayside like an old piece of furniture you want to get rid of on YU Marketplace. Albums, clothing, furniture; nothing could be saved. One student on the trip said what we were all thinking: "Every time I see walls I think about the 5 feet of water that most houses had in Baton Rouge and it is something you can't forget when you see that much mold and that much destruction."

Unfortunately, this was nothing that we hadn't already been dealing with for the past 5 days. The only difference was the smell. Dorothy, the leader of the Nechama group that was giving us supplies, rushed over to inform us that we would not be allowed in this house without masks and gloves. Of course masks and gloves had always been "required," but for some of the tamer houses they were not fully necessary. This house, our last of the relief mission, was by far the worst. Walking towards it, it was clear that this was going to be different. There was almost nothing sitting in the front yard which meant that this house had been untouched since the flood three weeks earlier. What that meant was that we would be entering a house made of mold, full of dilapidated furniture, warped floors, and a refrigerator that will haunt our memories for years to come.

The worst item we had to remove from any of the houses we had worked on the entire trip was the refrig-



erator from this one. Full of food that would have been expired before the flood even happened, this fridge had been sealed shut by the water and left to fester and mold until it became a box of mold, sludge, water, and our own personal hell. The smell that came from this fridge was like nothing I had ever conceived and it permeated throughout the entire house, clogging our nostrils and lingering in the air like a bad dust storm. It took nearly all of us to remove that fridge and it did not help that the floor had been warped completely out of shape, making it that much harder to wheel it out of the house. After nearly ten minutes of struggling to move this fridge



*Left to right top row: Ms Pat, Nechama worker, Yoni Mintz, Noam Edmonson, Nate Trudou, Zev Behar, Sara Leora, Rachelli Shechter, Danielle Orenshein, Chaperone Sara Sheps*

*Left to right bottom row: Daniel Geller, Chananel Yosef, Tzivya Beck, Rivka Abbe, Leah Feygel (rav benny is taking the picture).*

about ten feet, we finally managed to throw it to the curb and then take a deep breath of the air we once dreaded breathing, but now seemed like a gift of fresh air.

The second thing that was different about this day was the fact that the owner of the house was there to help us clean it out, which had not been the case for the past four houses we had worked on. Ms. Pat, as we came to know her, was not just standing idly by. She was helping just as much as we were – which is surprising since she is not young and it was quite a bit of work. As gross as it was, we buckled down and went to work by creating a conveyor belt of people passing items from inside the house and out onto the street. It was at this point that things got a bit difficult for Ms. Pat. She began to stop us with every box we brought out, every piece of clothing and furniture. She would spend time inspecting every single thing to find what was salvageable. It was heart-

breaking to watch and explain that most of the things she wanted could not be kept due to extensive damage and mold. It was especially difficult since we knew that Ms. Pat didn't even own the house – she was only renting.

Tzivya Beck, a student at Stern College for Women mentioned that "when we were cleaning Ms. Pat's house it was so different from all the other houses we worked on, especially since she was renting from the house, so really all that we were taking from her house was all that she had; the house itself didn't even matter to her." When cleaning out this house, unlike the others where we tore down the walls and pulled out all the nails, we only took out the furniture because that is really the only thing that Ms. Pat had.

But it wasn't all sad. As we continued working, the pile of salvageable items began to grow. Albums, letters, books, and many other items were able to be saved. It also helped that Ms. Pat had an absolutely optimistic demeanor. Whether it was because she found something she could save or because she was telling us how proud she was of her kids and what they were up to, or her thirteen cats, the entire time we were there she didn't stop smiling. As hard as the work was, Ms. Pat's smile made it easier. As the day came to a close and we finished emptying the house, Ms. Pat began thanking us profusely. She was so grateful, in fact, that she invited us back to Baton Rouge in the spring to join her for her annual crawfish bake and that we would always have a place to stay if we were in the neighborhood, and I think deep down, all of us are considering

going back.



## Flourishing Night Seder Program Nears 200 Participants

By Eitan Lipsky

If you walked by the Jacob and Dreizel Glueck Center for Jewish Study between the hours of 8:00-10:15 pm over the past two weeks, you might have wondered why you were unable to hear yourself think. The answer, of course, is due to the overwhelming success of the Night Seder program, which has been producing an audible buzz that very closely resembles the (now world-famous due to the recent 360° video the Yeshiva posted on Facebook) Torah buzz of mornings in the Beit Midrash.

The need for a change in how Night Seder would be run was realized two years ago, when only a handful of students completed Mesechet Ketubot. In response to this, the administration thought long and hard about what they could do to raise the bar for the nightly learning. The Night Seder program began to create a stir last year, when it introduced an initiative for students to complete the mesechta, then called "the Sanhedrin Challenge". The participants of the program were able to choose between a faster or slower pace for their learning, and were tested

every few weeks on the material that they had learned. Students who excelled on the exams received gift cards to the YU Seforim Sale.

This year's "Kiddushin Challenge" has close to 200 talmidim signed up to commit a significant part of their nights and vacation time to finishing the 4 pera-



kim and 82 daf! This substantial number can be credited to the program's continuing the model that was established last year, while also adding several new elements. The program is run by Night Seder Rabbeim Yitzchak Radner and David Weiss, both of whom were involved in the operation of the program last year. They are joined this year by new staff members Robbie Schrier and Moshe Abrams, who will serve as Shoelim U'Meshivim.

This month, the intensity level is particularly high, as the Yeshiva spends Elul preparing for the Yamim Noraim. As such, Maariv which takes place at the end of Night Seder is pushed back 15 minutes to allow the talmidim to focus on mussar and personal growth. There are three chaburot, given by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen, Rabbi Yitzchak Radner, and Robbie Schrier, respectively, which students have the option to attend. Each class is very popular and focuses on a slightly different aspect of this theme.

It's still not too late to sign up to be paired with a night Seder chavrusa and to complete the Kiddushin Challenge.

## \$5M Goal for YU Day of Giving

By Nolan Edmonson

In an information session for interested students, YU announced on September 14 that it would be organizing a 24-hour blitz campaign to raise \$5 million to be added to the annual fund.

The Yeshiva University Day of Giving, which will be hosted by the crowdfunding platform Charidy, was born out of a desire on the part of the university to expand its donor base. "It's easy to rely upon high networth individuals for donations," Alan Secter, Executive Director of Annual Giving and Major Gifts, said. "Reaching out to those who may not be high income but still have benefited from YU is our main goal."

According to the Office of Annual Giving, the school currently has close to 8,000 donors who contribute to either the annual fund or the endowment fund. Fiscal year 2016 saw close to \$50 million raised with around \$7.65 million going to the annual fund. "A big chunk [of the annual fund] were in gifts of \$25,000 and under," Director of Annual Giving, Andrea Hale said.

Ms. Hale explained that the fund is used, in part, to sponsor different student activities like sports, clubs, service trips, community programming and the like. Mr. Secter believes that if people knew this, they may be more inclined to help fundraise. "The theme for our fundraiser is help people understand that YU touches the lives of so many in the Jewish community. Fundraising allows for YU to continue having an impact for many years to come."

Ms. Hale estimates that somewhere around 40,000 people will be phoned and over 60,000 people have been reached via email. "The people we'll contact have been involved in the school in some capacity," Ms. Hale said. "Donors, alumni, parents, friends of YU. Even those who've subscribed to YU Torah [and the like]."

Charidy is helping the university reach its goal of \$5 million using its unique matching system. For every dollar donated, a group of donors will match the donation by four. Mr. Secter said the group is made up of YU board members whose identities will be revealed when the campaign launches. The novelty of this fundraising tactic originally attracted Chairman of the Annual Fund, Elliot Gibber. After noticing other schools and nonprofits engage in this type of fundraising, Mr. Gibber thought that it would behoove YU to follow suit. Planning for the Day of Giving began in the spring and became ready to launch this past week.

The school's communication department was tasked with creating the fundraising slogan. After some delib-

school. Yeshiva College sophomore Liam Hirschfield would like to see the wrestling team reinstated, while Sy Syms freshman Morris Gammel would like to see some of the annual fund go towards creating more opportunities for students to go on mission trips to Israel and help orphans or victims of terror.

Regardless of where in the annual fund budget the \$5 million will go, one thing remains clear: those volunteering have their work cut out for them. Reaching out to 40,000 people is no small feat and the added time restraint of 24 hours makes it all the more challenging. But Mr. Secter remains optimistic. "This is not just a fundraising effort. We are spreading the positive message that is YU—a message that many people can get behind."

According to the campaign website, the fundraising is set to begin at noon on Tuesday, September 20 and run for 24 hours.

**"[THE] I AM YU SLOGAN REPRESENTS THE PRIDE IDENTIFIED WITH YU AS AN INSTITUTION AND THE VALUES YU STANDS FOR!"**  
- NOAH MARLOWE

eration the slogan and hashtag, "I Am YU" was decided upon. Ms. Hale and Mr. Secter hope the slogan resonates with those connected to YU as it an association with "the values of YU." That sentiment seems to be shared among students, too. Sy Syms sophomore Noah Marlowe said, "[The] I am YU slogan represents the pride identified with YU as an institution and the values YU stands for."

As for where the funding should be directed, some students expressed a desire to see the \$5 million go towards different activities currently missing from the



## UTS Initiative Brings the Issue of Laptops to the Table

By Eitan Lipsky

At the opening day Undergraduate Torah Studies ceremony on August 29, Rabbi Menachem Penner, Dean of RIETS and Undergraduate Torah Studies, announced that the Yeshiva would be engaging in a new initiative for the upcoming school year. He highlighted the potential pitfall that technology could be for otherwise dedicated students who are simply unable to resist the urge to let their phones and laptops distract them while learning in the Beit Midrash or while sitting in their morning shiurim. In response to this phenomenon, Rabbi Penner urged students to refrain from having their cell phones on near them while they are learning.

Additionally, he promised that there would be an "open conversation" taking place throughout the first few months of the school year, whereby the values and detriments of laptop use during class (or shiur) would be debated and analyzed. This promise was actualized on September 14th, as the first panel discussion on this topic was held.

After much hype from the administration in anticipation of the event, the discussion got off to a rocky start. The unexpectedly meager crowd was surprised to learn that Rabbi Penner, a major endorser of this event, was attending a simcha (celebration) and thus not available to give his introductory remarks. One of the panelists scheduled to speak at the event, Professor Will Lee, was also not present, due to a misleading email that had the

event's location in a room in Furst Hall, instead of Rubin Shul, where it was meant to take place.

One student who attended the event, who prefers to remain anonymous, took issue with the poor student showing and the faculty no-shows. "I was very excited about attending the event and I am happy that I did go," he said. "Yet, for all the hype (which even included an interruption of morning Seder), only about 20 students showed up. It didn't help that a room location mix-up caused one of the featured speakers to be absent. As great as the panel was, there was a salient feeling among those who were present (busy students and presenters alike) that they had been misled."

Nevertheless, the program continued as planned. Rabbi Joshua Blass, a RIETS Mashgiach, stepped in for Rabbi Penner and provided a message to the students to open the program about the need to sit and weigh the outcomes of our decisions before making them. With this, he introduced the program as one that was intended to engage the minds of students and allow them to each make the right decision

for them about whether or not to use laptops in the class and shiur rooms.

Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Jeremy Wieder began the conversation by highlighting his philosophy on the issue, specifically mentioning the "no laptops" rule for his classes. While noting that laptops do have positive uses, he stressed that using a laptop in class does more harm than it does good. He spoke about the distraction that is caused by having a laptop in class and how it prevents

us from using our time, which is the most sacred thing that we have, in a proper way. He also spoke about the lack of Derech Eretz towards teachers that students display when they sit through classes doing other things on their computers instead of listening and engaging in the lecture.

Dr. David Pelcovitz, professor and the Gwendolyn and Joseph Straus Chair in Psychology and Jewish Education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration, spoke next, providing concrete statistics demonstrating the negative impact multitasking with technology has on focus and ability to retain information that is taught in a classroom lecture. He emphasized that not only does a student who uses a laptop for other things during class significantly inhibit his ability to focus, he or she also negatively impacts the focus of those around him. Dr. Pelcovitz concluded by expressing concern over the state of humanity in the technological era, and its shift away from deep thinking. This is in direct contrast, he said, with the way we are expected to be learning in Yeshiva, whereby we work hard and analyze information. He explained to the students that as the generations become more influenced by technology, they will lose the attention span required to contemplate their decisions prior to acting. He empowered the students present by telling them that they still have this ability, and should therefore embrace it.

While Rabbi Penner's description of the program envisioned it as an "open conversation weighing the pros and cons of using technology in the classroom", the arguments presented seemed to align with only one side of the debate. Nevertheless, students who attended certainly benefited from hearing these perspectives. Ilan Scher, a second-year student, applauded the event for raising points that are generally not considered. "Discussions about classroom computer use often speak about the individual using the computer, but rarely touch on the negative effects that it has on other students, the professor, and the classroom environment in general. This debate really opened up my mind to technology's potential to do serious damage if not used responsibly."





## Club Fair Invites New Students to Robust Campus Life

By Abba Szydlo

On September 7th 2016, Yeshiva University held its annual club fair on the Wilf Campus, in Heights Lounge. The fair is always a time of excitement for Yeshiva students, because it allows students to expand their horizons. The club fair is a place where students can seek out clubs that inspire and interest them. As Evan Jaffe, a Sy Syms student, said, "The club fair is one of my favorite times of the year. It motivates me to seek out my passions and follow them."

Bringing all that joy is no easy feat. Board members of the clubs must prepare long and hard for this event: their clubs must look appealing to the students who are prospective club members. Jeremy Shevach, President of the Real Estate Club, posited, "Even though we love the event, it takes time to prepare. We need to have events in mind already, to give students a glimpse as to what we

do. We attempt to make our club seem unique, and as provid[ing] value to our prospective club members."

When looked at through multiple vantage points, the club fair provides different meaning to everyone. More than anyone, the club fair effects first semester students. Tyler Hod (Syms 19) said, "I had no idea what to anticipate as I made my way to the club fair. I had heard from older friends what the fair was like, but I do not think it did justice. The fair was eye-opening for me, I am currently a part of two clubs that I would not have been otherwise." The club fair is also a time to network. Since students with different backgrounds attend the fair, there is plenty of outreach to be done. Making connections and forming relationships is a secondary benefit of the club fair.

For some students though, the fair can prove to be overwhelming. Josh Morrow (Syms '17) claimed, "This is my third year going to the fair, and it still amazes me. Students swarm the Heights Lounge, yelling and scream-

ing trying to find the clubs that interest them. Sometimes it can prove to be somewhat of a jungle." Other students tend to get bothered by the clubs. Jamie Cappell (YC '18) "Why do they all ask for my email address when they send every person a Y-Stud anyway? It gets annoying when I receive over one hundred emails a day about stuff [that] I didn't ask to hear about."

If you go around to each student at Yeshiva University, they will tell you a different answer as to what the club fair means to them. However, year after year, no matter what the opinion of the fair is, the Heights Lounge is filled to capacity. With little room for students to squirm around, the tight confines breed a new year of club success, both from past clubs looking to improve and new clubs trying to make their impact on Yeshiva University. Simcha Halper (Syms '19) said, "I can not wait to see what the club fair has in store for us next year." No doubt, whatever the club fair has for students next year, it'll be great.

## YU Ties for 66th Place in U.S. News Ranking

By Commentator Staff

The U.S. News and World Report released its 2017 college rankings last week, ranking Yeshiva University 66th among national universities with an overall score of 58%. The ranking is a significant downgrade from the 2016 and 2015 rankings, which placed Yeshiva at 52nd and 48th, respectively. The report also ranked YU 49th among best value schools.

Rankings for large colleges in the United States are based on many data categories that are meant to reflect each school's "student body, its faculty and its financial resources, along with outcome measures that signal how well the institution educates students." Another important input, which may seem out of place for a community-specific school like YU, is the rankings of high school counselor ratings. According to U.S. News, "guid-

ance counselors from a nationwide sampling of public high schools in the U.S. News Best High Schools rankings that were gold, silver or bronze medal winners, as well as from the largest private independent schools nationwide" were asked to rate universities on a scale

of 1 to 5 or to mark "don't know" if they are unfamiliar with a particular college. The average of the results from the last three years of surveys rendered the high school counselor reputation score that was used in this ranking.

Other salient statistics reported by U.S. News about Yeshiva University include a 90% freshmen retention rate for 2015, which shows high student satisfaction. The student-to-teacher ratio is reported at 7:1. According to the report, applicants needing financial aid had, on average, 88% of their scholarship needs met.

College rankings are a popular means of helping prospective students decide among undergraduate programs. The U.S. News and World Report is among the most widely consulted ranking service. Kiplinger, another popular ranking report, pegged Yeshiva at 32nd for best value in private colleges last year.

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## Professor Gabriel Cwilich to Step Down as Honors Program Director

By Eitan Lipsky

Dr. Gabriel Cwilich announced on September 7 that he will be stepping down as the Director of the Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program, disclosing this unexpected leadership change to a crowd of around forty students gathered for the first weekly Honors luncheon of the year. Dr. Cwilich, who teaches physics in Yeshiva College and has been at the program's helm since 2009, said that his tenure as director will end when he begins a sabbatical this coming January. He also named Dr. Shalom Holtz as his successor for the next three years. Dr. Holtz, an Assyriologist and Bible scholar from Teaneck, NJ, is Associate Professor of Bible and already serves as the chair of the Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish



Studies. It remains unclear how long Dr. Cwilich's sabbatical from YU will be, and whether or not he plans to eventually reclaim his position as director.

Students were surprised to hear this news, but many also expressed their hope that this change in leadership will present an opportunity for the Honors Program to begin a new chapter. "I was quite taken aback by Dr. Cwilich's announcement," said Yair Lichtman, a second-year Honors student and frequent attendee of the Wednesday luncheons. "His distinctive presence has clearly left a lasting imprint on the Honors Program, which I'm definitely going to miss. At the same time, I'm looking forward to watching how Dr. Holtz is going to move the program forward in the next few years."

## From the President's Desk: YCSA -- On Politics and Partnership

By Tzvi Levitin

Between hours spent on buses to the Bronx and what felt like eons glued to a microscope counting zebrafish vertebrae, I spent an inordinate amount of time this summer listening to the soundtrack of Broadway's hit musical Hamilton. Written by and, until recently, starring Lin-Manuel Miranda, the musical tells the story of the titular founding father struggling to rise above his station and earn his own spot in the history books alongside our fledgling nation.

The American Revolution presented a young Hamilton with the perfect opportunity to distinguish himself. Seizing that opportunity, Hamilton managed to elevate himself far above his station as an immigrant orphan, morphing from a "son of a whore and Scotsman" into a decorated war veteran, Washington's right hand man, and perhaps the most influential voice in the public forums of the time. However history has judged Hamilton's dubious motivations, his list of accomplishments would impress even the most zealous overachiever: writer of most of the Federalist Papers, Secretary of the Treasury, founder of the New York Post, creator of the Coast guard, the list goes on and on.

How did Hamilton do it? How did a bastard from the Caribbean beg his way to the mainland and fight his way onto our ten-dollar bill? Using a certain degree of creative license (as fans of Hercules Mulligan will tell you), Miranda provides the answer through 143 enrapturing minutes of hip-hop and rap. The play extensively explores Hamilton's tense relationship with his (SPOILER ALERT FROM 1804) eventual murderer, Aaron Burr, emphasizing the contrast between Hamilton's staunch resolve and Burr's timid indecision. While Hamilton rises through the ranks with bold strokes and political risks both during and after the Revolution, Burr waits patiently for the dust to settle before taking any political stances. According to Miranda's narrative, Hamilton's strong conviction and outspoken nature in a time and place of political turmoil contributed to his success as a founding father.

But while developing and sharing ideas rather than indecisively waiting on the sidelines certainly contributes to success (see Doron Levine's brilliant editorial for more on that front), candor and genius alone are not sufficient for success.

Hamilton could never have succeeded in the war without the tactical support of his friend Marquis de Lafayette. The Federalist Papers would not have been written without the partnership of James Madison and John Jay. Yet Hamilton, both historically and through Miranda's eyes, refused to recognize the value of his partnerships, instead holding

on to his convictions so tightly that he ended up alienating those around him. In the end, Hamilton's steamrolling personality and desire for personal glory led to his demise. He fell out of grace and ultimately was killed in a duel by his incensed rival Aaron Burr.

While deadly duels over political beliefs are somewhat uncommon these days, Hamilton's mistakes can teach us certain lessons about ambition and collaboration. Knowing your convictions and your strengths is the first step, but knowing how to harmonize them with the convictions and strengths of others is how the real work gets done.

In my three years as a student here, I've learned that YU is exceptionally dedicated to creating partnerships between the students and those who can help them enhance their college experience. The Office of Student Life, for example, led on our campus by Josh Weisberg and Linda Stone, does an excellent job of empowering student leaders who in turn empower the student body. Whether it's the Israel Club turning Rubin Lobby into a lunchtime dance party or Sharsheret raising money for breast cancer research with the supreme combination of frosting and rivalry, student life is shaped almost entirely by the joint efforts of our tireless faculty and determined students.

**"BE A GO-GETTER, BUT REMEMBER THAT LISTENING TO AND WORKING WITH OTHERS WILL MAKE YOUR SUCCESS MUCH MORE ATTAINABLE!"**



The Office of Housing and Residence Life exhibits a similar dedication to student partnerships. Jonathan Schwab, associate director of the office, works nonstop with his team of resident advisors to constantly improve the housing experience. When you walk by his office you regularly find

an RA bouncing ideas off of him or a student seeking his counsel. The office radiates a commitment to improvement unparalleled by any other department in the institution.

The final and perhaps most valuable partnership dynamic I've seen at YU occurs in the offices of the deans. Deans Bacon, Jacobson, and Sugarman are always open to discussing course offering and academic policies with students. Last year, Dean Jacobson held meetings open to all students to discuss changes to the core curriculum and the future of the Natural World requirement, and those discussions led to the development of science and non-science sections of the requirement. Deans Bacon and Sugarman brought in students to discuss cheating issues on campus, and committed themselves to making sure students were on equal footing with their peers.

Of course, partnerships can sometimes be hard to come by in large institutions where people have diverse goals and priorities, and YU is no exception. In the second act of Hamilton, a song titled "The Room Where it Happens" describes the game of political chess Hamilton engaged in against Thomas Jefferson and James Madison to secure congressional votes for his revolutionary financial plan. They manipulated each other ruthlessly, playing to their opponents' weaknesses instead of to their strengths to service their own ambitions. Sometimes, differences in ideology become insurmountable, and people must resort to "politicking" and closed-door negotiations where personal agendas can sometimes trump institutional goals. Which isn't to say that the decisions made behind closed doors with dubious political tactics aren't the right decisions; in fact, oftentimes these decisions prove invaluable to the institution. They do, however, disenfranchise those who were blocked out and denied agency. They leave people wondering what has been redacted from the narrative and what motivations fueled the decision-making process.

So I encourage you to ask yourself: What am I in the context of Yeshiva University? Am I a constituent? A consumer? A tiny piece of the puzzle? Or am I a stakeholder? A driving force? A partner? Be a go-getter, but remember that listening to and working with others will make your success much more attainable. I can assure you, when it comes to student life and the academic experience at YU, there is no "room where it happens;" your student leaders, your professors, your deans - all of them want to work with you to improve this place, and that's not an outlook I've seen on any other college campus. Take a page from Hamilton's book: you don't have to be a president to take control and inspire change. Forget about the politics; choose to become a partner instead. Choose to play an active role in sowing the seeds of Yeshiva University's legacy.

## From Fantastic to The Fantasticks

By Chaviva Freedman

From the time I was a senior in high school, I envisioned myself working in the world of theater. Although I didn't know the steps I needed to take in order to achieve this dream, I knew that at some point in my life I was going to get lucky and land an awesome job to truly experience what it's like to be working behind the scenes of a show. Even with my experience in the drama societies here at Yeshiva University, I still kept looking for something more. This summer, I got that chance - with an internship at The Theater Center.

Located right in the heart of Times Square (on the corner of 50th Street and Broadway), The Theater Center is home to the longest running Off-Broadway musical, The Fantasticks, and the longest Off-Broadway play, Perfect Crime. Playing since 1960 and with over 21,000 performances, The Fantasticks is a modern telling of the classic Romeo and Juliet story that continues to touch people's hearts today. With just over 12,000 performances, Perfect Crime has been playing Off-Broadway since 1987 and, with the show being a Guinness-Award winner, it is a great choice for people looking for a live experience of their favorite crime television show.

Something really cool about The Theater Center is the fact that the Broadway shows School of Rock and Hamilton both have rehearsal space in the building. When I found out that they rehearse there, I did what I feel like every person who finds out this information does - I went to see if the cast of Hamilton was in the building. I loved

that The Theater Center went as far as naming Hamilton's rehearsal space "King's College" in honor of the school Alexander Hamilton attended in his youth. Although I was never around when that Broadway show rehearsed, nor was I allowed to be in "the room where it happens," I always got to see the adorable kids from School of Rock running around and I got to talk to them while they were on break. I even got to witness auditions happening and I'm pretty sure that the majority of the kids walking in to audition were more musically talented than I ever could be. There were even times that famed Broadway composer Andrew Lloyd Webber (famous for shows like The Phantom of the Opera, Cats, and School of Rock) was in the building, but alas, I never got to see him. That would have made for a cool picture, though.

During my time at The Theater Center, I learned the different ways that the company reaches out to audience members to see the shows. From learning how to tip the press with new and exciting information to quizzing random tourists in the middle of Times Square (specifically on the TKTS steps - let's be honest, we all have been there at some point or another in our lives), I saw that some ways were more efficient than others and that sometimes the idea that you think won't work is actually the one that people respond to the best. I had to learn to be creative in ways that I never imagined, like starring in a YouTube video to promote The Theater Center - and for anyone who knows me well, I have horrible stage fright, which is the reason why I love working backstage instead of onstage.

Although I helped with the marketing, my primary

focus was working behind the scenes of The Fantasticks. To be working on a college production is one thing. To be working behind the scenes of the longest-running musical in the world is a completely different ball game. I had the chance to shadow the stage manager and, although I had the position of Assistant Stage Manager in the plays here at YU, I really saw that the role of Stage Manager is a lot more than telling the actors where to go and what to do. It requires a lot of paper filing, running around, and many more things that make stage managing for a college production seem like a breeze (and if anyone has been a stage manager, you know how difficult the job is).

I found that during my time working in the theater, the camaraderie that people build becomes the glue for shows and their successes. With The Fantasticks, each actor had a welcoming smile for the interns and made me feel like I had been a part of the gang for a long time, even if I was there for only two months. It really felt like the actors appreciated all the time and effort the interns put into making the show better and more engaging to a broader audience. It showed me that this show doesn't just care for the people onstage - they care about the ones backstage as well.

So what did I learn from all of this? I learned that this field is something that I absolutely love doing. It was never hard for me to get up in the morning and put myself on the train to work. My mom always tells me that "you need to find a job that will never feel like work to you," and after this summer, I think I finally found it.

## Alone Among the Masses

### A Short Story

By Gavriel Guttman

It was a cold night. The wind was audible as it gushed against the large, dusty window panes on the sixth floor of Heisenman Tower. The building's rusty joints creaked, and one could almost feel its frame sway at the beckon of nature. Sam Jacobson sat hunched over the small wooden desk, sitting on the university standard-issue small wooden chair, eyes squinting in the dim light emitting from his laptop screen. He leaned backward, pressing his upper back into the chair frame and feeling his joints crack from the pressure. A yawn and a quick glance at the clock. 3:00 am. Sam stared blankly at the screen and tried to find a practice question he didn't already know the answer to. No success. *Now I can't sleep and I'm bored.* Another yawn and glance at the clock. 3:01 am. *So time hasn't stopped after all.*

Sam rose from the chair, letting out a groan in harmony with the old and rotted wood. He looked around the room. Empty. The only sounds came from the building itself and the wind outside. Sam stared wistfully out the window, hoping to see somebody -- anybody. Just the mere sight of another human being would be enough to put his mind at ease. A smile wouldn't be too bad either. It didn't have to be a full, cheek to cheek grin; a simple upward twitch of a human lip would really warm Sam up inside. But there was nobody out. The streets were empty, and the old oaks that lined the sidewalk swayed menacingly in the wind. *Where is Zach?* Sam turned toward his roommate's empty bed, acknowledging its peculiar vacancy. The party had surely ended by now. *You should've gone with him, idiot.*

Without putting much thought into it, Sam dragged his feet over to Zach's bed, slid off his slippers and laid down on the lumpy university mattress. He stared up at the moldy foam-tile ceiling, recognizing the distinct scent of Zach's deodorant on the linens. *Sleep, goddammit, Sleep.* Nothing. Sam's eyes

were bloodshot, and he didn't even have to look in the mirror to know. *Sleep, goddammit, sleep.* The words repeated over and over in Sam's head like a mantra. He closed his eyes and kicked his legs in the air every time he reached the word sleep, the bed shaking from his movement. *Sleep, goddammit, sleep.* Sam felt a tear wedge its way out from his closed right eyes and roll slowly down his cheek, eventually making its way into his mouth. He tasted the tear's saltiness and then a downpour was released onto his face, each tear



squeezing its way out from a squeezed-shut eyelid, on its own path down Sam's rosy cheeks. Some rolled onto his pajama top, others onto Zach's neatly folded linen, and the rest into Sam's mouth, where the salty taste remained as he wept.

Finally, with a conclusory shudder and trembling lips, the tears stopped and Sam sat upright in the bed. The night had progressed, and the shadows were no longer as deep and dark as they had been before.

Sam felt as if a giant weight had been taken off of his shoulders but, *Now what?* Easing his feet back into the cotton slippers, Sam lifted himself off of the bed and headed for the door. The old metal hinges let out a loud squeak upon their use, the sound echoing down the hallway and bouncing off the poorly painted cinderblock walls. Sam glanced in each direction, his room was smack in the middle of the long hall, and saw no one. A large cockroach crept slowly along the hall's width to Sam's left and a florescent bulb flickered its dying bursts in the direction of the elevator. Sam leaned back against the wall and allowed his body to be dragged down by gravity, finally resting his rear end on the cold linoleum floor. Another sigh. Sam could see the sun beginning to peek over the horizon from the fire escape window down the hall. *I might as well lie in bed. It's better than sitting out here.* Sam stood up, walked down the hallway and stamped down hard on the cockroach, feeling its body submit to the pressure of his slippers, and then headed back to the room to sleep.

Sam woke to his alarm blaring and blinking the time, 7:00 AM, in red analog numbers. Zach had returned and was sitting up in bed, looking, for once, as if he too had gotten little sleep.

"How was the party?"

"Dude, it was insane. You should've been there." Zach rubbed his eyes.

Sam stared down at his lap and nodded, not really sure what to say. "I've gotta get ready for class."

Sam got dressed hurriedly, eager to finally leave the dark and depressing confines of his room. *If I'm going to be miserable, at least let me do so in the sunlight.* He sat on a bench outside the library and began to prepare himself for another day. Another day of acing tests and complete loneliness. *But maybe today will be different. Maybe today somebody will smile at me in the hallway and I'll know that everything is going to get better. That's all I need. Just a small sign. Just a little indication of my existence. Then maybe I'll be able to sleep.* Sam got off the bench and headed to class.

## Book Review: Abram to Abraham: A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative

By Dr. Stu Halpern

Dr. Jonathan (Yoni) Grossman, a member of the Bible faculty of Bar Ilan, and son of Dr. Avraham Grossman, Professor Emeritus of Jewish History at the Hebrew University, is a long-time favorite of many students interested in literary analysis of the Bible. Dr. Grossman, a frequent contributor to Yeshivat Har Etzion's Virtual Beit Midrash, has long been known for his careful readings of Biblical text, and his keen structural and syntactical awareness, many examples of which can be found in the Maggid Press series on the weekly parashah, Torah MiEtzion, which collects essays from various faculty members affiliated with Har Etzion, as well as in his earlier volumes on the books of Esther and Ruth.

In his latest full-length work on the Abrahamic narratives, newly translated from the original Hebrew (where it was titled Avraham: Sippuro Shel Masa), Grossman brings his trademark mix of original analysis of texts long familiar to readers, combined with a vast knowledge of both traditional and academic literature on the topic, including literary analysis and knowledge of the ancient Near East. Even more impressively, in an extended discussion in the opening chapters of the dual nature of Abraham as Patriarch both in the familial and political/national sense, he cites with ease major political theorists including Locke, Rousseau, Mill, and Hegel, as well as lesser known figures like French historian Jules Michelet and Polish national poet Adam Mickiewicz. Rare is it indeed to find a book by a religious Bible scholar that integrates such a diverse yet relevant range of sources, from an address to NYU law

school about nationalism in the aforementioned discussion, to a poem and a scientific study on the relationship between laughter and conception in his discussion of the birth of Isaac. From chiasmic structure to Christian commentaries, from politics to nuanced discussions of peshat, Grossman leaves no stone unturned in this volume.

Along the way, Grossman treats his readers to brilliant insights into the stories of Abraham. Some examples include his noting, in Abraham's discussion with

**"GROSSMAN BRINGS HIS TRADEMARK MIX OF ORIGINAL ANALYSIS OF TEXTS LONG FAMILIAR TO READERS, COMBINED WITH A VAST KNOWLEDGE OF BOTH TRADITIONAL AND ACADEMIC LITERATURE ON THE TOPIC."**

Melchizedek following the battle between the four kings and the five kings, that there is the ambiguity of who is giving whom the tithe in the verse "and he gave him a tenth of everything" (Genesis 14:20), and that "it doesn't really matter who gave to whom; the two characters are inseparable and equal. Perhaps the two meet in the Valley of Shaveh ("equal") for this reason" (p. 151).

In his discussion of the Berit bein HaBetarim, the "covenant of the pieces," he, citing previous scholars,

notes that the origin of the word "berit" might come from the Akkadian birit ("between"), which connotes the mutual commitment between two parties, a particularly apt word for a ceremony in which God's fire passes between the pieces of the animals that Abraham had slaughtered.

Lastly, in an extended discussion of Lot's daughters' seduction of their father (which Grossman published in Catholic Biblical Quarterly as a stand-alone article titled "Associative Meanings in the Character Evaluation of Lot's Daughters"), Grossman makes multiple astute literary points, including offering an extended case for a more positive reading of the actions of the younger daughter, as opposed to the older, while reviewing the interpretive history of the episode in sources ranging from Jubilees, Josephus, and Chazal to modern scholars.

In conclusion, if you enjoy reading literary analysis of Tanach, appreciate works of traditional scholarship that utilize impressive arrays of academic scholarship, or simply want to learn more about the trials and travails of our Patriarch, I highly recommend you pick up a copy of this book.



## Book Review: *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio

By Amanda Kornblum

The cover of the novel *Wonder* features a boy's face. His face has just one eye that has "wonder" written above it, long bangs, and large ears. This face is prominent on a baby blue background with a few splotches of a different shade of blue. The cover represents August Pullman, the protagonist ten-year-old boy suffering from a severe case of Treacher Collins syndrome (a genetically acquired facial disfiguration). Just as one shouldn't judge the value of the book based on the splotches on the cover, one should not be prejudiced against Auggie due to his appearance. This novel is just as special and inspiring as August Pullman. Although it is labeled as a children's novel, it is truly for all ages.

August begins school for the first time as a fifth grader. He goes to visit the school and meets the

**"[WONDER] TEACHES US TO BE COMPASSIONATE, TO BE KIND, TO GIVE PEOPLE A CHANCE, TO BELIEVE IN ONE'S INNER GOODNESS, TO VIEW SITUATIONS IN A POSITIVE LIGHT, TO LAUGH, AND TO BE THE BEST PEOPLE WE CAN BE."**

principal before school starts. The principal hand-picks three students in August's class to take him on a grand tour of the building. One of the chosen kids, Julian, makes fun of Auggie on the tour because of how his face looks. August courageously decides to go to school, despite the rude remarks dealt to him on the tour before school even went into session.

One of his teachers, Mr. Browne, puts up a precept monthly on the board to inspire the students. The September precept is: "When given the chance between right or being kind, choose kind" (p. 48). This is the challenge for August's fellow classmates, namely, whether to act superior or to treat August as a human being, despite his distinct appearance.

Palacio provides a diverse array of characters to accompany August on his journey through middle school. Summer is a girl in his grade who decides that keeping August company at lunch is more important than sitting with her group of immature and whispering friends. Summer chooses kindness. Summer was not told by the principal to hang out with August to raise his self esteem; she just does it.

After the first day at lunch, Summer likes August's personality so much that she sits with him every day, regardless of his messy eating that is a result of his disability. Summer is the complete opposite of Julian, who throughout the year finds ways to bully and torment August, comparing him to a zombie, for example. Jack is a complex character in the novel. He is one the kids the principal chooses to take August on the tour. The principal as well assigns Jack the job of being August's friend. August considers Jack a good friend until he one day overhears Jack telling Julian that he would kill himself if he looked like August. Jack proves himself to be a phony with these dangerous words, having only said them to please Julian, the "cool kid."

Here lies the classic bullying conflict: The choice between doing the wrong thing to be accepted, or taking the risk of doing the noble thing. We are faced with situations like these daily. What's significant is what we choose to do, and how we choose to do it. This is perhaps the central lesson of the novel.

Another quote that Mr. Browne puts up on the board is "Your deeds are like your monuments. Built with memories instead of stone"(p.65). The idea is that people will remember you for how you treat those around you. August at this point in the novel sees Jack in a different light and realizes that he is not a true friend. Jack did not know that August overheard his conversation with Julian, and was really missing his company.

A few days later, Jack is faced with the same conflict. The teacher makes Jack and August partners for a science project, which leads to Julian approaching Jack and convincing him to drop August the "freak" as his partner. Jack chooses kindness and punches Julian in the face to show August his loyalty and to prove that he wants to be friends again. This leads to all of Jack's friends dumping him and harassing him, although he is happy because being friends with August is more important to him.

The novel is rich with themes, including the famous question of "Do things occur coincidentally?" August is granted parents who adore him, and a sister, Olivia, who spends her life looking out for him and being anxious that people will treat him differently, judging him by his looks rather than by his unbelievable character. August gains faithful friends like Summer and Jack who truly do support him. August is very bright and excels in his classes where his other classmates do not. Olivia's boyfriend has a very interesting outlook on August's predicament. He decides that "no, no it's not all random, if it really was all random, the universe would abandon us completely. And the universe doesn't. It takes care of its most fragile creations in ways we can't see..."



The universe takes care of all its birds" (p.204). Everyone in life is given his/her share of strengths and struggles, but it's the way we choose to look at it all that matters most.

At graduation, the principal presents August with a medal for his character and academic success. For this, August receives an emotional standing ovation. The principal gives August a powerful introduction, saying: "If every single person in this room made it a rule that wherever you are, whenever you can, you will try to act a little kinder than is necessary — the world really would be a better place. And if you do this, . . . someone else, somewhere, someday, may recognize in you, in every single one of you, the face of God. . . . or whatever politically correct spiritual representation of universal goodness you happen to believe in" (p. 301).

This novel teaches us to be compassionate, to be kind, to give people a chance, to believe in one's inner goodness, to view situations in a positive light, to laugh, and to be the best people we can be. At the end of the day, these qualities are more important than our exam scores or who we eat lunch with between classes.

*Wonder* is a heartwarming, inspirational, life-altering novel that I strongly recommend. A movie based on the novel is going to be released in 2017, starring Owen Wilson and Julia Roberts.

## Why I'm Not Obsessed with Hamilton

By Shoshy Ciment

It's the hottest ticket on Broadway. It snagged a record-breaking 16 Tony Award nominations and produced the highest selling cast album since 2011. It's a show so huge, it promises to entertain only full house theaters for at least the next three years. Some call it revolutionary (pun intended), and some, like me, call it hype.

Welcome to the era of *Hamilton: An American Musical*.

If you don't live under a rock, you've probably heard about the new musical sensation that has swept, quite literally, across the country. The show debuted in February of 2015 to a sold out run at the Public Theater, and later transferred to the Richard Rodgers Theater on Broadway, where it received unparalleled acclaim. Audiences were enraptured, critics amazed. Everything was lauded, from the sets and costumes, to the progressiveness in casting, to the sheer brilliance of the show's fearless leader, Lin-Manuel Miranda.

It's no wonder that almost everyone who has heard of the musical is diagnosable with "*Hamilton fever*." All it takes is a few seconds of a song, a

catchy line, and a proverbial shout with the name of a vaguely familiar historical player (Lafayette!), and you're hooked.

Why then, you may ask, have I not succumbed to the cult?

For starters, I haven't seen *Hamilton* yet. Most people haven't. And I am disinclined to swear and live by a musical that I haven't even seen. If people can be obsessed without even seeing it, then I can be the opposite. Of course, one can technically become familiar and "obsessed" through YouTube videos and clips, but that brings me to my next point.

I am no stranger to Lin-Manuel Miranda.

Let me paint a picture for you. It was the generation of Britney Spears and auto-tune. Enter me, a young, theatre-obsessed teen trying to find herself amidst the pop, techno-remixed noise that characterized her generation. I first heard about Lin-Manuel

Miranda while listening to what I usually listened to in the car: the Broadway Station on Sirius XM radio. Out of the blue, a song from his first Tony award-winning musical, *In the Heights*, came on, and changed my idea of what a musical could be.

SEE HAMILTON, CONTINUED ON  
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## A Cursed Crack at Canonicity, or Good Enough?

By Benjamin Koslowe

Any consumer of fiction appreciates the convention of canonicity. The “official” works of a storyline. A “fictional universe.” The “real stuff” as opposed to “fan fiction.” While it is difficult to determine an objective standard for canonicity, the most basic element is usually assumed to be a consistent author (or producer/director for a movie). Consider the creator of Sherlock Holmes, the most popularly depicted character of all time. There is a common world established by Arthur Conan Doyle in his dozens of short stories and novels featuring the iconic investigator; yet, not everything from the writer’s mouth or pen becomes sanctified. There is a significance to Holmes’s pieces that were published greater than his spoken word or even written communication. And the thousands of books, movies, and short stories published by fans over the years are undisputedly elements of a different universe. As good as they may be, they are a different canon.

Less obviously, consistent authorship and official publication (whether for books or movies) do not ensure canonicity. This enters the realm of influential fan bases in fiction. The *Star Wars* prequels were so disfavored by the population of fans to the point that debates rage on today as to their placement in the same cinematic universe as the originals. While fans in this instance generally give up the fight, the idea of limiting the author in this way does have its merits. The author may not blatantly contradict previous works in the universe. On a subtler level, the rules of the universe must remain the same. A character’s personality may not drastically change for no reason. And the quality of the story must remain of a similar caliber (this last point is controversial, but widely considered a factor in these evaluations).

Once the fiction is established, it maintains a life force of its own independent of its creator. While the author or filmmaker may extend the universe with further works, he/she is just as much a fan as anyone else when it comes to theories and interpretations of the stories. J.K. Rowling’s proclamation in 2007 that “Dumbledore is gay” is accurate only insofar as it is based on a good reading of the text.

Which brings us to the ostensibly eighth Harry Potter installment released this summer. At first glance, the new *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (made for the stage but printed as a special rehearsal edition script), plain and simple, is a canonical eighth story. This is a logical inference, considering the suggestive internet headlines, familiar midnight releases around the country, and, of course, Rowling authorship. Some fans suspected impure authorship due to enigmatic lines such as “based on an original new story by J.K. Rowling, John Tiffany, & Jack Thorne” and “a new play by Jack Thorne.” Yet Rowling assured that “the story of #CursedChild should be considered canon... John Tiffany (the director) and I developed it together,” so it is not obvious that it is profane or apocryphal. Indeed, there was widespread hype throughout America this past summer leading up to its release, almost on par with the excitement for *Deathly Hallows* in 2007 (nine years ago!). Fans were going to give this story a chance.

*Cursed Child* jumps right into action where *Deathly Hallows* left off, at King’s Cross 19 years after the defeat of Voldemort. The play’s action advances forward from this point in time (sort of), developing

next-generation protagonists Albus Severus Potter and Scorpius Malfoy. Grownups like Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Draco are around as well. The first of four acts portray Albus’s unexpected sorting into Slytherin, which quickly leads to a strained relationship with his father Harry, social remoteness in Hogwarts, and an attempt to steal a time-turner from Minister for Magic Hermione Granger-Weasley with the help of Polyjuice Potion so as to go back in time and stop Cedric Diggory from being killed. That’s right, Polyjuice Potion and time-turners to save Ced-

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**“THE DIALOGUE OF CURSED CHILD FEELS VERY CHOPPY AT TIMES, AND THE PLOT IS AS PREPOSTEROUS AS A TROLLEY WITCH FIRING PASTRY GRENADES AT CHILDREN TO STOP THEM FROM ESCAPING A TRAIN.”**

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ric Diggory. Why? Reasons, presumably. Something about Albus fixing the mistakes of his father whom he doesn’t love.

Makes sense? Well, kind of. The dialogue of *Cursed Child* feels very choppy at times, and the plot is as preposterous as a Trolley Witch firing pastry grenades at children to stop them from escaping a train (for example). There simply isn’t good writing. The drama escalates quickly and erratically, forcing the reader to regularly question how the characters’ dispositions in one scene came about from that which preceded narratively. The original books have depth, emotion, tough dilemmas, and complex relationships, all while being accessible to children. By comparison, the new plot is unexciting and predictable.

None of this inherently disqualifies the play from canonical consideration. But what about a Ron who is now a doofus comic-relief version of Fred and George? Or a Harry who tells his son that he wishes he hadn’t been born and who blackmails Headmistress McGonagall to spy on her students for his benefit? This is where the reader begins to sense that tingle of unfamiliarity. Ron didn’t used to be a bumbling moron, and Harry wasn’t previously a conniving jerk.

Still insisting that this is an established eighth story? Beginning in Act Two and developing for the rest of the play, Albus and Scorpius mess with their time-turner to travel back to the events of Book Four, before Cedric was killed, and to alter the events of the Triwizard Tournament. Make Cedric lose the tournament, Cedric never portkeys to Voldemort, Voldemort never kills Cedric. Simple enough. Unfortunately for these whippersnappers, changing the past creates alternate timelines with often dire outcomes. Only with the help of the witty and brave old gang can Albus and Scorpius hope to save the

Harry Potter universe, as they (and we) have come to know it, by the end of Act Four (along the way, expect many not-so-subtle references to the old books).

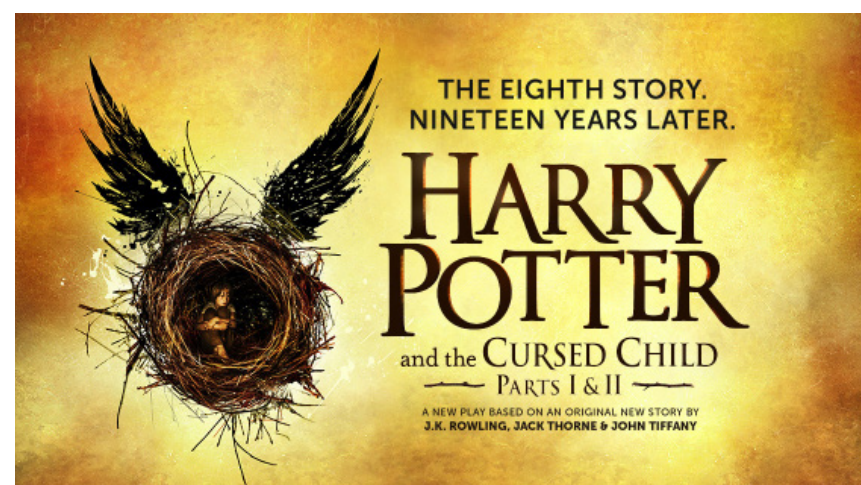
Some may notice that this style of time-travel is weird. Philosophers like David Lewis have described how it is impossible. While the Azkaban-ian portrayal of time-travel works in that time-turners create causative loops of self-fulfillment and a type of destiny, it makes no sense to “change” the past like *Cursed Child* attempts. The past already happened, so it is incoherent to somehow make it have happened in any other way.

Is fiction allowed to suspend logic (readers may notice the irony in the phrase “logic dictates,” which is used actually quite a few times in *Cursed Child*)? Perhaps, considering that it isn’t inherently obvious upon consumption of this type of time-travel narrative that it is illogical. Consider *Back to the Future*, a movie with philosophical problems that still results in a comprehensible story about people and a compelling funny drama.

Can one say the same about *Cursed Child*? It’s a dicey course of action. Accept this form of time-travel as permissible, and you accept the play. Accept the play, and there are still time-turners existent even after all of them are destroyed in the Battle of the Department of Mysteries. Accept the play, and Harry is still able to speak Parseltongue and experience Voldemort-related pain in his scar after losing the Horcrux part of him. Accept the play, and a child of Harry Potter and Ginny Weasley winds up in Slytherin and becomes a mopey loner, despite no portent of such in the epilogue of *Deathly Hallows*.

If these contradictions aren’t blatant enough; if the recurring characters in fact stay true to form enough; if the authorship of the play is in fact Rowling enough; if it is good enough; then perhaps *Cursed Child* can happily exist in the revered Harry Potter universe. Die-hard enthusiasts and even those who simply grew up on the books will read the play regardless because, well, how could one *not* read the purported eighth story? If there’s any saving grace, it’s what seem to be cool stage effects that probably are pretty neat in a live performance. Hey, even terrible fan fiction can have some admirable features.

Will *Cursed Child* grow mainstream with age, or will it wither and be forgotten like some gratuitous footnote on what was a proper epilogue (*Scrubs* season 9, anybody?)? I have my own hunch, but ultimately only time and fans can tell.



### HAMILTON, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

I loved it. It had a unique sound like something I had never heard before. It was a blend of pop and rap, yet it was still characterized by the impressive vocals of a classic show tune.

I guess you could say I fell in love like a child does, prematurely. I listened to the whole cast recording, I watched interviews with the creators, I watched illegally recorded videos of the Broadway production. But I didn’t have an army of crazed fans backing me up. Sure, *In the Heights* was popular in its time, but it was no take-out-a-third-mortgage-on-your-house-for-tickets popular.

I guess a part of me feels like I got there first, before it was cool. I was always in awe of Miranda’s talent and I’d been a devoted Broadway loyalist through and through. For many people who became obsessed with *Hamilton*, it was because they had never been exposed to that type of music before, like I had been. They had never really given Broadway a chance.

There is no denying the originality of *Hamilton*. Aside from its aesthetic beauty, *Hamilton* breaks beyond the scope of classical theatre. *Hamilton* tells an ancient story in a modern way, and raises the bar for entertainment and education.

But I guess I’m also not obsessed with *Hamilton* because I know there are so many other shows that

are also ground breaking in different ways, and they deserve at least half of the recognition that *Hamilton* gets. And for those brilliant, yet unfortunately timed shows that opened last season with *Hamilton*, my heart breaks.

So no, I am not obsessed with *Hamilton*. I won’t memorize every line of every song, and I won’t be seen holding a twelve-hundred-page biography of our founding fathers. That’s not to say I won’t include *Hamilton* in my daily entries for the online Broadway lottery. Or I won’t still be mildly disappointed when I lose.

It is Lin-Manuel Miranda, after all.

## The Real Contributions of Olympic Athletes

By Joey Chesir

In August, the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, allowed spectators the chance to witness remarkable athletic achievements in a wide variety of competitions. These contests included many sports that are less familiar to the public audience than the major sports leagues, such as the National Basketball Association or National Football League in America. During this year's Olympiad, a number of notable athletes, such as track and field legend Usain Bolt and swimming icon Michael Phelps, put on incredible displays of athletic ability and pushed the boundaries of performance. However, this year's Olympic competition was also clouded with several controversies, including the arrest of American swimmer Ryan Lochte and the outbreak of the Zika virus, which led to a number of athletes withdrawing from the Games because of health and safety concerns. These controversies generated a large amount of negative attention, specifically after being publicized by the media, which marred an otherwise exceptional sporting event. It would be much more worthwhile to recognize the level of excellence reached by athlete at the Rio Olympics than this specific scandal, even without considering the fact that the plethora of achievements at the Olympics occurred at a much higher frequency than Lochte's transgressions, which were confined to one evening of mishaps.

Initially, Ryan Lochte claimed to have been mugged, along with several of his swimming teammates by individuals brandishing police badges. Afterwards, while attempting to board a plane to America, two of Lochte's teammates who were present during the incident in question were apprehended by Brazilian Authorities, who removed them from the plane in order to question them about the events. Eventually, it was revealed that Lochte had over-exaggerated a number of details about the incident, and had failed to mention that he and his teammates had caused damages in a bathroom at the gas station where the event had occurred. After the details of Lochte's transgressions were revealed and publicized, Lochte faced a brutal fallout from the scandal. Lochte lost several endorsement deals, and a significant amount of media analysis and scrutiny was devoted to the scandal. Lochte's public image became tarnished, with many labelling him as dishonest. It is certainly true that Lochte acted improperly in this instance, and surely worsened matters by propagating an incorrect version of what truly transpired.

Lochte should undoubtedly face justice and be subject to whatever punishment imposed on him by Brazilian authorities, just like anyone else who breaks the law. However, it is important to understand that Lochte is exactly like anyone else who breaks the law, and that his status as a successful Olympian should have absolutely no impact on any punishment that he may face. Lochte committing a crime is in no way different from anyone else in the world committing that crime. This is because specific crimes do not change in magnitude based on who commits them. Lochte is not the first person to lie to the police, and probably not even the first athlete. It is unjust to scrutinize and demonize him specifically for this crime, while ignoring others who do the same thing. To excessively scrutinize this incident is unjust. Presumably, those who do so aren't discussing the crime because of the extent of Lochte's transgression, but rather because the crime was committed by a famous athlete. Lochte should only be penalized for what he's done by the authorities, not the public and the media who are fixated by Lochte's celebrity status, and are only aware of the crime in question because of it.

Lochte's legal troubles highlight an important issue with how the public and media perceive athletes. Lochte, like any other well-known athlete, is well-known because of his achievements in the athletic arena. However, his many accomplishments should not impact his actions within other areas of his life including his moral character or relationships. Therefore, the media and public should focus on his accomplishments alone, because who he is as a person is not what has brought him into the public eye to begin with. Any time the legal, ethical, or even emotional issues of a well-known athlete are emphasized as much as the accomplishments that made him or her well-known to begin with,

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**"THE PERFORMANCES OF BILES, BOLT, PHELPS, AND MANY OTHER ATHLETES WERE CERTAINLY THE HALLMARK OF THE RIO OLYMPICS, MORE DESERVING THAN THE LEGAL MISHAPS OF ANY ONE ATHLETE IN PARTICULAR"**

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those who scrutinize are essentially saying that those issues become more important when they surround an athlete, as opposed to an ordinary person. This is simply a false notion. Furthermore, it is unfair to give so much attention to one athlete's legal issues while taking away attention from the achievements of other law abiding athletes, who should be given the spotlight for actually contributing something positive. Athletes, like anyone else, should receive recognition for their contributions to their fields, but that does not mean that their actions outside those fields should be analyzed with the same intensity.

When we appreciate the vast number of positive benefits of the Olympics, in addition to the performances of Olympic athletes, Lochte's incident seems like an afterthought. It certainly goes without saying that the Rio Olympics featured a wide variety of athletes accomplishing remarkable feats within an expansive number of sports. The Olympics is important for athletics in general for a number of additional reasons. Firstly, the Olympics served as a truly international athletic contest, where athletes often competed

against rivals from countries they previously would had little exposure to.

Additionally, the Olympic games, in both the summer and winter, consist of many sports that the average sports fan may not have exposure to. If not for this year's Summer Olympics, sports fans around the world would not be able to observe the exploits of gymnastics phenom Simone Biles, or watch Phelps' age-defying dominance of swimming. Both Phelps (who has compiled an unprecedented twenty-three Olympic medals in his lifetime) and Biles won several gold medals, and have unquestionably reached the pinnacle of their respective sports, which the casual viewer is only aware of because of the Olympics. Several Olympic sports such as track and field, swimming, volleyball, and gymnastics, do not have yearlong competitions similar to annual seasons in professional sports leagues, like the NBA or the NFL.

For athletes who participate in these sports, the Olympics often represents the highest level of performance in which they can compete. The Olympics, which only takes place every four years, is one of the only chances athletes like these may have at winning at the highest level of competition, and making contributions to the sports that they have devoted themselves to. This is in stark contrast to professional basketball or football players, who always have another chance to return to winning form the next season if they disappoint. For this reason, it is particularly important to recognize the achievements of Olympic athletes, for whom the Olympics is their greatest opportunity to succeed in their sports, and who use the games as an arena in which to perform incredible athletic feats.

Athletes, including Ryan Lochte, are notable for their sporting achievements, not any positive or negative areas of their personal lives. To focus on Lochte's legal mishaps while devoting less attention to the incredible performances of athletes at the Olympics is detrimental to the vast majority of athletes at the Olympics. The Olympic Games represents the highest level of performance for a multitude of sports, many of which may have been previously unfamiliar for fans, and may prove to be instrumental in increasing attention toward those sports for future participants and viewers. The performances of Biles, Bolt, Phelps, and many other athletes were certainly the hallmark of the Rio Olympics, more deserving than the legal mishaps of any one athlete in particular. The remarkable accomplishments of Olympic athletes should define the legacy of this year's competition.



## What Was Once a Dream: A Conversation with the Author

By Hillel Field

*This past winter, my friend Jonathan Sidlow asked me to edit the rough copy of his now published book: What Was Once A Dream, which documents his service as a Lone Soldier in the IDF as a Paratrooper. Sidlow delivers the brutally honest truth with a combination of sarcastic wit and introspective detail that culminates in the crushing intensity of his depiction of the 2014 war in Gaza. We recently sat down to catch up since his book's release last month.*

**Hillel: What are you up to these days in YU?**

Jonathan: This is my third year at YU as a music major and Pre-med student. My plan is to obtain an American medical license, so I could live in Israel but remain flexible to work both here and there. I fence often with Spencer Brasch, am doing my utmost to take advantage of the many exceptional professors on staff here such as Rav Hayyim Angel, Dr. Beliaevsky, and Professor Kurt Nelson, and am very pleased with my overall college experience.

**H: What's more rigorous, Tzanchanim or Pre-med at YU?**

J: (Laughs) They're different disciplines, but I'll go with Tzanchanim nonetheless. Professor Feit gave me a run for my money during my first year on campus though.

**H: What was your original inspiration or motivation to draft into the IDF?**

J: The complete answer to that question is the chapter of my book. My main reason for joining the army was striving to create harmony between my beliefs and my behavior. Other reasons include wanting to grow up after living a relatively sheltered and pampered life, wanting to immerse myself in Israeli culture before making Aliyah and wanting to test my beliefs in general to ensure they were concrete. In the first ten pages of my book, I talk about how post high school, I was very close to dropping religion entirely. I made a compromise with my parents that I'd go to Yeshiva and give it my all.

I went to Yesodei Hatorah, and quickly underwent epiphanies and humblings in rapid succession. With any question I had, there wouldn't be some quick, go-to answer that I wouldn't find intellectually satisfying. The rabbeim built the program to force students to boil down their question to the basic assumptions and evaluate their substance. It was the first time I asked myself those kind of questions and took serious time to evaluate my belief system. In "answering" a question, rabbeim taught us how to navigate the seforim stacks and conduct research so we would get comfortable with investigating our questions independently. Gaining this skill set made the process of learning much more fulfilling and enabled me to feel a connection with the texts I was immersed in.

I was very arrogant at that time, and I still struggle with that part of myself. The first big change that happened at Yeshiva was gaining the humility to understand that the Halakhic system wasn't vapid or arbitrary, but based on rigorous thought. I realized that the Mishnah and Gemara are blueprints for the Halakhic system, and that these are the texts that define us. That's not to say I was always satisfied with the answers I discovered, or that I always understood them entirely despite my effort, but I came away impressed with the sincerity of dialogue that took place in the documented discussion of the Halakhic process.

I was also very much an absolutist at that age, thinking in terms of right vs. wrong and valid vs. invalid. At the beginning of my time at Yesodei, I didn't recognize the possibility of a plurality of truths, and that a sugya could be a documentation of two equally valid truths based on the Halakhic process, each reached through a different creative process. When I realized that matters were not so simple, and that my understanding of a halakhic decision is not the litmus test for whether it is legitimate, I began the ongoing struggle of pushing ego aside to make room for faith. This in turn led to my seeing myself as part of a continuum, and recognizing the responsibilities implied by such a relationship, as opposed to an individual in a vacuum.

**H: It's interesting, you say that because many people would be turned away from religion because of reasons such as saying that there is a plurality of truths, while you embraced it for this reason.**

J: Right, I actually found religion to be more inclusive in this way. I don't learn straight shulchan aruch because the discussion leading to the law is not included. In *masechet avodah zara*, an idea stood out to me somewhere in the neighborhood of *daf lamed vav*, which reads "*gemarta gmar, zmartar tehe*?" Paraphrased, this means "Are you learning the gemara at a superficial level like a song, or will you confront the



complexity of the sugya squarely? This idea was constantly espoused at Yesodei Hatorah and has become part of my still evolving approach to learning and self-discovery. When I found that the law was decided in favor of a certain opinion, I would always try figure out why that was the case, why the socio-cultural environment at a time would make a p'sak more fitting, but also investigate why the differing opinion was substantive enough to be included in the discussion. This is what provides me with spiritual fulfillment, as opposed to performing mitzvot by rote because a book told me to, without supplying the logic which led to said conclusion.

**H: Do you think the fact that Yeshiva was the first time you felt like you were in a non-stifling educational environment points to a fault in the Jewish educational system you experienced growing up?**

J: Yesodei Hatorah catered to the goal oriented and internally motivated, and my year in Yeshiva was the first time in my life in which I made a conscious effort to have those adjectives apply to me. I don't feel comfortable pointing fingers, so I'll say that while there is always potential for improvement, I accept partial responsibility, and admit that I may have been too arrogant and cynical in my youth to be able to glean that which was being offered by the private school system.

**H: So it sounds like becoming religious was more of a personal journey for you?**

J: Yes, in many ways *What Was Once A Dream* is about how I became religious. At Yesodei, my rabbeim supported Israel and Tzahal, but were worried that despite the progress I had made spiritually, since I'm not the most outwardly 'frum' person given my dress and diction, that Tzahal would beat what I had learned out of me. To the contrary, I found my service in the IDF to be very enriching spiritually. In the crucible, my beliefs were concretized. When things got

tough, I would ask myself the same thing every Lone Soldier asks themselves: "Why are you doing this?" To regain perspective I would always open my weathered Artscroll Tanach and continue my seder in tanach to remind myself of my beliefs and what I'm a part of.

**H: Going back to what you said about the army being a spiritually beneficial experience, is that a major message you want to get across in your book?**

J: For sure. I give multiple examples in the book of the IDF bending over backwards to accommodate religious soldiers. For instance, I found army kitchens to be excellent when it comes to Kashrut. On Pesach, even the secular soldiers were forbidden to bring in Chametz. One time we were at an outpost on the northern border right outside an Arab village for Shabbat, and they still managed to bring a Sefer Torah there. During training we were almost always given time to pray three times a day. There are numerous more examples that I can't think of off the top of my head. In short, I never felt disrespected as a religious Jew, and appreciate the tremendous progress that has been made since the IDF's more secular beginnings.

**H: What motivated you to begin this project of writing your experience down in the first place?**

J: There are three reasons. The first is offering an in-depth explanation of what it means to be a Lone Soldier for anyone interested in the program. I wrote the book I wish I could have read before I began my service.

Second, I offer my book as a factual document to counteract the negative attention espoused by various media organizations against Israel. There is truth, exaggeration, blatant falsehood, and then there are certain media organizations which I won't mention here. I want to show the reader that we, as soldiers, do not want conflict, and do not enjoy having to guard our communities and relinquish our freedom in order to ensure the survival of our people. What we really want is peace, and for our time in uniform to end so we can return to our families.

Lastly, when I came back from Israel after my service, it was almost immediately after Tzuk Eitan (Operation Protective Edge), and three days before starting the semester at YU. The transition was rough. There was a residual numbness that I still find difficult to explain. I was happy to be home, but felt like a fish pulled out of water. My service left me primed for privation, responsibility, violence and being part of a team, but all that was suddenly replaced the banalities and freedoms of civilian life as an individual. Looking back, to suddenly have my family, my freedom and relative safety reminds me of refeeding syndrome, it was too much to take in so quickly.

There were other feelings I couldn't understand at the time. I'd hear something like the sound of a foot crunching broken glass on the ground, and my train of thought would be totally interrupted. I'd feel an adrenaline dump akin to flight-or-fight response. Noticing this, my parents suggested I see a PTSD specialist, who recommended that I start writing about my experience.

Initially, I wrote about my experience in Gaza, and felt adrenaline rushes while writing certain events. Various epiphanies occurred in rapid succession, like realizing that the sound of a foot crushing broken glass was reminding me of the alarm system we used in Gaza. We would surround our positions with broken glass to warn us if someone was approaching, which saved our lives a number of times. When I hear broken glass being crushed, I think my mind automatically primes my body for the approach of a threat. Writing has helped me recognize the cause of these bouts of anxiety and has brought me to a point where I can better control myself in these situations, though the transition is not complete. Fourth of July is still tough. I have plenty of experience being shot at with mortars. Consequently, the sound of rockets being fired in the distance still sets off a visceral sense of vulnerability to this day.

SEE ONCE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

## Changes Come to YU's Career Center

By Ezra Berman

As many students have noticed, there were a lot of changes on the YU campus over the summer. One of the biggest sources of change came from the Career Center, specifically to their staff and YU CareerLink website. While change can lead to concern, especially in regards to something as important to the student body as the Career Center, this article gets to the bottom of the true nature of these changes.

The change students may notice most immediately is that a number of popular staff members made the tough decision to move on to, as the Executive Director of the Career Center, Marc Goldman, puts it, "a position at a higher level than they had at YU." Specifically, Jocelyn Coalter, Laurie Davis, Heather Novak, Terry Sabri and Rebecca Weiler are no longer with the Career Center. For Goldman, to watch staff depart is always hard, especially when some of those leaving have been with his team for such an extended period of time. Goldman shared that, "All of their departures were bittersweet because we were losing great colleagues who enjoyed working here, but we could only wish them well in their next positive move."

To counter this recent departure of staffers and keep the office fully staffed, the Career Center utilized the spring and summer to add five new staff members - Christina Jacques, Tina Lin and Diane Safer joined Wilf, while Susan Bauer and Dana Simpson were added to Beren. Speaking to the qualifications of the new staff, Goldman assured the student body that, "Our newest staff members bring experience from career centers at other institutions as well as industry backgrounds in media, fashion, consumer products, finance, PR, and consulting. These varied backgrounds will enhance the workings of the Career Center and provide more information, resources, and connections for our students." In spite of all these hires, the organizational structure of the office has remained unaltered.

The other major overhaul which took place over the summer relates to the Career Center's signature job site,

YU CareerLink. When students log on to YU CareerLink, they will notice an updated design. The user interface has been modified to a sleeker version that is easier to navigate. Goldman believes, "The developer's intent was to make a page that is more akin to today's social media profile pages, so students would be more accustomed

**"OUR NEWEST STAFF MEMBERS  
BRING EXPERIENCE FROM  
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PRODUCTS, FINANCE, PR, AND  
CONSULTING!"**

to the look and feel." It's of paramount importance that students feel comfortable using YU CareerLink, as it provides them with tremendous job searching opportunities among other resources. The Career Center is confident that students will find the new user interface to be a helpful improvement.

One reallocation of OCR requirements, which has been perceived by many students to be an addition to the requirements, is the mandatory video and accompanying quiz. This, however, is actually a simple restructuring to the on-campus recruiting process rather than an addition. Goldman's thinking was "to provide more of a webinar, so students could access it at their convenience." Moreover, the presentation is only twenty minutes long and the accompanying quiz is a brief ten questions. All this adds up to a much shorter duration than any live session the Career Center would offer.

The upper YU administration is beyond pleased with these changes and improvements to the Career Center. When reached for comment, Associate Dean of Sy Syms Michael Strauss, who oversees the Career Center, was sure to recognize Goldman and his team for having "done a superb job during the past several months with a smaller staff and not being tempted to settle; they were patient and went through many interviews to find the right people to fill the few open positions in the Career Center."

In addition to these exciting changes, students should be on the lookout for further helpful advancements to come. A couple of weeks ago at the "Career Fair and Interview Prep Night," Goldman announced that the Career Center hopes to have the entire orientation online by next year, thus completely eliminating the need for students to attend a lengthy in-person session. Additionally, Goldman looks forward to "collaborating with student clubs and hearing from students about their ideas." In fact, the Career Center "will soon be implementing an online survey of all students regarding their career interests and experiences." The hope is that this communication will foster further changes of benefit to the students.



ONCE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

**H: What's the meaning of the book's title?**

J: Israel itself is what was once a dream. Obviously this wasn't the case before we were exiled as a nation, but after 2,000 years of dreaming, our home is now a reality. I hope to communicate to the reader exactly what's entailed in making such the case.

**H: How did the day-to-day process of writing this book generally go about?**

J: The rough draft took about seven months to finish. It's what I did during my study breaks while studying Bio for Professor Feit's tests during my first year on campus. The remainder of the time involved subsequent editing cycles, IDF censorship, and publishing, for a total of two years to the date (of the interview). It's kind of eerie because my friends from my platoon were discharged a month and change ago. You could say this book is a present to them in a way. It gave me a sense of closure, and I hope it gives them a sense of closure as well.

Initially, when I realized that writing about my experiences was so helpful, I would camp out in the YU library late at night, and a security guard would have to kick me out. Last summer, I was writing up to seven hours a day and taking a chemistry, so I didn't sleep much. I wrote when I could and just made it into part of my routine. This past year involved more waiting through editing cycles and integrating edits. I was less involved, especially during the censorship process, where I had to sit on my hands and remain patient.

It's important to note that I consider myself an author, not a writer. Writers know how to write, authors make books. Exceptional authors are also writers. I'm a hack with great friends, who helped me turn a word document, on which I bled my soul, into a book. I took two writing courses in YU with Professor Schwabe, who unknowingly edited a small section of the book and gave me a B (laughs). That's the full extent of my formal writing education. I owe the cohesion of this project to the editors.

**H: Did you write any original content before this book?**

J: I dabbled in high school, but that's about it. I'm currently working on a compendium of short stories.

**H: So it sounds like you had no intention of writing a book when you first started the army?**

J: Correct. My adoptive family in Israel suggested I keep a journal, claiming the insignificant details of my service would become very important in retrospect and that I would want to look back at these details at some point in the future. I'm certainly glad I kept it now. The only reason the book is so detailed and honest is because of what I documented in my journals.

**H: I'm sure people will appreciate that honesty.**

J: I was hesitant at first, but I felt that I'd be cheating the reader if I didn't write about times when I hit a wall inside myself. A lot of the 'test readers' who gave me initial feedback on the book said they felt like I was 'naked,' that I revealed a lot about myself, including my failures. I wrote about times where I felt pride, and also about times where I failed myself and my friends. I find it important to do away with the fallacy that soldiers possess superhuman strength and are made of steel. We too are human and have weaknesses. What makes us soldiers is that we stand in the way of threats despite this fact.

**H: Based on what you said before, it sounds like your target audience is much broader than just those looking to join the IDF.**

J: For sure! I write in the introduction that my goal is manifold. I write for those interested in the IDF to get a sneak peek on the experience. I also write for those who are not interested in drafting but are still curious, as well as parents of combat soldiers who want to know what their children are going through. I hope everyone will pick up the book and find something valuable in it, even those against the state of Israel.

**H: Obviously YU is a very Zionist campus, but do you think there are some aspects of Zi-**

**onism that could use increased attention in our community?**

J: I appreciate that YU takes active measures to engender Ahavat Ha'Aretz. Such measures are necessary to counteract complacency, which may corrode one's bond with the far away speck of land which is the seat of our legacy.

There is an elephant in the room when you ask this question that I feel obligated to address. Readers will think that I'm practicing hardcore diplomacy unless I follow up on this. To be clear, I don't feel comfortable pointing my finger and claiming that everyone should draft. That's not what I believe. There are many ways to contribute to Israel. I chose my method. Others choose theirs. My choice was based on a refusal to ever be in a situation in which I would have to watch from the sidelines as our destiny was shaped, given what the Nazi's did to my grandfather. I believe God has given us the tools necessary to resurrect our dignity and pride as a nation, and I want to be part of the process. I use the word "part" deliberately, because I believe it is only a part. Great support work is done all over the globe by various organizations which support Israel in a myriad of other arenas.

**H: What did your grandfather have to say about your service?**

J: He's a quiet guy, so not much. Three years in the camps can do that to you. I handed him a Paratrooper beret when I saw him after my service. He looked me in the eye, gently took it from my hand and nodded. He's not the kind to tear up easily, but made an exception then. My grandmother tells me he keeps the beret in his tefilin bag and holds it before prayer every day.

*What Was Once a Dream is available on Amazon.com in paperback and to download for Kindle.*



## A Guide to Political Incorrectness, and Why Trump Doesn't Get It

By Zach Stermán

For someone who touts himself as the king of “political incorrectness,” Donald Trump seems to know very little about what that term actually means. In fact, it is evident that Trump does not entirely comprehend what political incorrectness is or why it is used. His understanding does not account for a key distinction between political incorrectness – a legitimate tool used to counter political correctness that whitewashes real issues – and his personal use of rude and apolitical rhetoric.

But first, some background. The PC movement – notorious for its presence on college campuses – aims to create a safe and comfortable political atmosphere for all. That is, if there is an opinion or ideology that makes you uncomfortable then you shouldn't have to hear it. Many colleges have instituted intellectual “safe spaces” and “trigger warnings,” as well as disallowed controversial speakers, in order to protect students from unwelcome opinions. To be sure, PC does not stop at the gates of college campuses. Rather, these campuses are but a microcosm of an ideology ubiquitous across the country, particularly in the political arena.

While the sentiment of protecting students or citizens from discomfort is well intended, many see its methods as intellectually close-minded and potentially stifling to freedom of expression. This line of opposition to PC has recently been spearheaded by the University of Chicago whose welcoming letter to the incoming class stated that the University's “...commitment to academic freedom means that we do not support so-called ‘trigger warnings,’ we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics are controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual ‘safe spaces.’” This candid rebuttal of PC is representative of a rapidly growing feeling of opposition toward PC as citizens feel more and more ideologically suffocated by the PC movement.

Bear with me, I'll get to Trump soon.

For every leftist movement there is bound to be a counter movement from the right. The logical way to combat political correctness would be to provide its mirror image. But what is that mirror image? The aforementioned letter from Chicago University states, “Civility and mutual respect are vital to all of us, and freedom of expression does not mean the freedom to harass or threaten others.” In other words, just because we don't create safe spaces doesn't mean you should walk around insulting people. This line is the point of disconnect and the key to the distinction between true political incorrectness and Trumpian political incorrectness. True political incorrectness counters PC by presenting for public consumption the very positions, opinions, and legitimate political arguments that cause the discomfort political correctness seeks to avoid.

A popular example of this is found in the ongoing debate regarding how to address the threat of radical Islamic terror. President Obama has famously refused to adopt the language of “radical Islamic” terror because he believes it miscasts the issue as one of wider Islam, whereas President Obama himself sees radical Islam as being part of a sub or fringe group that ought to be considered an entirely separate entity. The politically incorrect movement views this pussyfooting as a paradigm of political correctness negatively impacting the decisions and trajectory of our nation and its policy. Senator Ted Cruz has responded to the President's position saying, “Political correctness is killing people, because it prevents the Obama administration from focusing on the communications and activities of potential terrorists who are Muslims.” Cruz's rebuttal of President Obama's position exemplifies political incorrectness in action.

Cruz's so called politically incorrect association of radical Islam with wider Islam is in direct contrast to President Obama's PC position. His (Cruz's) argument is substantive and speaks to the perceived issues facing the nation. The sentiment of Cruz's argument might cause discomfort to fragile pushers of PC, but the challenge he presents contributes to the important dialogue through which our political system aims to approach and resolve issues while maintaining a sem-

blance of mutual respect. He does not resort to insulting his opponent through name-calling, nor does he insult his opposition's appearance. In fact, he doesn't issue any personal insults at all. Rather, Cruz speaks directly to the politics of the matter and thus he is politically incorrect, whereas Trump has made a habit of presenting arguments void of political relevance altogether and therefore to call his remarks “politically incorrect” would be a misnomer. Statements like Cruz's are representative of the true political incor-

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**"True political incorrectness counters PC by presenting the very positions, opinions, and legitimate political arguments that cause the discomfort political correctness seeks to avoid."**

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rect movement, which aims to counter the suffocation of debate wrought by hypersensitive PC. It does not do so through unsubstantial vulgarity. That isn't true political incorrectness; it is just Donald Trump.

So what does Trump's version of political incorrectness look like? There is perhaps no example of Trump's misguided approach more telling than an exchange he had with Megyn Kelly of Fox News at the first Republican primary debate just over a year ago. Kelly questioned Trump's temperament – particularly toward women – citing times when he had called women “fat pigs,” “dogs,” “slobs,” and “disgusting animals.” Kelly added that Trump “once told a contestant on *Celebrity Apprentice* that it would be a pretty picture to see her on her knees.” Trump's response began, “I think the big problem this country has is being politically correct.”

As the *Washington Post's* Colby Itkowitz puts it, this excuse from Trump is “the same one he used when he insulted Mexican immigrants, women, and prisoners of war: People are just being too ‘politically correct.’” Citing other examples, Mitchell Blatt of the *Federalist* has said, “He calls his opponents ‘losers’ and mocks the appearance of their wives and then pleads that he is just being anti-PC. That's not being anti-PC, it's just being a contemptible jerk.” It is pretty easy to see the difference between true political correctness and the distasteful, unapologetic muck issued often by Trump.

Trump correctly read the room when he labeled himself the politically incorrect candidate at the outset of his campaign, but his assessment of the national mood was – and still is – far better than his uncouth solution. As the *Daily Wire's* Ben Shapiro has said, “He's always been half of a great doctor: terrific diagnosis, awful prescriptions.” Trump had the opportunity to champion the politically incorrect cause and do real damage to the PC movement. Instead he has consistently taken to emitting an unabashedly vulgar stream of consciousness, only to then hide himself behind the hollow guise of political incorrectness.

Were it Trump alone who failed to recognize the distinction between Trumpian political incorrectness and true political incorrectness this would all be insignificant. However, Trump's conflation of these methods has spread rapidly across both sides of the aisle. On the right Trump has succeeded in igniting latent frustration within the Republican constituency, transforming people's irritation with the restraints of PC into a belief that Trump's boorish and abrasive behavior is acceptable, or even preferable as a method of political discourse. This has caused serious divides within the party, as influential Republicans have fallen out on both sides of this issue.

Fortunately, some – such as the aforementioned Senator Ted Cruz – have remained steadfast to the true, civilized intentions of the counter-PC movement and have rejected – some diplomatically, others less so – both Trump and his false brand of political incorrectness. Yet many others have been seduced ei-

ther by the supposed merits of Trump's style or by an unquenchable desire to defeat Hillary Clinton. Key Republican figures drawn into the Trump camp have manifested in two forms: That of Chris Christie – the full buy-in to Trump's unrefined approach – and that of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell – the tentative, if not reluctant endorser. Ultimately the approval of party leaders is allowing for the redefinition or, at least, the blurring of values for party at large. Many Republicans, both within and without the political arena, now fail to see the difference between revealing hard but important truths and claiming that a frustrated reporter had “blood coming out of her wherever.”

In turn, this conflation has been adopted by leftists who throw all political incorrectness – whether Trumpian or true – into the same bucket. Perhaps sensing political opportunity, or otherwise genuinely, the left has seized on this, as Trump has given them a face at which to point their fingers and say, “See? I told you Republicans were terrible.” One searing example of this is *Time* writer Mark Hannah – a liberal – who just last month wrote, “The opposite of political correctness is not unvarnished truth-telling. It is political expression that is careless toward the beliefs and attitudes different than one's own. In its more extreme fashion, it is incivility, indecency or vulgarity. These are the true alternatives to political correctness. These are the traits that Trump tacitly touts when he criticizes political correctness.” While Trump's culpability does not fully absolve the ignorance of Hannah's statement, Trump is ultimately responsible for dismissals of any and all merits of political incorrectness, such as we see here. The failure of Republicans to recognize the difference between Trumpian and true political incorrectness, and to reject the former, has resulted in the knee-jerk reaction of many Democrats to lump the two together. These misperceptions have diluted political incorrectness and thereby robbed the American people of their most powerful tool with which to counter the PC movement.

To be clear, these consequences are not a win for the left and a loss for the right. Rather, one thing both sides do agree on is that the development of PC culture has gone too far. According to the *Washington Post*, in a Fairleigh Dickinson University poll conducted last October, “68 percent agreed with the proposition that ‘a big problem this country has is being politically correct.’” In fact, the piece goes on, “It was a sentiment felt strongly across the political spectrum, by 62 percent of Democrats, 68 percent of independents and 81 percent of Republicans.”

The PC movement is seen as a pressing issue throughout the country and on both sides of the aisle. The ramifications of our failure to distinguish between Trumpian political incorrectness and true political incorrectness are to the detriment not of one party, but of the American people.



## Political Journalism in the Orthodox World

By Yitzchak Fried

In the last edition of this paper, former Editor-in-Chief Yechiel Schwab reflected on the role of journalism in society. His article “Newspapers: Defenders of Conversation and Great Writing”, insightfully points out that not all journalism is meant to be political. At its core, journalism, like all writing, is a means of communication. Its great achievement lies in the fostering of clear, open, conversation – whether or not that results in, or even anticipates, political action.

He’s right in part. Like he says: “Most articles don’t aspire to cause change, but simply serve to provide information. Long-form articles, interviews, discussions about art, even editorials and most news pieces, usually serve to convey truth and information to the reader.” Journalism is about truth and information, and being informed is not always about being political. We enjoy conversation about art and films and museums as much as about issues of social policy. If journalism is fundamentally a means of public conversation, it is valuable because it nurtures those conversations that make us enriched and informed.

Even Thomas Paine – a fiery political journalist if there ever was one – agrees that news isn’t only about politics. In his time, Paine bemoaned that contemporary papers were “almost wholly devoted to news and commerce” and “afford but a scanty residence to the Muses.” He imagined papers as a way to keep society cultured, creative, and, yes, entertained. The ideal American paper would have something for everyone – sections on artistic and scientific developments, as well as on the drab news and politics. Paine “consider[ed] a magazine as a kind of bee-hive...Its division into cells, gives every bee a province of its own; and though they all produce honey, yet perhaps they differ in their taste for flowers... Thus, we are not all philosophers, all artists, nor all poets” (“The Magazine in America”).

But to my mind, beyond clear communication, there is an equally basic function of journalism that is, fundamentally, political. An informed public is a dangerous public; it is a public that is empowered to judge its reality and make decisions about whether or not to change it. After all, even Paine’s article about the enriching function of the press was a call for Americans to write better newspapers.

It is perhaps a sign of our society’s political lethargy that we place “being informed” about social issues in the same category as cultural enrichment. The reason why freedom of the press is constitutionally protected in America is not only to ensure that we can read up on the arts and sciences. It is protected because the press is fundamental to political discourse; it is part and parcel of the machinery of democracy. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer put it well in the Tanner Lectures of 2011: “the [First] Amendment...seek[s] to facilitate a conversation among ordinary citizens that will encourage their informed participation in the electoral process.” The First Amendment, according to Breyer, “encourage[s] the exchange of information and ideas necessary for citizens themselves to shape that public opinion which is the final source of government in a democratic state.” An uninformed population cannot act and cannot self-govern; and so, “the Amendment helps to maintain a form of government open to participation...by all citizens without exception.” In short, being informed is about being political. It’s not only investigative reporting that serves a political function; all journalism is meant to raise communal awareness and enable communal action.

So much for the function of journalism in American so-

ciety. But zooming in on our narrower community – the Orthodox world – I think that Schwab’s praise of depoliticized journalism stems from a real tension between political journalism and our communal decision-making process. The Commentator is a means to inform its readership of issues of relevance to our community. But not all of those issues are ones that, within the apparatus of our society, are given to the members of the community to decide. Schwab’s idea of apolitical journalism seems particularly appropriate to our discussions of religious practice. These discussions embody a strange situation – a communal discussion of an issue in which the community is a putative spectator.

For example, in April 2014, The Commentator published “When Rabbi Lamm Allowed Women to Wear Tefillin and Form Minyanim”. That article discussed the opinions of several rabbis regarding the propriety of women’s wearing tefillin; the rabbis quoted including YU’s own authorities, Rabbi Schacter and Rabbi Twersky. What is remarkable, however, is that the issue at hand was not one that, within our community, falls under the rubric of communal action. On matters of Jewish law and practice, the laity looks to its rabbinic authorities – which is why the quoted names cited on both sides of the women-and-tefillin debate were the article’s most salient nuggets.

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**“AN INFORMED PUBLIC IS A DANGEROUS PUBLIC; IT IS A PUBLIC THAT IS EMPOWERED TO JUDGE ITS REALITY AND MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT TO CHANGE IT.”**

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It is interesting to consider what purpose such articles serve. As a form of communal discussion, they seem something like the grumbling that takes place in the back of



shuls. They are interesting, and often passionate and serious, but never political.

This is a peculiarity of the press in our society. But it is a natural consequence of how Orthodoxy makes its decisions. Rabbis are not elected officials and religious law is not based on communal decision making. True, the humanitarian implications of religious law often peak communal interest. But however empowered such discussions

make the community feel, they don’t change the fact that normative practice is not in the hands of the laity. Ultimately, the discussion raised by such articles seems little more than speculative debate about the legitimacy of how those who can decide, have decided. Perhaps we are right then, in the case of social issues relating to religious law, to treat “being informed” as a form of moral-cultural enrichment. There seems to be little role for the community, here. Indeed, it is understandable if rabbis see discussions of religious social policy as an encroachment of the laity into an arena in which they have no business.

I do not mean to suggest that there is necessarily an antagonism between rabbis’ decision making and the laity. That depends on the community’s internal attitude toward authority – and the extent to which that internal attitude diverges from the practice of authority in Orthodox society. Down this line of thinking, I believe we can find a more serious function of our “apolitical” communal discussions of religious law and social policy.

Not every authority figure is antagonistic. Authority rooted in knowledge and experience can provide those who accept it with the guidance they need to meet their own goals. Eric Fromm, in his book *Escape from Freedom*, calls this type of authority “rational authority”. Such authority is a means to an ends. Its archetype is the platonic relationship between a student and teacher: the student wants to gain knowledge, and the teacher helps him to gain it. For the teacher’s part, there is nothing absolute about his authority over the student. On the contrary, the teacher works to dissolve his authority, by helping the student become an authority himself and so closing the gap between himself and his pupil. Of course, learning will mean that the student must give up some his own agency in order to follow the instructions that his or her teacher recommends. But this abdication of agency is done by the student in the name of his choice to pursue knowledge.

The Orthodox community’s submission to rabbinic authority functions in much the same way. So long as the community chooses to structure itself according to religious law, it abdicates its agency on particular social issues in the name of meeting this choice. But, the process can only continue so long as the community continues to believe that rabbinic authority embodies the values it seeks in religious, communal, and individual life. One who feels that his or her leadership is not meeting those needs will find a different community.

I think that herein lies the function of our “apolitical” journalism; it is a communal (or inter-communal) discussion of values – which, yes, for the devout, include religious integrity and respect for tradition. But for all of its deference and sideline reporting, such journalism raises an implicit question: which line of rabbinic leadership best meets the values we believe and which the community should embody? Rabbis may preach, but the laity, the community in flesh and blood, judges the preaching according to its internal values.

It stands to reason then, that even the Orthodox community utilizes the press for politics. It’s not so much the technicalities of religious social policy that we debate (although, as the passionate back and forth over partnership minyanim in 2014 demonstrated, we occasionally do that as well – see “Women in Tefillin and Partnership Minyanim” and the response, “The Halakhic Status of Partnership Minyanim” in the February and March editions of this paper). Our communal debates on religious social policy are rather about the question of a community’s continued commitment to a particular religious authority. At least, that’s what writhes under their surface.

Our journalism is political, even when we discuss matters of religious practice. It’s merely a question of to what extent we admit that fact to ourselves.

## Changing Your Perception of the History Major

By Yisroel Ben-Porat

As a history major, I'm often asked, "What are you going to do with that?" This question reflects a dismissive attitude toward the study of history. Although such a view is understandable – as scholar Peter Stearns points out, "Historians do not perform heart transplants, improve highway design, or arrest criminals" – history is nevertheless an essential field of study, both from a secular and religious perspective.

In 1998, Stearns published an influential article entitled "Why Study History?" for the American Historical Association. He argued that history is essential for understanding the present. How so? Stearns suggests that if one wishes to analyze contemporary society, one cannot rely exclusively on current data. History provides information unavailable in the present. For example, how can one evaluate war during times of peace, without using historical materials? Without historical data, how can one analyze national elections, which are extremely difficult to replicate in experiments? Additionally, Stearns argues that history sheds light on contemporary issues, because the past causes the present: "Any time we try to know why something happened – whether a shift in political party dominance in the American Congress, a major change in the teenage suicide rate, or a war in the Balkans or the Middle East – we have to look for factors that took shape earlier."

Using history to understand the present isn't only important for academics. History has many real life applications, especially in the realm of politics. Consider Harvard University's Applied History Project, directed by Graham Allison and Niall Ferguson. The project's manifesto urges the next American president to establish "a White House Council of Historical Advisers," citing Thucydides' observation that "events of future history will be of the same nature – or nearly so – as the history of the past, so long as men are men." Allison and Ferguson suggest several assignments that the president could delegate to such a council. For example, the president could ask his "applied historians" to identify historical precedents for the ISIS phenomenon. Applied historians could assist the president in his affairs with foreign nations, by determining how a state's history affects contemporary issues. If a financial crisis were to occur, applied historians could draw

upon their knowledge of previous economic downturns to help rectify the situation.

Beyond its benefits for society, historical study provides rigorous intellectual training for students. Although many think of history as simply rote memorization, the discipline actually has many analytical components. As Stearns notes, "The study of history builds experience in dealing with and assessing various kinds of evidence...sorting through diverse, often conflicting interpretations...[and] determining the magnitude and significance of change." Not only do these aspects of historical study provide intellectual fulfillment – which is a means for increasing people's creativity and productivity – they also hone skills that are applicable to many disciplines and careers, including law, business, and management. Additionally, participating in historiographical debates sharpens one's communication and writing skills, invaluable tools for any profession.

My defense of studying history has thus far come from a utilitarian perspective. However, the study of history also contains a religious dimension: Judaism values the study of history. As the Torah states, "Remember the days of yore; understand

how can one presume to understand God's intentions? – but that is not the goal of a religiously oriented study of history. Rather, such study aims to know God simply by observing what He does. Analysis of various cultures throughout time and space – including our own – improves our understanding of the world that God created.

There is another reason why history has its place in the life of a thinking religious individual: its subject matter, the human being, is sacred. Rabbi Shalom Carmy, in a 2011 article for Tradition, argues that the "vigilance and care with which Halakha invests the details of our daily lives are ridiculous if those lives and the multitude of actions and feelings and thoughts that define those lives lack such importance... Our obligations and solidarity with our fellow human beings require us to take their existence seriously." Rabbi Carmy further argues that studying the past enables us to challenge the way we live in the present. Judaism, he claims, is "countercultural; it can only flourish by forging an alternative to the culture around us... And so, we study history and know that the mores and forms of early 21st century Western culture are not the only way to live." Rabbi Carmy concludes, "The

more we can creatively mobilize the sweep and scope of human experience in all its forms, the better we can put in perspective the attractions and faults of our society."

If you really want to see what studying history is all about, there's no substitute for doing it yourself. YU offers many intellectually-stimulating and thought-provoking history classes. For example, last semester, Professor Jeffrey Freedman taught "The History of Emotions," introducing students to an emerging field in historical studies, with fascinating methodological issues. For example, consider the following questions: what constitutes an emotion? Are emotions social constructions – varying across cultures and eras – or are they universal in nature? How can one historicize emotions, and

what sources can a historian use for such study? In the answer to these questions lies insights into the astonishing variety of the human condition.

So, what am I going to do with a history major? I am going to understand the world in which I live. I am going to sharpen my analytical skills. I am going to learn about God's creations. I invite you to do the same.



the years of the generations" (Devarim 23:7). Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman (1874–1941) emphasized that the plain meaning of this verse applies to all of history, not just Jewish history. Assuming that God is the ultimate cause of all historical events, the study of history is essentially the study of God, of His interaction with the affairs of mankind. True, it would be idle speculation to attempt to decipher the divine plan – after all,

## The Summer Olympic Scandal

By Maayan Moss

She scrolls through the endless list of country names, many she has never heard of, one country in mind. Blue and White, pride and tradition, I...I...Israel, Where is it?

He grins as he makes his way toward the bus, laughing with his teammates, anticipating the game. Sweat drips down his brow in the Rio heat, AC on his mind. He reaches the bus but someone stops him from boarding. He stands in the heat wondering, waiting...

Shock echoes through the stadium...She forfeited the match...a simple question...why?

Boos ring in his ears as he stands there, hand extended, head cocked. Will he take the hand? No, he sees the back of his opponent walking away, hand still out, head still cocked, ears still ringing...

This year's Olympic games expressed a unique take on the long-standing Olympic values of peace and coexistence. Rife with political statements and slights against the Israeli team, the Olympics in 2016 contained a fair number of surprising events. Fans of the Israeli Olympic team were quite disheartened to see the clear and unadulterated insults against the State of Israel that occurred in

Rio De Janeiro this year.

We begin outside of Rio, on one of the most common social media networks of today's day and age, Facebook. As many know, Facebook has an Olympics page on which people are given the opportunity to use their favorite Olympic team's flag as their profile picture. This year, however, the compendium of available flags on the Facebook page suspiciously lacked that of the Israeli delegation. Fans of the team did not have the option of using their nation's flag in their profile picture. Despite the reassurance by Facebook moderators of "technical issues" and the later addition of the flag to the lineup, a bitter taste permeates my mouth as I wonder at these interesting "technical issue" no other country seemed to have.

The list of slights continued on a roll before the games even began, on none other than the opening night. As the Israeli team attempted to board their designated bus they were abruptly stopped by their Lebanese opponents. The Israelis intended to share the bus peacefully and with camaraderie but the spirit of the night was ruined as the head of the Lebanese delegation ordered the bus driver to close the door on the Israeli team. When that command failed, he physically blocked their entry, standing in the doorway, looking down at his understandably astonished competitors. The Israeli team was graciously granted a different vehicle and made their way to the ceremony separately. Aside from a minor reprimand by the IOC to

head of the Lebanese delegation, Nakoula, and a warning that his behaviour would not be tolerated, no action was taken in recrimination for this extreme offense which could have easily escalated to violence.

As the games began, no fewer than two additional affronts could be noted. During the Judo matches of this year's fierce competition, two separate Jodokus publicly spurned Israeli competitors, refusing to acknowledge them. The first instance occurred on Sunday, when Saudi Judoka, Joud Fahmy, withdrew from her first round of fighting supposedly to avoid fighting Israeli Judoka Gili Cohen. The Saudi Olympic delegation denied these claims, however, attributing her sudden withdrawal to injury. This injury was questioned by none other than Fahmy's Olympic coach Nieto. The second event was when Egyptian Judoku, El-Shahabi, refused to shake the hand of his Israeli opponent and victor, Or Sasson. El-Shahabi was rebuked by the IOC and subsequently sent home. He later released a statement saying, "...for personal reasons, you can't ask me to shake the hand of anyone from this state (Israel), especially in front of the whole world."

This unfortunate chain of events simply serves to reinforce my belief that the Jewish people, despite numerous attempts at coexistence, are still disrespected and ridiculed by the world. I pray that one day Israeli-Arab relations will become friendly and our peoples will be able to coexist without insult or injury, IYH.

## Why Learn Neviim Acharonim?

By Yosef Sklar

“Oh, I know who the last Jewish prophet was. Wait -- don't tell me, I'm gonna get this -- Malachi! Am I right?” My friends and I quickly glanced at each other. We honestly had no clue whether or not this friendly Christian security guard was correct. But he came across as knowledgeable, and he had answered his own question pretty confidently. So we assumed he was correct and nodded our heads.

After the conversation came to a close, we did a Google search and discovered that the security guard was correct. Startled, we began to question ourselves, “how is it that we know so little about these prophets?” Through our Jewish education, we had learned a few books of Neviim. But Malachi? We barely recognized the name. Was that our fault? We didn't think so. For some reason our community just didn't prioritize familiarity with it.

In Yeshiva University it is generally acknowledged that learning Tanakh is a value. Many students keep up with shnayim mikra vi'echad targum and many others read through the text of the parsha every week. There is also a minority who set aside time to learn other books of Tanakh during night seder, the first thirty minutes of morning seder, or lectures taking place over the weekend. These Tanakh endeavors add crucial variety to the students' Torah study. Unfortunately, these ventures are often limited to the study of Biblical narrative: Chumash, Neviim Rishonim and select Megillot. The books of Neviim Acharonim, however, are rarely included.

While the study of Biblical narrative is valuable, there are many educational benefits that are particular to the study of Neviim Acharonim. I'd like to consider a few here.

### Focus on the Societal, National and Global

The study of Biblical narrative primarily focuses on individual characters. One can analyze the character of Yehoshua as he develops as a leader or delve into the mind of Yonah as flees from his divine mission. One can identify ethical role models such as Ruth and denounce depraved characters like Izzevel. Deep study can raise crucial questions pertaining to our own personal religious and ethical lives. However, in its focus on the individual, Biblical narrative leaves aside other important questions.

Prophetic speeches, on the other hand, rarely focus on any one person. The prophets address societies, nations and even humanity as a whole. They force the reader to deal with important issues that expand far beyond his or her own personal growth.

When one reads Yeshaya's condemnation of Jerusalem's upper class, “How dare you crush My people, and grind the faces of the poor.” (Yeshaya 3:15), one is forced to think of Judaism as it relates to the societal level. Isaiah was addressing an issue far greater than any one person's moral adherence and religious observance. Thus, he forces the reader to consider a new set of questions: Is abuse of the poor still a problem in our society? Who are the downtrodden in our communities today? How can I help develop a solution?

The prophecies described in Neviim Acharonim include grand messianic visions: “In the days to come, the Mount of the Lord's House shall stand firm above the mountains and tower above the hills; and all the nations shall gaze on it with joy. And the many people shall go and say: “Come Let us go up to the Mount of the Lord to the House of the God of Jacob; That he may instruct us in his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” (Yeshaya 2:2-3) One who encounters these visions cannot help but ponder issues of our national destiny. What is the Jewish nation's role in the world? To what extent does the land of Israel factor into that role? How do these texts inform our understanding of these issues? When reading Sefer Yechezkel and hearing the prophet address the Babylonian exiles, a particularly relevant question arises: What is the contribution of the diaspora to the future of Judaism?

What does it mean to be an “am hanivchar?” Is our perception of Jewish “chosenness” affected by the prophecy of Amos? “To Me, O Israelites, you are just like the Ethiopians” – declares the Lord. “True, I brought

you out of Egypt, But also the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir.” (Amos 9:7)

How does our particularity fit into God's larger plan for mankind? Have we considered the vision of Yeshayah? “In that day, Israel shall be a third partner with Egypt and Assyria as a blessing on the earth: for the Lord of Hosts will bless them saying, “Blessed be my people Egypt, My handiwork Assyria, and my very own Israel.” (Yeshaya 19:24-25) Does God's care for other nations modify our understanding of his unique relationship with Israel?

Lastly, if our nation is attempting to impact the world, what do we want that world to look like? Amos condemned nation after nation for neglecting basic ethics with their international conduct. Should we be doing

### “WHAT NEVIIM ACHARONIM LACKS IN SCOPE IT MAKES UP FOR IN DEPTH – BOTH IN THE LEVEL OF DETAIL IT PROVIDES AS WELL AS IN THE GENUINE HUMAN EMOTION IT PACKS INTO THOSE DETAILS.”

the same? What are our hopes for humanity? Does it involve the “beating of swords into plowshares”? (Michah 4:3)

### Explicit Moral Value Statements

One shortcoming of Biblical narrative is that the texts themselves are often morally ambiguous. The message of any given story cannot easily be determined. What sin did the Dor Haflaga commit when they built Migdal Bavel? The answer is not clear. Perhaps they were waging war against God, perhaps they were trying to keep the sky from falling, or maybe their sin was the very notion of uniting in one location and under one ideology. The true answer may even be “none of the above.” Which system of morality is being depicted in the story of Akeidat Yitzchak? Semester long courses have been devoted to this question. Ultimately, the text leaves us in the dark. After reading the book of Shmuel one can't even come to a conclusion as to whether the institution of a monarchy is ideal or not.

The result of these frequent ambiguities is that we often project our own messages onto the text and interpret it in accordance with those messages. Instead of learning morality from the Bible, we project our own preconceived values onto it. We are not confronted with any explicit moral value statements that cause us to formulate, sharpen and even rethink our own priorities and moral outlook.

On the other hand, the literary prophets, speaking directly to the people, make statements that leave far less room for interpretation. The reader is confronted with the Biblical perspective on morality, instead of projecting his or her own preconceived morality onto the text. Some values are delivered in concise and powerful maxims: “Seek justice, undo oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17) values are made clear via causality: “Because... out of their beautiful adornments, in which they took pride, they made their images and their detestable abominations- therefore... I will give them as spoil to strangers, and as plunder to the wicked of the earth.” (Yechezkel 7:20-22)

Some of the most valuable moments learning Neviim Acharonim come when one is confronted with two conflicting values and must calculate how they are to be prioritized in his or her own moral outlook. It is clear throughout Tanakh that proper ritual service is of great importance. And yet we read several appeals like the one of Michah: “With what shall I approach the Lord, do homage to God on high?

Shall I approach Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old?

Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams...? He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk modestly with your God;” (Michah 6:6-8)

The reader must reevaluate the importance of ritual and consider how it relates to the fulfillment of moral principles. After seeing each prophet give emphasis to different values depending on their societal circumstances, one recognizes that morality is not black and white but is filled with nuance and must be applied to our own realities with great forethought.

Reconciling conflicting values is not the only challenge readers face. The Jewish society portrayed in the First Temple era differs starkly from our own in many ways. Torah study, in the traditional sense, is not a central priority. Does our perception of Judaism change after encountering a society that revolves not around the beit midrash, but the Temple, where the main concerns of religious leaders were not that of technical halachic decisions but of general societal corruption?

### A Powerful Lens into Jewish History

At first this might seem counterintuitive. How could the speeches of the prophets be more of a historical adventure than learning the books of Biblical narrative? After all, one book of narrative, say the book of Shoftim, can span nearly 400 years, telling many epic stories along the way. A prophet directs his speeches towards, at most, one or two generations.

What Neviim Acharonim lacks in scope it makes up for in depth – both in the level of detail it provides as well as in the genuine human emotion it packs into those details. The societies that surround the prophets are painted vividly and heavily resemble our own. A reader sees society operating on all of its different levels. There are conflicts between different political factions, social strata and geographic regions of Israel. Political decisions are debated, social trends are criticized and ritual practices are questioned.

The details are presented not by a distant narrator, but by one of the society's active players. Events are not being related objectively; they are laced with human emotions. Does our best understanding of the Holocaust come from textbooks filled with bird's-eye-view summaries, or from the personal memoirs of Viktor Frankl and Primo Levi? So too, the frustration displayed by Yermiyahu when his political advice is ignored and the anger of Amos towards the corruption of the upper class help us better grasp the reality of the First Temple era.

### Adding Meaning to Important Terms and Pesukim

Many of the daily tefillot we say consist of different lines from Neviim Acharonim. Understanding the Biblical context of these lines can deepen our appreciation for them. When putting on tefillin in the morning, the reciting of “Erastich li lolam...”, “I will betroth you to me forever...”, could be a routine utterance with little meaning. The experience is completely transformed, however, if one recognizes those lines as the climax of Sefer Hoshea – a text portraying the tribulations of God as he struggles with his people as a husband would a wayward wife.

The same goes for many of the lines in Kedusha. Once understanding their origins in Yeshaya's and Yechezkel's visions of God, one realizes that we are trying to, in a sense, recreate these scenes by reciting them out loud as group.

There are many staples of the Jewish lexicon that people toss around without regard for their original Biblical context. Where did the term mashiach come from? What is mashiach? Is it a person? Maybe an era? If it is a person, is our perception of him affected when we realize that Koresh the King of Persia was identified by Yeshaya using the same term?

What is the original meaning of “Or lagoyim?” Can it pertain to being a technological leader, as Bibi Netanyahu has used it? Or should it be limited to moral and ethical leadership?

In previous generations, unfamiliar Hebrew and complicated imagery hindered the masses from learning Neviim Acharonim. But in the past decade, Maggid, JPS and Artscroll have all published series devoted to making these sefarim more accessible. So the next time you are deciding what to learn with your chavrusa, consider encountering the prophets.

## A Life in the Day of an IBC Student

By Michael Shavolian

My roommate had discouraged me, but to no avail. I decided to make the switch. I made my way to Glueck and took the elevator up to the sixth floor accompanied by an esteemed Rosh Yeshiva. I felt embarrassed, admittedly. Perhaps, before we reached our destination, he would ask me what tractate I am in the midst of studying. I would have no answer. But no such question was asked. I made way to the office of Undergraduate Torah Studies where I filled out the requisite paperwork. I was not aiming to fulfill Jewish Studies requirements or get an easy A. I was looking for a more invigorating morning program. And, since then, I haven't looked back. I would like to share my IBC experience- the life in a day of an IBC student.

At 8:55am, I make my way to class. I grab breakfast from Nagel Bagel (God Bless) and two minutes later sit myself down in a classroom in Furst Hall. In Contemporary Jewish Thinkers, Rabbi Ozer Glickman walks us through three of Aquinas' classical proofs and connects this Catholic friar's thinking to

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that of Immanuel Kant and finally to the philosophy of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. He reserves some time at the end of class to share some of his thoughts on a recent conversation he had with a Modern Orthodox thinker. After class, a few students gather around his desk to continue a tangential discussion. He asks me how I am doing and tells me that I should stop by in the afternoon to chat. Before I know it, I am five minutes late to my next class.

Rabbi Hayyim Angel's Isaiah class is riveting. His use of sources from across the spectrum- academic literature, modern commentaries and traditional exegesis- makes for never a dull moment. This is my fourth course with Rabbi Angel. In class, a student raises his hand and asks an astute question. Rabbi Angel answers it directly. Not once have I witnessed him dodge a question. He's way too honest to do so. Today in class, he speaks about modern scholarship's

claims on the authorship of Isaiah and the responses of some contemporary Orthodox thinkers. When he gets excited he stands on his toes and gestures with outstretched hands. He speaks clearly and softly--but most of all, humbly. There's a reason he taught a class in RIETS entitled "Teaching Tanakh." As I leave, we wish each other Shabbat Shalom in our shared Sephardic tongue. I make my way to lunch where I join three friends from IBC, students whom I met in class and with whom I share interesting conversations. Later that evening, I receive an email from Rabbi Angel. He recaps what we learned in class and mentions what we should be looking forward to during the next class. He encourages us to email him with any questions.

IBC, like the other three UTS programs, enables students to engage with their Judaism in a meaningful way. But IBC, I have learned, does so in a different way. As a student in BMP, as much as I enjoyed Talmud, I could not hack studying the same few folios of gemarah for three to four hours everyday. Perhaps, I wasn't cut out for it. Perhaps, it just wasn't for me at the time. Or perhaps, admittedly, I went about it all wrong. Diagnose it how you will, but in any case, I wanted something different. I wanted variety and I wanted to experience the perspectives and approaches of multiple teachers. There were so many things outside of Gemara that I wanted to learn and IBC gave me that.

In IBC, I had the chance to observe how archaeology can complement the study of Tanakh. Last semester, in Dr. Joseph Angel's Jeremiah course, my classmates and I studied the verses that discuss the threat of Babylonian invasion. We learned about the Lachish Letters, messages transmitted by a Jewish military officer in advance of Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Lachish, a city in Israel. We then learned to read and decipher the 6th century BCE Hebrew of one of these letters. The experience could not have been more cliché -- melding the latest academic findings with traditional study of tanach -- but yet entirely meaningful and highly informative. In Dr. Aaron Koller's Aqeda course this semester we will be discussing the binding of Isaac from a philosophical and comparative perspective. We will mine the writings of Jubilees and learn about the approaches of Maimonides and Søren Kierkegaard.

In IBC, I had the opportunity to learn from teachers well versed in the topics they taught. Rabbi Benjamin Blech, who has been teaching at Yeshiva University for more than forty years, regularly teaches a course based on a book he authored entitled Understanding Judaism: The Basics of Deed and Creed. Often, I join Rabbi Blech during lunch in the dining

hall. His voice is hoarse from lecturing for three continuous hours but he is always kind enough to grace me with interesting discussions. Last semester, Rabbi Allen Schwartz taught a course entitled Analysis of a Manuscript based on his own work in publishing the Rokeach's commentary to Mishlei in 2014. Other IBC classes provide students with ways to think about important issues. Classes taught by Rabbi Yosef Bronstein, such as Philosophy of Rav Kook, provide students with a survey of the philosophy of seminal Jewish thinkers.

Recently, IBC has been making an effort to form a cohesive IBC community of students. This semester, for the first time, the Isaac Breuer College is sponsoring a weekly lunchtime fellowship open only to IBC students. The seminar will host Orthodox thinkers who will speak to the challenges facing the committed religious individual in the twenty first century. The conversations will be moderated by Rabbi Ozer Glickman and lunch will be sponsored for fellows. Other IBC programs such as rosh chodesh davening and breakfasts with Rabbi Moshe Weinberger and IBC shabbatons also contribute to the cohesiveness of the IBC community.

I have only covered one facet of IBC and have mentioned only a handful of classes. But, there are a handful of others that cater to students with different interests and needs. Gemara classes provide learning for those looking for a different setting for the traditional study of talmud. Chumash classes taught by masterful pedagogues enliven one's mornings with Torah. Chassidut and meditation classes give students a glimpse into the world of Rabbi Chaim Vital and the Aish Kodesh. Halakha classes offer students the knowledge they need to live committed Jewish lives.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, IBC gives students the chance to connect and form relationships with multiple teachers who all have something different to offer. The teachers in IBC are gracious in offering to meet with students during lunch or in their office. I have met with rebbeim during the summer in midtown Manhattan and for lunch in the Sky Café. I have spent Shabbat in Brooklyn and in YU with them. I have, to paraphrase Pirkei Avot, warmed myself by their fire.

It's my last semester and this must be my one hundredth ride in the Glueck elevator. I smile as a Rosh Yeshiva asks for my name. I introduce myself and we chat. The people around here can be pretty friendly, I realize. He asks me what morning program I am enrolled in and I smirk because he didn't presume I was in BMP or YP. IBC, I reply...and I couldn't be happier.

## Land of the Trump, and Home of the Kaepernick

By Molly Meisels

On the outside, Colin Kaepernick and Donald Trump seem to have nothing in common. Kaepernick is an African-American quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers and Donald Trump is a white, rich man worth \$4.9 billion dollars. Kaepernick believes that 'black lives matter' and Trump can hardly get one black voter. But, in reality, these two gentlemen are more alike than you think.

Colin Kaepernick enraged Americans when he refused to stand for the national anthem during the 49ers preseason game against the Green Bay Packers. After his civil protest Kaepernick explained, "I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag that oppresses black people and people of color. To me this is bigger than football and it would be selfish on my part to look the other way. There are bodies in the street and people getting paid leave and getting away with murder."

This voicing of government criticism isn't newfangled. America is a nation that is built on demonstration and rebellion. Americans thrive off their ability to protest their own government. If this is the case,

why do 55% of Americans oppose Kaepernick's decision to sit during the national anthem? Why are 55% of Americans acting as if Kaepernick's silent protest is spitting on our flag and everything this nation stands for? And why are many of them refusing to treat Donald Trump's inflammatory comments and actions the same way?

Donald Trump's entire presidential campaign is built on the foundations of 'Make America Great Again'. This slogan has been adopted by millions of authoritarian, nativist, and jobless voters across America. They see Trump as their savior; their modern day Moses, who will lead them out of the "destitute" America of today, into the "improved" America of tomorrow. Donald Trump has said on multiple occasions that "America doesn't win anymore", degrading our means of production and our citizens in the process. And most Americans can't get enough of it. They adore Trump's hateful, critical rhetoric of the United States government.

Trump supporters thrive off their leader's criticism of our democracy, so why do many of them, including Donald Trump himself, despise Colin Kaepernick? When asked what he thinks about the Kaepernick

controversy Trump said, "I think it's personally not a good thing, I think it's a terrible thing. And, you know, maybe he should find a country that works better for him. Let him try, it won't happen." This is simply confusing. For the last 18 months, Trump has been shooting his mouth off, insulting this nation at every opportunity, calling us losers and worse. Plenty of us have begged Trump to find himself a new country, wishing he'd pick himself up and run for president of Antarctica. Therefore, shouldn't Trump back Kaepernick? Shouldn't Trump be pleading for the man to campaign on his behalf all across America?

Trump and Kaepernick aren't really that different. They are two men with seemingly similar values, protesting a government they seem to despise. Both of them are displaying harsh disapprovals of our democracy. They both want to "Make America Great Again".

Why is this the case? Is it Trump's billionaire status, inflammatory comments, and prejudice opinions juxtaposed to Kaepernick's reserved, egalitarian sentiments? Or is it something more?

# The Olympics Preaches Internationalism but Thrives on Nationalism

By Samuel Gelman

In these last Olympic Games, Rio was able to do something quite remarkable. For the first time in the history of the Olympics, a Refugee Team participated in the games. Ten athletes from four war torn countries - The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Syria - were chosen to represent the 63.5 million displaced people of the world. Watching the team walk out during the opening ceremony was an amazing moment, a true representation of what the Olympic spirit should be.

I say should because no matter how many of these types of moments we have, the Olympics can be boiled down to the one thing that they claim to transcend: nationalism. In some games it is more evident, in others it is hidden. But it is always there and it is how the Olympic games survive and thrive.

Before I continue I want to stress that I am not talking about patriotism. Patriotism is being proud of your country and what it stands for. It is based on values and beliefs. It is believing that your country is one of the greatest, but that every other nation can be great as well. Nationalism, on the other hand is believing that one's country is better than the others. It is based on a national culture--language, history, demographics--not values. The nationalist's instinct is that his country is the greatest, no other country can be as great, and if any other state tries to be great they must be put down.

This nationalistic spirit has been present ever since the first modern Olympics were held in Athens in 1896. Pierre de Coubertin revived the Olympic games in order to spread the ideas of peace and a community of nations, yet this did not stop the wave of nationalism that took over the games, starting with the host. In a clear slight to the hated Ottoman Turks the opening ceremony took place on the anniversary of the declaration of the Greek War of Independence, something that probably would have offended them very much had they been invited to the games in the first place.

It was not just the Greeks that let their nationalistic pasts get the best of them. Coubertin had trouble getting the French and Germans to participate due to hostile relations between the two countries that dated back to the 16th century and reached its peak during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. The Irish also brought their nationalistic struggle into the games, refusing to participate on the English team.

In London 1908, the Swedish team refused to participate in the opening ceremony because their flag was not on display in the main stadium. In the 1920 games, following WWI, the Allies were all too pleased to shove their victory further into the Central Powers' face by not inviting them to the games. The same happened with Germany and Japan following WWII in London 1948. In 1980, the United States boycotted the games in Moscow with the Soviet Union responding by refusing to attend the 1984 games in LA.

None of this compared to the Berlin games of 1936.

## "HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? HOW DID A SYMBOL OF PEACE AND INTERNATIONALISM TURN INTO A STAGE FOR NATIONALISTIC DISPLAYS AND AGENDAS?"

Everything was choreographed to display the power of the German state. Nazi propaganda and symbols were deployed all across the city. A free exhibit on German culture was set up for the foreign visitors. Foreign photographers could not take their own pictures out of fear they would end up representing Germany in a bad light. Hitler even had the Hindenburg fly across the Olympic stadium displaying the Nazi symbol.

How did this happen? How did a symbol of peace and internationalism turn into a stage for nationalistic displays and agendas? Think about your fifth grade dodgeball matches. Everything is fine and dandy until that jerk Kyle yells "you throw like a girl" in front of all your friends. Suddenly the friendly match has become a fight to the death to see who can hit who in the face the most with the ball. This is exactly what happens on the Olympic stage. As soon as there is a feeling of disgrace or lack of respect -whether to the athlete or country- that savage chauvinism rises up and takes over. It is no longer about the game. It is about earning the respect of the other nations, no matter the cost. The sport is no longer important. Only the flag matters now.

And the irony of it all is that the Olympics survive and thrive on nationalism. It is the only reason why they interest us. There is no other time that most of us, if any at all, would even think of watching swimming or gymnastics. I can bet that none of you watched the world championship gymnastics competition in 2015. Why? Because it lacks the nationalist narrative. We don't want to see Simone Biles take on Wang Yan. We want to see the USA take on and beat China, and we want everyone to see us do it. It's no mystery why the 2008 Olympics in Beijing were the most watched of all time. The narrative of China vs. USA, the up and coming economic powerhouse vs. the established superpower, communism vs. capitalism, new world vs. old world, east vs. west, home vs. away. It was too good to miss and 4.7 billion people tuned in for the gladiator match that was, in many sports writer's opinions, one of the best Olympic games ever.

When we watch the Olympics we are not really watching the sports or the athletes. It is why we allow NBC to make us wait until prime time to watch the games, even though they have already been spoiled for us. It is why NBC only shows us the sports that Americans (or Usain Bolt) dominate as opposed to exposing us to other events or athletes. It is why the IOC let the Russian team participate in the games after a doping scandal. This is about nations and their pride, not sport. What we are watching is a king of the hill competition between all the states of the world, and all we care about is who comes out on top.

Yes, we will always have great moments of sportsmanship and internationalism at the Olympics. However, at the end of the day, the last thing NBC will be showing us is that final medal count and everyone will be looking for their nation at the top.



## YU is Massive

By Aryeh Kaminetsky

YU is massive. If you took it upon yourself to meet one new person every day, it would take 17 years until you would meet every student here. I remember on my first day of college, surely one of the more impactful and momentous occasions of my life, and all I was able to think was "This place is freaking huge!"

Similarly daunting in breadth and scope is the incredible diversity amongst the student body. People from all streams of life, from all variants of Judaism, are all here, present in this place. If one were asked to pin down one factor that ties us all together, the answer would probably vary. A teacher or administrator would probably say we are all united in our thirst for knowledge. Some may say we all share the same Jewish identity. My friends would probably point out our universal appreciation for free food. Often, our thoughts are noticeably shaped by the prism of our personality. I don't know what it says about me, but what I notice is that everyone in this place has--problems.

It's almost like an unspoken ice breaker when you meet someone new here. "Hi, nice to meet you! What's your name? Why are you unhappy here?" One person thinks YU is too frum. His neighbor thinks the opposite. This guy wishes he could dorm at home. The security is too harsh, the Caf isn't good, too many emails... the list goes on. There is an atmosphere of dissatisfaction and resentment towards anything that goes on, more so than any other place I've attended. It certainly isn't all unjustified. Obviously there are some legitimate problems and anyone who works for YU would

in all likelihood gladly admit to that. Needless to say, there is work to be done here, but the ratio of problem-noticers to problem-fixers strikes me as a little unbalanced.

This is an issue which hits close to home for me and I suspect many of us. Many of us feel a strong sense of loyalty and kinship with the State of Israel, and as a result undergo the tumultuous roller-coaster of emotions associated with following Israel in the news. We bash mainstream media for its bias against Israel, pick apart CNN headlines to make sure all of the right keywords are in there and rage against the double-standards that our beloved homeland is forced to endure. These are surely admirable, but when has that same passion for intellectual honesty ever manifested for our defense of YU? Can we truly say that all of our complaints against YU are fair from a pragmatic and even idealistic perspective? Can we really say we have stood up for our Yeshiva University when it is attacked as it so often is? How can we have a double-standard about when to care about double-standards?

It may seem that I am using a straw-man by not singling out any complaints in specific, but the sheer volume of the grumbles and fussing make it that either at least some are inaccurate or we are in some 3rd world prison camp. Again, YU is definitely flawed, but having a point only matters if you point it out in the right way.

But in reality, even for the justified complainers who feel that some problems can just never be solved, sometimes some perspective can help. Take for example, the fact that YU has existed since 1886. The University which we all attend is a product of hundreds

upon hundreds of personalities who have shaped it during that time. This amalgamation of Jewish identity has been the epicenter of Modern Orthodox culture and thought for virtually as long as there has been modern orthodoxy (and probably haredism too). By comparison, most of us didn't exist 25 years ago. Optimistically, we could be considered to be legitimately opinionated for maybe the last 10 of those years. This in and of itself shouldn't silence our opinions about the institution but it is more than enough to inject a strain of humility when those opinions are formulated and expressed.

Additionally, sometimes it's reassuring to view our problems in a broader context. For example, how often do we reflect on the fact that we complain about life in COLLEGE. We are all enrolled in a university of higher education with a chance to earn a degree, which is an accomplishment only 6.7 percent of the rest of the world can brag about. We live in a rich area, in the richest country, at the richest time in human history. This manifests itself in countless ways but some of the most profound and meaningful of them are the seemingly the most trivial. What percentage of humans who have ever existed have ever had the privilege of experiencing a hot shower or traveling in an elevator? How many have had air conditioning or have lived in a true democracy? Yet, we are all part of that selective and lucky group. This does nothing to discredit anyone who finds fault with his or her current situation and isn't a real answer to anyone's problems in the conventional sense. Yet I feel strongly that a lot of what holds people back from getting the most out of their time here could be corrected with this simple shift of perspective.

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Yeshiva University

## Understanding Accounting and Finance Job Recruitment

By Etan (Alex) Neiman

Another year, another round of accounting and finance job recruitment has smacked Sy Syms students square in the face before they could walk into their first class. As is tradition, the accounting and finance job search for full-time positions for the following year or internships for the upcoming summer ramps up the moment YU begins. On Thursday night, September 1st, it officially began with the Career Center's mandatory "Career Fair and Interview Prep Night" kick-off event. However, even before then, ambitious accounting and finance students have been fine-tuning their resumes and scouting out their preferred firms. Just this past Thursday and Friday, September 8th and 9th, were the reliably jam-packed finance and accounting fairs respectively. Next up will come the applications and then, hopefully, the interviews. Navigating accounting and finance job recruitment can be more stressful than maneuvering YU's signature double curriculum. Hopefully, this five step guide to completing the accounting and finance recruitment process will alleviate much of the associated stress.

**Step 1: Take care of those pesky OCR (on-campus recruiting) requirements.** Before one can unlock access to apply to an internship or full-time position through YU's OCR program, there are five core requirements he or she must fulfill. The first was to attend the "Career Fair and Interview Prep Night" which took place on September 1st. If this was missed, it is recommended to contact the Career Center as soon as possible to see if there is anything that can be worked out. The second requirement is to upload one's carefully crafted (and previously reviewed by a counselor at the Career Center) resume to YU CareerLink. Care should be taken to do this in a timely manner as the approval process can take a few days. The third requirement is to complete the online "OCR Orientation and Quiz". This can be found on the Career Center website and replaces the in-person seminar students had to attend in previous years. The fourth requirement is simply to sign a Fall 2016 OCR

Contract. This can as well be found on the Career Center's website. The fifth and final requirement is to conduct a mock interview. Only if a student had a mock interview in the spring of 2016 is he exempt from this requirement. Note that one can still apply to OCR job postings before completing their mock

### "HOPEFULLY, THIS FIVE STEP GUIDE TO COMPLETING THE ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE RECRUITMENT PROCESS WILL ALLEVIATE MUCH OF THE ASSOCIATED STRESS."

interview; however, the mock interview must be conducted prior to any on-campus interviews.

**Step 2: Attend the accounting and/or finance career fairs.** As of this publishing, these fairs have actually already happened, so if one or both of these fairs were attended, great. If not, students can still proceed with the process without the advantage of these prime networking events.

**Step 3: Apply to firms.** Now that all the formalities are in the past, it is time to get down to business and apply to the desired firms. Students can apply to firms via YU CareerLink's OCR service (if they completed the previously detailed requirements) or directly on the firm's websites. For those students looking for guidance while applying to the numerous opportunities which are found outside of the OCR firms, the Career Center is more than happy to review this process with students. In terms of application requirements, some firms will require as little as a resume submission to as much as a resume, cover letter, unofficial academic transcript, references, and an additional application submitted through the firm's own website (if the initial application took place on YU CareerLink). It is key to ensure that all the required forms and parts are submitted.

**Step 4: The interviews.** The finish line is in sight. Typically, there are multiple interviews standing in-between an applicant and the job. For OCR applicants, the first interview generally happens at Beren's central midtown Career Center location. If the first interview passes inspection, there are usually one to two more interviews at the firm's location before a final decision on a job offer is made.

**Step 5: Navigate the job offers.** Those still standing for this step are for all intents and purposes the "winners" of job recruitment, having received at least one job offer. What can be tricky is when an offer is extended from one firm before a decision on whether or not to make an offer is made by a firm which the candidate deems more desirable. Asking for more time to make a decision is fair, but if the firm extending the offer does not oblige, a difficult decision must be made. A route which may also be considered is asking the more desirable firm for an expedited decision. Regardless, it is far better to have a difficult decision to make at this stage than no job offers to consider.

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For those interested in tips for how to successfully navigate this job recruitment process from the Career Center and industry professionals, such as composing one's resume and nailing the interview, please see the article "What You Must Know About Accounting Recruitment" from last year's first edition of the Commentator.



## I Sense You're Not Getting Enough Sleep

By Binyamin Zirman

As college students, sleep deprivation is something that we've almost become totally accustomed to. My late night study habits (we're talking 2:00am and 3:00am) and coffee addiction are two examples of my personal sleeping difficulties. While YU, its dual curriculum, and its myriad of extracurricular activities are time consuming and at least partially responsible for many students' sleep deprivation, this is a problem that plagues college students everywhere. According to research by Brown University, 73 percent of students in a certain experiment were found to have sleep problems. And, these sleep problems for college students aren't just limited to sleep deprivation. At least 30 percent of college women and 18 percent of college men reported that they suffered from some form of insomnia over the past 3 months. And what are the byproducts of sleep deprivation? The same Brown University study shows that sleep deprivation impairs people's ability to function normally throughout the day, causing them to pay less attention in class. This explains, in part, why students with sleep deprivation were found to have lower GPAs.

A company that is actively trying to fix this issue of sleep deprivation is EarlySense. EarlySense was founded in 2004 and is based in Ramat Gan, Israel, with U.S. headquarters in Waltham, Massachusetts. The CEO of the company is Avner Halperin, and Tim O'Malley is the president. The company is currently developing a consumer-facing product, called myEarlySense, geared toward sleep and wellness monitoring at private homes—a technology that could undoubtedly help the aforementioned sleep deprived college students. With this technology, users place a sensor under their mattress, which collects information on heart rate, respiration, and sleep stages and movement, and then wirelessly transmits the data to a

smartphone app. myEarlySense can also be paired with home automation systems, which will give users a whole series of powerful features to take advantage of. For example, if myEarlySense senses that a user is struggling to enter a deep sleep because they are too cold or there is too much light in the room they're sleeping in, myEarlySense can speak directly with a smart home automation system like Nest to raise the temperature, turn off lights in neighboring rooms, or pull down the shades in the room. This functionality is related to the IoT or Internet of Things, which has gained popularity and received attention in the news recently. In short, IoT is when various electronic devices speak with each other.

This isn't EarlySense's first product though. EarlySense has actually served enterprises for many years now, with their products that identify early signs of patient deterioration and motion in hospitals, elderly care facilities and homes. Their flagship product is EverOn, a contact-free early detection patient supervision system that measures, records, displays, and alerts heart and respiration rates, as well as bed entries and exits, patient motion, and quality of sleep— all from under the mattress.

EarlySense's system empowers the medical staff in unmonitored wards to detect patients' deterioration by following and analyzing patients' vital signs and motion. This enables the nursing staff to improve clinical outcomes and proactively reduce length of stay in the hospital's general wards and in ICUs while also decreasing unfortunate events like falls.

It's not hard to see the utility of this product for general care patients who are usually monitored by nurses only once every four to six hours. With EarlySense, in the event of a change in a patient's status, the system notifies nurses at a central nursing station and on their mobile devices.

In January of this year, CEO Halperin emphasized

to MobiHealthNews that they "see a huge value in our technology in the home consumer space or digital health space. This technology that was invented and proven in... the hospitals and home care institutions; now we've proven that that same capability can be brought into the home."

In June of this year, the company actually announced a new funding round of \$25m dollars, which will be used specifically for these consumer products.

EarlySense occupies a unique place in their market. One of their early competitors, Apieron, focused on similar technology to EarlySense, but primarily in the asthma sector. While their initial product sounded promising, they never received FDA approval and have since gone out of business. This lends hope to the idea that perhaps EarlySense can really establish itself as a force in this area. Another one of EarlySense's competitors is Micronics Microfluidics. In another promising sign for EarlySense, Sony Corporation purchased Micronics in 2011 for an undisclosed sum, showing that their might be some lucrative M&A potential for EarlySense if they choose to go that route.

Part of what makes EarlySense so unique is that their products and research can affect users in a vast number of areas. Their products can obviously be used in hospitals and wellness centers, but can also change the lives of millions of consumers in their homes, in nonmedical settings. It can improve their sleep, and consequently their productivity and physical and mental health. To see that EarlySense is life changing is by no means an understatement.

EarlySense



## Analyzing Who is Behind Trump and Hillary

By Avishai (Jacob) Cohen

Unless you have been living under a rock, you have probably been inundated with story after story about the Clinton Foundation, Trump University, and everything else in between. Was Trump University a scam? Is the Clinton Foundation a sham? Some want to know what Hillary knew and when she knew it. Others wonder what Trump knew and when he knew it. Many just want to know who cares. The records of Donald J. Trump and Hillary Clinton have been examined ad nauseum by everyone from CNN to the neighbor's dog sitter. What is often overlooked is the business records of those who closely advise the two candidates. While many advisors have been subject to their own rounds of media scrutiny, it tends to get drowned out by coverage of the principals. Not to downplay the significance of the successes and stumblings of the candidates, the records of those who surround them and serve as their surrogates are just as important. These women and men advise them, speak for them, are their closest confidants and will likely remain in power, formally or informally, if their candidate is elected.

Starting with Trump, the candidate has overcome all the naysayers and all those who said he would never last and secured the Republican Party's nomination. For a long time, Trump eschewed the pricey consultants and election pros who populate every major campaign. He rationalized this strategy in an interview with MSNBC, reporting that he has a "very good brain." Thus, it is prudent to examine the business records of those few who do advise Trump and influence his "very good brain."

One of the top advisors to the Trump campaign has been his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, the scion of a politically connected family that made their money in real estate. Jared has become one of the Donald's top advisors despite having no formal role in the campaign. An Orthodox Jew, Jared has defended Trump from charges of anti-Semitism and closely advised him on Israel and the Jewish community, among other areas. He even helped write the well-received speech Donald gave at March's AIPAC Policy Conference, a gathering of over 18,000 pro-Israel Americans. A graduate of Frisch, Harvard, and NYU, Jared inherited the Kushner family real estate business and later bought the tabloid New York Observer and its associated internet properties. Perhaps Jared's most well known deal was the acquisition of 666 Fifth Avenue, which was then the single most expensive property ever purchased at a cool \$1.8 billion. In an example of his willingness to defend his father-in-law, Jared took to the pages of his newspaper (the New York Observer) and invoked his Holocaust survivor ancestors after one of its staff penned a piece accusing Trump of anti-Semitism. On a different note, Jared placed a bid to acquire the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2012 but ultimately came up short.

In an interesting bit of irony, New Jersey governor Chris Christie, a 2016 presidential contender turned Trump campaign surrogate and top advisor, put Jared's father, Charles Kushner, in prison for two years. This was in Christie's former role as United States Attorney where he prosecuted Charles for the crimes of witness tampering and campaign finance violations. In addition to this criminal penalty, Charles, who has an honorary doctorate from YU, also paid a civil penalty of over \$500,000. A Law & Order episode was even based on this ordeal.

Jared's wife Ivanka, Donald's daughter and close advisor, has had an interesting career of her own. Her primary job is working for her father as an executive in the Trump Organization, but she also

has her own fashion line, published a book and has another book in the works. Ivanka's fashion line is carried at high end retailers such as Nordstrom and grosses over \$100 million per year. Ivanka wore a dress from her line during her speech at the GOP convention, and has worked hard to create an "every woman" image despite her privileged upbringing and lifestyle. Ivanka has come under fire for not paying the interns employed by her personal brand, manufacturing the clothes bearing her name in China, and not offering paid maternity leave to the women who work for her fashion collection. Her

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father has also been critiqued for manufacturing the clothes bearing his name in China, despite the campaign's major focus on cracking down on businesses who export jobs abroad. In her day job at Trump Organization, Ivanka recently pulled off a major coup, acquiring what is now the Trump National Doral, an 800 acre Florida golf resort just outside Miami costing \$150 million to acquire. The resort notably hosted the Doral Open, a PGA Tour event for four decades, among hosting other professional golf events. The Doral is regarded by many as the crown jewel of Trump's collection of golf courses.

The Trump campaign has cycled through three campaign managers, virtually unheard of for a presidential campaign. Trump's latest Manager, Steve Bannon, left as the chairman of the conservative news outlet Breitbart News to take the Trump campaign reins. Bloomberg Businessweek did a cover story on Bannon last year and named him the "most dangerous political operative in America." Bannon's resume includes a stint at Goldman Sachs before leaving to start his own firm called Bannon & Co., which he later sold to French bank Societe Generale. Also present on Bannon's resume is a multi-year

tenure at Goldman, Mnuchin made an estimated \$40 million, before leaving to start a fund called Dune Capital. Mnuchin controversially has close business ties to far-left megadonor George Soros, having served as CEO at a hedge fund backed by Soros. On a similar note, Mnuchin has come under fire from conservatives for his decades of donations to Democrats, including Barack Obama, Al Gore, and Hillary. Mnuchin was briefly a Vice Chairman at hedge fund ESL Investments, which controls Sears. He later became CEO of failed lender IndyMac, re-inventing the firm as OneWest. Finally, Mnuchin served as co-chairman for movie producer Relativity Media, bankrolling the production of hits Avatar and X-Men among others. He also co-produced a number of movies including American Sniper and The Lego Movie.

It is a bit ironic that Trump has surrounded himself with Goldman Sachs alumni, as he has hammered Hillary for her strong ties to the bank, considered the posterchild bank for those who find Wall Street corrupt. During the primary, Trump notoriously went after Ted Cruz, whose wife works for the bank. "I know the guys at Goldman Sachs. They have total, total control over him (Cruz), just like they have total control over Hillary."

The final Trump confidant worth focusing on is his most recent ex-Campaign Manager Paul Manafort. Manafort spent his private sector career as a lobbyist, representing a number of controversial foreign leaders, including a few dictators. For example, Manafort lobbied for a group that has been accused of being a front for Pakistani intelligence, a country allegedly complicit in terrorism. He has also represented an impressive lineup including the Saudi Arabian government, Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, and Congo dictator Mobutu Sese Seko. Manafort's tenure at the Trump campaign ended after new revelations surfaced about his relationship with Viktor Yanukovych, who successfully ran for president of Ukraine and then fled to Russia for safety after being deposed. Moreover, Manafort is alleged to have helped Ukraine secretly funnel money to US lobbying firms, including to a firm co-founded by John Podesta, Hillary's Campaign Chairman. A ledger of secret payments recently discovered in Ukraine appears to show that Manafort was still owed \$12 million, something Manafort denies.

Switching gears to those behind Hillary, one of Hillary's top surrogates is her daughter Chelsea. Chelsea boasts an impressive educational resume, including Washington's elite Sidwell Friends School, Stanford, Columbia and Oxford. There is perhaps no better example than Chelsea of the power family ties can play in making a business career. Post-Stanford, with (at this point) just a bachelor's degree to her name, Chelsea joined elite consultancy McKinsey & Co., where she made as much as colleagues with MBAs despite arguably having less experience. She also spent a few years at NBC News, making over \$26,000 per minute

on air despite having no prior journalism experience. Chelsea enjoyed a stint at hedge fund Avenue Capital, a major backer of Hillary and the Clinton Foundation. Her speaking fee has gone as high as \$65,000, despite a business career which would not seem to be inline with that figure. The morale of the story is if one wants to be successful in business, he or she should consider changing their last name to

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stint in the movie business. He co-produced the 1999 thriller Titus and directed a 2004 film about Ronald Reagan. Bannon's film career predominantly consisted of producing conservative films and documentaries, including a collaboration with Citizens United, the political action committee behind the famous Supreme Court case bearing their name regarding the regulation of campaign spending.

Trump's National Finance Chairman, Steve Mnuchin, has had a similar career to Bannon. Mnuchin worked at Goldman, started a hedge fund, and spent several years in Hollywood. During his

## The Ins and Outs of Index Investing

By Evan Axelrod

Saving and investing should be a top priority for all 20-something year olds. As Yeshiva University and other college students alike work their way through college and enter the workforce, they're going to face the question of what to do with their hard-earned money not spent on daily consumptions. This quandary is not unique to college students. Most individuals, to escape the effects of inflation, choose to invest their money. Whatever one's profession, the consensus logical thing to do with his or her money is to put a portion of it away, watch it continuously grow over time, add to it annually, and experience the magic of compounding. In the 21st century, the public fortunately has many investment options geared towards how much risk they want to take on. While bonds are deemed less risky than stocks, the lower return can push some people who are looking for a higher return to invest in stocks.

The problem many college students and young professionals face in investing is determining which stocks are undervalued and are expected to grow in years to come. The assumption is that only a select few experts might understand why a stock is undervalued or what's driving the growth of a certain stock, due to their strong interest in investing. However, that may no longer be the case. What can help that engineer or doctor in training properly invest is a 20th century innovation, known as the index fund. Specifically, the Exchange-Traded Fund (ETF) has burst onto the scene as offering tremendous opportunity to investors.

An index fund is an instrument that invests in and tracks a group of large stocks such as the S&P 500 (500 largest U.S companies by market capitalization), as opposed to investing in just a few companies. Conceptually, an ETF is the same as an index fund but is more appealing in that it is easily accessible for buying and selling on an exchange like a stock. Conversely, an index fund trades like any other mutual fund, being bought and sold only at the end of each trading day. Just like a stock, an ETF can be bought or sold using a brokerage account. ETFs are essentially the evolutionary product of index funds.

Index funds were invented back in the 1970's to provide investors with an option to invest in mutual funds that don't solely rely on a mutual fund manager's stock-picking skills or expertise. Managers' performances were and still are benchmarked to certain stock indexes, usually the S&P 500. As these managers trailed their benchmarks, often due to the higher fees paid to the manager of the fund, the popularity of index funds surged. This lower cost option provided investors with an opportunity to invest in the market as a whole, while saving money on fees.

One of the major proponents of index funds since their creation has been Burton Malkiel, a long time economics professor at Princeton (and a former Yeshiva University part-time professor). In a book which is now known as an investment classic, *A Random Walk Down Wall Street*, Malkiel campaigns for the average retail investor to stick to investing in index funds. In a bold analogy, he exclaims how a blindfolded monkey could throw darts at the financial section of a news-

paper and select a better portfolio of stocks than an expert. While this may or may not be factually true for mutual fund managers in general, there is a tremendous emphasis being placed on not spending time trying to pick individual stocks. If Malkiel thinks a monkey would form a better portfolio than experts, then certainly for any average investor it's better to buy an index fund.

Malkiel isn't the only strong proponent for individual investors to put their money in an index fund. The king of stock picking himself and subject of my article *Unlocking Buffett's Billions: Understanding his Investment Philosophy*, Warren Buffett, has voiced similar suggestions. In the 2013 annual Berkshire Hathaway letter to investors, Buffett wrote regarding how his money should be managed once he passes away. (He is currently 86.)

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WILLING TO TAKE ON."**

"My advice to the trustee could not be more simple: Put 10% of the cash in short-term government bonds and 90% in a very low-cost S&P 500 index fund. (I suggest Vanguard's.) I believe the trust's long-term results from this policy will be superior to those attained by most investors – whether pension funds, institutions or individuals – who employ high-fee managers."

This quote from Buffett couldn't be more straightforward about his attitude towards index funds. This isn't to say no one is able to pick stocks consistently and beat the benchmarks. However, for the average investor, the time-conscious decision is to allocate most savings into an index fund or ETF.

Although an ETF can track a benchmark just like an index fund, the S&P 500 is just one of the many benchmarks ETFs track. As of 2015, there were 4,396 ETFs globally. ETFs are differentiated by many

characteristics. There are ETFs that track baskets of commodities, fixed-income (bonds), currencies, and more. Stock ETFs track different sized companies, from large-caps, to mid-caps, to small caps. There are even ETFs that utilize investing strategies formerly reserved for hedge funds, such as the ProShares Merger ETF, which tracks a group of companies involved in possible merger deals.

It's easy to get lost in the world of ETFs, as it is in the world of stocks. With so many options to choose from, how should investors know which ETFs to put their money into? If one keeps to Buffett's preference for his own estate, then he or she only needs two ETFs, one for the S&P 500 and one for US Treasuries. For investors looking for diversification (a fancy word to describe adding different types of investments to one's portfolio in order to reduce the potential riskiness of it), ETFs offer many options. For instance, if an investor wants to diversify based on countries, there are ETFs that track each country's main stock index such as the Nikkei for Japan or DAX for Germany. Evidently, ETFs offer much more variability than a standard index fund and might be an easier, more accessible option for college students. While index funds usually require a substantial minimal investment, typically about \$1000 but sometimes as high as \$10,000, ETFs could be bought by the share just like any stock.

Two of the most important investing principles are to be conscious of what one's future financial goals are and to understand oneself in order to gauge how much risk he or she is willing to take on. With the accessibility and cost-effective options that ETFs and index funds have brought to the table over the last 40 years (Vanguard's first index mutual fund launched just about 40 years ago), investors have an opportunity to build an investment portfolio to watch grow for years to come.



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Clinton or Trump for that matter.

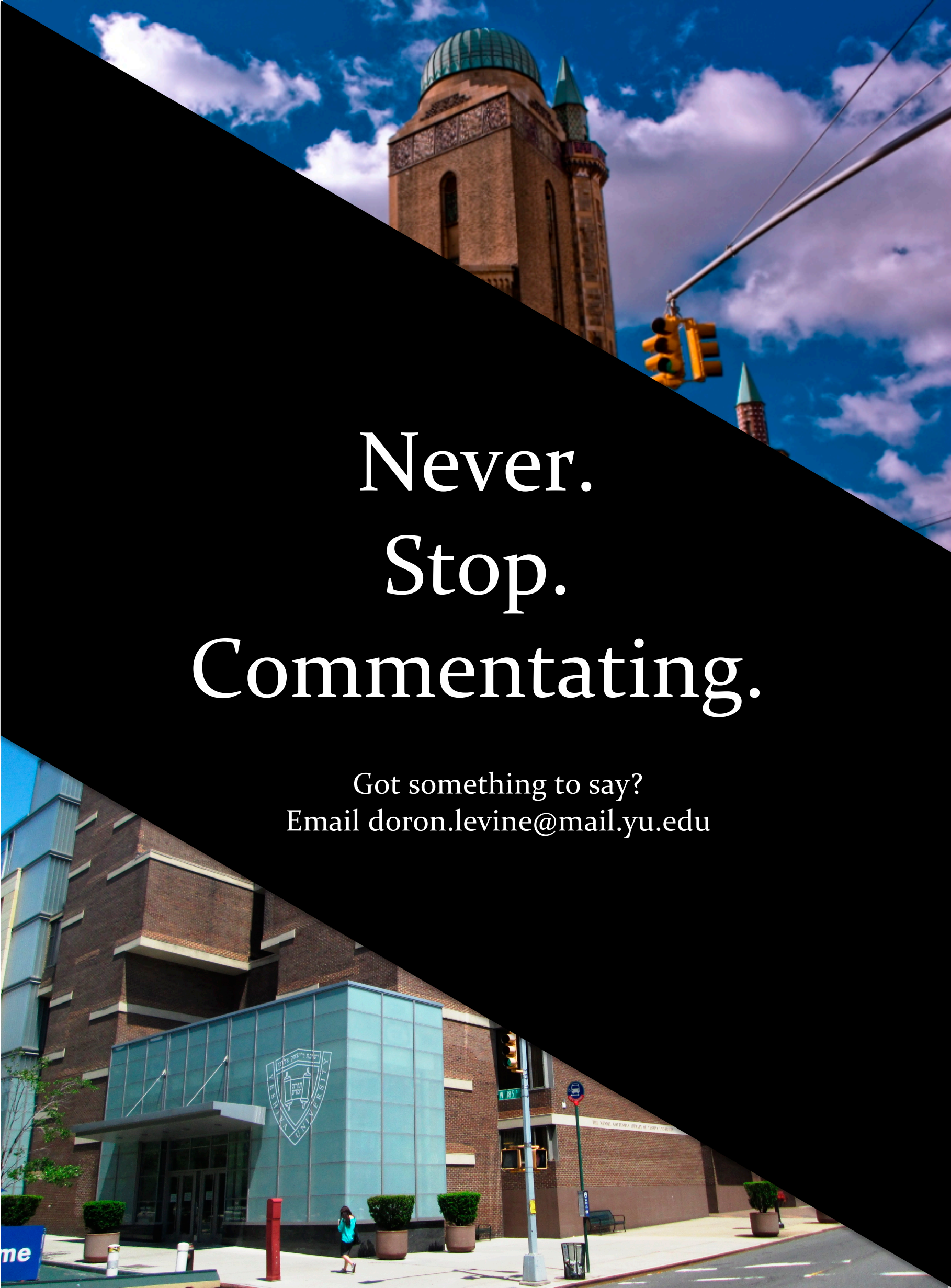
Chelsea is married to Marc Mezvinsky, the son of divorced Jewish former members of Congress. While Mezvinsky does not have as noted of a role in the Clinton campaign as Jared does in the Trump campaign, he is certainly in the thick of things. Mezvinsky's father, Ed, spent 5 years in prison for bank fraud, mail fraud, and wire fraud. Following with the theme of many top Trump surrogates, Marc worked at Goldman Sachs for several years before co-founding hedge fund Eaglevale Partners. Eaglevale opened a fund focused on Greece which Marc pitched and managed, but it shuttered after it lost over 90% of

investor money. The Eaglevale main fund is believed to manage over \$300 million. Goldman Sachs CEO and Clinton donor Lloyd Blankfein was a major investor in the fund.

Analyzing the business backgrounds of Hillary's team, or "Hillaryland", as it has become known, is a quick exercise. The reason being that the bulk of those around her have spent their careers strictly in politics, usually with one of the Clintons. Almost none of her top aides or surrogates have much of a private sector business record to speak of. Hillary herself spent a few years as a private sector lawyer, but has been in nonprofit or political work almost her entire adult life. Hillary is close to a wide range of campaign and Foundation donors, but most do

not speak on her behalf. Her Campaign Chairman, referenced above, co-founded a lobbying firm but has not had a formal role there in years. Others, such as Campaign Manager Robby Mook and Vice Chairwoman Huma Abedin, have never had significant professional private sector employment. Joel Benenson, Hillary's chief strategist, runs a consulting firm that has private sector clients ranging from Uber to Intel to Walgreens, but Benenson has almost no public profile.

Advisors and surrogates matter, more so than perhaps one might imagine. Analysis and critique of their records is important, and there is certainly plenty to evaluate in this campaign.



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