

The COMMENTATOR

The Independent Student Newspaper of Yeshiva College, Sy Syms School of Business, and Yeshiva University

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Issue 4

Mayor of Jerusalem Addresses YU Community Before Receiving Honorary Degree

By Elliot Heller

Dozens of members of the YU community came out to Weisberg Commons on Thursday evening, December 8 to hear brief words from Nir Barkat, the mayor of Jerusalem. Barkat, Jerusalem's mayor since 2008, was introduced by President Joel, who conferred an honorary degree upon the mayor at Sunday's 92nd Hanukkah Convocation and Commencement Ceremony.

"Mayor Barkat was chosen to keynote this year's convocation in celebration of the upcoming 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, and because of his many accomplishments, which complement YU's own commitment to the safety and prosperity of the State of Israel," said Matt Yaniv, YU's Director of Marketing and Communications.

In his remarks, Mr. Barkat spoke of what the holy city means to him, and his optimism for its future.

"For me, making Jerusalem work better is a life mission," Barkat said. "We have to make Jerusalem work for the benefit of all its residents. We have to open up Jerusalem for the benefit of the world to enjoy."

Asked how American college students could best contribute to the city's growth, Barkat highlighted three areas in which he and Harvard Business School professor Michael Porter had determined the city has a competitive advantage that is being underutilized: tourism, health and life sciences, and the hi-tech sector. The mayor stressed that Americans could make significant contributions in the latter two areas.

"The brand of Jerusalem as a destination for people to come and visit is underutilized. New York City has 50 million tourists a year," he said. "Rome has 40 million tourists a year. Now, Jerusalem, with 5 billion people around the world that want to come and visit us – I found it unacceptable that we only have 2 million tourists a year. If Cyprus can have 10 million tourists a year, so can Jerusalem."

SEE BARKAT,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



Students and members of the broader Modern Orthodox community gathered for the annual Medical Ethics Society Conference on December 4.

On Social Justice, Jewish Law and Contemporary Political Discourse

By Rabbi Ozer Glickman

It should go without saying that one of the most sacred and fundamental functions of a university is to advance knowledge and understanding through the exchange of ideas. The Y in YU thankfully does not stand for Yale, which distinguished itself over the past year as the near polar opposite of what a university is intended to be -- at least in the minds of many student activists there and the administrators who coddle them. Watch the video of students drowning out the calm voice of Nicholas Christakis. For them, a safe place means a place where they can censor ideas. Parents contemplating a university for their academically talented child should watch this video, so they know what questions to frame before they make the biggest investment decision of their lives, investing in an asset more precious than the finest jewels -- the mind and soul of a child.

Correspondents write me to ask if there are not limits to open discourse on our campus. One challenged me by asking if Yeshiva University would invite J Street to speak on campus, since many of its ideas and tactics are odious to many on campus. That is not the right question. Yeshiva University did not invite Mr. Shapiro to speak to its students; a student organization did. I seem to recall that other student organizations have invited J Street or other controversial groups from the Left to speak. If my recollection is incorrect, let me assert that I absolutely support the right of stu-

dent groups to sponsor talks by speakers anywhere on the extremes of public acceptability, a continuum which is very broad. Although Shapiro's tone wasn't always ap-

"THOSE WHO WOULD MAINTAIN THAT JUDAISM IS IDENTICAL TO THE PLATFORM OF THE IDEOLOGICAL LEFT MIGHT LISTEN TO THE LECTURE BY BEN SHAPIRO WITH AN OPEN MIND. I THINK HE GOT AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE STORY RIGHT, BUT PERHAPS OMITTED WHAT I HAVE HEREIN EMPHASIZED."

The EDITORIAL

Say What You Wanna Say

By Doron Levine

Here are two questions: Was Ben Shapiro nice? Was Ben Shapiro correct? Upon reflection, it is clear that these two questions are unrelated. One can be correct and nice, correct and not nice, not correct and nice, or not correct and not nice.

This mutual independence applies to propositions that, in some contexts, are plainly insulting. A doctor asks his patient to step onto the scale and proceeds to grossly misread the patient's weight. He gently informs the poor fellow that he is obese, and recommends the Atkins diet. Here the doctor is not correct, but not not nice. He needs no moral rebuke, only better glasses.

But in the past week I have found myself confronted by a perplexing fact. Many have shared their thoughts on Ben Shapiro's evaluation of transgenderism that he expressed in his recent speech on campus; I've heard it said that Ben Shapiro was correct, that Ben Shapiro was incorrect, that Ben Shapiro was not nice, and that Ben Shapiro was not not nice. But here's the rub. With few exceptions, the peo-

"THE ARGUMENT OVER WHETHER BEN SHAPIRO WAS NICE IS A MERE PROXY BATTLE FOR THE ARGUMENT OVER WHETHER HE WAS CORRECT."

ple expressing these opinions fall into one of two categories: they either believe that Ben Shapiro was not correct and not nice, or that Ben Shapiro was correct and nice.

A Mysterious Coincidence. Where are the people who believe that transgenderism is an illness but that Ben Shapiro expressed this fact in a careless and unkind manner? And where are those who think that transgenderism is not an illness but that Ben Shapiro expressed his factually incorrect opinion in a perfectly appropriate tone? I have encountered only a handful of the former and zero of the latter. Ruminating about that for a moment, chew on and relish that flavory fact. Is it not deeply peculiar?

Here we have a typical case of artificial connections between beliefs. We see this often on the political stage – beliefs are accepted as packages and often not considered on their independent merits. The belief that the US government should have less control over whether its citizens purchase firearms is, for some inexplicable reason, tied to the belief that human life begins at a relatively early stage in the development of a fetus. The belief that the economy thrives when people are taxed more is tied to the belief that the government should endorse marriage between people of the same sex is tied to the belief that humans are responsible for the earth's rising temperatures. Bizarre.

In our case, though, the artificial connection between these two beliefs has tended to cloud discussion about one of them. By calling transgenderism an illness, Shapiro proffered a distinct position on the nature of gender that many on our campus agree with and many on our campus disagree with. But most of the criticism of Shapiro that has reached my ears has not revolved around the core substance of his statement. Even the faculty, in their condemnatory letter, shied away from saying that Ben Shapiro was wrong – the closest they got was writing that Shapiro's position "does not reflect current understanding of these issues." They instead chose to focus on his "derision," "disrespect," "public humiliation," and "discrimination" towards transgender people.

But our Mysterious Coincidence suggests that the argument over Ben Shapiro's politeness is a partisan, politi-

cized argument. Correlation may not imply causation, but it is generally considered strong evidence for causation. (In fact, correlation is probably the only sort of empirical evidence that we can bring in support of causation. For this very reason some philosophers actually contend that causation simply is universal, exceptionless correlation.) Perhaps our opinion of whether Shapiro was nice influences our opinion of whether he was correct, but I suspect that the reverse is true – the argument over whether Ben Shapiro was nice is a mere proxy battle for the argument over whether he was correct.

It seems to me that a person's degree of comfort with the tone of Shapiro's statement that "transgender people are unfortunately suffering from a significant mental illness" largely boils down to whether that person believes that transgenderism is an illness. If it is an illness, then Ben Shapiro is valiantly campaigning to open the eyes of blind devotees of the APA who delude themselves into harming a suffering minority; an acerbic tone is necessary, or at least forgivable, when used to further this sort of mission. But if transgenderism is not an illness, then Ben Shapiro is spreading pernicious lies. (Incidentally, the term "illness" is as much evaluative as it is descriptive; an illness is merely a physical condition that we deem to be "bad" for the person experiencing it. Scientists are experts on the descriptive element, but no more qualified than you or me to determine if a given physical condition is "bad" for the person experiencing it.)

For some reason, though, we prefer to shy away from discussing the fundamental point at issue—whether the acceptance of transgenderism is good or bad—and instead shift the topic of discussion to niceness. Would the faculty have written a similar letter if a speaker on campus had mocked opponents of transgenderism as preposterously backward roadblocks to progress? Would they have reacted similarly to a sarcastic roast of alt-right Europhiles who self-identify as white? I doubt it and I doubt it.

The disagreement over "facts don't care about your feelings" is a facade, a clever disguise. Facts are propositions – they don't have mental states, let alone desires or cares. And in the more colloquial sense of "care," the truth-value of a fact does not depend on our feelings (notable exceptions to this rule are facts about how we feel – those, of course, depend on how we feel. Interestingly, a person's gender, according to one position in the transgenderism debate, is actually this sort of fact, the sort that cares about your feelings. To state "facts don't care about your feelings" in response to someone who claims to be female because they feel like a female is to straightforwardly beg the question.). And presumably everyone agrees that some true facts should not be said because they are insulting (e.g. "Quasimodo, you are utterly hideous.").

But it's difficult for critics to explain why they believe Shapiro was wrong; the transgenderism debate boils down to basic assumptions about human nature that are notoriously prickly. Denouncing Shapiro's tone is simpler – it appears less political and appeals to the universally accepted value of not being mean. This deflection shifts attention from a profound question about the nature of gender to the fabulously trivial question of whether a certain political pundit is mean.

Here we might do well to heed the sage advice of Sara Bareilles, "Say what you wanna say." Honesty requires bravery. We all agree that, generally speaking, it is good to be nice, but we all tolerate or even applaud a wee dram of scorn and sarcasm when aimed at beliefs we consider contemptible. The tactic of deflection, of pretending that ideological disagreements reduce to tone rather than substance, obscures the underlying debate and fuddles the dialogue.

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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.



500 W 185th Street
New York, NY 10033
yucommentator.org

1 Hefker Table

Where else in YU can you get chewy, wet gefilte fish? Or a box of raw noodles? Or a bag of half-eaten baby carrots? Or a flier with dating advice?

2 Free Hot Cocoa Outside of Rubín

So random. But oh so kind.

3 KB Carlton

No joke, our beloved Caf guy shares his name with a Texas law firm. Look it up.

4 Chanukah During Reading Week

We don't have to run out of class to light candles. But we also have this added distraction from our studying. But it also coincides with Christmas. Ahhhh not sure if this is up or down!!

5 PB&J

With President Berman recently elected and President Joel still in power, it is time to start using the nickname PB&J: "Presidents Berman and Joel." It's peanut butter jelly time, folks!

6 Snow Days

They're really awesome and better happen. No more of this snowing on Shabbos and melting right away business.

7 Free SOY Shabbos

People are speculating that Rav Schachter will dress up as Santa Claus for the occasion. You heard it here first.

7 UP 7 DOWN

1 Commentator Starting Controversies

Rumors have been circulating that The Commentator told that kid to wear the Confederate flag, and invited Ben Shapiro to speak, in order to spawn disagreements and increase readership. We can neither confirm nor deny these theories.

2 Dank

This word means "damp" or "musty," nothing else. End of discussion!

3 That Dress

Ambiguously colored dress appears on the internet and sparks ridiculous fights between friends about colors, before proceeding to be forgotten about forever.

4 Elevator Conversations

You know that thing when you start a conversation with someone right as the elevator door is closing between the tw...

5 Down

Pithy way of indicating interest in participating. Also describes a layer of fine feathers in fowl.

6 "Calling All"

Whenever this is a ystud subject line, I automatically stop reading.

7 #Pj'sLastShabbat

"He's excited to spend his last shabbat with YOU." That's an actual quote from a promotion for the recent Senior Shabbaton. Awfully foreboding...

Management Students Attend Special Presentation on China

By Elliot Heller

In a unique, coed event, all three intro-level management classes of the Sy Syms School of Business came together Wednesday evening in Weisberg Commons for a special session about China and its role in the global environment. Professor Andrew Geller, Visiting Clinical Professor of Management and director of YU's Executive MBA program, spoke in depth about issues facing China today, its role in the global marketplace, and the future of the U.S.-China relationship.

The lecture was inspired by the two Executive MBA trips to China that Dr. Geller led in 2014 and 2016. Dr. Geller spoke on a wide array of topics in the talk, ranging from the nation's push to increase its GDP via mass urbanization, to the uncertain future of the Chinese auto industry (due to a shift toward used car purchases, a recent innovation in the country) to the unintended consequences (large retiree-worker ratio, danger of under-population in the long term) of its controversial one-child-per-family policy, which began to be phased out in 2015 after over three decades of implementation.

"Understanding the global marketplace is a key challenge for managers, and a key variable in this global marketplace is China," said professor Steven Nissenfeld, Clinical Professor of Management who teaches the other management class on the Wilf campus. "[Professor Geller's] presentation offered the students a unique opportunity to hear firsthand insights from experts and business leaders in China who met with members of the Sy Syms executive MBA program. We are indeed delighted to have access to this type of information and insight for our undergraduate students."

Explaining the motivation for holding the event, Dr. Geller remarked, "Dr. Nissenfeld and I were just thinking about it because I was going to do something in my class about China, [Dr. Nissenfeld] was going to do something about global, if not China per se, and I said 'hold on a second, we have all this stuff, that's really interesting...and it's real stuff coming directly from China, it's not just reading a book about it...why shouldn't we do it and why shouldn't we do it for all four of the classes that are going on?"

Moshe Ovadia, a sophomore accounting major, thought the presentation was "eye-opening." He said it changed his perspective: "I thought China was at the top of the global market and always will be; now, with the presentation, I'm having second thoughts."

Beren Campus Welcomes Library Renovations

By Eric Shalmon

Renovations at the Hedi Steinberg Library on the Beren Campus created an open study space for students out of what were previously stacks of periodicals. Featuring individual cubicles, lounge seating, and group study rooms, the renovations on the lower level of the library were the result of student requests for more study space on the Beren Campus. Zahava Schwartz of the Beren Campus SLC, in cooperation with Head Librarian Edith Lubetski, conducted a student survey to determine many of the design decisions. The transformation was made possible by a gift from the Mitrani Foundation and the support of Dr. Karen Bacon, Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

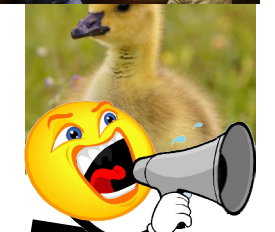
The renovations have been generally well accepted. "Even though it's smaller than the [Washington] Heights [Gottesman] Library, the new area in the resource library is spacious, clean, quiet, and an easy place to study," explained Ruthie Klein, a Stern College junior. "It's a huge step up from the old library and I choose to study there when I need to get a lot of work done." Miriam Pearl Klahr, a senior at Stern College, said, "It used to be a rakish room but now it's bright, with nice chairs similar to the seating in Heights Lounge, and a few small study rooms."

Still, the new area seems cramped and loud. "It's definitely a great improvement," continued Ms. Klahr, "but there still isn't enough space for everyone who wants to work on group projects." Hudi Owrutsky, a Stern College junior who frequently studies in the Beren library, commented, "because the study rooms aren't soundproof, I find it noisy and crowded. I like the other parts of the library better because they are quieter and more spacious." The aim of the renovations was to address student desires for more reading and study space. Although there are some complaints about the lack of soundproof rooms and cramped space, clearly the rooms are being used and the project has been fruitful.

Site Stats
December 2016

Title	Views
Home page / Archives	90,127
Racism in the Orthodox Community	9,244
Letter to the Editor	7,787
The Confederate Flag You Never Knew	6,542

DANK



Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

We the undersigned are extremely disturbed that on the night of Monday December 5, during a talk hosted by a Yeshiva University student group, Ben Shapiro mocked transgender people-- and drew applause and laughter from a packed audience in Lamport Auditorium. Shapiro is not an expert on transgender experience or mental health, and his opinion does not reflect the current understanding of these very serious issues, in which people's lives are literally at stake. Public humiliation of others has no place at any university, much less one whose motto includes the word Torah. We are surprised that we need to remind this university community that Jewish tradition condemns the derision of another human being. Moreover, while we encourage our students to seek out diverse opinions, we also hope they would stand up against discrimination and disrespect.

As university faculty, we are committed to protecting the dignity and the safety of all—and to speaking out when the vulnerable among us are threatened. We call on the University administration to join us in our condemnation of this behavior.

Sincerely,
 Silke Aisenbrey, Sociology
 Jamie Aroosi, Political Science
 Barbara Blatner, English
 Anna Lisa Cohen, Psychology
 Gabriel Cwilich, Physics
 Jonathan Dauber, Jewish Studies
 Steven Fine, Jewish Studies
 Lauren Fitzgerald, English
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 Samuel Schneider, Jewish Studies
 Liesl Schwabe, English
 Josefa Steinhauer, Biology
 William Stenhouse, History
 Elizabeth Stewart, English

To the Editor:

I would like to echo the concerns shared by members of the faculty in today's letter regarding the December 5 student-sponsored talk. A university should and must offer diverse viewpoints and opinions, but let there be no mistake – this university is committed to civility and the sanctity of all people. This applies to our admissions and employment process, as well as our daily interactions in and outside of the classroom.

Sadly, the current political climate is beset with divisiveness and personal attacks rather than respectful dialogue. YU is committed to fostering an environment where ideas can be exchanged in a meaningful, productive and civil way. We can always agree to disagree but without exception, it must be done with respect.

Richard M. Joel
 President
 Bravmann Family University Professor
 Yeshiva University

Dear Editor,

After reading Akiva Schick's recent opinion piece "The Need for Varying Perspectives," I felt both impressed by his argument and compelled by his logic. While the issue of coeducation in an Orthodox Jewish setting is justifiably and appropriately complex on a variety of fronts, I felt that Schick's piece was a sensible and valuable contribution to this much broader discussion as he adeptly articulated one important and relevant consideration to the topic. I (and Schick) am not commenting on the halakhic or hashkafic issues involved in having men and women studying together in the same classroom at Yeshiva University. These are serious issues where the guidance of the gedolei ha-poskim of our community is needed.

But after reading Jordyn Kaufman's response, I was left both confused and shocked. My confusion derived primarily from what can only have been a misreading and misrepresentation of Schick's point on her behalf. My shock, however, was a result of her apparent denial of the necessity and benefits of having other perspectives in the classroom and how having multiple genders together would only help that cause. Admittedly, the shocked feeling I possessed also came in part from the frankly inappropriate ad hominem style of her response. What I thought could only have been logically interpreted as a sincere formulation of the benefits of having

other perspectives in the classroom, Kaufman seemed to have interpreted as a selfish and derogatory attempt to use women in a way that would be disadvantageous for the women and solely benefit the male students.

Furthermore, Kaufman chalks up the issues Schick describes to flaws in the male students as opposed to objective, common, and expected intellectual challenges in many settings presented by a lack of diversity. Experiences, and the way literature informs our experiences, are valuable to any discussion, whether it's in a class or a coffee shop. To claim that merely through a priori reflection one can somehow intuit opposing perspectives assumes that humans are like robots, and that our interpretation of texts and learning is something that only incorporates strict logic. While Kaufman accurately notes the importance of close readings, the extrapolations each individual makes are inevitably tied to their life experiences.

Finally, I applaud Schick for opening a discussion that is critical for us to be having in our community. As such, I think it is important we revisit Schick's piece to re-evaluate the insightful point that he makes and to help clarify the benefits of varying perspectives.

Avraham Wein
 Yeshiva College '18

To the Editor:

I am not a follower of Ben Shapiro, but after having carefully reviewed his presentation of the transgender issue (here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXCGYROH1EA>, starting at approximately 19:00) during his recent appearance at YU, I would like to briefly speak to the condemnatory letter from YU faculty.

Whether or not one agrees that transgenderism reflects mental illness (such was the position of the American Psychiatric Association until 2013), why is Mr. Shapiro not entitled to express his opinion on the matter in the context of open political discourse? Mr. Shapiro's addressing a transgender biological male debate opponent who identified as a woman as "Sir" was in the course of an ideological debate about transgenderism; it was not an insult hurled at a passerby, but was an ideological statement in a spirited debate on the topic. Mr. Shapiro's remarks in the presentation at YU did not approach the level of personal vitriol as described by the faculty letter, but were a candid exercise of free speech on an ideological issue. Readers should please listen themselves. The faculty letter's depiction of Mr. Shapiro's remarks was ex-

aggerated and conflated personal interactions with ideological debate, and constituted a form of censorship.

More importantly, although the Torah of course requires our interpersonal conduct to be respectful and sensitive, there is an elephant in the room: Halacha expressly forbids the type of intimacy and so many other actions and attitudes associated with transgenderism (such as cross-dressing and all acts of same-sex sensual affection -- not to mention the Torah's value statement about same-sex intimacy). Were the faculty letter to have acknowledged this, yet stated that Mr. Shapiro should have expressed his views in a softer tone, it would be understandable. However, referring to one's stance on transgenderism as part of a spectrum of "diverse viewpoints," failing to acknowledge the Torah's controlling position on the matter, is not acceptable.

Avrohom Gordimer
 CSL '96
 RIETS '93
 YC '89

To the Editor:

I cannot respond to the entire tape of Ben Shapiro's presentation and I generally avoid signing collective declarations written by others. Yet it would be shameful and mortifying to me and to what I believe in if the absence of my name from the faculty letter of protest were interpreted as condoning the substance of his remarks.

"There is death and life in the power of the tongue" (Mishle 18:21). To make cheap irresponsible insult comedy out of serious, painful questions is as degrading to those who propagate and encourage it as it is to the targets. That such language is tolerated and even applauded unthinkingly underlines the pervasive impact of the most vulgar tendencies of our secular entertainment culture. The Ribbonno shel Olam deserves better from us and so do our fellow human beings.

Thank God students of Torah at Yeshiva University have the opportunity to study Torah, to encounter wholesome religious personalities and thus to elevate our speech and thought as is appropriate to benei Torah.

Shalom Carmy

BARKAT, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

“So, we have defined what we call the culture tours and business cluster. We market Jerusalem as a place where kings and prophets walked, where you can come to the holy sites, and to the religious sites, and to the archaeology and history, but also complement that with culture, and shows and significant fun when people come to our city. And we’re scaling very nicely. There are lots of opportunities in that framework.”

The mayor was equally optimistic about the recent boom in hi-tech the city has experienced. “[W]e realize that we are very powerful, and have a lot of potential, in health life sciences and hi-tech,” he said. “As a hi-tech entrepreneur, I know the power of the Hebrew University, and the different colleges we have. Hebrew U is top in the world in in generic research in health life sciences, top ten in mathematics and computer science, yet we weren’t keeping talent in the city. So we created a very interesting ecosystem for entrepreneurs. Time magazine 2015 defined Jerusalem as the number one emerging tech city in the world. We grew from 250 companies less than four years ago, to over 600 companies in Jerusalem, and we’re scaling at a rate of over 120 a year. Now a lot of those opportunities are young start-ups, young companies... We’re creating that ecosystem for young companies to become successful. And I think they need lots of skilled labor, lots of skilled management, people that understand the U.S. market, I think it comes with an advantage.”

Asked how we handles the diverse and often feuding factions that live in the city, he responded “carefully,” in jest, before elaborating: “If you deeply understand that we must live together, even sometimes when there are conflicts, if the philosophy is ‘okay, how do we create a relationship and work together,’ rather than have one party win and the other party lose. Because if you start off with one party losing and one winning, next round it’s the other way around, and then it’s just bashing each other and you end up in lose-lose. In game theory, if you learn game theory, when you start off with a win-lose relationship, zero sum game, eventually everyone loses. And so by consistently seeking solutions, mediating conflicts, you gain trusts of the different constituencies, and if you trust that you really mean, and you’re really seeking solutions designed from that position, you have a much, much better chance of succeeding. Another thing I want to mention is that, in one way, shape, or form economic growth has something to do with it. Because if the pie is shrinking, and the economy is not doing well, then people tend to –

for their survival, for their basic needs – they tend to fight over [a] shrinking pie. And if you cannot get the growth there, for the benefit of all people – and unfortunately ours is a city that was not growing at the pace it should, as a matter of fact it became poorer and poorer – then the dynamics are negative, and positive economics contribute to easier solutions.”

“So now with the city scaling in the last 8 years, I’ve doubled the mix of the budget from 3.5 billion shekels to over 7 billion shekels, if you take the total investments in our city. And that creates a very different atmosphere. It helps mediate tensions. Last but not least, you need to have a customer-centered approach, meaning when I meet the local leaders of the ultra-orthodox sect, you really have to open up your eyes and ears and understand what they need. Then you go to the secular and the national religious and the Muslim and the Christian communities. Turns out that if you come and help them live their life their way, it helps mediate tension. And sometimes there could be conflicts, but at least let’s help people live their life their way in their communities...it dramatically decreases tension and creates trust, as I said earlier. So it’s probably a combination of gaining people’s trust, understanding that there’s room for everyone, let them live their way, mediate tension, create economic growth – each one of these little strategies helps us coexist in our city.”

When a questioner asked for the mayor’s thoughts on a recent article in the New York Times Magazine highlighting the poor living conditions of one of Jerusalem’s Arab neighborhoods, he was quick to defend his government.

“Unfortunately, the Palestinian refugees, nobody wants to settle in the Arab world, nobody cares about them, nobody’s even thinking how to take those refugees, and settle them, and help them, like we do to our Jewish people. We have 60,000 of those, in Jerusalem...in my mind they’re political prisoners of the political situation between the Palestinians and the Israelis. If the Arabs wanted to solve the problem then they would start settling 5,000 them in different Arab countries, maybe in some of the Arab towns in the west bank, and take care of the children, and the people around.”

“So what we do is because of security we have a security fence to defend the Jewish country and Jerusalem. That fence, the security fence, is there because they’re very violent. And what we do on a daily basis is we pass the majority of the kids on the other side to the city of Jerusalem and give them the best education we can and we give them the best jobs we can, and the best hospitals in

the world, much better than they have in Ramallah and anywhere else in the Arab world. So whatever we can do to ease the pain of the Arabs living in Jerusalem, those refugees, we will do everything we can.”

The mayor also said that he supported the right to Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount, that he considered a building freeze for Jews east of the green line to be an act of discrimination, and that in order to make sure that Jerusalem will always be “the Jewish capital of the Jew-

“FOR ME, MAKING JERUSALEM WORK BETTER IS A LIFE MISSION”

ish state,” he would not support the prospect having a Muslim mayor of the city.

Many students were pleased with the mayor’s remarks.

“It was wonderful to hear such optimistic words from Mayor Barkat,” said Maxwell Charlat, a first-semester biology major. The mayor described some of the amazing economic, social and cultural advancements in Jerusalem since he was first elected in 2008. Barkat is hopeful that Jerusalem will continue to flourish and grow into the thriving capital that Israel deserves.”

Math and computer science major Shalom Azar concurred. “I was very impressed by Nir Barkat’s points on having the right for Jews to build throughout Israel. Whether one believes the two-state solution is the best solution or not, we cannot ask someone what their race is to give them a building permit. No place in the world has that law.”

Others were not as impressed. “While he spoke about improving the city, I was disappointed that he did not cite examples of the challenges he faces as mayor and how he approaches them,” said Ari Rosman, a sophomore at Lehman College who lives in Washington Heights and attended the speech.

After serving in the paratroopers and fighting in the First Lebanon War, Barkat earned a bachelor’s degree in computer science from Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and worked in the high-tech sector for the next fifteen years, before getting involved in philanthropy. In 1999, he and his wife, Beverly, invested in the Snunit Center for the Advancement of Web Based Learning, a non-profit organization that aims to improve online education for elementary and junior-high school aged students throughout Israel. He lives in Jerusalem with his family.



RAFT Hosts Rabbi Klapper and Prof. Rynhold Discussion on Jewish Law and Morality

By Eric Shalmon

On Monday, November 28th, RAFT (Religious Approaches to Faith and Theology) hosted a discussion between Rabbi Aryeh Klapper, Dean of the Center for Modern Torah Leadership, and Dr. Daniel Rynhold, Associate Professor in Modern Jewish Philosophy at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies. The speakers proposed practical modes of dealing with the challenges in faith that may arise when Jewish law collides with an individual's moral compass.

Rabbi Klapper presented eight methods for dealing with a situation in which there seems to be a con-

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tradition between Halacha and ethics. After Rabbi Klapper presented each group of methods, Dr. Rynhold responded with his critique.

Rabbi Klapper presented eight modes of dealing with the challenge, each with its advantages and pitfalls. Various elements differentiated the modes he presented, including humility, the recognition that God's laws are sometimes incomprehensible, acceptance of contradiction, and the overall understanding that G-d's law still requires obedience. Several great scholars inspired some of Rabbi Klapper's models, including Rav Hutner and Rashbam; philosophers, such as Averroes, inspired other models.

Professor Rynhold pointed out the philosophical scruples and implications of the various methods. He also said he had to withhold some details of some of his responses because they were based on the content of a forthcoming book by David Schatz, the Ronald P. Stanton University Professor of Philosophy, Ethics,

and Religious Thought.

The presentation was generally very well accepted. "Rabbi Klapper had a refreshing, systematic approach to an area in which most people follow their emotions without thinking them through," expressed Yaakov Stone. "He presented a series of approaches that allowed for serious philosophical discussion." Avi Hoffman agreed: "It was great, and really interesting." He reported that he doesn't usually go to "these events, but this seemed to be a really good one, especially based on the number of attendees."

However, not everyone liked the mode of Rabbi Klapper's presentation. "Although the ideas were presented well," opined Aharon Mirlas, "the arguments used were highly apologetic and did not represent an honest approach to the religion."

Every seat was filled in Furst Hall 535, the location of the discussion. Aryeh Laufer, SOY Vice President of IBC and one of RAFT leaders who organized the event, said, "We are trying to make the Torah programming more accessible to everyone and this is

one of the ways we have opened it up. The room was filled, so students clearly have an interest in this aspect of programming." Michael Shavolian, another organizer, voiced his take on the discussion: "These are very complicated issues and justice can't be given to them in just one session," he explained. "However, it was a discussion that provoked thought and, judging by the number of people who stayed behind to ask questions, it was a success."

Still in its first year, RAFT is a student group that aims to promote discussion of Orthodox theology at YU. Benny Aivazi, one of RAFT's founders, said RAFT participants are generally "a group of students who are interested in creating a forum for discussing the major questions pertaining to Orthodox Judaism and having them addressed from an Orthodox perspective." He described the group's mission as creating "a space for discussion where we can seriously engage with all kinds of questions in a respectful and sincere way."



Writing-Intensive Courses Mandatory for New Students

By Judah Stiefel

A new writing-intensive course requirement will be added for students who have joined the school in the past year, including those who attended the post-Pesach program. The writing-intensive initiative will not add a class to the YU core requirement but rather will require students to take one core course which will be taught with a writing-focused orientation. These classes will be available within many of the core disciplines.

The courses will be designed to improve students' critical reading and writing skills. "How writing works within each discipline will be specifically framed," said Dean Jacobson, who is heading this writing-intensive initiative along with Professor Leisl Schwabe, Lecturer in English. The classes will also aim to further students' writing skills beyond what they gained from First Year Writing. Professor Schwabe said, "Writing needed to be foundational. It allows students to learn, re-learn, and evaluate. A student equipped with the ability to read and write has the power to grow on his or her own."

This writing-intensive course initiative is actually not new. When the current core structure was formulated there was a dual writing requirement of First Year Writing and an intensive seminar on writing within distinct disciplines. However, with YU's financial troubles came troubles for the writing department as the department lost funding for

writing lecturers. The administration decided against the importing of part-time professors, and the writing seminar was scrapped.

Upgrading the core is a big deal. Despite questions aimed towards the structure of the core, the Yeshiva Col-

"THE CLASSES WILL NOT ONLY FOCUS ON THE SUBJECT MATTER INVOLVED BUT ALSO THE NUANCES AND STYLES OF THE WRITING OF THAT DISCIPLINE."

lege core curriculum is in line with national standards for liberal arts colleges. "The current core was built by years of dialogue," says Professor Schwabe. Now that the school is finally able to re-implement writing-focused courses, the core is providing students with a wholesome basis in liberal arts education. The writing-intensive course is intended to enhance students' abilities to harness the knowledge they've attained from various courses and subjects and apply it.

The instructors for these writing-intensive courses were chosen on a volunteer basis. Examples of just a few of the available classes are Professor Aaron Koller's History of the

Alphabet, Professor Lauren Fitzgerald's class titled Global, the class Jews in Medieval Spain, and Professor Paul Glassman's class titled Modernist Impulse.

The classes will not only focus on the subject matter involved but also the nuances and styles of the writing of that discipline. They will answer questions such as, how does writing affect the evolution of this field? How has each discipline affected the writing that accompanies it? What can students learn about this writing style that they can use to improve their own writing both stylistically and qualitatively? The assignments in these courses will mainly take the form of papers, essays, and participation in online forums.

Professor Schwabe said that not all Yeshiva College classes were designed to be writing-intensive because that there is a balance to be maintained between the information of the subject matter and the writing focus. Nonetheless, it's beneficial for students approach teachers and engage them in writing nuances related to their material.

Dean Jacobson wants students to understand that, "anyone who can write well always has an advantage." This applies to the professional, cultural, and academic fields and to our own daily lives. Reading can be a key that opens up a world of knowledge, and it is important for students to be able to access this. Likewise, writing is a medium through which students can share their own thoughts and ideas.

Ben Shapiro Bashes the Left, Ignites Political Conversation on Campus

By Noam Feifel

Thunderous applause and a standing ovation welcomed conservative public speaker Ben Shapiro to the Wilf Campus's Lamport Auditorium on Monday night, December 5, for a student-run event that garnered a level of attention and scrutiny some have deemed historic for Yeshiva University.

Invited by YU's College Republicans Club, the political commentator, author, attorney, and talk show host addressed a variety of contemporary societal issues in America.

Shapiro drew a huge crowd, as around 700 students, alumni, and administrators filled Lamport Auditorium, buzzing with anticipation for the contentious speaker to emerge onstage. The crowd was packed with both men and women, many of whom made the trip up from the downtown Beren Campus for the event.

A building on the Wilf campus rarely sees as much security as it did at the event. The event was also streamed online through Young America's Foundation, a conservative youth organization that helped make the entire event possible.

Before Shapiro spoke, Yossi Hoffman, President of the Yeshiva College Republicans Club, graced the stage. "While this isn't our first event of the semester," he noted, "it's definitely our biggest."

It sure was, and all sorts of students were motivated to come hear the speaker for a wide variety of reasons.

Elliot Fuchs, a member of the executive board of the YU College Republicans, followed Mr. Hoffman, and spoke about Shapiro's character. "Ben is an intelligent, engaging and entertaining speaker. Shapiro is not too much older than us and most of his employees are our age, so he and his team set an incredible example for students like us."

While many who attended agreed with the views of the young political analyst, others went to broaden their political perspective. Miriam Einhorn, President of YU's College Democrats Club, said, "being a liberal, I went to the event to hear a different perspective than mine on the political spectrum. I went not exactly to challenge my views but to hear and understand the conservative side of things."

Others, like Sy Syms junior Shimmy Borgen, showed up merely because Shapiro identifies as a Modern Orthodox Jew. Borgen was curious to see how someone of such an orientation would approach the topics up for discussion.

Some students were very familiar with Shapiro and came with the intent to pose a question to the Daily Wire's editor-in-chief at the end of his speech, while others came out of pure curiosity with no previous knowledge of the speaker. Still others admitted that they simply came because Shapiro is extremely entertaining, and they were looking for a good show.

During his speech, Shapiro primarily focused on the country's contemporary state, boldly stating, "America – our social fabric is gone." He argued that the mainstream left movement has a backwards idea of what humans are, what rights they have within society, and what their responsibility is to their nation. These views, he contended, are responsible for

destroying America's social fabric, the figurative glue that holds the country together, ultimately preventing it from functioning as a culturally rich and socially cohesive community.

He criticized the leftist community for habitually faulting a "flaw in the system," rather than putting the burden of blame on individual people, when a societal problem arises. He applied this view emphatically to the notion of "white supremacy." He attempted to debunk the claim that institutional racism is holding back people of color from thriving in society and elevating lighter skinned people to better lifestyles and opportunities.

His criticism continued as he condemned the left's ideology for putting too much stock in people's emotions and political correctness instead of dealing with matters in an objective fashion. He mentioned his patented phrase, "facts don't care about your feelings," numerous times throughout the evening.

Perhaps the most controversial moment of the evening occurred when Shapiro discussed his personal frustrations with micro aggressions, specifically with those regarding transsexuality. He mocked the media's portrayal of celebrity and former athlete Caitlyn Jenner, perhaps the most famous transgender figure, as a national hero and savior. He belabored an instance on CNN headline news when he had an unpleasant interaction with a transgender person. These comments were met with a raucous round of applause from the audience. "My perspective on transgenderism is pretty clear," Shapiro stated. "Transgender people are unfortunately suffering from a significant mental illness that is deeply harmful."

However, Shapiro's words came much to the dismay of many students in attendance, whose displeasure was drowned out by the applause of the larger crowd. Sruly Heller, a YU alum, felt deeply disturbed by Shapiro's comments on gender dysphoria. "I thought his treatment of transgender issues was the grossest manifestation possible of a total paucity of menschlichkeit," said the former student.

Elliot Heller, a Yeshiva College junior in attendance, reacted similarly. "My favorite part," he said with irony, "was when he talked about the importance of being a mensch, before bragging about calling a transgender woman 'sir,' claiming that not everyone is deserving of respect, and declaring that as long as something is true, it can't be offensive."

While his comments irked some, to others the crowd's reaction was even worse. Stern College junior Rachel Lelonek commented, "I was not surprised by many of the things Ben Shapiro said because I am familiar with his borderline alt-right views. What surprised me what the cheering and laughing that came from the audience, especially from the male audience, following his bigoted remarks about the LGBTQ community – especially individuals who identify as transgender."

Shapiro encouraged YU students to avoid the errors of leftist political thought by practicing decency towards all people and accepting personal responsibility to improve America's broken social fabric.

After his speech, Shapiro held a lengthy question and answer session for the students in attendance, during which he fielded questions on societal matters

ranging from abortion laws, drug-related activities and consequences, racial discrimination, and more. At times he even offered insight into how Judaism views those topics.

Shapiro has seen no shortage of controversy during his tours at college campuses. Earlier this year, the conservative pundit was banned from speaking at DePaul University in Chicago, and he has been greeted with a great deal of resistance at other universities across the country, most notably University of Wisconsin-Madison, California State, and Penn State. Nationwide, many have dubbed Shapiro a bully, racist, bigot, homophobe, alt-rightist, and more, and his presence as a political figure has rarely been taken lightly.

While there were no violent protests on the Wilf Campus after Shapiro finished speaking, plenty of dissenting opinions emanated from the crowd. While the applause for some of Mr. Shapiro's comments was loud, a number of students opposed what he said in entirety, and some left Lamport Auditorium with mixed feelings about the event.

"My reaction to the event is twofold," said Kira Paley, a Stern College student in her first semester. "I'm impressed with many of the YU College Republicans for running the event so efficiently and for ensuring that most people got a chance to ask questions. Hate speech, however, does not call for thunderous applause and laughter, and I am ashamed that many of those who responded this way identify with YU."

Others, such as YC Senior Ari Marder, expressed that while he usually leans to the left on certain issues, he appreciated Shapiro's perspectives and willingness to discuss these issues in such an open forum.

Still, many of those in attendance shared a quite favorable view of Shapiro and his brazen statements. David Raden, a Yeshiva College sophomore who said he "ditched" his lab out of excitement for hearing Shapiro, lauded the speaker's lecture after it concluded. "Ben Shapiro represents something amazing within this liberal nation we have, and he fights for the truth. I also think he is a real mensch and intends to educate people for the betterment of society. He made a great impact tonight."

Despite the controversy among students about Shapiro's views, many agreed that the event was valuable as a forum for starting conversation on campus.

"The opportunity to gather both conservative and liberal identifying people into the same room for a discussion was very inspiring," observed Borgen. "Everyone had the right intention in mind, and it was awesome to see all the students being respectful, regardless of political associations."

Some have said that they hope the YU College Democrats organize a similar event of their own, showcasing a speaker who represents more liberal viewpoints and ideals to the same YU community that heard this ideology criticized by Shapiro.

YU College Republicans President Yossi Hoffman opened the event by saying, "It's okay to have differences of opinion." Mr. Shapiro's speech proved that YU contains exactly that: a student body of diverse thought and opinion, one that can't be generalized with a single statement or label.



Subaba: Raising the Bar for Washington Heights Restaurants

By Joshua Zirman

In the 2016 spring semester, a flashy green sign went up on Amsterdam Avenue near 187th Street, and there was a buzz around campus about the opening of a new restaurant. Students were used to using words like “greasy, unhealthy, and dirty” when referencing the restaurants on the YU campus. At times, they felt that they were spoken to rudely by employees and that they were rushed to leave the restaurant upon finishing their meal. This is exactly how Daniel Elam, owner of Subaba and YU graduate, felt in his time in Washington Heights. Said Elam, “I was one of those kids who always ate out at restaurants but I never felt warm and welcomed when I was there.” He decided to take matters into his own and to open a restaurant of his own, Subaba. With the opening of Subaba, students have noticed a difference. They have changed those adjectives to “clean, healthy, and tasty”, and feel at home in Subaba. “Our goal is to offer the best quality and healthy food to students and also offer a place for students to do their work, study, or just hang out with their friends,” explained Elam. “There are places like this in every other college campus, there should be one here too.”

The food sets the tone at Subaba. The management claims that they are not trying to be just another Israeli-styled restaurant. In fact, the owners of Golan and Subaba are friends and don’t consider themselves to be directly competing against each other. Elam described the restaurant as “a kosher version of Subway, with healthier options and the highest quality kosher meat.” Sandwiches can be made in subs or wraps and whole wheat options are available. Student-favorite dishes, which include the Bisili Schnitzel and the Tasa Subaba, can be mixed with a plethora of different toppings and sauces, with every order being a build-your-own style sandwich. The best meat on the market is used, and the chicken is cooked on the spot to ensure the highest quality of food for customers. There are also a slew of different build-your-own-salad options, with green options of lettuce, kale, arugula, and spinach. Subaba is committed to offering students healthy, tasty options at highly competitive prices for their customers. Junior Boruch Gralnik said “what has impressed me the most

with Subaba has been the combination of quality food and a stellar customer experience.”

Subaba also wants to raise the bar of the overall restaurant experience offered to customers. Subaba’s delayed opening was partially due to the renovations Elam wanted to make to create the best atmosphere for YU students. There is Wi-Fi open for students to use for work as well as 4 outlets and USB charging stations next to every booth so students can charge their devices while eating. Furthermore, Elam plans on unveiling student lunch and dinner specials in the near future to help create the best value for customers. Speaking of prices, Subaba’s prices are in line if not cheaper than its competition in the Heights. Elam stressed the importance of being a restaurant that always has the students in mind; something that wasn’t avail-

able to him during his time at YU.

To the question of whether or not Subaba will be joining with YU and allowing students to pay with their Caf cards, Elam said “of course we want to be on the Caf card. We want to work with students in any way we can.” The holdup has been on the University side, as they have had difficulty adding another restaurant onto the Caf card. Elam expects Subaba to be on the card by the end of the month.

Overall, students want Subaba to succeed, because students want a place that they feel a connection to and a management team that they know will have their backs no matter what. While still in its fledgling days, we can already thank them for setting the tone for all campus restaurants, and hope that the care they show their customers will radiate the rest of Amsterdam Avenue.



Longtime Caf Personnel Member Regina Eli Departs YU for New Position

By David Rubinstein

Regina Eli, longtime staff member at the Furman Dining Hall, completed her last day of work at YU on Friday, December 16th. She is moving to Maryland, where she will work on the staff of a hotel in Silver Spring.

Ms. Eli, endearingly called Regina by the hundreds of students who appreciate her sincere smile and cheerful attitude, came to Yeshiva over eleven years ago when a temp agency connected her with a position at YU. She stayed on staff, switching from working in stock to working as a cashier, a move which Regina described as her fondest memory from her time in the Caf.

“I’ve enjoyed working in the Caf,” she said. “It’s had its ups and downs, but I enjoyed it.”

Sam Chasan, Director of Dining Services, worked with Regina for several years. “She’s always been a very dedicated worker,” he said. “She pays attention to everybody and makes sure everything is perfect. It’s a big loss that she’s leaving.”

Adin Liss, a finance major completing his studies at the Sy Syms School of Business, said Regina’s positive attitude was “contagious.”

“Every single time I made a purchase, I could count on a smile and a kind word, which brightened my day immeasurably,” he reminisced.

Regina reflected on her time at Yeshiva: “it’s been nice; it’s been real.”

Fundraising VP Dismissed for Lackluster Hanukkah Dinner Revenue

By David Rubinstein

Seth Moskowitz, the chief administrator of YU’s fundraising office, was dismissed from his position as Vice President of Institutional Advancement on Monday, December 12 due to underwhelming fundraising revenue from the annual Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation the night before. The now-vacant position will remain empty for the time being, and President Richard Joel will personally oversee Institutional Advancement until he steps down on July 1.

Mr. Moskowitz joined YU’s senior leadership in 2014. At the time of his hiring, President Joel described him as “a consummate professional, a man of deep Jewish passion, and a person with deep commitments both to education.” He had “over thirty-five years of management and fundraising experience with non-profit, political, and communal organizations,” *The Commentator* reported at the time.

This year’s gala dinner, held at the Waldorf Astoria, raised “close to \$4 million,” according to the YU News blog. The 2014 event, the first under Mr. Moskowitz’s leadership, raised over \$4.2 million. In 2015, the dinner gathered approximately \$4 million. The same event in 1982, in perhaps one of its most successful iterations, raised \$8 million and allowed for the construction of the Max Stern Athletic Center and endowment of the precursor to the current Honors Program for undergraduate men.

The annual Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation is the university’s primary annual fundraising event. At the yearly dinner, major donors are honored with symbolic doctorates and a distinguished dignitary delivers the keynote address at a ceremonial academic procession. Dinners in recent years have featured high-profile figures including George W. Bush, Andrew Cuomo, Michael Bloomberg, and Hillary Clinton. Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat delivered this year’s valedictory.

In an interview with *The Commentator* in 2015, Moskowitz said that, while YU’s fundraising arm had improved in recent years, he was working to advance operations further. “Compared to universities of our size, we’re doing remarkably well. We just need to do better.” He maintained that, despite YU’s financial struggles, he had seen no decline in donors’ willingness to give to the University. Potential benefactors might pose tough questions about the University’s plans for the future, but Mr. Moskowitz pointed out that all actively contributing donors raise objections at some point. “The art of fundraising is working through those objections.”

As of press time, spokespeople for YU, administrators of Institutional Advancement, and members of President Joel’s cabinet had not returned requests for comment.

Expanding Your Musical Horizons

By Hillel Field

My morning trek from my apartment to class takes approximately seven minutes, give or take a few depending on my level of enthusiasm and the whims of traffic lights. Since the Washington Heights area isn't exactly known for its scenic vistas, this routine can become monotonous quickly. As a longtime music lover, I figured after a few days that I might as well treat myself to a tune or two to occupy this chunk of time.

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A little musical pick-me-up in the morning would be a nice way to get the blood pumping. To keep things slightly interesting, I decided that I would discipline myself to press shuffle on my iPhone and avoid the skip button like the plague. After all, at some point I enjoyed a certain song enough to add it to my library. How could I betray my carefully informed choice with a dismissive skip?

What began as a casual way to pass the time by soon became something I look forward to. Armed with my backpack and a pair of standard Apple earbuds, I embrace this ritual that animates the usual morning trudge by giving each day its own unique soundtrack. I have also learned a couple valuable lessons from this practice. On a practical level, getting yourself absorbed in music while walking the city streets can

lead to a remarkable ignorance of oncoming traffic, so don't forget about your surroundings. More importantly, though, I came to realize how music can transport you places, much like reading an enjoyable book can.

I can't claim to be a musical connoisseur of the highest caliber. But I can say that with the help of my morning custom, I have been able to expand my tastes beyond a single genre. Personally, I have always loved listening to alternative rock. In the past few months, I have learned to appreciate jazz and even what I passed off as radio-friendly pop songs. Ironically, I found that hearing the contrast between songs of completely different styles can be invigorating. At one moment I could be listening to a rock anthem, picturing myself in a stadium among a sea of candle-waving fans. At the next, a Charlie Parker jazz tune takes me to an intimate smoke-filled club from the 1940's where patrons are entranced by the groundbreaking musicianship happening right before their eyes. Next up on the playlist is a crushing heavy metal song that resonates with the cathartic release of emotion by a screaming vocalist. A catchy pop hit offers a welcome respite from previous intensity. Truly, a single press of the shuffle button can take you through an exhaustive tour of the human experience.

I'm sure most of us have experienced the mood-improving power of music, but there's also much to gain from exposing yourself to a diverse range of music. Generally, it can give you an awe-inspiring appreciation of humanity's creative capabilities. On a different note, I've come to realize that if you accustom yourself to embracing different genres of music, you get a sense of the various life experiences and viewpoints of artists from across the musical spectrum. This kind of exposure can instill in us a greater sense of empathy in general, a valuable trait that is

in short supply. It's what compels us to reach out to someone when we sense they are struggling, because we imagine what it must be like in their shoes. In everyday life, practicing this on a regular basis can make us more attentive to the needs of others.

We can engage in a similar kind of understanding when we hear clashing points of view from people about certain hot topics. While we might have an initial knee-jerk reaction that one person is right and the other is dead wrong, it may do us good to at least get a sense of the context in which both parties form their opinions. By empathizing with someone's life experiences, we get a better sense of why they might hold their specific point of view. In the contemporary marketplace of ideas, where self-expression typically consists of opinionated and polarizing social media posts, maybe we can all benefit from engaging in some musical exploration.



Finding the Holy Dark in Fantastic Beasts

By Yitzchak Fried

"It is the ill-luck of the cultivated man," wrote Dostoevsky, "to live in St. Petersburg, the most theoretical and intentional city in the entire globe." Writing in the only truly modern city in all of nineteenth century Russia, and a booming center of the arts and sciences (this was the home of Mendeleev, after all), Dostoevsky could sense that a new age was dawning. And it made him nervous. He feared that people in the modern era would suffer from an overabundance of thinking, and from a veneration of reason, planning and technical knowledge. He foresaw that, eventually, all that deliberate thinking would take its toll, and people would be left with a hole where the wilder side of their nature once lived. John Staudenmaier, a professor at the University of Detroit Mercy, more recently argued the same thing. The modernist worship of "progress," he says, has led us to overvalue the regimented thinking that helps us get there, and has robbed us of an appreciation for our own mystery. The close of the middle-ages, with its faith in the unknown – with its shuddering love of dragons and giants and Fantastic Beasts of all sorts – brought with it an end to the widespread appreciation of what Staudenmaier calls "the Holy Dark": the untamed, the unreasonable and the mysterious. Living under the mask of reason, we modernists forget the deeply irrational wellsprings of the psyche that nourish all human life.

Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them helps us get back in touch with that wildness. It brings us face to face with creatures who are more driven by passion than reason, who are sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrifying, sometimes mischievous but always beyond the narrow intentionality of human thought, and, precisely for that reason, are beloved to the socially awkward Newt Scamander, the movie's protagonist. It takes a magizoologist to remind us how

wonderful these creatures are – and how absolutely relatable they are to us.

Fantastic Beasts is replete with references to our inner worlds. Early on, the movie establishes what soon becomes a recurring motif: that things are more than what they seem. The plot begins with a mix up, when two identical, nondescript leather suitcases switch hands. Newt Scamander finds himself holding a case full of craft pastries, while Jacob Kowalski, a baker and a no-mag (the American term for muggle), takes home a suitcase full of magical creatures. Newt's case is a colorful example of mystery and surprise lying beneath a bland exterior: it proves to house Newt's entire menagerie, with each animal hosted in a separate habitat. The theme of revelation is repeated in a series of un-



maskings: of the real terror stalking the city, of the true nature of Credence Barebone, of the actual identity of Percival Graves. The internal is always more important than the external, which inevitably misrepresents it. It is the great talent of Queenie, a witch who is also a legilimens, to be able to cross over this divide. With her pow-

er to see directly into one's deepest thoughts, Queenie manages to bypass externalities and communicate with Newt's inner self about his relationship with Leta LeStrange – an intimate exchange that leaves Newt feeling somewhat trespassed upon. We are reminded that boundaries have a purpose, and that the inner world is a tumultuous affair, not always willingly acknowledged and sometimes best left below the surface.

It can also be very, very dangerous. Within Newt's case lives an Obscurious: a spirit composed of the repressed magic of an underage wizard. The Obscurious is a reminder of the rage of the oppressed, and that the beast within can have bloody passions. Much of the movie centers around locating an Obscurious who is wreaking havoc on the city, leading several prominent citizens to horrible deaths. The message is clear: mankind's internal world is beautiful, but as with all *Fantastic Beasts*, it also contains a murderous potential. Newt, however, is an animal tamer; he is convinced that human rage can be mastered with compassion, the same compassion that he extends to all the other creatures he loves. In a final showdown with the, now found, Obscurious, Newt and the Law compete to reign in the raging wizarding child. Tragically, it is ultimately the Law that neutralizes the threat by killing the Obscurious. It is predictable that the public has little tolerance for violent beasts. We are reminded that the threat of force is always present to curtail our most dangerous impulses.

Despite the death of the Obscurious, the movie succeeds in drawing us back to the richness of our selves, to the beauty and grace and admirable fearsomeness that dwells wild beneath our skin. Don't let the mild manners of Newt Scamander fool you; he knows full well about the chaos that exists in all *Fantastic Beasts*. Humans not excepted.

From the President's Desk: YSU — Chanukah: A Time for Reflection

By Jacob Herenstein

More and more over my past few years here at Yeshiva University, I have noticed the various message boards across all social media platforms that pertain to Yeshiva University. Most of the posts that I notice are complaints. People are complaining about how something is wrong with YU, or how our school has no money, or how the administration does not care about the school.

These are statements that, besides not being true, have no basis behind them. The only backings people have for this rhetoric are the different rumors and articles that are published by outside media outlets about how YU has sold properties, or how YU is millions of dollars in debt, or that the administration takes salary increases while its faculty does not, or that YU does not have a true interest in its student body.

I think that, in life, people like complaining for the sake of complaining, rather than actually looking at the positive aspects of any scenario. We are not looking at the glass as half-full; rather, we are viewing the glass as half-empty. I try to advocate to people as much as possible that if they would take a step back and open their eyes to what they have in life, they would be amazed at the abundance of good that they have. I think the same can be said about Yeshiva University.

Yeshiva University is a relatively small university, with students in all undergraduate and postgraduate programs totaling under 7,000 students, and just about 2,000 students in the various undergraduate programs. By comparison, Touro College and Columbia University have more than 7,000 students in their undergraduate programs alone. New York University has nearly 6,000 students just in their Freshman class. The Fashion Institute of Technology has nearly 10,000 students, Baruch College has almost 19,000, and Hunter College has over 23,000.

Yet, despite the small number of students that Yeshiva University has, we have so many amazing amenities that many of the above listed schools do not have. Other universities of similar sizes--and in some cases, bigger ones as well--do not have nearly as many amenities and services that we offer. The services that we have at

Yeshiva University are tremendous compared to other universities. We are so used to many of these amenities and services that we sometimes take them for granted. Here are some of the services, amenities, and benefits that Yeshiva University offers its students:

1. We have two undergraduate campuses, four postgraduate campuses, and two high school campuses. Most schools do not have this many campuses. This allows for students of the different programs to be able to interact more with the other students in their own program. Additionally, it allows for students to be able to use resources from the other campuses.

2. We have a tremendous Judaic faculty and an array of *Roshei Yeshiva*, both of which allow every student to pick a religious path that suits him or her best. On top of that, the amount of Minyanim on all campuses totals over 60 per day, and there are many different Kosher food options. The ability to have such flexibility and comfortability in one's Judaism is something that is not

always offered on other campuses.

3. We have a career center that places hundreds of students each year in top jobs around the world, in all different fields. From accounting firms to investment banks, from hospitals to software companies, the Career Center is successful in helping students apply to jobs, build their resumes, prepare for their interviews, and get settled once they get a job.

4. For students who plan on going to postgraduate school, we have advisement teams that assist over 90% of students in getting into their school of choice--a number that is twice the national average. Additionally, these advisement teams help students through the entire process--from applications to essays to selecting

"THE SERVICES THAT WE HAVE AT YESHIVA UNIVERSITY ARE TREMENDOUS COMPARED TO OTHER UNIVERSITIES. WE ARE SO USED TO MANY OF THESE AMENITIES AND SERVICES THAT WE SOMETIMES TAKE THEM FOR GRANTED."



schools.

5. We have a health center that caters to the needs of every student on campus, with psychologists, doctors, and social workers whose sole job is to help students. This is one of the most underutilized services on campus, and is something that can come in handy. Whether you are stressed about work, or have personal issues you want to share with someone, the Health Center is there to help every student on campus.

6. We have dormitories that are within a few blocks of each campus. Many universities do not have dormitories that are as close to academic buildings as are ours. Even other universities and colleges in New York City, where campus sizes are much smaller, do not always have university housing as close to campus as we do. On top of that, our annual dormitory fees are less expensive than any other college in New York City.

7. Yeshiva University offers on average over \$20,000 per student each year on merit-based and financial-

based scholarships. In addition, over 85% of students receive some form of financial assistance. The average university in the United States offers \$12,740 per student in aid each year. This is something which Yeshiva University takes pride in, knowing that it will do whatever it can in order to make college affordable for its students.

8. We have 16 NCAA and other teams that compete with other colleges and universities. Most schools of our size do not have nearly that many teams, especially schools outside of Division I. Not only do we compete, but we win in many of these sports.

9. We have a student-to-teacher ratio of 12:1, which is low compared to the national average of 18:1. This allows for a more personal connection with professors, and gives an opportunity to really build a connection with the faculty.

These are just a few of the many things that make Yeshiva University unique. YU is not at all a bad university; rather, the student body--myself included--takes these services for granted, and does not take the time to appreciate it. If we take the time to realize how many opportunities we have here at Yeshiva University, we will slowly learn how great of a school we attend.

As a senior, I start to reflect on the past few years. I look back, and realize all the amazing opportunities I have had at Yeshiva University. I have made friends that will last a lifetime; I have gotten a tremendous academic education; I have been able to continue my learning that I developed in my few years at Yeshivat Sha'alvim; I have gotten full-time offers from various real estate firms; and I have been able to get involved on campus in many different roles. All of these accomplishments are directly due to the opportunities given to me by Yeshiva University. I am very confident that this list is very similar for many of you as well.

My advice to you--the student body--is as follows: do not spend all of your time bashing Yeshiva University on social media and in person. Rather, take the time to appreciate all that YU has given each and every one of us: a fantastic education; amazing extracurricular clubs, events, and activities; a tremendous job placement program; an amazing Judaic learning experience; and many other benefits that many schools do not offer.

Yeshiva University does all of this because they care about us, the students. YU is the flagship for Modern Orthodoxy in the United States, and possibly even the world. YU is leading us to become the next generation of Jewish leaders in the world, and they want us to shine in the world. They want every student to be the best he or she can possibly be, and that is why they offer all that they do.

If you take anything out of this, make it the following: if you take advantage of what Yeshiva University offers instead of looking down at what they do not, your time here will be one you will never forget. College is known to be the best years of one's life, and it only happens once. Do not spend your time trying to nitpick everything, or you will never be satisfied. Rather, just take in all that YU offers and enjoy it, and I guarantee you will have a much greater time!

Dude, Get a Real Job!: The Illusion of Value in Today's Economy

By Aryeh Schonbrun

As young college students, we are constantly reminded that our only true purpose in spending three or four years of our young, productive lives studying various fields of knowledge is simply to get a job. Though there still prevails among us a small coterie of brave souls who invest themselves in unpromising (at least financially) careers in the arts and sciences, most of us do not get the opportunity to devote ourselves to such interests. Instead, following the directives of our parents, teachers, and the market, we tend to pursue degrees that closely approximate our willingness to make money, earn salary, settle down, and, God willing, build a *bayis ne'eman beyisroel* (a faithful home among the

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ORDER.”**

Jewish people). Some of us may try to bridge the gap between profitable fields of study and self-fulfillment, but, as we all know, sometimes we've just got to work to survive. This theory of work and self-worth is deeply ingrained in our psyches. One can find such a persuasion in some halakhic discourse, but mostly it derives from what Max Weber categorized as the “Protestant Work Ethic.” This ethic, or value, strikes an average American (at least a privileged sort from the top of the pyramid) as self-evident, just like all the basic liberties laid out in the Bill of Rights of this country's Constitution. We use this mode of thought as a way to ensure proper adherence to social custom, to keep the proletariat in check, and to reinforce the perennial ideal of the “American Dream.” If you're dirt poor, according to most of America's reasoning, you just haven't worked hard enough to climb the ladder of American society.

Those who find lucrative, profitable positions in this economy presume to think of themselves as lucky. In fact, some are truly *very* lucky. CEOs and managers receive salaries that only the Rockefellers and the Carnegies could dream of, but even their underlings benefit from some of the pie. These jobs include accounting, financial services, management, marketing, computer programming, data management, IT, etc. They pay better than most other jobs, but they also demand a higher skill-set, more business and (usually) social acumen, and a sense of a dutiful work ethic. These higher-end service jobs are the contemporary manifestation of the American dream, and all who aspire to work in a clean, comfortable, stable environment dream to secure such an occupation.

But not all is as it seems.

Back in 2013, anthropologist David Graeber, a principal player in the *Occupy Wall Street* movement, penned a controversial essay in a relatively unknown magazine (Strike! Magazine) entitled “On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs.” In this critique of the socio-economic structure of mid-to-high paying jobs, he outlines his argument that most of these jobs are quite meaningless and do almost nothing to help mankind progress. He invokes Keynes's *Economic Possibili-*

ties for our Grandchildren and chides society for not making room for the leisure expected, promised to us by Keynes on account of the automation of most of industry (e.g. manufacturing, mining, agricultural).

Graeber opens quoting a recent employment report, “over the course of the last century, the number of workers employed as domestic servants, in industry, and in the farm sector has collapsed dramatically. At the same time, ‘professional, managerial, clerical, sales, and service workers’ tripled, growing ‘from one-quarter to three-quarters of total employment.’”

Naturally, fewer jobs and less stress should translate to fewer hassles and more time to concentrate on the real virtues of life: purpose and meaning, and the pursuit of truth and beauty in the arts and sciences. But that did not occur. Graeber bemoans that “rather than allowing a massive reduction of working hours to free the world's population to pursue their own projects, pleasures, visions, and ideas, we have seen the ballooning not even so much of the ‘service’ sector as of the administrative sector, up to and including the creation of whole new industries like financial services or telemarketing, or the unprecedented expansion of sectors like corporate law, academic and health administration, human resources, and public relations.”

Though Graeber admits the difficulty in determining the relative “value” of each job, he observes in people's own regard for their jobs a lack of interest, purpose, and meaning. He does not call for a reintroduction of the terrible conditions and low pay of the industrial revolution factory wage labor, but he does see that in constructing a new, intangible commodity in the form of an office-job we have in a sense cut the laborer off from tangible purpose. When Thomas Jefferson romantically describes rural life and a connection to the land, he evokes a sense of belonging, and stability. Today, some people live their lives as *Oompa-Loompas* in this “world of pure imagination,” and Graeber observes that lots of them end up feeling unfulfilled and underutilized.

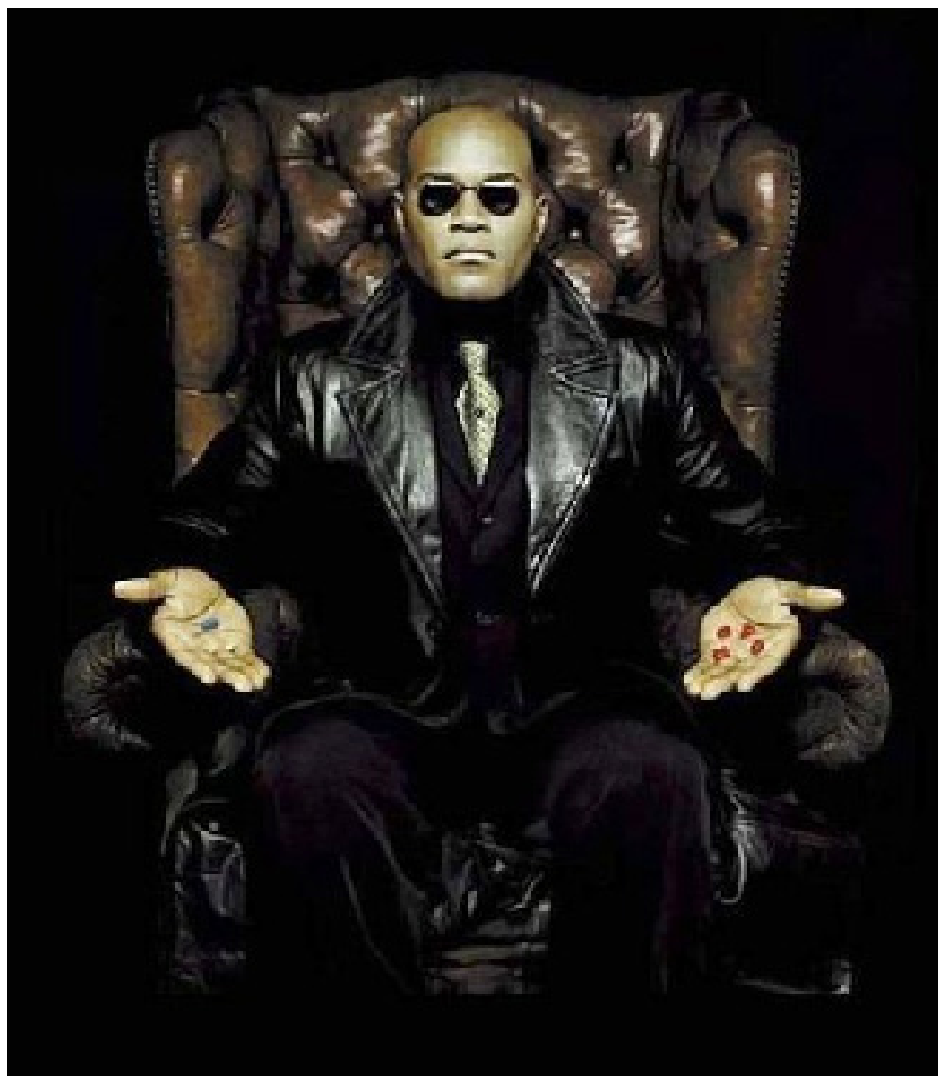
Additionally, he argues that this practice *detrimentally* affects the economy. Since no actual goods are being produced, economic productivity remains quite low. While some of this cost is offset by the profits accumulated from the *overconsumption* of goods (i.e. consumerism), and through the fact that by indirectly distributing wealth to more people the market gains fluidity (more people can buy things), the practice of paying workers for unnecessary labor is still incredibly wasteful and leaves Graeber convinced that the scheme mostly smells of a sociological mechanism by which a ruling class manipulates the working masses.

The Economist (8/21/13) unsurprisingly questions these conclusions. In a review of his essay, the writer claims that the jobs in question just reflect the loss of the tedious, horrendous jobs of industry that we have thankfully done away with. He sees it as just another step towards the utopian vision of Keynes's world without work. He writes in the concluding paragraph that “there is a decent chance that “bullshit” administrative jobs are merely a halfway house between “bullshit” industrial jobs and no jobs at all.” This statement does not answer in any way to Graeber's critique. Graeber claims that the jobs are inherently unnecessary and unproductive, not just uncomfortable, and asks what justifies this colossal waste of human skill and energy. It seems that the reviewer has missed the point entirely!

In analyzing Graeber's argument, I would like to more concisely define his criticism. When he looks at the world, he imagines that there exist objects that contain inherent value. When a worker helps to create a car, he generates value—he adds to the quality of life of some consumer who will buy his handiwork. In contrast, one's preoccupation with bureaucratic processes does not benefit any consumer other than the one directly involved in the intricacies of the capitalistic maze. The value of some jobs, therefore, exists *solely* within the confines of the closed system of capitalism. In other words, they serve only to keep the present capitalistic economy from collapsing, a noble and altruistic purpose entirely devoted to the notions of free-market capitalism—less so to the hopes and dreams of humanity. I believe it bothers Graeber that capitalism has redefined for humanity what is valuable. To a philosopher or anthropologist (and I hope to you as well), it seems very difficult to entertain the possibility that financial modeling, big data, and the management of complex financial information confer actual benefit to society as a whole. This system of economy has decayed to the extent that it takes monumental financial and human costs in order to glean just marginal real progress and I urge you against succumbing to the charms of this ill-gotten worth.

The question that poses itself through all of this, however, relates to the origin of this ill of society. Why doesn't capitalism self-regulate as the many Warren Buffets and Donald Trumps have led us to believe? A devout Marxian may instinctively respond that capitalism itself was doomed to fail sooner or later, and while he may correctly identify the long-expected demise of capital, he would not easily explain the actual mechanism of how this disruption of society came about. Graeber, as an ardent socialist, correctly identifies the ruling classes as beneficiaries of such a corrupt system, but fails to highlight the underlying reasons for its development.

Simply, in Marxian terms, profits must fall away when labor becomes either cheap or unnecessary. Marx argued that most of the profit of capitalism derives from the owners' exploitation of the laboring masses. When technology deems



“This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill—the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill... and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.” (The Matrix)

**SEE JOBS, CONTINUED ON
PAGE 12**

What The Scope Can Teach The Onion

By Yosef Sklar

“Clickbait” humor has invaded the internet. In a comedic economy that measures success based on likes, shares, and traffic, the posts that thrive are those that are flashy and concise. As a result, our newsfeeds are filled with sixty-second BuzzFeed videos, Bad Luck Brian memes, and some links to “Ten things that only _____ people will understand.”

One comedy news source that has flourished in the clickbait market is The Onion, whose articles are best known for their witty headlines. Presently, they are focused on the upcoming holiday season: “Mom Wants One Of Those Things Your Sister Has For Christmas”; “Entire Shopping Mall Quietly Dreading Whatever Empty Stage Set Up For”; “Man Had No Idea Cough Was Going To Be Wet One”.

Though I appreciate the ironies highlighted by these headlines, I feel that they don’t fully satiate me. They are funny – but not *that* funny. I want to read something that’ll have me rolling on the floor gasping for air, something that I’ll want to read over and over, and will make me laugh harder each time I do. But these headlines are a bit too bland, and the articles attached rarely provide me with much more to laugh at. They are often a mere paragraph or two in length and do little other than retell the joke from the headline in a much wordier formulation.

The Onion’s mediocrity results directly from its comedic strategy. The writers generate headlines by simply observing the world they live in, identifying ironies, and isolating them. They are not creating satire, they’re just drawing attention to the humorous things that already exist in the world around us.

To create satire is to *invent* a new world. To write about places that don’t really exist, events that don’t really happen. These satirical worlds will *resemble* our own. But the nonsensical aspects of our world are not spit straight back to us. Instead, they become the foundations of a far more ridiculous world, one that, on the one hand, we completely relate to, and yet on the other hand we feel excited to explore.

It is this technique that has granted our school’s satirical paper, The Scope, such widespread acclaim on campus. The articles that they feature do more than just draw

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attention to the abundance of ironies that permeate our complex campus. They take these ironies and use them to construct a different campus, a far more outlandish one. Last year’s article about Rabbi Wieder receiving criticism for acknowledging the existence of women was paradigmatic of this method. It created a reality in which the reader could at once recognize the frequently debated issue of woman’s role in Judaism, while at the same time feel immersed in a world of dialogue that is completely preposterous and foreign.

The Onion writers, in contrast, have not created anything new, so there is little room for them to expand their satire beyond the headline of their articles. What details can they add about holiday gift drama that we don’t already know from our own experience? At the same time the lack of original material prevents us readers from wanting to come back for a second read. We don’t need to reread the article to be immersed in its reality, since its reality is not different from our own. On the contrary, after we read the headline one time we accept its contents for what it is – just another idiosyncrasy of our absurd world.

If The Onion were to write about YU Marketplace, it might read, “YU Marketplace gives up, becomes meme page.” When The Scope approaches the same topic they create a world where YU Marketplace becomes a real, physical market, where the familiar quirks of the Facebook group are manifest in new, bizarre ways, from “Emergency Herenstein Booths” to “Open Orthodoxy is Not Orthodox” picket signs. The latter takes far longer to produce and requires much more skill. But its fruit is the kind of comedy that makes us fall out of our chairs.

JOBS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

the masses expendable, only a monopoly, or collusion of sorts, can help the owners of capital maintain a sufficient margin of profit. Otherwise, competition will tend to force owners to sell their products at-value (manufacturing costs, including labor), precluding any prospect of big financial gains. This theory of stagnation did not originate with Marx (David Ricardo, John Malthus, and even Adam Smith foresaw economic stagnation at maximum economic reach), but most modern economists have ignored such warnings (except during recessions/depressions). John Hobson, a Victorian-era economic thinker, realized the severity of the problem. He argued that this stagnation, or fear of it, contributed to the unprecedented push toward imperial expansion that swept through all major powers in Europe during the latter half of the 20th century. In order to stave off the death of capitalism, owners invested abroad, acquiring both new markets and sources of cheap labor/production.

This practice still occurs today. I should note that some jobs contribute to systems of oppression, such as colonialism and predatory lending. While I don’t blame each individual for the collective immorality of their occupation, I don’t disregard completely their complicity in such nefarious business dealings. In its wake, colonialism has left world wars, mass inequalities, and domestic unrest, but owing to the West’s economic exploitation of the global economy, capitalism has survived.

But just barely. Simply, when opportunities for further growth have been exhausted, and new markets do not open on command, the economy will begin to stagnate. What we see today constitutes a defense mechanism of capitalism. When no *real* jobs exist, we must then manufacture them in order to maintain social order and market fluidity. It is an implosion of the system itself, and corresponds to the slow but inevitable stagnation that Marx and others warned of. The economy will continue its downward trend (though it still grows, the *rate* of its growth declines), and these jobs will *increasingly* become unsustainable. A burgeoning economy can maintain significant inequalities, as a steady source of national income can satisfy the basic needs of even those less fortunate (including through this process of paying salaries for “fake” jobs). When that stream thins out, though, the

economy of the country must restructure, or risk social tension. Sadly, the market does not respond well to logic, or to morality. Jobs are being cut and wages are declining! How, you may ask? Well, apparently the top 1% have successfully manipulated the system to effectively siphon off the dwindling profits into their bank accounts. Thus, a diminishing profit margin accompanied by increasing greed, has transformed a vibrant economy into a disaster waiting to happen. Along with these largely economic conclusions, we must also analyze the sociological implications of such a disturbance.

As one of the earliest economists to analyze the sociological expression of work as it relates to unemployment, John Maynard Keynes caricatures this kind of mindless accumulation in a sarcastic analogy. In his *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (which he published during the Great Depression), he writes: “If the Treasury were to fill old bottles with banknotes, bury them at suitable depths in disused coalmines which are then filled up to the surface with town rubbish, and leave it to private enterprise on well-tried principles of *laissez faire* to dig the notes up again,... there need be no more unemployment and... the real income of the community, and its capital wealth also, would probably become a good deal greater than it actually is... the above would be better than nothing.” In Keynes’s vision, public funding serves the practical purpose of getting people off the streets. I find this utterly depressing and too conventional. In his world of “proper” upbringing he valued order and structure over purpose and ideals. His solution does not inspire in us a feeling of purpose in our jobs, but rather reveals that sometimes work is but a game, an element of either governmental or private control. In this same way, private industry offers people jobs with little actual value (e.g. workers dig through the refuse of bureaucracy); they are fed, but none the better.

In perhaps one of the more inspiring, but depressing commentaries on the capitalist system, Joseph Schumpeter, an iconoclast Austrian economist, revives the sociological aspect in respect to the economy. In short, he posits that entrepreneurship, the creative ability, to innovate, drives most economic growth, especially after most natural resources (including population growth) reach their natural limits. But this entrepreneurship does not come cheap. It needs to be cultivated. Sociological and economic factors must combine to inspire new generations of inventors and investors to innovate and progress.

Additionally, not all innovators grow out of the 1%, so improved social mobility allows for the efficient progression of society as a whole. However, in order to inspire those individuals, society needs to provide them with purpose. Robert Heilbroner in *The Worldly Philosophers* writes of Schumpeter’s claim that “it requires a faith—in its case, faith in the values and virtues of the civilization that capitalism produces and that in turn reproduces capitalism.” Thus, as people become more disenchanted with the system, their will to succeed and innovate gradually disappears.

In addition to economic stagnation Schumpeter warns of impending skepticism. He claims that “Capitalism creates a critical frame of mind which, after having destroyed the moral authority of so many other institutions, in the end turns against its own; the bourgeois finds to his amazement that the rationalist attitude does not stop at the credentials of kings and popes but goes on to attack private property and the whole scheme of bourgeois values.” Hence, capitalism dooms itself not only economically, but sociologically as well!

We are all witnesses to the mighty power this critique of society has unleashed. Traditional values have been eroded in short time, but, curiously, the idea of private property remains strong. We stand on the brink of social warfare, but the underclass still cowers at the idea of being labeled “thieves.” I can only surmise as to why this has occurred: The masses have used up all their political resources. Unions have lost their sting as a result of automation, and the Calvinist work ethic has shamed those suffering into silence. Therefore, the masses today do not see any system as viable and a purposeless dread pervades all. Currently, their one true goal is not the reallocation of power and wealth, but the dissolution of society itself (both sociologically and structurally). This errant, misguided populism is particularly dangerous, but I spare them judgement: they are desperate, and the current political situation offers them no better options.

—
“You need not finish the job, however, do not idle from it.”

(Ethics of our Fathers 2:16)

The Game is (Almost) On

By Shoshy Ciment

It's finally happening.

After an agonizing three-year wait, on January 1st, 2017, the fourth season of *Sherlock* will be released to the public. The premiere episode, entitled "The Six Thatchers", will be the first one released of the three episodes that will make up the highly anticipated new season.

Don't be fooled. This isn't a one-hour special that producers created to tauntingly dangle in front of Sherlock-starved fans. This is the real deal. All one-and-a-half hours in its full glory. And judging by the trailers, it is shaping up to be one the most intense seasons yet.

The first trailer for the new season reveals the return (and revival) of multiple key players. Moriarty, perhaps the most insipid of all of Sherlock's adversaries, kicks off the trailer with his classically haunting line, "Didja miss me?"

That we did Moriarty. That we did.

However, despite the hype and speculation that is surrounding the new season, the trailers do not reveal much about the plot. We are given snippets of familiar places and characters, but there is nothing definitively revealed about what the actual season will entail. The trailer may be ambiguous, but as Sherlock ominously says, it is clear that "something's coming."

Judging by the ratings the series has received, Sherlock's views are only going to climb. In the US, the premiere of the third season

had over 2 million more viewers than the second season. The fourth season is expected to continue this path of growth in American viewership, despite the three-year wait between the third and fourth seasons.

Unfortunately, these long waits between seasons are the norm when it comes to *Sherlock*. *Sherlock* fans are known to be many things; nerds, bingers, and somewhat insane. What other explanation is there for the torture we subject ourselves to as we patiently wait for BBC to grant us three measly episodes every two, maybe even three years? Therein lies the problem with being a Sherlock fan. The waiting is almost unbearable. But for some reason, we stick around, steadfast as John Watson.

What is it that makes us stick around? Is it Benedict Cumberbatch's irresistible genius? The thrill of the chase? The anachronism of it all?



BBC has got it right. *Sherlock* is unique because it is intelligent. Every episode can stand alone as a full-length movie, compete with the full arch of a classic story. And you can never stop thinking. *Sherlock* isn't the type of show you half-heartedly watch while folding your laundry. It is so much more than that.

Based on the stories of Sir Arthur Conan, *Sherlock* brings these original mysteries to life. Creators Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss propel Doyle's characters and stories into an arena that loses the horse and buggy for more practical things like cellphones and cars (how convenient!). *Sherlock's* world is all the more intense, as he faces age-old mysteries in a modern setting.

Sherlock has an addictive quality. The kind of quality that makes you wonder how Saturday night turned into Sunday so quickly, or how you watched for nine hours

straight without leaving your room. The twists and turns in every episode are warranted to whiplash its viewers into captivation and leave them begging for more. The agony of waiting between seasons dissipates the moment you press play and are transported into Holmes' mind palace.

Maybe this is why we Sherlock devotees never waver in our allegiance to the show. We've crafted a reciprocal relationship in which we offer unwavering support to a show that never disappoints us.

So far, this support has paid off. As for the fourth season, the wait is almost over. So *Sherlock* fans, start charging your laptops. The game is on.

The Crown: Season 1 Review

By Lilly Gelman

"The Crown," one of the many new Netflix original series, has gained quite a bit of popularity since its premier last month on November 4th, 2016. The show illustrates the life of Queen Elizabeth II, beginning with her sudden rise to power in 1952 after the unexpected death of her father -- King George VI. Each season is set to showcase a decade of her reign, the first season focusing on the struggles that Queen Elizabeth faces as a young monarch of a mature nation in post-WWII decline. The royal title proves difficult on all fronts, causing infighting amongst the royal family and tension between the Queen and the Prime Minister at the time, Winston Churchill.

Americans seem to love their British TV, with shows such as "Downton Abbey" and "Sherlock" taking the nation by storm at the time of their respective state-side debuts. "The Crown" is no exception and has gained a following not only by exposing Americans to those adored accents, but by opening a window into British culture.

"The Crown" brings a unique approach to monarchy in the modern world that is not widely discussed in the United States. In America, monarchy has the connotation of colonial times, oppressive English control, eliciting thoughts of King Arthur and "Game of Thrones." Rarely does it bring to mind the idea of an ancient, divine institution working hand in hand with the modern democratic government to run a nation seeking to hold on to its royal tradition. However, that is exactly when "The Crown" is about. Aside from it being a historical drama highlighting the life and accomplishments of the longest reigning monarch in England's history, it is a demonstration of a culture rich in both ritual and progression.

Many of the episodes begin with scenes from Queen Elizabeth's childhood, one of which takes place in season 1, episode 7. The episode opens with young Elizabeth sitting in a private lesson in Eton College on the structure and details of the constitution. The day's lesson focuses on the two components of the English rulership -- the "dignified" (the monarch) and the "efficient" (the democratically elected Parliament and Prime Minister) -- and the mutual trust that is the foundation of the relationship between

the two pillars of governance. "The Crown" showcases this unique relationship between the monarchy and democracy, two seemingly polar political ideologies that, in England, come together as the bridge between tradition and modernity.

There is not only partnership, but also struggle between the two foundations. This trend of old v.s. new runs throughout the show, and is expressed in the relationships between the characters and the conflicts that arise in the plot. The connection between Winston Churchill, the 77 year old Prime Minister trying to hold on to his WWII glory days, and Queen Elizabeth, a 25 year old monarch doing her best to fill the void left by her father, proves to be a bit choppy, symbolizing the fact that while there is a partnership, there exists also a clash between tradition and modernity. In the middle of season 1, the issue of Queen Elizabeth's sister's right to marry a divorced man - an act which goes against the values laid out by the Church of England - arises, forcing Queen Elizabeth to choose between keeping the ancient customs in place, and taking a step in a more forward thinking direction.

"The Crown" is much more than a TV show, but serves just as well as a source of entertainment and escape. The first ten episodes are on Netflix now, and with finals season fast approaching, there doesn't seem like a better time to get hooked on a new series.



Book Review: The Menorah, by Dr. Steven Fine

By Ari Abrahams

On a class trip to the Jerusalem exhibit currently on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, a middle aged Orthodox Jew from Teaneck gets excited when he finds out Dr. Fine is in the museum. The man buys a copy of the book, approaches Dr. Fine and asks him politely to sign the book. Dr. Fine smiles and graciously writes the man a message in Hebrew before signing his own Hebrew name Shimon. Smiling he now turns exclaims, "who would have thought that Steven from San Diego, California would have his book in the gift shop at the Met? Who would have thought that Steven would be giving a lecture at the Met on December 15th?"

The Menorah: From the Bible to Modern Israel by YU's very own Dr. Steven Fine gives a very rich and detailed history of this majestic religious artifact from the seemingly unfinished description given in p'sukim of the Torah, to the Menorah of the Arch of Titus, emerging as national emblem of the state of Israel and the Jewish people. It was recently published by Harvard University Press in November.

By exploring many artifacts and a vast body of texts, *The Menorah*, captures the extensive history of the Menorah that was once lit in the Beit Ha'Mikdash and its exile to Rome. Also explored are the intriguing discoveries that a Menorah figure served a lamp that illuminated synagogues for a thousand years after the destruction of the second Beit Ha'Mikdash, and the evolution of the Menorah as a symbol for the return of the Jews to Israel and establishment of the state of Israel after a long and painful exile.

As one might expect, this academic book will occasionally drift into dense prose containing often unfamiliar and intimidating capitalized terms. Do not be discouraged, the book is not strictly a fact-finding mission, and a motivated

SEE MENORAH, CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

Laughter is the Best Pre-Medicine

By Michael Shavolian

In front of me lies a textbook so thick that it has to be the one I'm most looking forward to throwing in the fireplace at the end of the semester... or at least that's what I find myself thinking when the coffee fails to kick in and I still have two chapters left to review. I roll my chair forward and it comes to a halt as its armrests hit the wooden table. I uncap my highlighter and begin to read.

The fifth floor of the library provides some calming white noise against which my mind can –I lift my head and notice Alex sitting nearby. It was time for a break anyway. But instead of a break I fleetingly wonder if Alex is ahead of me in the textbook and what I am essentially doing at that moment is fishing for a comparison. I have become all too familiar with this treacherous concept of a curve- the impulse to compare your progress (or lack thereof) to that of another. I chuckle at its absurdity.

But despite this self-awareness, I cannot help but overhear Alex chattering. “2-methylcyclohexane.” “How do you draw it?” he beckons a classmate. Pre-med FOMO overcomes me. Are they reviewing something that I should be reviewing? Alex grabs his oversized personal white board from his tall blue backpack. I chuckle aloud at the super-sized board and at the fact that I sit here watching him.

The next day, after class is dismissed, and after almost everyone has left the room, the student next to me remains steadfast in his seat. He raises his hands and shakes them in unison. “Veha-ikar lo lefached klal”, he whispers fervently. He clenches his eyes closed. And the main thing is to never be afraid. I hear him repeat those same words as I pass by him in the library that evening. The main thing is to never be afraid. I laugh because of how far pre-med seems to have taken us.

The test comes and goes and the class's next meeting couldn't arrive any quicker. At its end the exams are returned and I observe the varied reactions as I wait for my moment of fate. One student's head clamps down as he cautiously peeks at his grade. Another quickly slides his exam into his knapsack without affording it a glance and yet another smiles cautiously as he walks slowly out of the classroom. Alex jumps and shouts with joy, almost toppling another student on his way out.

The next class is loud...so loud that I can hear myself wondering for a moment if it's because everyone performed so phenomenally on the exam. The comical absurdity of even entertaining this thought becomes clear to me. The professor calls for attention and begins his lecture. In the midst of

the lesson students at the other end of the classroom lean into the aisles to form impromptu study groups. They ask each other questions when they find the professor's explanations dissatisfying, which judging by their frequent murmurs isn't infrequent. Their whispers are maddening to the student next to me. He turns to me:

“They love Orgo”.

“So do I”, I reply.

“Yeah. But you're not annoying about it”.

I chuckle. “Thank you...I think”.

“WHEN YOU PUT IN ONE HUNDRED PERCENT AND GET BACK LESS THAN THAT, WHAT MORE CAN YOU DO BUT LAUGH, SHRUG IT OFF, AND TRY HARDER NEXT TIME?”

So I guess I have struck the balance...studious enough to excel in class but not overly obsessive so that I would be described as a single-minded pre-med machine (though, that's not entirely a bad thing). It's kind of like when your secular friends tell you that you're the coolest observant Jew they know or when your Ashkenazi friends tell you that your Yiddish



The author, far left, doing some last minute laughing and reviewing with classmates before an exam.

pronunciation is on fleek (this hasn't happened to me yet)...or at least that's how I prefer to perceive myself.

I look around at my peers in Organic Chemistry and ponder the ways in which we have individually learned to cope with this pre-med hoopla. Some admittedly seem so naturally equipped. It is as if they were born to break their bones while studying in an ultimate effort to fix others' as orthopedic surgeons. These are the pre-meds that thrive off of pre-test anxiety (just kidding, that's impossible) and who take every single MIT OpenCourseWare test from the past ten years in order to prepare for an upcoming Organic Chemistry exam (OK, fine, I did that too).

There is, of course, a spectrum of ways in which pre-meds deal with the pressure of looming laboratory report deadlines and dense biology chapters. I have learned to roll with the punches and to view my medical aspirations as part of a journey. Because in any good story or play, there are elements of tragedy and comedy...but all too often, I think we forget to laugh on cue when the high-hat signals a joke or when the comic takes the stage. We forget to laugh, not in a deriding or lightheaded kind of way but in a thoughtful fashion, in recognition of our flaws and weaknesses and of our, sometimes, ultimate powerlessness...in a way that Jean Dominique Bauby in his chilling memoir accurately depicts. “There comes a time when the heaping up of calamities brings on uncontrollable nervous laughter - when, after a final blow from fate, we decide to treat it all as a joke.”

Now, pre-med is far from a calamity (or a joke for that matter) but Bauby reminds me that laughter can be a pretty good medicine for its dismays. So I laugh because laughing is a decidedly better alternative to smoking to take the edge of stress, because competition does not motivate me as it might others, because I am, unfortunately, too lazy to exercise as regularly as I should and because this is the 7th time I have registered for classes and not once has my class schedule from May been anywhere near close to my schedule in November. I laugh because the jitters that accompany my thirty fifth college exam don't surprise me in the least and because the post-test hoc is utterly pointless. I laugh because I know I may not be the smartest in the room and, to be honest, I definitely do not top the list of students with most weekly library hours. But I *have* always put in one hundred percent. And when you put in one hundred percent and get back less than that, what more can you do but laugh, shrug it off, and try harder next time?

MENORAH, CONTINUED FROM 13

reader should be able to power through these pages with a decent understanding of its main ideas. An unmotivated reader can skip to the next page which most likely has a marvelous picture of a Menorah and resume reading from there. Absolute continuity is not essential to enjoy and understand the book.

An example that comes to mind is a beautiful midrash that is quoted in *The Menorah*. According to the Midrash, Moshe was initially unable to construct the Menorah. He was given the vision and image at Mount Sinai but he lacked the artistic craftsmanship to realize God's vision of the Menorah. However, together with Betzallel, who was a talented craftsman, the two were able to construct the first Menorah. These types of passages appear throughout the book and serve as the rhyme that complement the historical reason.

While reading *The Menorah*, specifically the sections that detail the symbolism of the Menorah, you can discern a special love for Israel and inspiring sense of Jewish pride that is not prevalent in today's generation and is unique to people of an earlier time.

It is an apolitical Zionism if you may, that can only be-

long to somebody old enough to experience the fear that preempted the Six Day War, and the times when the state of Israel was at constant war for its survival and celebrate in the jubilation that followed after Israel's victory. This is a Zionism and pride for which the existence of a state of Israel is a miracle unto itself.

When interviewing Dr. Fine, he spoke of the Israel of his childhood that was constantly fighting for its survival and a Menorah that was not merely a symbol of the Hanukkah holiday and Hallmark cards, but rather a reminder of the constant threat that the state of Israel faced. He remembers his mother with her head listening closely to the radio during the Six-Day War, the days at his synagogue in San Diego when everyone would gather and pray with the with a menorah lamp shining at the front of the synagogue.

A substantial section in the book is dedicated to delegitimizing in great detail the myth of the existence of a Menorah currently in the Vatican. In a personal interview, Dr. Fine explicitly stated that there is no Menorah from the Beit Ha'Mikdash in the Vatican or any other place, and that there was never any historical evidence to believe such claims. When I asked him why it was necessary to dedicate time in his book to disquiet these unsubstanti-

ated claims, and why he felt it was an important section to have in his book, he drew upon the recent shooting at Comet Ping Pong in Washington DC. A person brought a gun into a pizza store because of an unfounded conspiracy that was freely published online, leading to disastrous consequences. Similarly, it is important that we understand that there is no Menorah in the Vatican and there is no Menorah buried in Jerusalem, because we cannot predict the negative consequences that these unsubstantiated claims can have on real people.

For Steven Fine, *The Menorah* began as a 12th grade AP Art History Essay in San Diego California, yet it took a career as a historian to cultivate the language skills and understanding of artifacts to complete the work. This book is the life of a scholar. Perhaps the audience for this book is more appropriate for museum-goers than people looking for a page turner to take on their tropical excursion from the New York winter. Yet, any educated and curious person can surely appreciate this book that is filled with plenty of important and intriguing content and stunning pictures.

The Case for Free Trade

By Adam Bandler and the Board of the College Republicans

It is inherent in human nature to look back at the past and long for the 'good old days'. While we progress as a world community, many claim that our quality of life is declining. Others claim that the world is becoming increasingly unfair- that the rich keep getting richer while the ones at the bottom are not gaining any ground on the economic ladder. However, both of these assertions could not be further from the truth; the citizenry of the world has never been better off than it is now. America is the richest country the world has ever known and the reason for that is, simply, free trade.

Free trade is a symptom of free market capitalism and with the introduction of free market capitalism to the world, certain principles were introduced which were never seen before. Among these principles are: private property, competitive markets, limited government intervention and most importantly, freedom of economic exchange. However, recently there has been much debate regarding the beneficial value of free trade, resulting in unparalleled hostility towards the concept.

To address global inequality, one must examine modern events in terms of socio-economics and geopolitics. By nearly every measure, 21st-century humanity is not only improving but also succeeding. Children are far better off than their parents and poverty is declining. By many measures, global inequality has actually decreased in modern times. Measures in citizens' purchasing power, for example, reveals that global inequality has declined remarkably all across the board.

We also have to acknowledge that poverty is a relative term. For example, people living in poverty in Rwanda are living very differently from the poor in America. Seventy-two percent of 'poor' Americans have one or more cars, while 50% have air conditioning and a wealth of other amenities that people considered poor in other countries do not own.

Disregarding the above perspective causes many individuals to claim that wealth is a greater problem in our society than poverty. Becoming a millionaire shouldn't be a problem if, in the process, hundreds of millions become better off.

The argument against free trade resulted from the myth that free trade creates global inequality, and that

claim can't hold up to the most basic criticism.

Perhaps, more importantly, free trade has led to a great amount of good in the world. It has brought hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, decreased world hunger and increased awareness about environmental issues. It is no coincidence that countries that deal in free trade have a higher GDP per capita and that the people of these countries have longer lifespans.

Free trade, however, is not limited to the movement of goods; it values the open exchange of ideas and opportunities. Regardless of religion, race, or creed, we all have freedom to thank. Society has become smarter,

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with literacy rates increasing decade after decade since the advent of free trade, and we are approaching a time where there could be universal literacy. Another effect the free trade movement of ideas has created is the rapid increase of democratic systems of government being established across the globe. The oppression of women, as countries become more democratic and open to free trade, has declined throughout the world. Women are increasingly gaining an education, as more families are able to afford sending all their children to school. The fact of the matter is that free trade helps increase prosperity for Americans and countries with the same shared values. The idea that protectionism, which is advocated by President-Elect Trump, will automatically create more jobs in America is false, and a more likely result is a loss of American jobs.

Of course, there are some negatives that occur with the advent of free trade but the positives outweigh the

drawbacks. The negatives are that jobs in industries that aren't efficient will be lost. Conversely, jobs will be created in good effective industries, which history has shown us.

The notion that free trade is the cause of all manufacturing jobs loss is not factual, since it appears blue-collar job loss are more directly correlated with technological innovation. For example, mobile apps and devices have displaced a tremendous amount of products, leading to less manufacturing and less jobs. According to Donald J. Boudreaux, in his book *Globalization*, with manufacturing output actually increasing since the 1960's, the reason there are less jobs is because of the American workers and industries becoming more efficient.

The arguments made by protectionists fail when challenged with scrutiny. To those that say trade deficits are an indicator of economic ailing are blind to the fact that it's the totality of trade that shows American prosperity. Restricting imports by protectionist methods will only lead to American's being worse off. It will incline foreign countries not to invest in America and there will be less choice for Americans to buy cheaper goods, leading them to have less disposable income. Protectionist policies will help special interests who gain by them acquiring a defense against competition. Protectionists also avoid the fact that American exporters use half of American imports according to the Mercatus Center for their own businesses. Finally, these individuals refuse to acknowledge the fact that countries with lower economic barriers to trade tend to see an increase in economic growth.

However, the key philosophical component that hasn't been mentioned in the current debate over free trade is the fact that free trade promotes freedom. Without economic freedom, we will lose the ability to choose what we think is right for ourselves. We will begin to be controlled by these special interests that are being protected by these backward trade policies. Prices will rise and the American consumer and American economic growth will be directly affected by protectionist policies. It is a fact that as the government asserts more control over increasing aspects of our lives, our collective freedom will diminish.

America can still improve on its free trade track record and increase trade deals with countries

SEE FREE TRADE CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

On Showing Up

By Tzvi Levitin

Eager for a brief respite from the frigid and gloomy but not-yet-cozy atmosphere of early December in New York City, I spent last weekend visiting some friends at Yale University. As I explored the Gothic campus on Fri-

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day afternoon, with all its arches and quads and reading rooms brimming with students, I couldn't help but compare it to Yeshiva University.

As students chatted about their professors, perused the seemingly endless stacks of the Yale Library, and wove through courtyards and cobblestone pathways with

SHOWING UP, CONTINUED ON PAGE 31





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JUSTICE, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

propriate and I did disagree with some of what he said, he is certainly on the spectrum of acceptable discourse.

One of the ironies of American society is that calls for censorship increasingly come from the Left. Whereas the progressive wing of the political spectrum began as a protest of the establishment, it has, over the past several years, established its own orthodoxies which it now seeks to defend in much the same way that the establishment repressed discussion in the past. It is my sense that the so-called "tyranny of the Left" increased during the Obama years and is guilty in part for the rise of a know-nothing presidential candidate who celebrated the lack of education of his earliest followers. What the Establishment Right does not understand is that it is viewed by many as enablers of the tyranny of the Left by its failure to engage with ideas. When all you do is play politics, you add to the frustration of the center and right-of-center electorate. Plenty of educated centrist voters felt disenfranchised by the Left and voted for a candidate who rejected free trade and other fundamental Conservative principles.

If you travel the congested roads of social media, as I do, you discover that outside the Yeshiva University community, YU is popularly branded as a narrow-minded bastion of conservatism which refuses to challenge its members with anything but accepted orthodoxies. Read the debates in our student publications about the ideas put forth by Ben Shapiro and then watch the Yale University videos available online and ask yourself which YU censors ideas.

I also discovered on social media that Modern Orthodoxy and its flagship school are frequently confused with more right-wing communities and institutions. Yes, there were likely more supporters of Donald Trump on our campus than at Columbia. While there is a certain element of our population to whom Trump appealed as a strongman or for his supposed business acumen, the largest single factor in his support appears to be the assumption that he is a stronger supporter of Israel than Hillary Clinton. (As an aside, that is unproven to me. The only thing that I am certain Mr. Trump supports is himself. We will have to wait and pray for the rest.)

This brings me to the controversial topic of Judaism and social justice. Let me begin by saying that if you are one of the many people who does not like Orthodox rabbis, or me personally, please keep in mind that you are reading this by choice. You can stop at any point. I am not imposing my ideas on unsuspecting readers. I was invited by people who are interested in my thoughts and routinely read what I write to ponder the question of social justice and Jewish law, and so I have. If my perspectives are anathema to you, you need not read them. If you can express your differences without attacking me personally, feel free to write to me privately. I am always willing to learn something new, but I won't endure baseless and frivolous insults, even when they are so absurd as to be funny.

There are progressive wings of the Jewish community who have elevated social justice above all else in the Jewish tradition. For them, Torah is the platform of the Democratic Party in Biblical Hebrew. I saw many comments challenging Ben Shapiro by pointing out mitzvot of the Torah that they identify with social justice. Addressing Shapiro directly, one commenter reminds him that the Torah commands us to provide tithes to the Levi. Mr. Shapiro's point was, in the grand old journalistic tradition of *The Forward*, ripped from its context. I will explain where I agree with him and where I disagree, on the basis of my textual understanding of the Jewish tradition.

The Torah is replete with many mitzvot that appear to map nicely to what folks generally seem to mean by social justice. One in particular is of interest. In the Torah portion of Ki Tetzeh: "If in your travels you come across a bird's nest on any tree or on the ground, and it contains baby birds or eggs, and if the mother is sitting on the baby birds or the eggs, you must not take the mother along with her young. You must first chase away the mother and only then may you take the young for yourself. Things will then go well with you, and you will enjoy a long life."

This mitzvah is an exemplary lesson in the empathy Jews much show toward even poor unintelligent birds. How much more so should we treat the less fortunate

and defenseless of the earth. Is this not a mitzvah?

In the Mishnah in Berakhot, we find what must then appear to be a strange law: "One [leading prayer] who says 'may Your mercies extend to the bird's nest' or 'may Your Name be remembered for good,' or 'we give thanks, we give thanks' is silenced."

The Mishnah here in the fifth chapter of Berakhot calls upon the congregation to silence the one who prays for God's mercies to reach the mother bird in her nest just as the Torah appears to command. Why?

The Talmud offers two explanations, the latter of which is accepted as the authoritative one (see below for the decision of the Rambam):

"We understand why he is silenced if he says 'we give thanks, we give thanks,' because he seems to be acknowledging two powers; and [when he says] 'may Your Name be remembered for good,' because this implies, for the good only and not for the bad. And we have learned: 'one must bless God for the evil as one blesses Him for the good.' Regarding the reason for silencing him if he says, 'may Your mercies extend to the bird's nest': two Amoraim in the West, R. Jose b. Abin and R. Jose b. Zebida, give different answers. One says it is because he creates jealousy among God's creatures. The other, because he takes the measures prescribed by the Holy One, blessed be He, as springing from compassion, whereas they are but decrees."

It is the second opinion that is brought as authoritative by the halakhic tradition.

"One who says in prayer 'may He who had mercy on the bird's nest not to take the mother with the chicks, and not to slaughter an animal with its offspring on the same day, have mercy on us,' and similar sentiments, is silenced, because these precepts are Scriptural decrees and not acts of mercy. For if they were, He would not have permitted slaughter at all."

I cannot speak for Ben Shapiro, just as he cannot speak for YU and its rabbis. But this is what I think the Gemara means, and what it says about social justice (I alluded to this in my class and in exchanges on social media). The mitzvah of shiloo'ach haken may indeed promote sensitivity to the unfortunate. The rationale for observance, however, is commandment, not social justice ideals. Like Cordelia, we honor our parents because that's what we are bound to do. We love them, of course, and may genuinely respect them for the content of their character. We are, however, obligated to honor them whether we are so moved or not. The essence of Torah is positivist law, not moral aspiration. If Mr. Shapiro meant this, then I agree.

Where I may disagree, however, is whether moral aspiration is only personal. The Talmud teaches that Jerusalem was destroyed because its judges operated only on the basis of strict Torah law. The system requires individuals AND the community to go beyond the letter of the law.

This is itself part and parcel of the body of Jewish law we call the Halakhah. Wherever there is an "underlap" in the law, i.e., where there is no explicit law that can be applied, we are obligated to do what is right and good in

the eyes of the Lord.

In my classes on contemporary business and Jewish law, I describe the Ponzi scheme perpetrated by Bernard Madoff. I ask if this was a violation of the Torah. Students offer various theories as to which law his fraud does or doesn't violate. I explain every year that it should be obvious that stealing from one's investors is wrong, that we need neither a pasuk nor a sugya to teach us this.

Those who would maintain that Judaism is identical to the platform of the ideological Left might listen to the lecture by Ben Shapiro with an open mind. I think he got an important part of the story right, but perhaps omitted what I have herein emphasized.

A good friend suggested that I look to debate what he called "lefties." This post is not about politics. I admit to being a social liberal/economic conservative but I do not believe those positions are dictated by Jewish law or even Jewish tradition more broadly. They are about tactics. They represent what I think is in consonance with the U.S. Constitution and macroeconomics, respectively. This means they are merely tactical. My understanding of economic history is that economic growth in capitalist countries has outstripped economic growth in socialist ones. This is not a halakhic judgment and is irrelevant to discussions of Jewish law. Rabbis with presumed expertise in the interpretation of halakhah and rabbinic texts have no privileged position in a discussion of economics. I may well be wrong and do not espouse those positions in rabbinic/academic contexts.

My post, then, had nothing to do with Shapiro's politics. It had nothing to do with his comments about transgender people, which I think were unacceptable in tone. I don't know enough about the issue to have an opinion about the psychiatric/medical/sociological dimensions of the question. I do have an opinion about how to treat people and speak publicly. On that level, I oppose the tone and language of Shapiro's remarks.

So proposing that I debate "lefties" makes no sense to me. What qualifies me to invite people to debate me on politics? I am just a private individual. Neither politics nor gender identity were the subject of my post; in the interest of candor, I admitted where I stand personally on those issues but that was not the thrust of my remarks.

What I wrote is not original to me. It has been attributed to the Rav z"l. It has been espoused by Rabbi Walter Wurzbarger z"l and Rav Aharon Lichtenstein z"l. It can be reduced to this: Halakhah is a floor, not a ceiling. The Ramban articulated it clearly when he wrote that the Torah commands us to do what is right and good where the halakhah is not explicit.

I understood Ben Shapiro to acknowledge this, at least implicitly. My difference with him is that I believe it is also an obligation of Jews as a community and not just as individuals. These are just my personal views. I do not like snarky comments (there were plenty) and ignore them. If I don't interest you or anger you with my views, just ignore me. My family certainly does.



The Emotional Toll of Global Chaos or Why Modern Psychology is a Fraud

By Aryeh Shonbrun

Before I begin with an analysis of the faults that I have found with the assumptions of modern-day psychology, I would like to briefly explain my title. For starters, I hold psychologists in deep regard for their selfless drive to better the lives of their compatriots. It takes unquestionable strength of character and lots of courage to pursue an occupation that daily pits the practitioner against the trials and turbulence of the human condition. Effective therapists know from the start that by involving themselves in their patients' affairs, they risk empathetic entanglement, a dangerous coincidence that exposes them not only to the pain and suffering of their fellow brothers and sisters, but to the full spectrum of the sins and impieties of a fallen humanity. Yet they persevere, cognizant of the danger but unable to turn a blind eye to others' suffering. Without such brave individuals, society would most likely have not prevailed amidst the churning tides of societal discord that have gripped all of human civilization over this past century. Strong support from such public servants (they do serve a real public need) allows today's society to continue to function in the face of tremendous stresses and threats.

But despite the benefits that these selfless individuals offer society, the implications of some of their practices contradict their own purported ethics. I can only express dismay at the realization that the modern approach to therapy potentially endangers the perpetuation of enlightened, civilized society. Simply put, as the title indicates, I feel that something's rotten with the state of psychology.

I am not the first to point a critical finger at the practices of contemporary psychology. Many have done so before me and were later found to be suffering from the same mental ailments whose existence they questioned. Those who countered the prevailing sentiment within the closed communities of psychologists, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts have had the unfortunate luck to have chosen as their adversaries the sole members of society invested with the power to diagnose such conditions. If not discounted psychically, many have suffered one way or another from the close-mindedness of their colleagues in the field. Some have lost professorial positions, some licenses to care for the sick and some have just been given a cold shoulder. I cannot speak to the psyches of those individuals that have ventured to criticize the ever-evolving world of psychology, but it stands to reason that at least some of their discontent was solidly founded on honest inquiries done out of pursuit of truth. While I am not oblivious to the risks of pursuing counter-cultural dissent, I urge you, dear reader, to resist the impulse to rush to judge my intent in doing so, or to presume my fallibility where no counter-proof exists.

When approaching psychology, one should acquaint himself with its origins and critical innovations. The roots of this "science" stretch back to antiquity, probably not much later than the development of spoken language (inherent in language lies the ability to distinguish between one's own emotional state and that of one's fellow man). Throughout history, our social nature has provided the basis for all of society's achievements and shortcomings. The great philosophers of Greece, Rome, Judea, Egypt and Europe all pondered the eternal questions of the psyche. As society climbed ever higher on the scale of human development, the effect of its philosophies of the psyche on our understanding of ourselves and of our various governances has grown. Locke's notions of liberty and law, for example, derive from his theories on ethics and conscience. Kant investigates much of our internal psychological constitution (desire vs. intellect) whereupon he develops his theory of ethical behavior. Historically, much of this psychological discourse has taken on a religious character. One can find it in the treatises of rabbis, imams and priests alike. From the bible (e.g. the Deluge, Joseph and his brothers, Saul and David, Amnon) to today's modern society, the

questions that pertain to psychology's spiritual quest have given rise to lively debate, fantastical storytelling and dangerous discord. Though we can credit Dr. Sigmund Freud with developing the world's first consolidated model of psychology, his theories no longer retain the preeminence they once enjoyed. As much as I would like to introduce you to his complex, disquieting ideas, I abstain in favor of dealing with the more practical matter of contemporary psychology.

For argument's sake, I will highlight two underlying fallacies that appear in contemporary psychological theory and literature. These do not represent the opinions of all practicing mental health professionals, but do offer us a concise way through which I may critique the basic understandings of many psychologists. Some therapists do not take any psychological constitution, or personal history, into account, and treat every patient as a tabula rasa. Others (notably psychiatrists), in quite the opposite manner, operate

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based upon assumptions about the genetic, biological or psychological (i.e. psychodynamic) makeup of the individual, and so leave little room for the concept of free-will. Though these classifications may seem like broad generalizations, you most likely will find that they work for most theoretical approaches to mental health treatment. I should note that these two classes of treatment don't exclude one another. In fact, most therapists incorporate some of each approach.

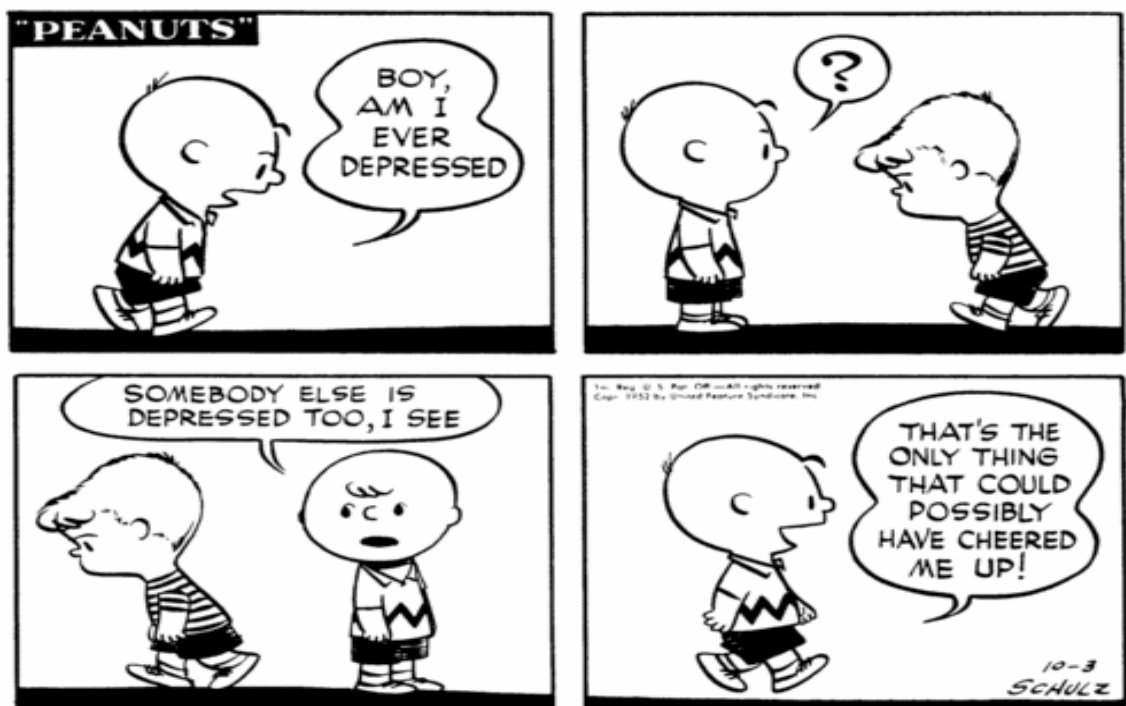
If the tendency of some psychologists to rely on a deterministic model of human behavior strikes you as problematic (either morally or halakhically), I wonder how you may react to the fact that some psychiatrists assume that their afflicted patients have been somehow predestined by a weak genetic constitution (if I may, by God) to a life of suffering. To a serious, thoughtful person, this should not appear self-evident, and, as a religious Jew, I call foul. Who are they (doctors, researchers) to determine that someone hasn't

got the 'right stuff' to make it in the world? By what means can they identify genes and make conclusions that sum up the entirety of one's personality?

By any account, this Calvinist-esque ideology is disheartening at best and dehumanizing at worst. Surprisingly, though, it is not based on much objective scientific knowledge.

If genetics, and only genetics, were responsible for mental disorders, we could expect rates of mental illness to remain stable for long periods of time—genes don't spontaneously combust. How then can we explain the dramatic increase in rates of neuroses (specifically anxiety and depression) over the past two decades? One study listed in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* (11/2012) concluded, after extensive research, that "in conclusion, available evidence suggests we may indeed be in the midst of an epidemic of depression." Another article published in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* (12/2006) concluded that "rates of major depression rose markedly over the past decade in the United States," and warned that "if the prevalence continues to increase at the rate it did during the past decade, the demand for services will increase dramatically in the coming years." These studies show that something other than genetics can affect an individual's mental health. While the data does not indisputably disprove the claim that genetic disposition is a significant factor in depression, it sure does lead one to question the premise of such an argument.

Alternatively, therapists, when at a loss to explain the source of a patient's illness, tend to completely overlook the causal factors in favor of an optimistic, forward looking approach that almost entirely ignores a patient's personal history. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (or CBT) represents the most common form of this therapy. CBT mainly focuses on reinforcing the patient's ability to identify and weed out negative thoughts and to avoid the things in his immediate surroundings that detrimentally affect his mood. Though this method does provide the patient with some newfound confidence, by focusing only on the patient's present situation, the therapist essentially dismisses further analysis of the etiological factors of his illness as either irrelevant, ineffective or misguided. The basic approach can be somewhat-comically construed as follows (I suggest intoning as a hippie might): "Your thoughts are buggin' you man?? Well, man, forget them! Try harder, get up, and go!!!" Such an approach has its limitations. It sort of hovers outside the realm of reality and, while it may help patients in the short term, it struggles to sustain improvements in the long term (researchers regularly observe relapse rates of close to 50% over the course of several years). Addi-



SEE PSYCHOLOGY CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

Heavy Anchors, Artistic Deals, and Looney Tunes

By Elliot Fuchs

In November of 1987, some guy named Donald J. Trump published a book called "The Art of the Deal." In it, the now President-Elect discusses many different approaches to securing business ventures or as he would probably say it "closing HUGE deals."

One of the tactics Trump describes is a negotiation method where the negotiator intentionally marks up his original asking price. He does this so that when his opposition makes a counteroffer, it is with Trump's initial high-asking price as the starting point for negotiation. As Trump explains, the guy on the other side of the table will take that into account and offer a higher counter-offer than he otherwise would have, had Trump's starting point been lower.

Trump may not have known it at the time, but

"BUT THERE WAS ONE THING THAT TRUMP WAS ALWAYS CONSISTENT ABOUT. NAMELY, NO MATTER WHERE ON THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM ANY PARTICULAR POLICY OF HIS FELL, IT WAS AT AN EXTREME. HE WAS ALWAYS ALL THE WAY TO THE RIGHT OR ALL THE WAY TO THE LEFT!"

what he describes in his book is called "The Anchor Effect" by most modern day psychologists.

The famous example of the Anchor Effect is an instance where a pair of shoes in one store costs \$300 and nobody is buying it, but then in a different store when the same pair of shoes was originally marked at \$500 and put on sale for \$300 they sell out. Obviously, this seems silly, because ultimately the two pairs of shoes cost the same amount. But when the \$500 value is originally put on the shoe you can't help but think you are getting a good deal. You might want to think about that the next time you buy something just because it's 25% off.

I recently read about the anchor effect in a Journal of Advanced Research in Law & Economics titled: "An Analysis of Bounded Rationality in Judicial Litigations," by Eric Langlais. Professor Langlais leads the studies of economics, psychology, and legal proceedings as a teacher in the University of Paris. In his paper he makes mention of a number of cognitive fallacies or limitations. He generally discusses their pertinence to his fields of interest but I would like to apply them to Trump's campaign, policy, and transition period as president-elect.

But first, what is bounded rationality? It is the idea that in decision-making, rationality of the individual is limited by the information they have, the cognitive limitations of their minds, and the finite amount of time they have to make a decision.

Bounded rationality is a blanket term that encompasses many different cognitive fallacies including "Loss/Disappointment Aversion" and "The Anchor Effect." These are widely accepted psychological concepts that I have also found in the works of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. Trump took the Anchor Effect from the pages of his book all the way to his policy positions so many years later.

Trump was able to apply the concepts discussed by these psychological masterminds to his campaign and has continued to utilize them even now, in his transition period before officially being inaugurated as president. If you look at how Trump ran his campaign you will notice that he was generally all over the political spectrum. Sometimes he came out with a conservative policy and other times he announced his more liberal policies. Inconsistent.

But there was one thing that Trump was always consistent about. Namely, no matter where on the political spectrum any particular policy of his fell, it was at an extreme. He was always all the way to the

right or all the way to the left. For example, he did not just propose to deport some illegal immigrants it had to be all of them. Banning Muslims from countries with a significant terror threat was not sufficient, it had to be Muslims from all countries. Placing a tariff on international trade wouldn't cut it, it had to be a massive 35% tariff.

Like I said, some of those policies are favored by the GOP and some of clearly lie on the Democratic side of the aisle (and frankly, some of his policies are neither). But they are all one thing--extreme.

The next obvious question is why. Why did Trump decide that the best move would be to come out with extremist positions? Why didn't he try to maximize his vote potential by releasing mainstream political opinions?

Because Trump knew that if he won the presidency after making these crazy policy proposals, then according to psychological research, he would have a relatively easy path to a decently successful presidency.

Trump already has an easy path to a moderately effective presidency. If he fulfills his campaign promises and repeals Obamacare and the Iran Nuclear Deal than people will praise him right from the start. With a GOP Congress, repealing ObamaCare should be easy, and through executive order he could pull out of the Iran deal on his first day. [Trump could pull out of the "deal" because the entire thing was followed through by the Obama administration through word of mouth. In other words, there is no written document signed by the Iranians and the American's agreeing to what they have agreed too. So all Trump would have to do is reinforce the sanctions upon Iran that existed before Obama decided to cozy up to a bunch of mass murderers.]

But aside from those aforementioned policy alterations that should come simply, he has already set himself up for success for when he needs to negotiate with the other branches of government. Because during his campaign he has already anchored his positions and policies at such egregious points, his opposition will feel as though they got away with a victory when they bring his policy proposals down from where they currently stand.

In case I am not being clear, allow me to use the same examples I used earlier to illustrate my point. Since Trump anchored his deportation number at 12 million, his opposition would probably be appeased if that number was cut in half to 6 million. But on Trump's end, 6 million illegals deported is a win for his presidential resume. Furthermore, if Trump can freeze the immigration of Muslims from terrorist countries to America and concede that Muslims from peaceful countries can enter, Trump will be able to boast his triumphs as a president and his opposition will feel as though they dodged a bullet. I hope and assume that there is no way that the GOP Congress is going to impose a 35% trade tariff as it goes against what they believe in ideologically. But I am sure that if they are able to get Trump to settle at 15% they would find it more manageable. The anchor effect. Full throttle.

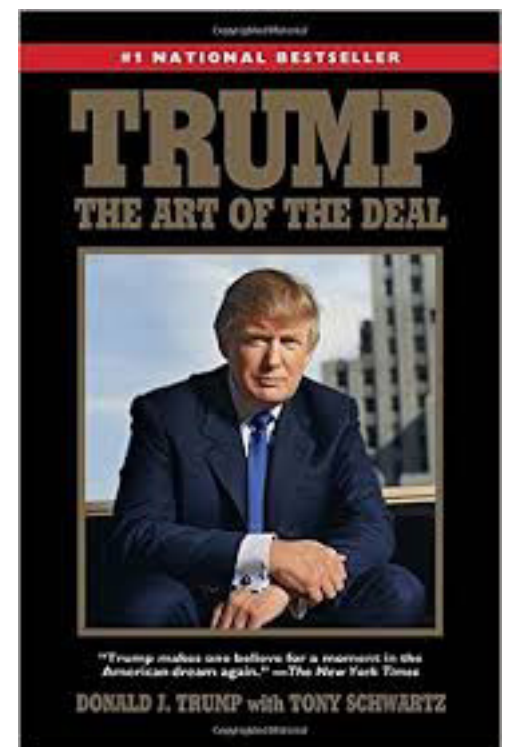
In this way, Trump has already set up the template that he will use to fashion his presidential legacy. Parenthetically, I believe that for Trump this is all about boosting his resume. It is clear to me--see my other work-- that Trump ran for president for purely egotistical and self-centered purposes. Also, if you don't agree with that, then please see:

Trump the board game or Trump vodka. That should convince you.

Despite what he probably thinks, Trump did not invent his own negotiation strategy. It is one that has been rooted in the depths of the human mind for a very long time. But considering the fact that Trump's book was published in 1987, he clearly has known about these tactics since then. And based on the arguments I present here, I think it is than fair to say, that Trump's deal making, on the grand stage of the American government, will be something incredible to witness. And as an American I hope that it will be nothing short of the "art" that he discusses in his book.

Arguably the greatest proof of Trump's intention to use his original policy proposals as a starting negotiation point is what he has done since he won the presidency. Almost immediately after he won, his steadfast positions slowly began to become more flexible. Repealing Obamacare went from priority number one to only a partial repeal, the Muslim ban is looking less promising, and he has already said that he will not prosecute Hillary. Clearly, Trump is easing his opinions now that his policies have been anchored. There would have been no reason for him to campaign with more extreme propositions and then become more moderate after his win unless he had negotiation in mind. Otherwise, we would see him do the opposite, he would've campaigned moderately and ended up doing whatever he wanted.

Beforehand, I mentioned "Loss Aversion," which refers to the tendency for people to strongly prefer avoiding losses than acquiring gains. In other words, a person is more likely to settle where he thinks he can walk away from a situation with some benefit, rather than pursue the action until its end, in an ef-



fort to see if he can win much more than the arrangement offered to him. This delusion will often cause people to walk away from court cases, gambling and/or business deals even when probability dictates that it is likely that they can receive more if they would continue to pursue the endeavor to its conclusion.

This is interesting to note considering that "winning" was one of Trump's campaign themes. During a speech in Florida Trump said "We're gonna win win win and we're not stopping," and it would be hard to forget the time he stated "We will have so much winning when I get elected that you may get bored of winning."

We should consider the thought that people may have voted for him because they were loss averse. And Trump's constant victory-themed rhetoric is what compelled them to vote for him. Trump almost made it seem as though it was vote for him and win or, alternatively, vote for Hillary and lose.

But while I don't have evidence other than the above speculation to suggest that Trump won the election because the America people were averse to disappointment, I do think that we will see many politicians display loss aversion when they go to the negotiation table and see Donald Trump on the other end.

Politicians, like all other humans, certainly suffer from loss aversion when trying to pass legislation. But in addition to the standard psychological fallacies, I expect that we will see politicians bow to Trump at the negotiation table for the following reasons as well.

SEE TRUMP CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

Make Orthodoxy Great Again

By Ben Atwood

“LOCK HER UP! LOCK HER UP!”
 “BUILD A WALL! BUILD A WALL!”
 “T-R-U-M-P, ALL THE WAY TO VICTORY!”

It was early Wednesday morning on November ninth, and the American people had elected Donald Trump into office. Cheers, singing, simkhah (joyous) dancing could be seen and heard in the streets and hallways of Yeshiva University's Wilf campus by students who had either waited out the night or were stirred awake in their rooms by the festivities. The atmosphere was joyous and triumphant, as a victory for the ages was being celebrated.

Earlier that night, a friend and I stood in the back of the YU Morgenstern Lounge election watch-party, disoriented by what we were witnessing. We were stunned, speechless. I suddenly turned to my friend, looked him in the eye and painfully confessed “these are the moments I question my Orthodox identity.”

What caused our bewilderment and my unfortunate admission was not the unexpected results of the election but the reactions of our peers around us. Even more, our unsettlement continued past that night. During tefillah (prayer services) on Wednesday morning, a rabbi who teaches at YU proudly joked that we omit tahanun, the emotional prayer often omitted on joyous occasions. Similarly, a student in a later minyan recommended saying hallel, a celebratory prayer reserved for festivals. In YU's Stern College for Women, a rabbi burst into his classroom with a glowing expression, excited to explain to his students the halakhic debate he had underwent that morning to conclude whether or not his congregation should indeed say hallel. In the greater Orthodox community, children were sent to our day schools proudly donning Trump yarmulkas, and synagogue members pushed for Shabbat kiddushim in the president-elect's honor.

Interestingly, one of the central moments in the hallel service is the singing of the phrase “zeh hayom asah HaShem, nagila venismehah vo,” “this is the day God has made, let us rejoice and be glad on it” (Tehillim 118: 24). A yarmulke is a traditional symbol of a Jew's fear of God. A kiddush is an intimate recognition of God's creation of the world. As an Orthodox Jew who cares deeply for God's Torah and its underlying principles, my stomach churns at the mere thought of using these precious, sacred words and symbols to commemorate the election of a man like Donald Trump.

I wish to clarify that I am in no sense condemning voting for Mr. Trump. One is permitted, and perhaps encouraged, to be satisfied with the election results if Mr. Trump is whom one thinks will be the best president of the United States. What I consider disturbing, however, is the excessive celebration and display of pride in Mr. Trump's victory that has been expressed by many members of our Orthodox community over the last several weeks.

Throughout my Jewish education, I have been consistently taught that along with a passionate love for and steadfast observance of halakhah comes a commitment to its underlying principles: “derekh erez kadma laTorah,” “courtesy comes before Torah” (Mishnah Avot 3: 17). In other words, religious practice severed from its larger, moral values is a corrupted enterprise. As a result, when Hillel the Sage was asked to describe the entire Torah on one foot, he responded not with the laws of keeping the Shabbat or eating kosher, rather with the ethical imperative “de'alakh seni, lehavra-kh lo ta'aveid,” “whatever is repulsive to you, do not do to someone else” (Talmud Bavli Shabbat 31a). The backbone of the Torah and our religiously observant lifestyle is basic ethics and morality, doing “that which is good and straight” (Devarim 6: 18).

To excessively celebrate Mr. Trump's victory is antithetical to these fundamental principles of the Torah. “Tzedakah and acts of kindness are the equivalent of all the commandments of the Torah” (Jerusalem Talmud Pe'ah 1: 1)—Mr. Trump's private foundation has stolen from multiple charities and refused to fulfill pledges, including those to the familiar Friends of the IDF organization. “On this day you should give [your worker] his wages, the sun should not set on it” (Deuteronomy 24: 15)—Mr. Trump has admitted on several occasions to stiffing many of his contractors. “You shall not cause emotional pain to a stranger, nor shall you oppress him” (Exodus 22:10), a commandment the Talmud Bavli (Bava Metzia 59b) notes appears thirty-six or forty-six times in the Torah—Mr. Trump has verbally abused several minorities consistently since the beginning of his campaign. He has bragged, using vile language, about sexually pursuing married women. He has publicly attacked women accusing him of assault as unattractive. When several women accused him of sexual assault, he insulted them publically and called them too unattractive to have been assaulted. The list goes on and on.

Can a rabbi jest about reciting hallel for such an individual? Can one even conceive of making a Shabbat kiddush, a sanctification of God's name, in Mr. Trump's honor, as many in our community have asked our synagogues to do? Being pleased with the results is one's personal business, but do? We dare sing songs of simkhah, reserved for moments of true religious joy and happiness, at the victor of this month's election?

The lack of moral clarity in our Orthodox community runs deeper than celebrating Mr. Trump's victory. As the topics of politics have arisen recently, I have heard many disturbing comments from my peers, including “people in this country need to stop playing the race card,” “if the immigrants are illegal, I do not need to care about their families,” “the command to judge others favorably has no application to gentiles.” More importantly, the sentiment is not limited to students; I have heard many alarmingly similar comments from parents, teachers, and rabbis. Have we forgotten our mission to imitate God, who, as we say thrice daily, “has compassion on all of his creations” (Psalm 145:

9)? Woe, how our community has fallen!

Some may argue that these cases I mention are merely exceptional, while I would retort that in a nation that is meant to be “a light unto the nations” (Isaiah 49: 6), even a few outstanding cases stain our entire community: “kol Yisrael areivim ze bazeh,” “all of Israel is responsible for [the wrongful behavior of] one another” (Talmud Bavli Shavuot 39a). The burden of responsibility falls not solely on the shoulders of the members of our community, but on its leadership, as well. The lack of compassion and ethics in our community presents a clear and immediate danger that must be addressed through our spokespeople, our rabbis, our teachers. Without such guidance, I, as well as many of my peers, have been left confused, questioning whether our Orthodox community truly shares what seems to be the principles of the Torah, tradition, and our Sages. In fact, many are not only discomforted by the shunning of religious values expressed by others, but have begun considering the behavior as sanctioned by our leaders: “since the rabbis were sitting there and did not object to it, it can be inferred that they agreed” (Talmud Bavli Gittin 56a). Indeed, some, such as Rabbi Jeremy Wieder, have bravely spoken out for true Torah principles, but they unfortunately remain of the few to do so. We need the leaders of our community to raise their voices and provide ethical clarity—otherwise, as Yoni Brander wrote in a Facebook post, “if moral silence is Orthodox Judaism, count me out.”

As a caring, compassionate Torah Jew who is not alone in feeling that his religious principles are being increasingly marginalized in his Orthodox society, I implore our leadership to preach not only strict adherence to the Shulhan Arukh but concern for the world beyond our Jewish community; not only commitment to daf yomi but devotion to universal empathy and derekh erez. I call upon all of our teachers, be it at the next Shabbat sermon or mussar schmooze in the Yeshiva University Beit Midrash, to expand their message beyond maintaining consistent Torah study and kindness to other Jews to reminding their students and synagogue members to be disturbed by the plight of all who are created “betzelem Elokim,” “in the image of God.” Please open our eyes to the surrounding world and teach us how to practically become the “kingdom of priests and sanctified nation” (Shemot 19: 6) we should be striving to be.

The United States may currently be bitterly divided, but our Orthodox community need not be. We have the ability to be stronger together and to make Orthodoxy great again, but we need clear guidance to do so. Rabbi Tarfon taught “it is not your responsibility to finish the work, but you are not free to desist from it either” (Avot 2:16). No one person has to take on the whole burden of changing the status quo, but it must begin somewhere.

Until then, I will be questioning my Orthodox identity. And I will not be alone.

FREE TRADE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

it doesn't already have a deal with. The more America opens itself up to free trade the better off all Americans will be. The effect free trade has on America creates an environment where workers in this country will move onto higher-level jobs. Manufacturing workers will be able to take advantage of the opportunities that open up, only if they were aware of them.

Director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies at the Cato Institute, Daniel Griswold, explains this is why America has this constant debate over free trade; the benefits are much harder to see than the ills. When a factory shuts down all of us hear about it, but when we reap the benefits of free trade we are silent. At the moment, America currently has tariffs on sugar and steel, if these tariffs were lifted, many manufacturing jobs would be created. Protectionism actually hurts American manufacturing! Regarding imports, the U.S dollar is uniquely used to our advantage. When American companies buy goods from foreign exporters, the exporters receive their pay in American dollars. These firms then have to exchange dollars for many reasons,

then keep the remaining dollars and invest them in American assets and America. So, as we import, we actually create more opportunities for foreign countries to invest in America. On the other hand, if we suddenly put up trade barriers, foreign investment will fall, exports will fall and other countries will put up trade barriers, which will hurt American exporting companies (acceding to the Cato Institute).

When President-Elect Trump becomes our leader, he will have a tremendous opportunity to fix America's path and to break out of recent economic stagnation. President Trump can craft policies that won't just benefit the top of the economic ladder but everyone if, and only if, he enacts free trade policies that propel American interests forward and puts the American worker first. The only way forward in “Making America Great Again” is by continuing the policies of his Republican Predecessors, in which free trade, and economic freedom were the stalwarts of American prosperity.



We Weren't All in Morg Lounge

By Benjamine Koslowe

I read Neta Chizhik's recent piece in *The Observer* about her election night experience, and am deeply disturbed. Disturbed, but not surprised. Only a week before the election, at the Morgenstern Hall ("Morg") Lounge World Series watch party, a similar "Lock her up" chant erupted during a Hillary commercial. Yet even that was not surprising, given the general theme of hooting and hollering that manifests at collegiate male watch parties. I suspected that what Neta described would occur, and purposely avoided the Morg Lounge party on election night.

On behalf of what I believe to be the majority of YU guys, I would like to say that we are sorry. We are sorry that Neta, and probably others, were disrespected. The behavior and attitude of students she described is inexcusable. Neta is, of course, right; there is no justification for their actions. We are truly sorry.

While we cannot change what happened, perhaps we can show that the nasty aspects of the Morg party are not representative of the true Wilf campus values. We respect the perspective of those who were offended and will not tell them what to think. But we request to at least be heard out.

Morg Lounge may have been packed with people, but the YU community is much bigger. We who weren't in Morg Lounge on November 8th watched the election results in our dorm rooms and in our

apartments. We attended viewing parties by relatives. We kept up with the live results in the library on our computers while trying to study for midterms. Many of us attended Night Seder or hung out with friends, willfully avoid the craziness as the results came in. Some of us didn't even care at all about the election. Wherever we were, none of us chanted "Lock her up" at any point.

Some of us were dissatisfied with both presidential candidates and were not deeply affected by the surprising Trump victory. Some of us were either pro-Hillary, anti-Trump, or some mix of both, and were shocked and depressed by the result. Some of us felt, despite Trump's disgusting character and lack of experience, that Trump, for various reasons, was better
SEE MORG, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25



Why We Publish What We Publish

By Avi Strauss

It would be lying to pretend members of our editorial board don't hold a wide array of biases and opinions, many times in conflict with one another. But I also am confident that there is one opinion that we all subscribe to—namely, freedom of speech. We may edit, touch up or rework articles submitted to us, but we never compromise the integrity of the opinions presented by our writers. While we reserve the right to refuse to publish a submission, we would almost exclusively do so if an article

was written irresponsibly or poorly, while suggesting ways in which the article could be improved and ultimately become publishable.

Nonetheless, in light of some of the recent opinion pieces we published on controversial matters, like the Confederate Flag, some readers questioned our discretion and tact. In their eyes, our willingness to publish a piece like a defense of the student who wore the flag, which contained views that are unpopular -- and highly unpopular to a certain group -- is a moral tragedy worthy of delegitimizing our editorial standing. Some despaired over the state of the university paper they were once a part of, while others decried the state of education period at Yeshiva, because of the views of one of its alumni or the actions of one of its students. I strenuously object to these condemnations.

To indict Yeshiva University, or the editorial board of *The Commentator*, which operates independently of the college and is completely self-funded, for any singular opinion expressed by a by-line writer, betrays the supposition that the complainant values

free speech in its true sense. Although I feel as if this point is becoming belabored in some segments of the opinion writing sphere, free speech and freedom of the press were consecrated as fundamental rights specifically to protect views that are unpopular. Certainly popular views, or even the views of the self-righteous moral preeners of Facebook comment streams, will find platforms for expression. They don't require the same protection as out-of-favor views in controversial times.

Although the progressive tendency to over-classify opposing opinions as "hate speech" may be popular with some readers, it is not the prevailing view of *The Commentator*. If it makes those people uncomfortable that our newspaper will not reliably print opinion pieces that conform to their own preconceived notions, then they should get used to the

discomfort.

I imagine those who wish to censor some of the speech from our last issue in particular would take issue if we decided to consider other types of speech unpublishable. For instance, what if the editors resolved that the advocacy of abortion was equivalent with advocacy of murder, and therefore made a blanket ban on pro-choice style opinion pieces, due to the ideological conceptions of fringe elements from one side of the political spectrum. I imagine others would wish that we censor opinions from Roshei Yeshiva that explicitly or implicitly refer to individual student actions as racist, for fear of becoming complicit in lashon hara. Absent imbuing the opinion's section

with a defined ideological bent, the mental hurdles that would have to be done to limit disagreeable speech would test even an Olympic mental hurdler.

Regardless, contemplating the best way to remain consistent in this regard while rejecting submissions on ideological grounds is a futile exercise. We do have standards for refusing content, but we do so while keeping in mind our goal to broaden dialogue--not constrain it. Now this includes, without being limited to, speech that may incite violence and speech that needlessly targets or offends. And while the range of speech that may qualify as "needlessly offensive" may be broad in the eyes of some of our detractors, we believe that much unpopular speech can be given a reasoned defense. Trigger warnings, cognitive dissonance and offense on behalf of others be damned.

Newspapers have always been and remain, at least in some places, bastions of free expression. As platforms to amplify opinions from across the political spectrum, we elevate debate and dialogue for those willing to challenge their own preconceived notions and entrenched thought. Surely this opens up articles to strong critique and appraisal—but that is exactly the point. To contest the notion that we publish certain disagreeable things is to seek to control the flow of information rather than join the discussion.

So decry our "tact". Bemoan the fact that our student newspaper is open to a variety of viewpoints. Lament the fact that the editors of this paper refuse to kowtow to your preferred and narrow "objectively correct" stances. But we certainly will not accede to outright suppression of unpopular opinions.

"NEWSPAPERS AMPLIFY OPINIONS FROM ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, WE ELEVATE DEBATE AND DIALOGUE FOR THOSE WILLING TO CHALLENGE THEIR OWN PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS AND ENTRENCHED THOUGHT. SURELY THIS OPENS UP ARTICLES TO STRONG CRITIQUE AND APPRAISAL—BUT THAT IS EXACTLY THE POINT!"

The Paradox of Ben Shapiro

By Samuel Gelman (Houston, Texas)

Like many others, I disagreed with a lot of what Ben Shapiro said during his presentation. I thought he simplified complex issues such as transgenderism and Judaism's approach to social justice, and that not all of his facts were as factual as he thought. But this article is not an attempt to refute what Ben Shapiro said. In fact, for the sake of this article, I am going to assume that everything Mr. Shapiro said was TRUE. What I will focus on, though, is his closing remarks.

Towards the end of his talk, Mr. Shapiro turned his attention to transgenderism. He started off by mocking the left's reaction to Caitlyn Jenner, asking whether she was the "gadol hador or gedola hador." The crowd responded with a hearty laugh and an enthusiastic applause. He then compared supporting people changing genders with telling a schizophrenic that the radio is really talking to him. He said that in the same way one would not embrace that delusion, one should not embrace the transgender delusion either.

Mr. Shapiro then told an anecdote about his experience with transgenderism. A few years ago, he was invited on CNN to debate whether Caitlyn Jenner deserved an ESPN award for courage. One of the debaters on the show was a transgender woman. The two of them got into a heated argument, climaxing when Mr. Shapiro called her "sir" and she threatened to send him home in an ambulance. Mr. Shapiro said that she should not have been insulted when he called her "sir" because facts don't care about your feelings. That she was a "sir" is the reality, and he is permitted to make that reality clear as long as it is true. More applause.

Mr. Shapiro continued his story, saying that after the debate, a furious Zoey Tur (the transgender woman) approached him and, while imitating her voice, he quoted her saying, "I'll meet you in the parking lot." He then continued by noting that he thought her actions constituted "deeply unladylike behavior." This was met with even more applause. After speaking a bit more about fix-

ing our society's social fabric and personal responsibility, Mr. Shapiro concluded with, "if you act like a mensch, you should be treated like a mensch."

Now, before I continue I want to reiterate that we are going to assume that everything Ben Shapiro said was true: transgenderism is in fact a mental illness, Caitlyn Jenner did nothing heroic, and Zoey Tur is actually a man.

It was after his mensch comment that I became extremely frustrated. I knew coming in that I would disagree with Mr. Shapiro, but I also, in a way, admired him. He was a man of principle. I knew that despite everything he said he would be consistent and stand by his ideas. He would not lie to me or himself and would not hold back. Throughout most of his talk he did not disappoint. Yet, his final line of "if you act like a mensch, you should be treated like a mensch" shattered that admiration. Here was a man who claimed that he preached decency, yet completely ignored that very decency when he was speaking about what he considers a mental illness, gender dysphoria.

What do I mean by all of this? Well, look at how he approached Caitlyn Jenner's gender dysphoria. His remark of "gadol hador or gedola hador" took a person's mental illness and turned it into a joke. It was as if he said; Haha; she can't figure out what gender she is. Let's mock her while throwing in some hebrew language to appeal to my audience. This is like going to a schizophrenic and asking them if it is just the radio or also the TV that is talking to them? This is a person that suffers from a terrible mental disease and he made fun of her suffering in front of over 43,000 people, many of whom were probably not Jewish.

He then proudly told the story about how he humiliated Zoey Tur in front of a national audience by calling her "sir". While Mr. Shapiro is allowed to disagree with Zoey about transgenderism, that still gives him no right to mock her by calling her "sir". He could have easily asked "what are your genetics?" instead of "what are your genetics, sir?" Yes, she threatened him afterwards and that is completely wrong, but that still does not put him in the

right. Mr. Shapiro claimed that he was stating a fact and that she should not have been insulted by his fact since "facts don't care about your feelings". Yet, this is not how we, as a society, function. We wouldn't go around calling fat people "fat" and then expect them not to be insulted because we stated a fact. Facts may not care about your feelings but people are not made up of only facts. Rationality and intellect do not dominate the human experience. We have emotions and feelings and going after those feelings in an argument is both a low blow and disrespectful.

Mr. Shapiro's approach to the end of the story was just as bad. He mocked and imitated Zoey Tur's voice in a demeaning and vitriolic way. He could have easily spoken in his normal voice, the voice he used the entire speech, or perhaps, he could have even left this part of the story out. His point about transgenderism was made. But no, he had to continue, and he did so by saying that Zoey tweeted threats to him after the show and that he felt that her behavior was "deeply unladylike." This was a clear shot at her gender dysphoria, mocking her struggle between her male biology while also identifying as a woman, but failing to act like one. This is a person that is mentally ill according to Mr. Shapiro and he made fun of her for it. His joke implied that Zoey must truly be crazy if she thinks she is a woman while also acting like that. After all, a woman would never stand up for herself and defend her beliefs. That would be crazy. Therefore, she must be a man. Hilarious, right?

This brings us full circle to Mr. Shapiro's closing words: "if you act like a mensch, you should be treated like a mensch." From his behavior that night, Mr. Shapiro not only displayed that he is most definitely not a mensch, but that he is also a hypocrite. As Kira Paley stated in her quote to The Forward: "you can't brag about how you humiliate people on national television and make jokes at their expense while simultaneously describing yourself as a good person." You can't preach decency while using others as punching bags for your own agenda, no matter how right you are.

SEE BEN SHAPIRO,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

In Defense of Discourse

By Elijah Diamond

I suppose it'd be odd to begin a defense of College Republicans inviting Ben Shapiro to campus with the fact that I don't personally subscribe to his brand of politics. As a conservative member of YU College Republicans, I operate in much of the same philosophical space as Mr. Shapiro and yet I often disagree with the content of his conservatism and the way he goes about promoting it. I have a particular distaste for how Shapiro ridicules ideological opponents both onstage and in print, and it is still unclear to me why caricaturing your adversary is a more preferable method of political conversion than persuading them.

But inviting Shapiro to speak at YU wasn't about indulging my or anyone else's opinions about politics. It was about challenging them. While Shapiro could surely have been more restrained in his verbal disavowal of transgenderism, to name his most inflammatory gesture of the night, bringing him to campus was a necessary endeavor because it reminds every one of us that open discourse, however unsavory to our sensibilities it may sometimes become, is in dire need of reaffirmation in our time, and on our campus.

"If liberty means anything at all," George Orwell once wrote, "it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear." This sentiment is not exactly Shapiro's slogan — that "Facts don't care about your feelings" — yet the two share a basic intellectual premise. Both argue, as does our College Republicans chapter on campus, that a precondition for a free and flourishing society is the right to speak your heart and mind and portray through words the world as you see it.



"BY ARGUING THAT FACTS EXCLUSIVELY SHOULD FORM THE CONTEXT OF INFORMED DEBATE, SHAPIRO CONCEDES TO HIS LIBERAL-PROGRESSIVE OPPONENTS A SUBTLE, INSIDIOUS VICTORY: THAT IN A COUNTRY WHERE CHURCH AND STATE ARE INDEED SEPARATE, FACTS, RATHER THAN FAITH OR CREED, SHOULD BE THE SOLE GUIDEPOSTS OF OUR NATIONAL LIFE.."

Shapiro's comment last Monday evening that "Transgender people are unfortunately suffering from a significant mental illness" is undeniably a contested fact but reflects, nonetheless, his personal view of human nature as he understands it. Last week, a cadre of YU faculty members (and President Richard Joel afterward) condemned in separate letters Shapiro's claim, as well as the raucous

applause it earned from a crowd of over seven hundred YU students. While President Joel's statement was less unambiguous in its condemnation, the group of twenty-eight professors criticized the students' reaction by "remind[ing]" them that the "Jewish tradition" repudiates such disparaging behavior.

When juxtaposed, this seemingly innocent appeal by our faculty to an accepted "Jewish tradition" among Yeshiva students mirrors a not-so-implicit groupthink threatening our collegiate peers, and the very notion of a liberal education, on campuses across the United States. Like our well-intentioned group of faculty members here at Yeshiva who unfairly presuppose a single interpretation of "Jewish tradition" that all YU students do or should subscribe to, liberal-progressives mistake their personal views for universal ones and, in doing so, assume that any opposition to their worldview is an impediment to progress and mutual understanding.

Take for example a college student's belief in traditional religion, or in a particularist orientation of any

kind. When subject to progressive sensitivities on most college campuses, both faith and particularism become 'microaggressive' dogmas to be eliminated from the realm of acceptable discourse. If this sounds like hyperbole, I encourage you to read the recent words of Zoey Tur, the target of Shapiro's remarks last Monday evening; to quote an article in the Forward discussing Tur's response to Shapiro's talk at YU: "Tur said she hopes that the students who applauded Shapiro last week at Yeshiva University would learn

to "think for themselves" instead of relying on religious faith. "It's time that we dispensed with our silly beliefs and magical beings that control our lives [emphasis added]."

I believe this statement perfectly captures the debate that we're all not having about the Shapiro event, and *SEE DEFENSE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 26*



Never. Stop. Commentating.

Got something to say?
Email doron.levine@mail.yu.edu

PSYCHOLOGY, CONTINUED
FROM PAGE 18

tionally, according to the title of an article in Psychological Bulletin (5/2015), "The Effects of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy as an Anti-Depressive Treatment is Falling." The authors of that article conclude that "modern CBT clinical trials seemingly provided less relief from depressive symptoms as compared with the seminal trials." This should cause some alarm, as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy constitutes one of the cornerstones of modern psychotherapeutic treatment.

But all is not lost; we still have the 'wondrous' psychopharmaceutical innovations of the past few decades. Though I do not intend to debate the effectiveness of taking anti-depressant pills (some studies dispute the effect of the antidepressant SSRIs vs. placebos), I should warn the public of their side effects. Though most are minor, it pays to ask a doctor before starting a regimen. For anti-anxiety meds (i.e. tranquilizers) I suggest due care, as they possess possibly addictive qualities. Though psychiatric drugs can sometimes help treat various forms of mental illness, I don't revel in the news that over 10% of all Americans (and astoundingly nearly a quarter of all middle-aged women!) now take antidepressants—a 400% increase over the past twenty years alone! (CDC Report [10/2011]). I find it very hard to believe that such great numbers of Americans are all genetically predisposed to fall ill! And even if that were the case, would it comfort me in knowing that vast percentages of the U.S. population need constant psychiatric intervention in order to maintain basic sanity? What would happen if a shortage of these drugs were to occur? "Oy vey!"

Hence, I write to you, dear reader, in frustration. The discipline of psychology has run out of innovative options, no-one has yet invented a cure for these diseases of the mind and spirit, and, as I see it, no-one ever will.

Though I cannot fully disprove the effect of genetic factors on any disorder, I believe a genetic assessment should be limited to its lowest possible minimum. I grant that purely physiological/neurological disorders exist and contribute to the number of those who suffer; but I remain skeptical of the blanket genetic rationale given for mental illness. While some forms of schizophrenia have been shown to derive directly from genetic factors, sometimes these factors do not express themselves in active form (phenotype) due to a lack of adequate stressors (e.g. twin studies). The same can be said for bipolar disorders, depression and anxiety disorders, and ADHD.

Although I do not object on principle to using the terms 'illness' and 'disorder,' I warn you not to draw too many conclusions from doing so. Thomas Szasz, MD, writes in his book *The Myth of Mental Illness* of the dangers of such an approach. He asks, "The pancreas may be said to have a natural function. But what is the natural function of the person? This is like asking what is the meaning of life." In tyrannical psychiatry, he sees the overreach of society/government

and an encroachment upon private liberties. When he hears President Clinton say "Mental illness can be accurately diagnosed, successfully treated, just as physical illness," or Vice-President Biden say "Addiction is a neurobiological disease," he hears the dismissal of the humanity of the disease and perhaps the extreme haughtiness of these politicians. Most people assume that mental illness is fixable, but the aforementioned trends of increasing numbers of patients must worry them too.

So, then, what really lies behind this increasingly difficult situation? What can we blame? As the title to this piece suggests, the answer lies in ourselves. I do not intend to assume the role of philosopher or theologian in contemplation of man's tendencies for sin and disorder. But regardless of the source of our destructive impulses, humanity continues to prove its immense capability to create self-inflicted suffering. In particular, the psycho-socio-economic situation that we currently inhabit gives us all the reason to despair.

In an enlightened piece in *The New York Times* this past March, Richard Brouillette, a psychotherapist from New York, outlines this argument. The article titled "Why Therapists Should Talk Politics" describes the therapist's inability to help his patients, since he knows why they have fallen ill and they had nothing to do with it. As the subhead emphasizes: "Sometimes, the patient is depressed because the world is unjust." Brouillette observes that an increasingly competitive job-market, lower wages, and growing societal dysfunction (e.g. terrorism, inequality, racism) have all contributed to the problem of mental distress. He concludes: "You would be surprised how seldom it occurs to people that their problems are not their fault. By focusing on fairness and justice, a patient may have a chance to find what has so frequently been lost: an ability to care for and stand up for herself. Guilt can be replaced with a clarifying anger, one that liberates a desire — and a demand — to thrive, to turn outward toward others rather than inward, one that draws her forward to make change."

This clearly seems to help resolve our dilemma. Genetics explains some of the world's misery, but the majority of disorders are human in origin. Humans affect each other's emotional state, and nothing short of society-wide rehabilitation can effectively "cure" those who suffer from psychological disorder. While I cannot prove this conclusion, I implore anyone who doubts the extent of the misery present in today's world to simply open their eyes.

With this understanding, we can cast a more critical eye on some of contemporary psychological theory. Today, patients can choose from many different approaches and therapies when seeking treatment. However, as I've demonstrated above, the common denominator of most, if not all, of these therapies seems to be their tendency of myopically placing the blame on the individual and his psychological constitution, thus sparing society the task of performing proper *heshbon nefesh* (introspection). Therapists, instead of explaining to their patients the true ills of society, often shield

their patients from such knowledge. Perhaps they pity them. Perhaps they subconsciously repress the information out of genuine fear of its implications for their own well-being. Irrespective of their reasoning, by ignoring the societal causes of suffering, therapists risk overlooking the inherent structural weaknesses that threaten us all.

Shakespeare understood the futility of the field long before the advent of modern psychology. In *The Tragedy of Macbeth* (V, III), Macbeth begs a doctor to tend to his ailing wife who suffers from intense guilt over having orchestrated the murder of King Duncan. Although in this case she is directly responsible for her illness (i.e. it was not caused by external, societal factors), Shakespeare's general message about mental health still rings true:

Macbeth: How does your patient, doctor?

Doctor: Not so sick, my lord,
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies
That keep her from her rest.

Macbeth: Cure her of that:
Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart.

Macbeth begs the doctor to administer a cure that will deny her soul the suffering that reality imposes. He seeks a panacea that will magically relieve her of her pain. But, as we know, the doctor can do little to remedy such a case. He answers Macbeth, telling him not to expect any miracles. Her pain is real. In this particular situation, her guilt cannot be rectified (the king is already dead), and her ability to feel it cannot be dulled by any drug.

We collectively have not yet sunk to the depths of *Lady Macbeth*. We can still hope to fix our broken world. With common purpose and collective fortitude we can change our present circumstances!

A final thought for those who pursue careers in counseling: Try your best to help your brothers and sisters in need of companionship. You don't need to receive an education in how to act kindly. Just be a good, honest friend.

—

"Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

Thus saith the Lord; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border." Amen

-Jeremiah 31:15-17

TRUMP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

Politicians must be feeling self-conscious at this point. Their world was just penetrated and completely possessed by an individual who has shown less political finesse than a looney toon. So I would imagine that when the time comes to pad their personal resumes (so that they can get re-elected when the midterms draw closer) they will be quite loss averse when it comes to pursuing policy with President Donald Trump. Of course, the fact that Trump is now the most powerful man in the free world gives him some negotiating power. But the truth is that there is only so much that he can do without Congress' consent, which would be comforting if the politicians in the House and the Senate weren't suffering from severe disappointment aversion. This is only furthered by Trump's outsider status.

You see, if Trump comes out throwing proposals at Congress and they reject them, then it will appear as though the outsider is trying to get serious reform

"ARGUABLY THE GREATEST PROOF OF TRUMP'S INTENTION TO USE HIS ORIGINAL POLICY PROPOSALS AS A STARTING NEGOTIATION POINT IS WHAT HE HAS DONE SINCE HE WON THE PRESIDENCY. ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AFTER HE WON, HIS STEADFAST POSITIONS SLOWLY BEGAN TO BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE."

done while the classic, old, stale politicians continue to stall the process. The Republicans (who hope to grow their congressional majorities in the midterms) will not let that happen. As a result, they will meet Trump at the table, and make that settlement agreement, when in truth their political ideologies could have prevailed the entire time.

What I have described has already started happening. True conservatives like Mike Pence and Ted Cruz have supported Trump's crony capitalism maneuvers in the carrier job deal. This was a breach of free market capitalism and neither Cruz or Pence would have supported it a few months ago.

But this is Trump country now. The Donald has arrived and we can expect to continue watching as politicians bend to his will.

So for a guy who many people (including myself) called a complete moron, it seems as though he has been steps ahead of us since the start.

There Are Disgusting Acts and Then There's What Rosie O'Donnell Did

By Etan Neiman

A question sometimes fun to ponder is what act constitutes the lowest of the low? There are all types of delightful shots one can take at answering it. Maybe it is harming a child? Perhaps ruining someone's life? Bullying? As the late hours of Monday, November 21st spilled into early Tuesday, Rosie O'Donnell sent a tweet which may have covered all three of these possibilities. She tweeted the following to her nearly one million followers in regards to a ten-year-old boy: "Autistic? If so – what an amazing opportunity to bring attention to the AUTISM epidemic." Her tweet goes on to cite a disgraceful and tasteless YouTube video as evidence that the kid in question may be autistic. The little boy O'Donnell is referring to is Barron Trump, the youngest son of President-elect Donald Trump. Let's take a look at the three previously listed acts which may be the lowest of the low. This tweet, potentially outing Barron's autism, could certainly harm the child and it may very well ruin his life. The good news is that I'm not quite sure this act falls under the bullying umbrella. She left the bullying for the hundreds of kids who attend elementary school with Barron.

Perhaps, I should assume Ms. O'Donnell only had the best intentions in mind. After all, a follow up tweet provides some further explanation into her purpose in potentially outing Barron's autism. "Not my (YouTube) movie clip," O'Donnell tweets. "Lots of us who raise autistic children notice things many would miss... some things felt familiar." For good measure, she thoughtfully concludes her tweet with #NOSHAMEAUTISM. Moreover, right in the description of the YouTube video O'Donnell cited for evidence is #StopTheBullying. Heartwarming. Unfortunately, O'Donnell could have included all the hashtags from #BlackLivesMatter to #EndWorldHunger to #FreePalestine and I still would be disgusted with her. As evidence that her intentions may not quite have entirely been to promote mental health awareness, it took me some thirty minutes to wade through her hundreds of tweets dedicated to attacking President-elect Trump in order to arrive at the two tweets addressing Barron. It seems a bit fishy to me that Ms. O'Donnell would take a break from her important work denigrating the President-elect to raise autism or mental health awareness. I tend to lean towards the camp which believes she was attempting to destroy Donald's ten-year-old in her lowest attempt yet to get to her bitter nemesis. You know what they say, "If you can't stop him from becoming President, at least destroy the life of his little kid." Oh wait, that's not a saying.

Let me take a very important step back at this juncture. This is not an article meant to support President-elect Trump. I'll leave that to Sean Hannity. This ar-

ticle is certainly not in any way meant to suggest that there is anything at all wrong with having autism or any type of mental illness. If I felt that way, I would need to do some serious reconciling with a Commentator article I penned last spring detailing my battles



with mental illnesses. Even given my openness on the topic, I speculate a younger me would have been a tad ticked off if someone made a YouTube montage of my worst moments and then threw some mental health terms around. It probably would not have helped matters if a mega-celebrity then tweeted out a link to that video. This was my story to decide to tell. I could have easily given in to the damaging and laughably untrue stigmas associated with mental illnesses and told nobody. I decided not to; that was my decision alone to make. Finally, this article is far from a declaration that Barron has or doesn't have autism. To address some of

autism or a different mental illness. After all, nearly 20% of Americans live with a diagnosable mental health illness. Unlike O'Donnell, however, I will leave it to the doctors to decide any possible diagnosis and Barron to decide whether to share a potential illness.

After allowing herself ten days of defending her courageous actions and reflecting on all the great work she did with these tweets and sharing the YouTube video, Ms. O'Donnell decided it was apology time. "I apologize @MELANIATRUMP - I was insensitive in my RT - i am sorry for the pain i caused - it was not my intent - i am truly sorry," O'Donnell humbly tweeted on Thursday, December 1st. Of course, it would have been much easier for the general public to see this apology if she had not subsequently locked her twitter account to the public for nearly a week directly after issuing the apology tweet. Also apologizing was the maker of the YouTube video; however, he took the apparently unusual step of keeping his account public following the apology. His video statement reads in part, "It was incredibly irresponsible of me to diagnose Barron Trump using a selection of misleading videos. My video was originally intended as an anti-bullying video, as I myself suffer from autism and wanted to educate people. Unfortunately, I completely misdiagnosed a person and ended up making a video that was false, defamatory and malicious. I retract every single statement I made in that horrendous video, and want to sincerely apologize to the Trump family, especially to Melania and Barron Trump." Obviously, that well-formulated, grammatically flawless, and sincere public apology cannot compare to the 26 word tweet O'Donnell fired off, where she could only be bothered to capitalize the word "I" two out of the five times she used it, before locking her account to the public.

In determining an appropriate punishment for Ms. O'Donnell, she does deserve to have all the facts considered. I will take into account how she held back for eight years of the Obama presidency and did not unleash her apparent hobby of attacking President's kids. However, it would have been great if she could have held herself back for a little longer than two weeks into Trump's reign as President-elect. Considering all of the facts, it would be letting her off too easy to simply call for her to be terminated from her TV show on the Showtime network. A fitting punishment would be stripping her of her endorsements and banning her from television. That way, she could see what it feels like to have someone take a shot at ruining her life.

"IT SEEMS A BIT FISHY TO ME THAT MS. O'DONNELL WOULD TAKE A BREAK FROM HER IMPORTANT WORK DENIGRATING THE PRESIDENT-ELECT TO RAISE AUTISM OR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS. I TEND TO LEAN TOWARDS THE CAMP WHICH SAYS SHE WAS ATTEMPTING TO DESTROY DONALD'S TEN-YEAR-OLD IN HER LOWEST ATTEMPT YET TO GET TO HER BITTER NEMESIS."

the YouTube video's chief claims, it is perfectly conceivable that Barron is a bit shy and doesn't react well to cameras or extreme attention. I can comprehend how he seemed a little out of it at 3:00 in the morning after being awoken to celebrate his father's presidential victory. With this said, maybe Barron does have

other.

It is wrong that these students show a bad side at parties like the one was organized, and this problem must be addressed. If I may step out of the collective group I've labeled, I will acknowledge that I unfortunately may have been naively optimistic until this point. The meanness that was exhibited in Morg Lounge is a part of our community, and is therefore, unfortunately, reflective of a part of us. And as much as I hope that the following was not the case, there probably were some people in their apartments, dorms, and library cubicles quietly chanting "Lock her up" and identifying with Trump's vulgarity. I'm glad that Rabbi Jeremy Wieder's speech about racism in our community has sparked much conversation about some of these problems.

I like to think that there is truth both in my hopefulness and in my realism. There is a part of me that

knows that cruel behavior will unfortunately surface again on Wilf campus. But I don't think this is incompatible with thinking, or at least with hoping, that the Morg Lounge election night behavior, at the end of the day, does not reflect our community's basic values. And the (hopefully small) minority who deep down are racist, misogynist, or just plain old jerks, are the embarrassment of everyone else. Our community does not find their jokes funny, and we disassociate from their rudeness.

When I woke up in my Morg dorm room on November 9th, the sun was bright and the sky was clear. I had a congenial conversation with a friend about the election's results, and went about my day with usual Seder, lunch, classes, and social interactions. The Morg Lounge election party is not all there is to YU, despite all the attention that it has received. The story is not so dark.

MORG LOUNGE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

than the alternative, so we hoped he would win. But none of us adopted Trump's incivility or his misogyny. Not during any moment of the campaign, not on election night, and not now. Not in thought, and not in practice.

We like to believe as well that even most of the guys at the Morg Lounge party are typically thoughtful people. Those individuals who chanted loudly, who talked down to Stern girls, and who laughed about sexual assault, did the wrong thing. "Males of this age demographic will say nonsensical things," is no excuse. Our experience, though, is that the behavior Neta witnessed is, on the whole, the exception rather than the rule. The same guys who act like apes in some group settings spend most of their time as serious students who respect each other and act kindly toward one an-

Why Donald Trump is the Media's Biggest Beneficiary

By Joey Chesir

Last month, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump shocked people all over the world by defeating Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton in the presidential election. Despite winning the Republican nomination, Trump was widely seen as an underdog in the election, and many media polls conducted before the election had shown Clinton to be leading. Trump's campaign was fraught with controversy, including a dispute with the Muslim family of a deceased American soldier; his stated desire to build a wall, which would be used to keep out illegal immigrants; and, shortly before the election, the release of a video in which Trump used vulgar language to outline specific inappropriate behaviors towards women. All of these incidents were highly publicized by the media, who frequently criticized Trump, either openly or indirectly. In response, Trump recognized the media's criticism, and often responded aggressively to their censure, by repeatedly complaining about their coverage of his campaign, and referring to numerous specific media institutions as "dishonest".

In fact, Trump's hatred of the media became almost a rallying cry for his campaign and his supporters, who frequently accused the media of being biased and skewed towards Clinton. At face value, Trump may have had something resembling a point in his criticism of media institutions, many of whom would openly

scrutinize his campaign and vilify Trump as a candidate. However, Trump's frequent criticism of the media ignores the fact that Trump's campaign benefited tremendously from the media's coverage of him, and that he almost constantly used their coverage to his advantage during the election cycle.

When the media analyzed one of Trump's many inflammatory comments or incidents, they often referred to the comment, or Trump's actions, as "offensive". While this may seem like a harsh reproach of Trump's behavior, the only thing that the word "offensive" really means is that his action may have hurt the feelings of some citizens. This type of criticism is actually a particularly inaccurate way to analyze Trump's inappropriateness for the office of the presidency, because the job of the president has absolutely nothing to do with the emotions of citizens, but rather their logical best interests. Even (or especially) after Trump has won the election, there are many valid criticisms that could be made of him as a politician, including his lack of a political acumen, and his tendency to give political offices to only those who share his conservative agenda, in a way that is reminiscent of the "spoils system" employed by President Andrew Jackson. However, to merely state that Trump may have offended some citizens as his biggest flaw fails to do justice to the actual reasons why he was a poor candidate for the presidency. These reasons included Trump's lack of political competence, and a lack of commitment to

serve the United States honorably, both of which are ultimately highly important traits of a presidential candidate.

Trump frequently reacted to the media's criticism of his actions and comments by asserting that the media was biased against him, and accused them of attempting to turn voters against him. However, Trump also repeatedly stated that he was attempting to fix the problem of "political correctness" in his campaign, and that his seemingly inflammatory comments were actually examples of his supposed commitment to being honest in his rhetoric, regardless of the public's reaction. Many voters came to see Trump as the "politically incorrect" candidate, who would analyze an issue with brutal honesty, as opposed to other candidates who would paint a somewhat inaccurate picture of a situation in order to cause intense emotional reaction amongst voters. There is certainly no denying that Trump utilized the perception of him as being "politically incorrect" to great advantage during his campaign, and manipulated that perception into being a tool to convince voters that he was the best choice for the presidency. However, the perception of Trump as being "politically incorrect" was due largely to the media's extensive analysis of his many "offensive" incidents, which Trump was able to derive political ben-

MEDIA CONTINUED ON PAGE 27

BEN SHAPIRO, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

The concept of not embarrassing your fellow man is a fundamental Jewish precept. In Rabbi Daniel Sperber's article, "'Friendly' Halakhah and the 'Friendly' Poseq", he quotes various sources in this regard. For example, Leviticus 19:17 states: "You shall not hate your kinsfolk in your heart. Reprove your kinsman but [you shall] not bear sin because of him." The Torat Kohanim says that this verse is telling us that while we should rebuke our brethren, we do not do it if we risk severely embarrassing them. Even though there is a biblical commandment to rebuke, if the rebuking causes embarrassment it is forbidden.

This idea is further demonstrated in Sotah 10B. R. Yohanan says in the name of R. Simeon bar Yohai that "It is better for a man to leap into a fiery furnace rather than publicly humiliate his fellow. How do we know this? From Tamar [of whom it is said 'when she was brought forth (to be burned) she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "by the man who owns these I am pregnant"'] (Gen. 38:25)." Rashi explains in Bava Mezi'a 59A: "Even though she was being taken out to be burned, she still did not mention Judah by name as the man by whom she was pregnant." From this story the rabbis derived that (Avot 3:11): "One who... humiliates his friend in public... although he may possess Torah knowledge and good deeds, he has no share in the World to Come."

From these sources it is clear that the Torah forbids humiliating your fellow man. When Mr. Shapiro, who identifies himself as a Modern Orthodox Jew, completely ignores this idea, he creates a bad image for Modern Orthodoxy and Judaism as a whole. A public figure such as Mr. Shapiro must take this into consideration when speaking about controversial issues. He is allowed to disagree with Zoey and Caitlyn and claim that transgenderism is a mental illness, but he must find a way to do it without embarrassing or disrespecting others.

Which brings me to you, my fellow YU students. I am very happy that Ben Shapiro came to speak to us and commend the College Republicans and all the other clubs that sponsored the event for making it happen. I think it was a great event that will lead to a lot of serious discussion among our student body. But to all those that laughed at Mr. Shapiro's hateful jokes and don't see how hurtful they were, think about the damage you have done to our Yeshiva University community. A university is supposed to be a place where everyone feels like they belong. We are supposed to look out for one another. What if there was someone dealing with gender dysphoria at that presentation? Do you think that Ben Shapiro's jokes and your laughter made them comfortable, like they belonged to a community that would be there for them? How are we supposed to be a light unto the nations if we don't respect others and speak out when they are mocked and attacked? How can we expect others to defend us when we don't defend them?

Some of you will dismiss everything I have said, saying that I am a soft liberal who just had my feelings hurt and should toughen up. Others will disagree with me more seriously, and respond with a rational and well thought out argument. And that is fine. I welcome those that have different viewpoints to engage me in conversation. I will argue with you. I may roll my eyes at you. I may even shout at you. But I will never laugh at you.

DEFENSE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

about the state of our national and collegiate discourse more generally.

Tur's claims that core religious beliefs held by YU students are "silly" and that our God is "magical" reflect the progressive presumption that a traditionalist worldview, undergirded so often by factors other than merely facts, is an illegitimate premise on which to construct an opinion about politics. Unsurprisingly, this presumption echoes the same one underlying Hillary Clinton's comment during the presidential race that "half" of Donald Trump's supporters were in a "basket of deplorables." It also underlies the outcry of those on the Left after the election that Donald Trump's supporters were — by merely voting for him — at once "racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, and Islamophobic," to name one telling formulation.

When Shapiro repeats his fan-favorite slogan, "Facts don't care about your feelings," however, he unthinkingly confirms this assumption held by the Left that a traditionalist foundation should not serve as a legitimate pole opposite scientism in the spectrum of acceptable discourse. By arguing that facts exclusively should form the context of informed debate, Shapiro concedes to his liberal-progressive opponents a subtle, insidious victory: that in a country where Church and State are indeed separate, facts, rather than faith or creed, should be the sole guideposts of our national life. This quiet consensus, one shared by liberal-progressives like Tur, by classical liberals like Shapiro, and by our forward-thinking faculty on campus, has contributed to a fundamental and widening schism between progressives and traditionalists on what ought to be the building blocks of dialogue itself.

In a sense, support for Donald Trump's candidacy was driven by a profound counter-reaction — staged by a coalition of Heartland Americans, many of them faith-observers, many others not — to this implicit, elitist alliance between Liberals new and old. Heartland Americans believe, as do the mavericks on either coast daring enough to affirm their right to vote from the heart, that a tyrannous Thought Police has discredited their most cherished views and attitudes about the world.

Surging conservative support for political incorrect-

ness, observable in Trump's victory, the rise of Ben Shapiro, and the triumphant applause to the latter's charged remarks in Lamport Auditorium, has been a redoubtable defiance of the suppressive groupthink that has replaced a once genuine marketplace of ideas in America. Ordinary people no longer feel like they can express themselves openly, and many profess an honest plight when they claim that they are "under assault" from the oratorical onslaught of campus and media progressives. This environment, both on our campuses and across our country, betrays progress of any kind.

And so, after all this, why then is freedom of speech so important, and why does the contest between faith and facts, between Torah U'Madda, play an important role in the defense of open discourse? The answer, I think, can be found in the humbler plea of Shapiro's talk at YU, which watchers have elided in favor of his more controversial comments: That Americans, if nothing else, need to do a better job of being decent to one another.

On the surface this statement isn't much (Shapiro himself did a cursory job of defining exactly what it means to be "decent"), but my interpretation of it was this: Left and Right in America need to respect, in the most foundational sense, the immaterial elements of each other's creeds that fall beyond the realm of mere fact. For the Left, this means accepting oftentimes faith-informed opinions as legitimate sources of knowledge and wisdom; for the Right, this means accepting that feelings, regardless how little facts might care about them, are worthy of our consideration and our respect. For our presiding faculty and administration here at YU, this means reopening a serious debate about what exactly Jewish tradition is, how students at our university should relate its teachings to a largely secular world, and why students should even care about tradition in the first place. When disregarded with contempt or simply left uncultivated, faith and feeling fast-become agents of vice rather than of virtue, and if we aspire to a healthier, more open discourse, we must heed the better parts of Shapiro's admonition.

Finally, by inviting Mr. Shapiro to campus, we endeavored to reignite a humane, though no less critical spirit among all participants in our university experience. Our invitation to Shapiro was predicated on the idea that neither an open society nor a liberal education can exist without a free marketplace of ideas, and, based on the event's early reception, it seems that we are well on our way to rebuilding a formidable one on our campus. We welcome students, faculty, and administrators to join us in this much-needed enterprise, and hope that by seriously challenging others' ideas and our own, we can begin to answer society's most "serious, painful questions" and more.

Why We, As Orthodox Jews, Need to Oppose Racism

By Rabbi Yosef Blau

Articles in *The Commentator* about the Confederate flag expressed differing opinions on whether or not the flag was a racist symbol. The given was that if it was, then the flag's display was unacceptable. I totally agree that we should strongly oppose any expression of racism. An article is needed because of the current climate in the Orthodox community: accepting the norms of Western liberalism without showing Halakhic sources is not accepted. Fifty years ago a commitment to human rights and opposition to any discrimination based on race, gender, or religion was a goal that Orthodox (and non-Orthodox) Jews fully supported. This commitment was rooted in man being created in God's image and the commonality of all humans being descendants of Adam and Eve, a biblical source.

The after-effect of the horrors of the Holocaust and the lack of a serious ongoing campaign to save Jews by the Western countries has eroded trust in Western liberalism. The remarkable emergence of the state of Israel has been achieved despite ongoing hostility from its Arab neighbors. This has led many religious Zionist rabbis to reject Western notions of morality as conflicting with authentic Jewish morality.

The Mishnah in Sanhedrin Chapter 4 that states "He who destroys one life is as if he destroyed an entire world, and he who saves one life is considered as if he saved an entire world" is often cited. However there are two textual versions. One version adds the word "Jewish," restricting the statement to describing the value of a Jewish life. Our printed versions of the Bavli and the Yerushalmi differ, and there is a contradiction between two references and the statement in the Maimonidean code. These two tradi-

tions are reflected in other sources as well. While the simple meaning and the context of the Mishnah in Avot (3:14) discussing man being created in the Divine image relate to all human beings, there are commentators who again restrict the Mishnah to Jews. Regarding the Mishnah in Avot, it is clear that that is a minority reading.

With respect to racism—in a strict Halakhic context Judaism does not distinguish between races. There are no racial limitations on anyone who wants to convert. It is possible to interpret the curse on Ham, the son of Noah, as not limited to his son Canaan and his descendants, but as referring to all those of African ancestry. This does not justify feeling superior to Afro-Americans.

There is a fundamental philosophic disagreement between Yehuda Halevi, who sees Jews as a higher order creation than other human beings, and whose perspective is echoed by kabbalistic and Hassidic thinkers, and Maimonides. Maimonides considers those who accept the teachings of Abraham to be equal descendants to those who are born Jewish; he sees any Jewish superiority as emerging from our following the commandments of the Torah. This disagreement is relevant to our discussion. Rav Kook, who fundamentally follows Yehuda Halevi, found a way to combine a belief in intrinsic Jewish superiority with universal concerns. Followers of his son however were prone to view non-Jews as inferior and to respond to them accordingly.

In analyzing an authentic Jewish response to issues in modern life, there are frequently few precedents in Halakhah to guide us. The multiplicity of sources reflecting differing perspectives gives support for conflicting views. In this case two approaches can be helpful. The biblical descriptions of both

Abraham and Moses stress their concern for others and commitment to justice. Abraham prays for Sodom and Moses protects the daughters of Jethro.

Three different Halakhic concepts reflect concern for all humans without distinctions based on their race or gender:

1) Human dignity -- "Kevod haberiyot": Because some claim that 'Adam' may refer only to Jews, the use of the term "beriyot" clarifies that it includes non-Jews.

2) Ways of peace -- "Darchei shalom": Maimonides connects this with emulating G-d, who is merciful on all that he created (Hilkhos Melakhim 8:11).

3) Doing what is straight and good -- "Viasita hayashar vihatov": The Netziv's interpretations of the word "yashar" includes treating non-Jews fairly as demonstrated by Avraham in praying for Sodom.

Two others speak to Jewish responsibility when interacting with non-Jews to leave a positive impression that will lead them to accept monotheism:

1) Being a light to the nations -- "Or lagoyim": Which is understood as the mission of the Jewish people to the non-Jewish nations to lead them to adopt monotheism.

2) Sanctifying G-d's name-- "Kiddush HaShem": In both the Talmud Bavli in Yoma and the Maimonidean code the impression that the Jew's behavior makes on the "beriyot"—humankind—is critical.

Maimonides in many places says that most commandments serve to refine our character. There is a significant ethical dimension to Jewish law and observance. Racism and other manifestations of devaluing categories of humanity without relating to their individual worth fail to meet these criteria.

MEDIA, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

efit from.

Whenever the media labeled Trump's actions as "offensive", they either directly or unwittingly fed into the notion of Trump being "politically incorrect", which Trump obviously capitalized on. The media, in reality, was never actually able to give a harsh criticism of Trump, even if they wanted and actively attempted to do so, because their focus on the ultimately insignificant offensiveness of his actions was often the extent of their analysis of his candidacy, and was actually an analysis which he was able to greatly benefit from. Trump used the media's criticism of his behavior to fuel the notion that he was "politically incorrect", and therefore made that criticism advantageous for his campaign. When saying or doing one of his many inflammatory things, Trump knew beforehand what the media's reaction would be (or didn't, and is an even bigger fool than he seems), yet said or did them anyway, which means that Trump knew that the media's coverage would be either inconsequential or beneficial to his campaign. This is because Trump would not perform actions that he would know to be counterproductive to his candidacy, even for the sake of his "political incorrectness". Trump simply manipulated the media's coverage of his behavior into his advantage, and used their bad press as publicity of his "political incorrectness".

Additionally, many seemingly believe that Trump's "political incorrectness" represents a departure from the norms of political thought, and that he was a refreshingly independent candidate from the political institutions that have generally dominated American elections. In fact, many pointed to the "unconventional" nature of Trump's campaign as proof that Trump would bring a creative and individualistic

approach to the presidency.

In reality, Trump has absolutely no basis in originality or creativity, because every aspect of his campaign has parallels to previous political notions. Trump presumes to label himself as an "outsider" to the political system, yet he is a billionaire businessman who has actually run for president before, and has spent the entirety of his life (from childhood) living in wealth that most people never see in their lifetimes. The fact that he decided to run for the presidency this time around does not change the fact that he has spent his entire lifetime having a significant amount of wealth and influence. Additionally, many of Trump's specific policies, like his hard stance on illegal immigration, are in no way his original creation, but rather the political beliefs held by many throughout the country. Trump simply managed to convince them that he will honor

those beliefs if elected, unlike "establishment" politicians. Simply put, the notion that Trump is a "different" type of politician is nothing short of a falsehood.

Trump may have complained consistently about the media's analysis of his campaign, but in truth, he ought to be thanking them for their publicity, which he manipulated to his own political benefit. The perception of Trump as "politically incorrect" may or may not be incorrect, but there is no denying that the reason that that perception exists is because he thought he could benefit from it politically. Additionally, Trump is in no way a political "maverick", and would hardly be the first politician to label himself as such. Finally, the media's focus on incidents of "offensiveness" failed to accurately define why Trump was the wrong choice for the presidency.



Beren Syms vs. Wilf Syms

By Etan (Alex) Neiman

Since our University's inception, there has likely never been a shortage of debate between the merits of Wilf vs. those of Beren. The peaceful (sort of) uptown vs. the happening midtown. Wilf's cafeteria food vs. Beren's cafeteria food. The spaciousness of Wilf vs. the location of Beren. Guys vs. girls. Just this past September, *The Observer's* Editor-in-Chief, Masha Shollar, took to her newspaper to question why the Wilf campus tends to host the school's most important events over Beren, Shollar's primary beef being the I am YU fundraiser.

One debate which has quizzically never been had is between the Beren Syms program and the Wilf Syms program. No more. I recently discussed questions pertaining to each campus's program with Deena Fuchs and Akiva Koppel, the President of the Sy Syms School of Business Student Council at the Beren and Wilf campus respectively. Each represented their campus's Syms program on a number of important issues.

It should be noted that the information contained in this article has been obtained strictly from each campus's student council leader based on their extensive experiences as a student leader and interacting with students. While I occasionally added to some of the information based on my experience as *The Commentator's* Business Editor, this piece does not necessarily reflect how the Syms administration may view each campus's Syms program. With no further delay, let the debate commence.

What are the rankings of majors in terms of popularity amongst students?

Beren Syms: Marketing has the highest student enrollment, followed closely by accounting and management. Finance and B.I.M.A. (Business Intelligence and Marketing Analytics) are the lesser majors in terms of student enrollment.

Wilf Syms: Not factoring in the undeclared designation, which Koppel believes is probably the most predominant designation when considering freshman and sophomores, Koppel would rank the majors in popularity from top to bottom as Accounting, Finance, Marketing, Management, and B.I.M.A.

Is there a large discrepancy between the popularity in majors?

Beren Syms: Marketing, accounting and management are the three most popular majors at the Beren campus and have similar enrollment. Since B.I.M.A. was just created in the past couple of years, Fuchs believes it has the potential to gain popularity; though, it does not currently enjoy high enrollment. Finance is scarcely populated, which Fuchs finds significant when considering it is the second most popular Syms major at Wilf.

Wilf Syms: Accounting is certainly the clear most popular major at Wilf, without rival from the other majors. As an Accounting major, Koppel can attest that his upper level classes are a full 40 people for each class with two multiple classes needed to ful-

fill the demand. Similar to Fuchs, Koppel believes B.I.M.A. needs more time to gain in popularity. This will likely happen as it proves to be a success in producing jobs. The management and marketing majors are likely similar in enrollment, with finance maintaining a constant second place in popularity.

What are some of the most popular jobs which Syms students pursue post-graduation?

Beren Syms: Aside from Accounting, in which most students seek to be associates at firms, there is no specific job that can be pinpointed that most Beren Syms students pursue after college. With regards to Marketing and Management majors, students pursue a variety of jobs across a variety of industries. Because of this extensive mix of jobs, Fuchs is confident that

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the most popular for post-graduate Beren students are associates at accounting firms, being Accounting is the only major that has a specific job recruitment process and, therefore, sends many students on the same path.

Wilf Syms: Based on the conversations Koppel has had with students, the general breakdown in attendance at career fairs, and the success of the Career Center in providing students job opportunities, Koppel similarly finds that jobs with accounting firms are at the top of the list at Wilf. This includes positions in all departments - such as taxation, auditing and financial services - and consists of many firms, from the smallest firms to the Big Four. Following accounting jobs in popularity are finance jobs, which can include positions at investment banking firms, hedge funds, and asset management firms.

Approximately how many Syms students are likely to pursue post-undergraduate education?

Beren Syms: Fuchs estimates that above 50% of Beren students plan to pursue post-undergraduate education. However, she believes that though many intend to pursue further education such as an M.B.A., fewer than 50% of students actually go through with this plan. If their future employer requires or strongly recommends pursuing an M.B.A., the student will likely follow through with further education. Absent of this push from the future employer, many may never end up continuing their education.

Wilf Syms: While Koppel is sure there are some graduates who, at some point, pursue a further degree, it seems that many don't. Within a year following graduation, Koppel esti-

mates the number of students pursuing full-time or part-time grad study to be at the most 25%.

What are some challenges of being a Syms student?

Beren Syms: Fuchs believes that the challenges facing Beren Syms students largely stem from the fact that there are simply less female Syms students than there are male. She has found that Beren students often feel slighted by the University and the Syms administration. One example Fuchs points to is that there are significantly less classes offered at Beren and the class variety is remarkably reduced than those at Wilf. The amount of electives offered is so minimal that Fuchs has seen many Beren students being forced to stay an extra semester or even an extra year just to finish requirements due to scheduling conflicts of required courses.

Another area where Fuchs sees the Beren Syms students as feeling slighted is with academic advising, who are viewed as being at the Beren campus far less frequently than the Wilf campus. Come time to register, it is almost impossible to secure an advising appointment. Additionally, Fuchs points out that almost all of the Syms or business events, whether they are student or school-run, are rarely held at Beren, forcing students to make the journey to the Wilf campus if they desire to be involved in a club, event, or meeting. While Fuchs concedes there is logic to the lopsided event placement due to the student distribution leaning heavily male, she believes it's possible that the lack of attention towards the Beren campus, whether from advising or events, ultimately leads to the lower number of enrolled women in Syms.

Fuchs has many common sense, fiscally conscious suggestions to tackle these problems. To address the lack of course offerings, Syms should increase the online options at Beren. One suggestion Fuchs has raised, only to be quickly shut down, is the possibility of having night elective courses at Wilf for students of both campuses. While yes, one challenge at Beren is the need to constantly travel uptown for Syms events, if there are classes being offered, the willingness to travel would be higher. Moreover, students would be appreciative that they have the opportunity to take the course that probably would not have otherwise been offered to them at Beren.

To counteract the natural Wilf concentration of student-run events due to the enrollment discrepancy, Fuchs proposes that perhaps administration run events, such as club fairs, should predominantly be held at Beren. Finally, Fuchs is simply dismayed by the lack of a Beren academic advising presence. She finds it to be a truly frustrating discrepancy between the campuses which simply needs to be addressed.

Wilf Syms: One of the biggest challenges of being a Syms student on the male campus which Koppel sees is the lack of guidance and assistance outside of the accounting and finance professions. It is understood, for example, what an aspiring investment banker

SEE SYMS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 29



What Are These Rates That Appear To Be So Interesting?

By Ezra Berman

Too often does one come across the term “interest rate(s)” and not know exactly what it means or how it affects the economy. Nonetheless, it is essential to have a basic understanding of interest rates, as they are one of the key drivers of the economy.

Before being able to understand how interest rates affect the economy, it is necessary to know what precisely they are. Simply, the interest rate is the fee that a borrower pays to the lender for the use of assets. The reason for this fee is to compensate the lender for use or loss of their goods. In the case of borrowing cash, interest is paid to the lender because he or she could have invested the lent money granting potential returns. To illustrate, on a microeconomic level, if Josh lends \$100 to Michael for 1 year with 10% interest, Michael is required to pay Josh \$110 at year's end. On a macroeconomic level, if one invests \$1000 into a 10 year United States Government Bond as of the December 8th rate, their return on investment would be 2.4%, turning their initial investment of \$1000 into \$1024. These are simple examples of how interest rates may appear in day-to-day life.

Since the financial crisis in 2008, the government has kept interest rates extremely low in order to strengthen the U.S. economy. The chart below shows how the government moved the federal funds rate (one of the most influential interest rates in the U.S. economy) from late 2007, which was before the cri-

2007: GDP = 1.8%, Unemployment = 6%, Inflation = 4.1%		
Sep 18	4.75%	
Oct 31	4.5%	
Dec 11	4.25%	
2008: GDP = -0.3%, Unemployment = 6%, Inflation = 0.1%		
Jan 22	3.5%	
Jan 30	3.0%	
Mar 18	2.25%	
Apr 30	2.0%	LIBOR began rising.
Oct 8	1.5%	
Oct 29	1.0%	
Dec 16	0%	

sis, through the end of 2008, when the U.S. was trying to recover from the crisis.

The federal funds rate, which is the rate at which banks lend to other banks overnight, tends to set the bar for interest rates in the United States. Prior to the 2008 financial crisis, the U.S. economy was thriving and interest rates were sitting at roughly 4.5%. The reason for the vast decline in rates as the market crashed was part of the Fed's attempt to help the economy recover. When interest rates are low, the cost of doing business, borrowing, and spending money is lower, thereby pumping money into the economy. However, it can be highly problematic to keep rates close to 0%.

Leaving interest rates to float around 0% is essentially a disaster waiting to happen. Why is it unhealthy to keep the rates where they are if doing so would seemingly allow the economy to grow indefinitely? Unfortunately, keeping rates artificially low provides tremendous financial instability to the economy. When the market went south in 2008, rates were nearly 5%, providing a cushion to pull them back and stimulate the economy. However, if the market were to have a downturn now, with the rates hovering at 0%, the government would not be able to artificially infuse money into the economy by lowering rates. The economy needs interest rates to be raised so that the government can lower them in a time of desperation, such as the government did in response to the horrors of 2008. If a market crash were to occur with the current rates, the Fed would likely be forced to make rates negative, as many European countries have been forced to do. With all of this said, it is almost certain that the Fed is going to raise interest rates soon, so it is important to understand how that will affect the markets.

Raising the interest rates has an interesting effect both on the stock market and bond market. As bond yields (interest to be earned on the bond) go up, the price of the bond goes down. This can be explained as follows: If one buys a 10 year bond today with a fixed 5% interest for \$100,

and rates for bonds rise to 10% next week, the same type of bond can now be bought with a better yield. Having the ability to buy the same type of bond previously bought but for a better return on investment, ultimately reduces the value of bonds bought prior to the rate hike because investors can now buy the same bond and receive a higher interest payment. Within

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the stock market, the vast majority of companies will be hurt by the rise of interest rates because it affects the cost of debt. The cost of debt is essentially the interest a company pays throughout a specific time period, so raising this would ultimately raise corporations' cost to operate and, therefore, reduce profits. This will result in a ripple effect of most stocks decreasing in value. Although the bond and stock market may seem like two unconnected entities, this demonstrates how the rising of interest rates intertwines the two and harms the stock market.

Several problematic occurrences arise when lower expected return on stock market investments is coupled with rising bond yield. One of these occurrences is less consumer spending, which, of course, ultimately harms revenue intake for businesses. Although the federal funds rate affects banks, banks affect individuals. Rising rates for banks consequently raises their cost to operate. Due to this, consumer rates for items such as credit cards and mortgages also increase. Since consumers must allocate more money to those bills, households are left with less disposable income which ultimately results in companies generating lower revenues.

The expected upcoming rise of interest rates does not appear on paper to be beneficial to consumers and investors; however, the stock market is forever unpredictable, which makes it interesting to see what the results will be over time.

SYMS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

needs to do. On a basic level, he must gather relevant experiences for his resume, network properly, immerse himself in the *Wall Street Oasis* publication, and familiarize himself with all potential questions which may be asked at an interview. The steps to nab a job are similarly clear in other finance fields as well as the accounting field (though different steps). However, if a student desires, for example, to break into human resources, sports marketing, hospitality management, or become a salesman, the path is not clear. The Career Center certainly does great work in connecting with the YU alumni who are familiar with these niche types of fields; however, the number of the available alumni connections is low. Whether it is fair and accurate or not, this had led to a perception amongst students that Syms caters towards those seeking entry-level positions in accounting and finance.

Author's Note: While the perception does seem to exist amongst the Wilf students that the opportunities in Syms and at the Career Center are skewed towards those seeking jobs in the accounting or finance fields, the Career Center staff are making every effort to offer more diverse opportunities and break that perception. Read more about their efforts in *The Commentator* article *The Career Center: Far More Than Just The Accounting Center*.

What are some advantages of being a Syms student?

Beren Syms: There are certainly advantages Fuchs sees to being a Syms student at Beren. For one, they are

centrally located in midtown Manhattan. This places internships at students' fingertips and opportunities easy to jump on. Additionally, On-Campus Recruitment interviews for both finance and accounting majors are exclusively held at the Beren campus.

Wilf Syms: A great advantage Koppel sees of being a Syms student, particularly at the Wilf campus, is the opportunity to delve into serious religious studies, enjoy first-rate business classes, and be part of the extensive Syms network. Being able to combine learning with great classes provides a notable edge over other college students of similar backgrounds who may have to forfeit serious learning or religious lectures. In terms of the network of alumni, Koppel identifies it as one of the great advantages of the program. Alumni are always happy to give insights and assistance.

Are Syms students overall happy with the program?

Beren Syms: By what Fuchs sees, Syms students at the Beren campus are on the whole happy with the program, even given the above frustrations. Students find the Syms curriculum engaging and faculty as a whole to be caring, open, and genuinely helpful in one's pursuit towards a successful career. It is as well appreciated that Syms is well-known in the business world for both its education and success rate of students finding jobs.

Wilf Syms: Certainly, there are always going to be qualms people have no matter where they are in life. If one listens closely in the cafeteria or around Wilf, he will be sure to hear complaints about a Syms professor being too hard, an event not having enough food, a

lack of co-ed classes, or a top firm accepting only two students to their summer internship program instead of the traditional four. Despite these disappointments Koppel sees students occasionally feeling, he firmly believes that when considering the students that make up the program and the services that the school provides, Wilf is unrivaled. Koppel is confident that the students at Wilf are undoubtedly happy with and proud of the Syms program and all it has to offer.

To illustrate, Koppel recounts a conversation he had with a 2016 graduate. The recent graduate mentioned that all accepted interns in his division at Goldman Sachs were called into the office for two days to meet future co-workers. The alumnus's ability to engage in interesting conversation and command respect of others around him were far stronger than the students emanating from programs such as Harvard, Penn, Yale and Stanford. The former Syms student credits his experiences at the program for this success. On a personal level, Koppel attended the Deloitte Tax Leadership Conference this past May (a three-day immersive accounting workshop at the firm). His academic skills were tested through a tax case study, in addition to his social and cultural skills being continuously monitored. Through his time at Syms, Koppel was equipped with the skills to excel at these exercises.

The Big One, The Great One

By Yosef Kerendian

“The Big One,” was how the Business Leadership Club phrased it. And, Allen Friedman certainly lived up to this moniker, and then some. Armed with a B.A. from Yeshiva University, a J.D. from Columbia University, and a LL.M. in Taxation from NYU, Mr. Friedman is a true role model and inspiration to every current and aspiring Sy Syms student. Mr. Friedman is currently a managing director, or MD, and head of JP Morgan’s tax department. Prior to joining JP Morgan and working alongside CEO James Dimon, Mr. Friedman was a lawyer with Cravath, Swaine, & Moore (1984-1989) and a law clerk for Chief Judge Jack Weinstein of the Eastern District of New York (1983-1984).

Typically, the BLC brings in speakers from an array of different backgrounds and experiences to present in front of a large audience of Yeshiva University students. Maor Shoshana, a Syms senior and President of the Business Leadership Club, moderated the conversation with Mr. Friedman. Maor opened by asking Mr. Friedman how he got to where he is today, to which Mr. Friedman responded that “A lot of fortunate accidents got me to where I am today. I got very very lucky. Nonetheless, tax requires illogical thinking and applying rules to complex sets of facts, something I am good at.” Mr. Friedman also mentioned that he “established a good mentor early on”—advice that should resonate with all YU students.

Next, the conversation shifted to Mr. Friedman’s current position and the corporate culture at JP Morgan. Mr. Friedman was enthused with the topic and said that “at JP Morgan, we encourage strong legality enforcers, pushback from our peers, and challenging ideas. In addition, there are no dumb questions. If you don’t ask questions, then you aren’t paying attention, so ask questions and ask questions often.” Mr. Friedman added that

above all, when James Dimon took office in 2004, he unarguably enhanced the culture at JP Morgan which is now noticed by everyone internally. Mr. Friedman concluded the question by comparing a corporation to a family. “A corporation is like a family—you need strong parents and strong leaders to have an affect and change their kids lives for the better.” Without them, you neither have a family nor a corporation.

The next burning questions was about defining success and the metrics used to define this magical glory. One which we all strive to achieve over our professional career. “There is no single right answer,” said the YU grad. “Everyone can value success in a different way. In my experience, you should ask a lot of questions. When asked to do something, overshoot the project and give it everything you have. On top of that, never take credit for someone else’s work. If you didn’t do the work, don’t claim it as yours. Lastly, your boss doesn’t have prophecy. Always let them know what you are up to and the things you are currently doing.” If this doesn’t define success, I don’t know what does.

Similarly, the qualities of a great leader include, but are not limited to, “Openness to pushback, willingness to listen, making hard decisions after considering all possible decisions, reemphasizing your main points, and being able to talk the talk and walk the walk,” said Mr. Friedman. On the flip side, when asked about his biggest regrets, Mr. Friedman responded, “I honestly can say, I don’t have any regrets. I’ve been very fortunate in my career.”

On the topic of establishing a mentor, a person whom we all need to succeed in the cutthroat 24/7 business world, something to look for is “a successful individual who looks out not only for himself, but for others as well. Someone who has great interpersonal skills, and is both smart and politically savvy.” And when asked about the benefits Mr. Friedman gained from a Yeshiva

University education, he claimed “YU taught me my soft skills such as hard work, discipline, and how to think and express myself clearly.” Many students today would agree that we, at one point or another, have learned and utilized one or more of these skills over our time at Yeshiva University.

The discussion then transitioned and focused on the Dodd Frank Act; an act requiring large institutions to maintain large capital reserves, and how the Trump Administration will affect JP Morgan. Mr. Friedman mentioned, “Banks are over regulated and have a heavy load of paperwork which needs to be filed even though no-one will ever go through or read once it has been printed on paper. We are anticipating reduced regulation and lower taxes which will significantly affect JP Morgan.”

Last on the agenda, the president of the Business Leadership Club asked, “What is the future in the general tax department and JP Morgan as a whole?” Mr. Friedman answered, “Tax law is complicated and was created 35-40 years ago—before the internet, financial products of today, and the unfathomable amounts of trading happening daily—yet has a bright future. Tax laws are looking towards a new set of rules coming in a couple of months. It will affect large multi-national corporations such as Walmart, Apple, and JP Morgan as well as almost everyone else in America. The future of banking depends on regulations which await in the coming months.”

Jonathan Singer, Sy Syms ’18, told The Commentator, “Mr. Allen Friedman grew my ambitions to triumph and succeed in business by establishing hard working tactics, maintaining great mentor relationships, and building a knowledge base that is everlasting and irreplaceable.” Again, it is unfortunate to those who were not able to attend this event, because this event undoubtedly lived up to its billing as The Big One.

More Than Just an Ordinary Closet

By Benjamin Zirman

Is there a better way to learn about management and how to run a company than starting an actual company? In a YU course taught this fall that meets for two hours every Wednesday night called Managing the Family Business, professor Howard Jonas has taken a totally different approach to teaching. Gone are the complicated syllabuses, boring information, and impractical theories and instead Mr. Jonas has decided to teach the students what they wanted to learn. After a few classes of sharing his experiences and expertise in many industries he thought the class was still missing something. He decided the class should start a business and opened the floor to ideas from the students themselves. After a few class discussions, “America’s Closet” was born.

The company is designing a website that will be a platform for different retailers to sell their “Made in America” clothing products. Their screening process for partnering fashion companies is threefold: made in America, reliable in quality, and fashionable. They plan to serve all genders, styles, and price points. The company plans to take a percentage of the sales made with a long term vision of increasing margins and directed advertising once they are able to collect data from their site. The class decided on this idea when students combined their interests in helping America and turning a profit. The business plan isn’t to just address one clothing market, but it is to attract many different types of customers united in their patriotism and commitment to American products and manufacturing. They were given a starting budget of \$10,000 to build the company off the ground. They believe this is a revolutionary platform that has the power to help grow American products and keep money in America.

Before looking closer at the company let’s look at the course’s innovative professor. Howard Jonas has been overseeing the development of the company as the teacher of the class. Mr. Jonas is the 60-year-old founder, chairman, and controlling shareholder of IDT Corporation, one of the largest telecommunications companies in America, a Forbes 1000 corporation. He two

graduated from Bronx High School of Science and then got a BA in economics from Harvard University. He currently lives in Riverdale, NY with his wife, Debbie, and nine children. In addition, he is among the world’s leading Jewish philanthropists as Mr. Jonas and his wife are estimated to give away a tremendous portion their income to charity, backing causes that help the needy and broken. Mr. Jonas, who was not raised as an Orthodox Jew, also funds a diverse range of Orthodox causes and has a large portion of orthodox employees at IDT. He is also an accomplished author with books called *I’m Not the Boss: I Just Work Here*, *Faith and Depression*, and *On a Roll From Hot Dog Buns To High Tech*. When I reached out to him about his class he told me “There is an urban legend that at YU you’re going to find 10% of the kids could’ve gone to any university. This company created by my class is giving those truly outstanding people a chance to do something special.” Mr. Jonas is an extremely valuable asset to the YU fac-

ulty and friend to the school as a whole.

The class itself has transformed with the growth of this idea. Each member of the class has been divided up into one of four different teams for the company. The four groups are: a publicity and advertising team, a sourcing team, a shipping and warehouse team, and a customer service team. They have also appointed two students into leadership positions as Boruch Gralnik, a junior from Los Angeles majoring in management and minoring in marketing, was chosen as CEO and Josh Gurin was picked as COO.

Boruch’s first assignment was to divide the class into these four different arms of the company. He based his decisions on input from his peers, as he asked them to submit their top three choices and tried to accommodate accordingly. Boruch also has the responsibility

SEE CLOSET, CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

SHOWING UP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

resolve and purpose, I found myself thinking, on more than once occasion, “Wow, this is what a real university feels like.” I caught myself immediately and convinced myself that any new campus I visited would feel the same – energetic, bustling, and fresh – but I couldn’t shake the feeling that the students at Yale were somehow better at absorbing their academic experiences, more concerned with the values and mechanics of higher education, than my peers at YU.

This delusion was short-lived. While relaxing on my friend’s couch after dinner on Friday night, I picked up a copy of The Yale Daily News. Splashed across the front page, the headline practically screamed at its readers: “Yale College Council Faculty Diversity Town Hall Attracts Few.” YCC, the student council that “provides students with an opportunity to influence both their academic and social experience,” is Yale’s equivalent of the Yeshiva College Student Association at YU. They hosted a town hall with a university dean to discuss institutional plans to devote funding to increasing faculty diversity on campus. The open meeting was a natural outgrowth of the torrent of student concerns that have surrounded the issue since the administration announced last November that it would be dedicating \$500 million to diversity across an array of disciplines. However, only sixteen students showed up to the town hall. From an undergraduate student body of over 5,000 students, sixteen attended a meeting that was intended to ensure the right people heard student voices. According to The Yale Daily News, YCC President Peter Huang “wished more people attended the event, especially in light of student skepticism towards the University’s existing faculty diversity initiatives.”

As President of YCSA, I relate intensely to Huang’s sentiments. In fact, if I could swap out “faculty diversity” for “core curriculum” or “adjunct faculty” or “academic experience” (and as a side note, I’d love for faculty diversity to become a hot-button issue on our campus as well), Huang’s words would perfectly capture my current feelings about the Yeshiva College student body.

Let me be clear about one thing: I am not that guy who sits around complaining about apathy at YU, and I’m among the first to rise to its defense when students from other universities bash our academics. For a college of our size, the caliber and personal attentiveness of our faculty and the opportunities we have to really immerse ourselves in the liberal arts are truly unparalleled. And, on paper at least (or the virtual equivalent thereof), students here really are passionate about their academ-

ics and the future of the institution. Scroll through YU Marketplace, check your ystuds; this school overflows with people quick to point out weaknesses in course offerings, recount struggles with specific professors, or debate about partisan speakers on campus.

But for all of the skepticism and critique, very few students seem interested when opportunities arise to enact change. A few weeks ago, YCSA started publicizing a group discussion with Dean Joanne Jacobson where students would be welcome to voice their concerns and questions relating to academics and engage in a productive discussion with a Dean who has direct oversight over our curriculum. I, along with the other members of my council, sent out three ystuds and multiple posts in YU social media groups over the past three weeks. To ensure cohesive and natural conversation dynamics, we limited the meeting to 20 attendees, noting that if demand exceeded that number, we would organize a second meeting at the beginning of the Spring semester.

Do you know how many people showed up? Five. Two of whom were YCSA councilmembers, and one of whom was a professor enticed by the smell of free pizza. (I should note that Professor Kimmel actually ended up contributing significantly to the discussion, and I thank him for his presence and wise words.)

Percentage-wise, attendance was about on par with the town hall at Yale, but this was of little comfort. Where was the guy who emailed me to complain about NAWO? Where were the students who were unable to continue with their Spanish or French education when courses were cut? Where was the student who was thinking of switching out of the philosophy major because there weren’t enough courses that fit his schedule?

We talked about some very pertinent issues at the meeting. Dean Jacobson introduced an array of new interdisciplinary minors, and we strategized ways to maximize student interest in these exciting new areas of study. We discussed the dwindling foreign language curricula and the widespread extinction of Classics at institutions across America. We asked for Dean Jacobson’s opinion on the persistent and concerning replacement of full-time faculty with adjuncts and how these choices affect our liberal arts education and the prestige of the university. But so few people were there to listen, and, even more importantly, so few people were there to contribute.

Our campus, along with others across the country, contains a dangerous cocktail of skepticism and apathy. Consequently, our students are shaken, not stirred.

Why, though? Why do we care enough to doubt and berate and complain, but not enough to take action when opportunities present themselves?

The answer, of course, is rather elusive, but I think there are several contributing factors. First, an acutely utilitarian approach to undergraduate education, particularly on our campus, promotes an input/output attitude toward the college experience. So even if we recognize the values of a liberal arts education – diverse modes of thought, interdisciplinary exposure, critical thinking, etc. – we don’t rise to the defense of these values when they are challenged. We might care enough to complain to our friends or sign a petition, but as long as we still get the degree and GPA necessary to pursue whatever comes after YU, be it medical school or a coveted job at a consulting firm, we can’t be bothered to show up at the Dean’s office when three full-time professors leave the Biology department.

I don’t mean to sound like an old man here, but I think the way we use technology promotes apathy when it comes to taking action (and turn down that music, you whippersnapper!). Recently, I was talking to a friend of mine about dating etiquette. He felt strongly that excessive texting is dangerous, especially at the beginning of a relationship, because it’s easy to develop two distinct relationships with a person, one of which exists in the real world, and the other in the virtual world. When the virtual connection develops more quickly than the face-to-face one, you’re left with an illusion of a great relationship that quickly deflates when you realize you don’t have much chemistry when you spend time together.

I think my friend’s point isn’t entirely unrelated to the lack of student involvement with academics at YU. When we can rant about the Core on Facebook and get 60 likes on YU Marketplace, it’s easy to feel satisfied that we’ve “done our job.” But it’s important to remember that simply putting your opinion out there is not sufficient. Our relationship with our academic experience isn’t forged in the virtual realm; only real conversations and united voices can bring about change in this institution. Sometimes you have to log off, roll up your sleeves, and knock on some doors in Belfer and Furst.

So let us keep the skepticism spirited and the complaints ceaseless; let us promote student appraisal and demand administrative accountability. But let us also step down from our pixelated soap-boxes; let us turn away from the vacuous abyss of the internet and instead turn to our peers and our institution when the question presents itself in that little white box on Facebook: “What’s on your mind?”

CLOSET, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

of meeting with Howard Jonas once a week to give an update how the company is developing, to set goals for the upcoming week, and to devise a game plan to accomplish these goals. Boruch told me “It’s always been my dream to start and run a successful company and bring value to the world. I’m not just a passionate entrepreneur who is stumbling blindly through the dark trying to find my way. I have gotten tremendous guidance and vision from experts and role models that have made this experience so enjoyable so far.” When students show up to class every Wednesday, they are either divided up by teams to work on their specific assignments, or if something groundbreaking happens or a specific goal or problem arises that needs to be addressed, they tackle it as a class, often by having a class discussion led by Mr. Jonas. Their homework assignments have also been converted into group projects trying to accomplish different things for the company that they couldn’t finish in class. Such assignments range from figuring out production logistics to finding brands to partner with. This is definitely a very different way of learning that most college kids don’t get to experience in their other lectures and classes.

Boruch updated me on the progress of the company so far, as well as future aspirations. Currently, their website is under construction and they are about to finish their logo. One big advantage the class has, is their ability to use IDT’s name and resources to help the

business get going. They have agreed to divide the equity between YU, IDT, the CEO, the COO, and employees, although no numbers have been settled upon. The company isn’t looking for outside funding and plans to work in the budget outlined for them. However, they are in search of patriotic companies, manufacturers, and new brands to make strategic alliances and partnerships with. In terms of a future expansion plan, the company currently is focused on partnering with bigger and bigger companies to help build their name, create traction, and acquire a strong user base. Down the road they plan to manufacture their own products in America to bring even more jobs to America and capitalize on their industry experience and expertise. Mr. Jonas further explained to me that “Every business is more probable to fail than succeed, but the greater the dream the more that’s the case. If we concentrate on the entrepreneurs at YU, people would think twice about going other places where they are just taught theory. Here you can get hands on experience in building something valuable and real. This class could do more for YU than any new building or successful fundraising campaign.” At the end of semester, some students will be asked to join the founding team as a reward for their quality of work and effort throughout the semester.

Boruch spoke a little bit more with me about the opportunity to be a CEO of this company and working with Mr. Jonas. His favorite part is being exposed to so many new and cool companies as well as some of

the biggest names in the fashion industry. He recently met with one of the founders of the line Ralph by Ralph Lauren to talk about starting the company and getting advice from an industry expert. The most challenging aspect of the fashion industry for Boruch is the need to stay up to date with current trends. In addition, learning how to market a clothing company with its constantly changing products and messages depending on the season and trends. But the most valuable thing that he may have gained is his relationship with Mr. Jonas. He told me, “Being able to have the opportunity to learn so much from someone on a personal one on one level is amazing. The man breaths experience with all of his projects and intentions geared towards trying to make a difference in the world. Whether it will be a pharmaceutical company trying to solve pancreatic cancer or trying to make Israel and the greater western world oil independent there is a clear combination of business with passion. Learning from such a value-driven man is really special as I have learned it’s not all about making money but trying to make the world a better place in some way.”

If a student is interested in joining the team at “America’s Closet” for a paid internship, they should email Boruch at boruch.gralnik@idt.net. This homegrown YU startup could be a notable accomplishment for the university and its student body.

UNDERGRADUATES can take courses at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies.

Classes are open to students either within the BA/MA Program or as upper-class undergraduates taking graduate courses with permission.

CLASS SCHEDULE FOR SPRING 2017

BIBLE

INTRODUCTION TO BIBLICAL STUDIES I
Dr. Leiman | W | 4:50-6:30

BIBLICAL HEBREW II
Dr. Koller | M | 6:50-8:30

BOOK OF KINGS
Dr. Eichler | W | 6:50-8:30

PRAYER IN THE HEBREW BIBLE
Dr. Holtz | Th | 2:50-4:30

SONG OF SONGS
Dr. Cohen | Tu | 4:50-6:30

JEWISH HISTORY

JEWS UNDER ROMAN RULE
Dr. Angel | Th | 4:50-6:30

JEWS IN THE LANDS OF ISLAM I
Dr. Tsadik | M | 4:50-6:30

THE JEWS OF EAST EUROPE: 1914-1989
Dr. Zimmerman | M | 2:50-4:30

INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE OF THE RISHONIM
Dr. Kanarfogel | Th | 4:50-6:30

KEHILLAT YISRAEL: THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE
Dr. Carlebach | M | 4:50-6:30

MARRANOS & OTHER HERETICS: THE INQUISITION IN THE IBERIAN WORLD
Dr. Perelis | Th | 6:50-8:30

GERMAN JEWISH INTELLECTUAL HISTORY
Dr. Olson | Tu | 6:50-8:30

SEMINAR IN HISTORIOGRAPHY: 19TH & 20TH CENTURY PERSPECTIVES ON CLASSICAL JEWISH HISTORY
Dr. Fine | W | 4:50-6:30

EASTERN EUROPEAN JEWISH HISTORY THROUGH THE PRISM OF DRASHOT
Dr. Karlip | W | 6:50-8:30

THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY: CONTINUITY & CHANGE
Dr. Schnall | W | 2:50-4:30

THE JEWISH CHRISTIAN DEBATE IN THE MIDDLE AGES
Dr. Berger | W | 2:50-4:30

READING MODERN ARABIC SOURCES ON JEWS AND JUDAISM
Dr. Tsadik | W | 4:50-6:30

JEWISH PHILOSOPHY

SURVEY OF MODERN & CONTEMPORARY JEWISH PHILOSOPHY
Dr. Rynhold | M | 6:50-8:30

INTRODUCTION TO HASIDIC THOUGHT
Dr. Dauber | Tu | 2:50-4:30

SECRECY IN JEWISH THOUGHT
Dr. Dauber | Th | 2:50-4:30

PHILOSOPHY OF YEHUDA HALEVI
Dr. Rynhold | Th | 4:50-6:30

JEWISH EXISTENTIALISM: BUBER & ROSENZWEIG
Dr. Rynhold | M | 2:50-4:30

THE THOUGHT OF R. YITZCHAK HUTNER IN CONTEXT
Dr. Elman | Tu | 4:50-6:30

TALMUD

INTRODUCTION TO AMORAIC LITERATURE
Dr. Elman | Th | 6:50-8:30

INTRODUCTION TO THE MIDRASHIC LITERATURE OF THE TANNAIM
Dr. Hurvitz | Tu | 2:50-4:30

TEXTUAL DEVELOPMENT OF MISHNA & TALMUD
Dr. Hurvitz | Tu | 6:50-8:30



Yeshiva University
BERNARD REVEL GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF JEWISH STUDIES



For BA/MA Program requirements, please visit yu.edu/revel/bachelor-arts-master-arts/

For information on taking a Revel course outside the framework of the BA/MA Program, please contact Rona Steiner, Revel Director of Admissions, at steinerm@yu.edu