

Netanel Paley Excels in Jeopardy! College Championship

By Benjamin Koslowe

“Good luck, let’s go to work in the Jeopardy round. And now let’s take a look at the categories.”

And thus the contestants were off to a start. This past Monday (February 13th) Netanel Paley (YC ’18) competed in the first game of the *Jeopardy!* College Championship. Airing from February 13-24, the tournament features fifteen college students from across the United States competing against each other in games of three contestants each. The five quarterfinal matches all aired during the first week, with the five winners advancing to the semifinals which will be aired next week. Four “wildcard” contestants, the students who scored the highest out of all the non-winners, advanced to the semis as well. The three winners of the semifinals will advance to the two-game final round to compete for the grand prize: \$100,000.

For the first matchup in this college tournament, Netanel donned his blue *kippah sruga* (knitted skullcap) and grey YU crew neck sweater (distributed to students on “Swag Day” this past October) over a buttoned red dress shirt. A Yeshiva College senior from Teaneck, NJ majoring in Biology, Netanel faced off against Esteban Fernandez, a freshman at San Francisco State University from Coronado, California, and Lilly Chin, a senior at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) from Decatur, Georgia.

Gameplay of *Jeopardy!* involves two rounds of thirty clues, the first round valuing clues from \$200 to \$1,000, and the second “Double Jeopardy!” round valuing clues from \$400 to \$2,000. Contestants choose clues, phrased in the form of answers to a question, from six unique categories with five clues each. After Trebek reads each answer, the contestants strive to think of the correct response in the form of a question, and buzz in first for the opportunity to collect the clue’s cash-value. Three random clues are labeled “Daily Double” (one in the first round, two in the second round), allowing the contestant who chances upon these lucky squares to wager from his/her earnings on the clue. After the two rounds of gameplay, a category appears for the one “Final Jeopardy!” clue. When all three contestants have put up a wager, the clue is revealed and they have thirty seconds to write down their responses as the famous “Think!” song teases them in the background.

Trebek began Monday’s game like any other, wishing good luck to the trio and introducing the six categories: “Baskets of Adorables,” “Celebrity Sibling Surnames,” “In Olden Times,” “Multiple Meanings,” “Languages,” and “Seeing Red.” Lilly chose the first clue and started off the game with two correct questions. She did not keep up her streak for long, though, as Netanel buzzed in quick enough to respond to the answer “It’s what gives ‘the red badge of courage’ its redness” with the correct



“I’M SO GRATEFUL TO HASHEM FOR ALLOWING ME TO HAVE HAD THIS AMAZING EXPERIENCE AND TO ALL MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS FOR THEIR SUPPORT, JOKES, AND RETROACTIVE WELL-WISHES!”
-NETANEL PALEY

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Where are the Pitchforks? Being an Openly Gay Student at Yeshiva University

By Moshe Brimm

I was in seventh grade, one year into my depression, when I first believed that there was something horribly wrong with me. My rabbi had just shown the class how to wrap *tefillin* straps around our arms, as we prepared to become Jewish men. After he did so, he went into an elaboration of the rules behind wearing the small, leather boxes. “You can never be naked while putting on *tefillin*,” he instructed. “You can never put them on in a bathroom; you can never be thinking about women while putting on *tefillin*.” I knew that these three scenarios would never be applicable to me, since, up until that point, I had followed Jewish law to a stringently unhealthy level of observance due to my very religious upbringing.

My rabbi finished his instructions with a hint of comedy, “But don’t worry, you can think about men, but no man would be thinking about another man unless he’s crazy!” This comment shot a flash of panic down my spine. Embarrassment rushed to

my face as I wondered, “Am I crazy?” I outwardly laughed with the rest of the class, but inwardly took note that I was the insane one my rabbi referred to. He made the comment assuming that people like me didn’t exist. This one ignorant comment, stated so matter-of-factly, plummeted me into a deeper form of depression: a depression that bordered on hopelessness.

Until that point, denial had played a funny trick on my mind, and I had let myself believe something that wasn’t true. I lied to myself about my attraction to men and shrugged it off as, “I see men as attractive, and soon I’ll begin to find women attractive as well. It’s all just a matter of waiting for the attraction to kick in.” But that attraction never came.

In my elementary years, every time a teacher or student made a similar condescending comment about people like me, I laughed with the rest of the class

SEE PITCHFORKS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

The EDITORIAL

Art, Anarchy, and Political Colonialism: Some Thoughts on Postering the Mural

By Doron Levine

In the beginning, there was no wall. And it was very good. The rust-brown tiled floor of Nagel Commons was overlaid with square rugs arranged in a row down the middle of the spacious room. Colorful pleather couches, the sort that now populate only the Heights Lounge, were thoughtfully positioned on the carpets and partitioned by elegant dividers to facilitate cozy socializing. The Nagel store was smaller; Marco peddled congeniality and snacks from a modest nook nestled behind a simple glass countertop. The hallway from Nagels to Glueck was carpeted and considerably wider. The narrow staircase leading from the ground floor to the library began at the hallway adjacent to the Glueck water fountains. The space was tastefully furnished, blessedly undivided, intimate but spacious. Paradise.

Of course, hindsight is far from 20/20: the couches are always comfier on the other side. When, from the perspective of the present, the past appears impossibly sweet, prudence recommends that we offset this beguiling form of sugarcoated reminiscence with at least a few grains of salt. But the kernel of this nostalgia is certainly accurate: the original layout of Nagels, before the addition of the stairs and the wall, was more sensible.

What happened? Anyone who frequented Nagels in the years before the construction could have easily explained to the architects why depositing a hinged wall and an unnecessarily wide staircase in the center of the room would be unwise. But a university is not a democracy, and the people designing the space were unfortunately not identical with the people who best understood how it might have been optimized for student use.

As the builders began constructing the wall, many afforded the architects the benefit of the doubt, hoping against hope that the structure was intended to be merely temporary. But even the most resolute optimists were disabused of their faith when artist Connie Rose appeared one morning, carefully laid out her materials, and began to decorate the wall. As psychedelic figures and shapes slowly morphed into a surrealist mural, it became clear to all that the new piece of architecture was here to stay. Even as Connie's artwork cemented the wall's permanence, it cemented student opinion that the Nagel Wall was a hindrance rather than a help.

One positive result emerged from this architectural blunder: for once, YU students were presented with a situation that they could all agree on. The Nagel Wall divided a room, but united a community; in an uncommon display of solidarity, students of all stripes rallied around their common distaste for this unnecessary barrier. Though many were thrilled with the updates to the library, anyone who used Nagel Commons on a regular basis knew that the wall and stairs were a mistake.

But empires rise and fall, and factionalism never dies, only slumbers. Little more than a year has elapsed since the completion of the wall, and a new movement threatens to undermine the blessed unity that it induced; the wall that united us is now being wielded as a tool of disharmony, to stir up the passions and sow seeds of discord.

During the last few weeks, two groups of students covered Connie's artwork with creative displays of their own, repurposing the barrier as a platform to promote ideological agendas and reprimand fellow students. First an anonymous group of students hung pictures of immigrants and quotes from politicians to protest President Trump's Executive Order on Immigration. Then the YU Feminists Club covered the mural with anonymous quotes, some plucked from Facebook comment threads and others overheard from unsuspecting students, in an attempt to publicly expose sexism in the YU community.

The first display could have been written off as an isolated act of vandalism; every society has its outlaws. But after the Feminists Club's repeat performance, we can

now address this phenomenon as, if not yet a bona fide addiction, at least a developing habit. If postering the Nagel Wall becomes an established and acceptable recourse for students seeking to air their assorted grievances, we should at least understand the consequences. Is this a healthy habit?

Evidently, the Nagel Wall is not a bulletin board. It is a mural, a piece of artwork sponsored by a generous donor and painstakingly painted by a brilliantly talented British immigrant. And art, even when displayed in a highly frequented area, must command a certain degree of respect. Even if, caught occasionally in the throes of distraction, or jaded by the plodding monotony of our dreary routine, we, regrettably blind to the beauty of our surroundings, occasionally neglect to pause and eyeball the celestial eyeballs as we amble by, the mural remains an object that commands dignity—an illustration created at the university's directive to enchant students as they traverse the library stairs. It is an intelligent design, the kaleidoscopic brainchild of a woman who spent countless hours pouring her soul onto a wall, and it deserves some honor.

At baseline, we should treat the mural as we would treat any other piece of art; whether we admire abstract surrealism or not, our fundamental attitude towards the mural should be respectful at the very least. Generally speaking, art is not produced in order to then be concealed or defaced, and contributing members of polite society honor this premise. So when you cover up the mural, irrespective of your virtuous intentions and the merits

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of your cause, you are a renegade, you are transgressive, you are doing the unintuitive thing. Whether your cause is noble or not, you are publicly violating the common social expectation that protects works of art from willful contamination. You possess no formal permission or social license to cover our university's mural, and therefore, I submit, no mandate whatsoever to complain if a student emancipates the artwork by tearing down your posters.

This is the danger of acting outside of the law. When you disobey social norms in the interest of self-expression, you expose yourself to the danger of ironic reciprocity; inspired by your behavior, others of similarly zealous constitution might likewise defy etiquette in order to publicize their opposing view. Too much free speech can undermine itself – taken to an extreme, this sort of activity can generate a dog-eat-dog climate (cannibalism!) where everyone jockeys to stifle everyone else's self-expression in favor of their own. So the scandalized reaction of some to the “destruction” of these murals is ludicrous. You may treat Connie's university-sanctioned artwork as a bulletin board, but other students must not lay a finger on your posters? Isn't their removal of your display just as self-expressive as your putting it up?

At the same time, it would be pitiful to thoughtlessly fall in line with established norms. Sufficiently dire circumstances can call for desperate measures, and it's hard to imagine a social norm the breaking of which

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

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1 YU Emergency Management Team
The only thing more ridiculous than the name “Winter Storm Niko” this past Snow Day was this organization that apparently is a thing. I bet it’s just Rabbi Brander and Herenstein.

2 NYTimes Articles on Jewish Sports
I don’t care if the Times publishes ten articles on Yeshiva hockey, you guys are still such losers.

3 RAB
Rabbi Ari Berman shares his initials with Regulus Arcturus Black. The Dark Lord has returned.

4 Rav Moshe Tendler
According to a poster on a wall, Rav Tendler has been a RIETS Rosh Yeshiva since at least 1953. That’s 64 years ago. In case you thought Queen Elizabeth was the only one who sticks around for the long haul...

5 “Rabbi Brander Arrested”
Easily the weirdest ystud subject of all time. Way to go, Bienstock.

6 Lactation Room in Basement of Furst
In the spirit of YU cutting back, all YC female faculty have been commissioned for a certain very special project. I hope you’re not reading this while eating your breakfast cereal!

7 OshKosh B’Gosh
If posh is your attire, but children’s clothes your desire, then you should slosh with Josh to OshKosh B’Gosh. Just don’t mosh while holding squash or it will splosh on Josh and he’ll need a wash.

7 UP ⚡ 7 DOWN



1 “End of Discussion”
Never actually ends the discussion.

2 All That Extra Cake from Cake Wars
Such a shame that it never showed up on the Hefker table. Too bad that the Night Seder Chevra couldn’t take part in the sweet taste of cake frosted with sin.

3 Big Snow Pile Outside of Rubin
Only in New York City does something as blissful and serene as snow quickly become a horrid pile of dirt and bird poop.

4 Freezing Toilet Seats
Intimidating freshmen living in Rubin since 1956.

5 Nagel Wall Campaign
Plot twist! Turns out Connie Rose is actually an immigrant. Bet our campus activists didn’t know that when they were vandalizing her artwork. Oh, the irony!!

6 Midterms Starting Day after Purim
How can I justify getting smashed on Purim when I have three midterms that week? Not cool!!

7 Rav Twersky’s Beard
In the spirit of YU cutting back, Rav Mayer Twersky recently trimmed his savage beard. I hope you’re not reading this while eating your breakfast cereal!

Letter to the Editor: Overlooked Student Activists

To the Editor,

I'd like to respond to a recent letter published in this paper, written by Professor Gabriel Cwilich, addressing the lack of student involvement in protesting the most recent immigration ban policies.

I'm responding to this letter as a passionate political science student, as the co-president of the J. Dunner Political Science Society on campus who actively works to maximize my contributions both personally and communally.

As soon as the relevant executive order was signed, targeting Muslims (those with green cards, visas, permanent residence status) and many others from entering the country, I received an influx of messages from students across both campuses. Students were asking each other what could be done with regards to the order, how they could take action and protest the unconstitutional and discriminatory nature of such a policy.

Several students created Facebook pages to help YU students attend protests, arranging walking groups to head down to Battery Park and join thousands of others participating in protest of these policies. At least one student went to JFK and joined in protests there.

We have students creating murals.

We have students asking for events and who are excited to run them once approval is granted.

We may be the select few but we are the active ones.

We have students emailing, calling and texting their local politicians to voice their concern regarding the ban. These are students who have dedicated much time and effort to send a clear message to The Hill that constituents do not stand for such racially charged policies.

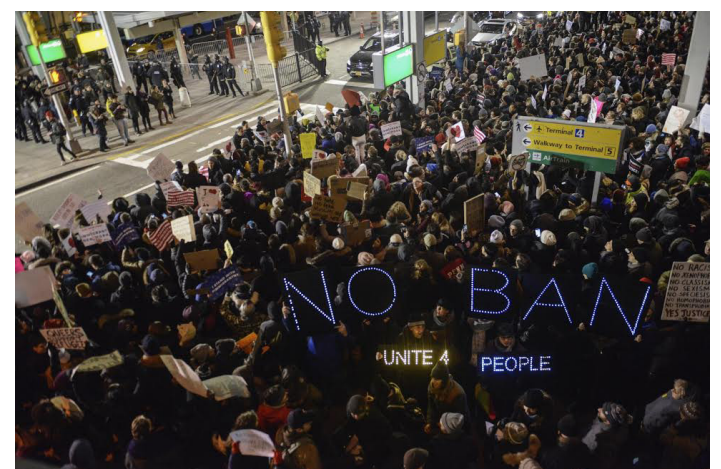
Several students on both Beren and Wilf campuses set up murals in the entry spaces of school buildings, aimed to build empathy and understanding of the current crisis. These students took time to print material, Biblical quotes, images and stories of individuals being affected and placed them artfully on campus walls.

I am writing this after spending many hours camping out in JFK with the volunteer immigration attorneys working to help those being detained and their family members. I spent many hours of my evenings traveling back and forth on the subway to run the media pages for these volunteer centers. These pages are what keep the American populace informed and help share information as events unfold.

We are a diverse student body; many do not get involved, as they would not get involved in any matters that extend beyond themselves. There are those who are apathetic, ignorant and indifferent. But there are many who care deeply. It takes some time to organize, to plan an agenda and convene in one, unified forum, but we have managed, and managed quite well at that. We understand the implications and ramifications of deeply discriminatory policies. We have taken the courses and studied such policies, and we understand that all this is directing us to a racist, isolationist state.

I invite the Professor and others to read the relevant articles published in both the *YU Commentator* and *YU Observer*. Both papers make our involvement in such activism quite clear, both in the physical and written forms.

Neta Chizhik, SCW '18



With Departure of Alan Secter, YU to Lose Another Chief Fundraiser

By Doron Levine

YU's fundraising arm is taking a hit as Alan Secter, YU's Executive Director of Annual Giving and Major Gifts, will be stepping down from his position at the end of this week.

A graduate of University of Toronto and then Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, Secter first joined YU in November 2010 as Associate Dean and Director of Institutional Advancement for Yeshiva College and Syms. He held that position until February 2015 when he became Executive Director of Annual Giving and Major Gifts in YU's Office of Institutional Advancement.

As Executive Director, Secter managed a major gifts portfolio and oversaw a team of fundraisers responsible for YU's Annual Fund. According to YU's official news blog, "The Annual Fund is [YU's] lifeblood," supplying cash for daily operations, and having "an impact on nearly every aspect of the student experience." According to the blog, "Money from the Annual Fund covers everything from scholarships and academic funding to cultural programs, faculty support, career development, infrastructure and undergraduate and graduate programs."

Sector also ran a number of important fundraising drives such as the YU Chai and Triple Play initiatives in which major donors matched new and increased gifts, effectively doubling or even tripling many donations in 2015 and 2016. Sector also oversaw the "I Am YU" Day of Giving campaign which was run through Charidy, an online fundraising platform, and enlisted students and faculty to raise \$5 million. The event was a success, raising \$6 million in just twenty-four hours.

With Secter's departure, YU will lose yet another critical leader of its fundraising team. On December 12th, Seth Moskowitz, the chief administrator of YU's fundraising office, abruptly vacated his position of Vice President of Institutional Advancement. His departure came the morning after the annual Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation, YU's biggest annual fundraising event. The university has yet to replace Moskowitz; for the time being, President Richard Joel is personally overseeing Institutional Advancement until he steps down on July 1.

After he leaves YU, Secter will join OHEL Children's Home and Family Services as their Chief Development Officer. When asked why he is leaving YU, Secter explained that he was presented a great



opportunity to work for OHEL. "I have been fortunate to work at YU for more than six years and am proud of the wonderful things we've accomplished," he said. "I am grateful to my wonderful colleagues who will continue to move YU forward."

Feminists Club Covers Nagel Wall to Expose Sexism at YU

By Doron Levine and David Rubinstein

At around 9:30pm on the evening of Wednesday, February 15, members of the new YU Feminists Club posted a display on the Nagel Commons wall protesting sexism within the YU community.

The exhibit, which was composed entirely of material originating on Facebook, was designed to demonstrate that sexism exists even within the YU community. Sexist quotes were taken directly from posts on Facebook account "A YU Bocher Says" and from comments on the Feminists Club's Facebook page. For example, one of the posters displayed a comment from the Feminists Club's page which sarcastically asked, "Will the meetings be held in the cafeteria kitchen?" and garnered fifty-two likes. Names of the commenters were blacked out. Screenshots of these quotes were taped to the wall surrounding the words "sexism exists" in large letters at the center of the display.

Molly Meisels, President of the Feminists Club, explained the purpose of the display. "We intend to raise awareness," said Meisels. "People don't realize that there is sexism in our community, so we wanted to show that there clearly is."

Other club members echoed Meisels's sentiment. Sheindel Rusanov, Director of Recruitment for the

club, remarked, "college students are supposed to be lamplighters of the world, and yet on this campus people are saying inexcusable things. It's 2017."

The display gathered support from a number of passerby. Joshua Perlman, a junior, thought that the display was appropriate because "there is sexism everywhere, and it's important to have a conversation about it."

Other students claimed to be confounded by the exhibit, saying that they were unsure whether it was satirical. The display's creators did not stick around to explain its purpose, and the display itself did lack any indication that it was mounted by the YU Feminists Club.

The exhibit did not remain for long, though, as the posters were all removed from the wall around an hour after they were put up.

This display of protest is the second of its kind in recent weeks. On January 31, a number of students similarly taped pictures and quotes over the artistic mural on the Nagel wall in protest of President Trump's Executive Order on Immigration. By creating this display, the Feminists Club continues to set precedent for using the Nagel wall as a forum for students to express protest and bring awareness to various causes. Both displays were torn down soon after they were created, but both drew students' attention and generated discussion.



New Feminists Club Looking to Break Stigmas on Campus

By Lilly Gelman

The YU Feminists Club was co-founded this semester by Stern College students Molly Meisels and Ailin Elyasi and has quickly begun making a name for itself.

According to Molly Meisels, the club was established to combat the "lack of gender equality representation ... [and to] represent a group of women (and men) who strive for gender equality, may it be in the YU administration, Modern Orthodox Judaism, or in the workplace."

The club has broad goals; some relate directly to the YU community, while others apply outside Yeshiva University. Ailin Elyasi identified different objectives such as, "creat[ing] a community of feminists at YU who can talk to each other if they feel bothered by some things... [and] hop[ing] to show a vision of Jewish feminists who show a balance of orthodoxy and feminism."

Meisels expressed disbelief at the amount of time it took for Stern College, an all-female institution, to start a feminist club. With the rise in popularity of women's marches and feminist political rhetoric, the timing of the Feminists Club's initiation on campus is apropos to the political climate.

The club's first official initiative was a mural in response to sexist comments made on their Facebook page, designed to demonstrate that sexism exists even within the YU community. Clubs at YU have a history of bringing in speakers and hosting panels pertaining to their particular niche, providing an open platform for the YU Feminists to host events in order to further their mission.

Since the club's creation, both a Facebook and Whatsapp group have been opened, available to all students who wish to take part in this new enterprise. Not all conversation has been friendly, however, with some heated debates taking place within the Whatsapp thread and sexist comments on the Feminist Club's Facebook link which was shared in YU Marketplace.

Meisels described the misconceptions surrounding feminism today as "striking."

"Many people will tell me that women have achieved equal rights in this nation long ago," Meisels reports, "but, equal rights... is about a societal equality. Equality is only a full-fledged equality when the members of a nation believe it to be true, and we have much to work on in that arena. Most feminists are not out to overthrow men and walk around topless in Times Square... The heart and soul of our feminism ...is pure, unabashed equality."

The club is in its first months of existence and has recently created a leadership board. Elyasi expressed interest in involving other students on campus. "This club is still in an experimental stage, and any suggestion and help is much appreciated."

Hundreds Turn Out to Hear Fellow Students, Show Support for Mental Health Awareness

By Elliot Heller

The large classroom on the fifth floor of Furst Hall has seen its share of large crowds. A popular venue for YU events given its large size, it has served as a popular host for several club and campus events. On Wednesday night, February 15, the room was filled again, with close to two hundred students attending a coed event featuring snacks and speakers.

But this was not your average club event or party. The students were there for the seventh annual “Stomp out the Stigma,” an annual event at which students speak candidly about their experiences and struggles with mental illness. Sponsored by the Counseling Center and the YU Active Minds Society, the event aims to reduce the stigma surrounding mental illness, and inspire those who think that they or a friend may need help to seek it.

The evening opened with brief words from New York City Councilman Andrew Cohen, who chairs the city’s Committee on Public Health. “Stigma is the number 1 barrier to people getting help,” he said. “Groups that might not have anything in common, have the stigma in common.”

In an exercise to display the prevalence of mental illness, index cards were placed under one fifth of the seats. Midway through the presentation, students were asked to stand up if a card was under their chair. This highlighted for all of the attendees of the event the remarkable statistic that one-fifth of adults in the U.S. struggle with mental illness.

Three undergraduates and one alumna shared their stories with the crowd. By the end of the evening, the auditorium had seen tears, laughs, and much applause for the bravery of the students and the importance of their messages.

The first speaker liaison was Marc Fein, a YU graduate who is now a communal fellow and youth leader. Fein spoke candidly about his struggles with depression, which began in high school and plagued him throughout

his college years. He spoke of the importance of reaching out to a friend who displays signs of depression, urging students to “have the uncomfortable conversation.”

“I didn’t ask for help,” because I was the one who helped others,” he explained. “It wasn’t until a friend told me that it was ok to talk and get help, that I was able to do so. If you had a physical illness, you would go to a doctor. Why should your mental health be any different?”

(He also reflected on his recovery from mental illness. “Depression defined my existence. It became my identity. Now it’s just a part of my identity. because I got help.... When you break your knee and then go running again for the first time after your recovery, the first time you feel it think “oh my God, it’s going to happen again. But you learn to live with it.”)

While not shying away from conveying the seriousness of the issues with which he struggled, he also made a conscious effort to mix a few jokes into his remarks, explaining that “if you can’t laugh about it, there’s still a problem.”

The next speaker, a senior in Stern, reflected on her long and unique journey. Having struggled with anxiety since childhood, her mental illness became exasperated when she unknowingly entered an abusive marriage, and became a survivor of domestic violence. While having the courage to end the relationship, she experienced a worsening of her anxiety, and was later diagnosed with post traumatic stress.

She compared the situation to attempting to fix a rip in one’s carpet, only for the roof to cave in. Once you’ve finished clearing away the rubble, you’re so happy to be in a clean room that you forget about your original problem, and allow the rip to grow larger.

“I thought taking on the challenge of mental illness would mean just taking on another train car of baggage,” she said. “But now I know that what I was actually doing was putting a driver in the front seat. Admitting you need help isn’t sign of weaknesses. It’s a sign of courage.”

The third speaker, a junior in YU, spoke of his struggles

with anxiety and depression, which were compounded when his family experienced a series of medical scares in a short period of time. After he initially ignored the signs, he knew he had to do something when his grades deteriorated, and even daily tasks, like going through his morning and bedtime routines, became taxing and exhaustive. He urged the students in attendance to notice signs of depression when they appear, before they become unbearable.

He also shared a message for those who notice a friend who may be depressed, discussed the difference between sympathy and empathy, and the importance of showing the latter, as well as relating to the person as a friend, as opposed to a special case. While it is important to want to help, he said, comments like “why are you always so depressed?” or “suicide is so selfish,”— can have the opposite effect on person who is struggling and should be avoided.

The final speaker, a first-year psychology major in Stern who had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, began by quipping, “I don’t struggle with mental illness. I’m really good at it.” Echoing the theme of seeking help, she noted that 57% of people who dropped out of college due to mental illness never sought treatment. Describing her motivation to persevere despite the doubts of others, she recalled a particular instance in which someone told her “this isn’t a place for people like you.” Her response? “Watch me.”

She also stressed the importance of showing empathy, rather than pity, and not treating a friend dealing with mental illness differently because of their mental illness.

“The kindest thing someone ever said to me throughout this whole ordeal, was ‘I’m not worried about you. You’ll be ok.’”

She concluded with a line that captured the theme of the evening: “I’m not asking you to relate to mental illness. I’m asking you to relate to struggle. Let’s be a school that defies statistics.”

YU-NYU Event Spurs Dialogue between Jewish and Muslim Students

By Lilly Gelman

On the evening of February 7, members of the Stern Social Justice Club and The Yeshiva College Tzedek Society participated in a Jewish-Muslim dialogue event hosted by the NYU Bridges club. The students engaged in discussion groups focusing on the stereotypes of Muslims and Jews in the media, prompting engaging discussions amongst the students. YU and NYU students broke up into small groups, each with a mix of both Muslim and Jewish students, to watch clips of negative portrayal of Jews and Muslims in television and news. While most clips were from movies and TV shows with actual derogatory rhetoric surrounding Muslim and Jewish characters, some related to the reverse power that the media has to change the stereotypes created by American television and movies.

With close to fifty people in attendance, the room was full of discussion, but each group experienced different levels of conversation. Some students delved deep, sharing honest opinions regarding the stereotypes and personal experiences with antisemitism and islamophobia. Others expressed dissatisfaction with what they felt was a lack of

depth in the discussions and with video prompts that did not spur meaningful discourse.

Golda Aharon, a YU participant from Queens, was proud to have represented YU at the event. Ms. Aharon said that the discussion helped her realize that, while she likes to call herself an open-minded and empathetic person, “I know (and generally care) so little about this community whose lifestyle is probably not that different from my own.”

The event was promoted by Amitai Miller, a YC sophomore from Houston, Texas who is passionate about initiating interactions between YU students and those of different ideologies and faiths. According to Miller, the event was meant to “confront the culture of ‘othering’ and stigmatizing that has pervaded media and mainstream society” and to “engender a larger feeling of understanding between our groups.”

To assist YU students in creating these connections, Miller reached out to Aliza Blond and Sana Mayat, the co-presidents of Bridges, a student group at NYU. When asked about the idea of an intercollegiate event, Blond and Mayat said they felt that “having a diverse group of

Muslim and Jewish students from NYU and YU would lead to a thoughtful event with a range of opinions and backgrounds represented.”

The long-term effects of the event are yet to be determined. Miller hopes that these discussions “permeate back into our own communities.”

An earlier version of this article stated that “the Stern Social Justice Club and The Yeshiva College Tzedek Society, in conjunction with the NYU Bridges club, hosted a Jewish-Muslim dialogue” and that “the event was spearheaded by Amitai Miller.” The present text reflects corrections to the original article.



EDITORIAL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

would not be warranted in some far-out scenario. But revolution has its dangers. If you don’t abide by the formal rules, then you cannot reasonably expect other people to. Once you invite Anarchy in the door, you cannot simply ask him to leave when he begins to irk you.

The first step, I think, is for the creators of these displays to own up to the act of erasing art in the name of a political cause. Even if circumstances call for the silencing of a female immigrant’s artistic voice, the silencers should at least acknowledge the collateral damage. Perhaps they should even ask for her permission?

Next, creators of the mural need to understand, if

they don’t already, that free speech is a double-edged sword. If you favor unfettered freedom of expression, then you cannot reasonably be outraged if other students design murals that you don’t like (especially if you put blank post-it notes on the wall to encourage audience participation). And if you favor removing posted material that contradicts your agenda (I actually saw one architect of the immigration mural remove a number of post-it notes with messages that contradicted the mural’s), then you cannot reasonably be shocked when a similar impulse inspires others to remove your own display. You cannot have it both ways.

Alternatively, maybe we should just leave the wall alone? This barefaced subordination of art to politics, the unilateral transformation of the mural into some

sort of wailing wall where students pay homage to political awareness through written supplications, smacks of ideological colonialism. Must ideas taint everything, even art? Maybe, but maybe not. As Connie explained in an interview with *The Commentator* last year, she views her abstract surrealist painting as a deeply personal expression of her soul. Masking her artwork with agendas can too easily be interpreted as political appropriation, an imperialistic imposition of ideology onto an otherwise pristine aesthetic space. If our political divisions can infiltrate even the basic human appreciation of artistic beauty, little hope remains for unification around anything – except for, perhaps, our steadfast agreement that the wall does not belong here in the first place.

JEOPARDY, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

question worth \$600: “What is blood?”

Lilly scored in for the next two questions, after which Netanel hit his low point in the game with two incorrect questions, mistakenly asking “Who is Justinian?” for the clue “Around 313: This Roman emperor starts championing Christianity,” and wrongly inquiring “What is Spanish?” for the hint “This language is spoken by about 11 million in Europe & about 200 million in South America” (the correct responses were “Constantine” and “Portuguese,” respectively).

While this setback brought Netanel’s score to negative \$800, he showed that he was still on his game in the next question when he successfully identified a picture of adorable hedgehogs in a basket. Commanding the board, Netanel picked the next clue and scored another question to bring his earnings back to the plus side.

Lilly got the next two clues, the second of which was the board’s “Daily Double” (she wagered \$1,200 to bring her score up to \$4,400). Netanel then stably responded “What is stable?” to add some more money, but, despite Netanel’s eager buzzer-pressing and hand-shaking, Lilly buzzed in earlier for the next three questions and answered correctly. By the first commercial break, Lilly led the game with \$6,600, with Esteban and Netanel tied for second with \$1,000 each.

**

After some advertisements, Alex Trebek spoke with each of the contestants to get to know them a bit. He began with Netanel (pronouncing his last name “Pä-le”), prompting Netanel to speak a bit about his pro bono work for a worthwhile charity. Netanel then proceeded to describe his experience with the YU club “Music Vs.,” telling Trebek that “I perform music for seniors and children in hospitals and nursing homes. I sing a little bit and I play guitar and piano.” Trebek then asked if he does so as a soloist or not, and Netanel explained that “I usually go in a group with students from my university.” Trebek commended Netanel’s work with seniors and noted that there were apparently some seniors in the audience who would love Netanel’s volunteer work. Then Trebek prompted Esteban to describe his own pro bono work, and got Lilly to describe a very impressive-sounding blade-like invention that she worked on in an MIT course called “Elements of Mechanical Design.”

While some might have crumbled after watching Lilly’s impressively savage early start and hearing about her intimidatingly intellectual inventions, Netanel correctly identified “candy apple red” to score first after Trebek’s interviews, and he continued to score the next clue as well. Esteban got the next one, but then Netanel managed the biggest streak in the game until that point with four correct responses in a row.

Notably, the third of these four clues was the answer, “Before 100 A.D.: Manuscripts are stored in caves, to later be called these scrolls named for a

body of water.” While perhaps not an objectively easy clue, the answer refers to famous Jewish scrolls that many knowledgeable Jews recognize; certainly many YU students, whose university offers entire courses on these scrolls, would have been able to identify the answer. Netanel did not disappoint, buzzing in first and, with a determined expression and deliberate delivery, responded correctly, “What are the Dead Sea Scrolls?”

“I was watching the episode in a classroom with about fifteen other people” reported Yaacov Bronstein (YC ’18), who joined his friends and classmates Monday night in YU’s Belfer Hall room 205 to spend thirty minutes of a film course (a CORE curriculum honors class in which Netanel is currently registered) to cheer on Netanel. “When the question came up, everyone in our class got excited, then when Netanel nailed the answer everyone went crazy. If that doesn’t vindicate Torah Umadda, nothing will.”

Unfortunately, Netanel would not tally any further earnings that round. Lilly scored on the next clue, and Esteban then correctly responded to four out of the five clues in the “Celebrity Sibling Surnames” category (one of the clues looking for “Osbourne” as the correct response left all of the contestants confused, and no one answered). Lilly then ended the first round with two more correct questions, bringing her halftime total to \$7,200. Despite Netanel’s powerful performance, Esteban ended off the round on a good enough streak to tie with Netanel yet again. Both Netanel and Esteban accrued \$4,200 going into “Double Jeopardy!”

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After another set of advertisements “Double Jeopardy!” commenced, introducing a fresh board with thirty new clues worth double the first round amounts. The six new categories were: “Facts on February,” “Bodies of Water,” “Semiliterate Before & After,” “A ‘B’-Plus Student,” “Broadway Musicals,” and “Remember 2016?” Netanel began the round by correctly identifying the “VCR,” and he proceeded to pick a question from the category “Bodies of Water.” This choice made sense for Netanel, who used to compete in geography bees. “When Netanel was about three,” related Netanel’s sister Kira Paley (SCW ’19), “family legend has it that Netanel was once eating a piece of cheese, and mid-bite, exclaimed to my parents that the piece of cheese looked like Oklahoma because of how he bit it. Let’s just say he’s a geography buff, so I and my dad were relieved to see a geography category up on the board.”

Lilly wound up scoring that clue, after which none of the contestants figured out how to respond to the first answer from the category “Before & After” (the intended response was “The Home of the Brave New World,” a tricky combination of the final phrase from the United States national anthem and the title of a 1932 novel about the future).

Lilly lost money with an incorrect response to the next question (which Esteban got right), after which Lilly got three more correct clues to pass \$10,000 and, after another clue that failed to garner a response, Lilly scored in yet another clue.

Then, at the eleventh question of the round, Netanel began to turn things around. Finally utilizing his geography skills, he astutely identified France’s Rhône River. In control of the board, Netanel chose another clue from the “Bodies of Water” category, and it turned out to be a “Daily Double.” He bravely wagered \$3,000 (almost half of his earnings) and was given the answer: “The ‘thumb’ of Michigan’s ‘mitten’ juts north into this Great Lake.” Netanel closed his eyes, moved his lips in thought, and turned his head toward Trebek to quietly but confidently ask, “What is Lake Huron?” Of course he was correct, and he looked visibly relieved and even hinted a smile.

Netanel’s hot streak would continue. He impressively produced not only one, and not even only two, but three more correct responses in a row (identifying Kellyanne Conway, Myanmar, and Peter Thiel). Not only did these five clues mark the most correct responses in a row at that point in the game, but they also gave Netanel the first place lead over Lilly.

With half of the round to go, Lilly would not let Netanel hold his spot for long, as she went on to answer an astounding six clues in a row, including a “Daily Double” that earned her \$2,000 and several complicated responses to clues from the “Before & After” category (Lilly was the only contestant to get any of these clues correct). No one was able to get the final clue from the “Before & After” category (“Alfred the Great Gatsby”), although Netanel did raise up his arm as if he had the answer on the tip of his tongue.

With the scores still close, Netanel correctly identified “Anglo-Saxons,” and was in a position with six questions left to take the lead over Lilly. However, after no one was able to correctly identify “Primrose” for the twenty-fifth clue, Lilly had secured her lead. With Lilly at \$19,200, Netanel at \$15,600, and only \$2,800 in clues left on the board, all Lilly had to do to keep her lead was to stay afloat for the last five questions without any incorrect responses.

Esteban made a modest comeback by getting the next three clues (including two musicals), and then Lilly closed off the round with two correct questions (including identifying the play Hamilton with a wide grin, implying that she is quite familiar with the award-winning musical).

After two rounds Lilly led the game with \$20,000, followed by Netanel with \$15,600 and Esteban with \$7,400. In total, Lilly answered correctly twenty-seven of the clues, Netanel got seventeen, and Esteban got eleven (five questions produced no correct response). Finally, before the third commercial break, Trebek explained how the five quarterfinal winners, as well as four wildcards from the non-winners, would advance to the semifinal round. He then revealed the “Final Jeopardy!” category and told the contestants to place their wages. The category? “Books of the Bible.”

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Viewers in YU and across America marveled at the seemingly great luck for Netanel that he, as an Orthodox Yeshiva student, would have the opportunity to identify something probably very familiar to him. However, upon further consideration, some realized that “Books of the Bible” could potentially include the New Testament as well, something less familiar to this Modern Orthodox Jew from Teaneck. Vaughn Winchell, a five-time *Jeopardy!* champion from two years ago, noticed this, tweeting in real-time that he was “stereotyping, but I bet that Netanel’s chances in category drop sharply if the Bible book they ask about is 1 Corinthians.” Netanel himself confirmed to this author that he “was afraid the question would be about the New Testament.”

The clue was the answer: “It begins with God saying, ‘Take yet the sum of all the congregation of the Children of Israel.’” While Netanel kept a straight face after writing down his answer, Trebek soon revealed that Netanel correctly responded: “What is Numbers?” Netanel had wagered \$2,400, and his successful response brought his total up to \$18,000 (which, as Conservative rabbi/blogger Jason Miller pointed out on Twitter, was “one thousand times chai”). Esteban lost all of his earnings by incorrectly suggesting

SEE JEOPARDY,
CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



Student Council Presidents Hold Town Hall Meeting

By David Rubinstein

Presidents of the Wilf Campus undergraduate student councils held a town hall meeting in Rubin Shul on the evening of February 15. Interim President Aryeh Minsky and Presidents Akiva Koppel, Tzvi Levitin, and Shua Brick spoke their respective councils and fielded questions from those present.

Tzvi Levitin and Shua Brick began planning the event last semester in an effort to allow students easy, direct access to their student council presidents. Brick said he enjoyed the forum, calling it an “honest and open conversation about issues on campus.”

“Our campus is incredibly close knit and it is easy to get your voice heard as long as you show up,” he remarked. “We have already started working on suggestions brought up at the meeting, or at least made sure they were under review.”

The town hall meeting, which offered a modestly stocked ice cream counter, drew a crowd of approximately 25. Phil Goldfeder, YU’s Assistant Vice President for Government Affairs attended, as did seven resident advisors, one of the co-chairs of the Student Life Committee, the editor-in-chief of *The Commentator*, and other interested students.

Chayim Rosensweig, a Yeshiva College senior who asked the presidents a question about increasing student engagement with the councils, thought it was “commendable” that the students council presidents “made themselves so accessible to student input and questions.” He also suggested that the town hall model, which he faulted with the small turnout, could be enhanced with a live stream video “to involve more students at future town halls.”

Max Hoffman, who was moderating the meeting, introduced the event briefly. Then, each president spoke about his council’s purpose and the events it had already run or will run in the future.

Aryeh Minsky became Interim President of Yeshiva Student Union at the beginning of the semester following President Jacob Herenstein’s sudden departure from his position “due to personal reasons.” Minsky characterized the organization as the “umbrella student council, representing all the undergraduate students of the Wilf Campus.” He mentioned that his council’s counterpart on the Beren Campus is the Stern College for Women Student Council. He also highlighted events such as Screen on the Green and Chanukahfest, and spoke about a future cholent cookoff as well as the the “Yoms,” referring to the commemoration of *Yom Hazikaron* (Israel memorial

day) and the celebration of *Yom Haatzmaut* (Israel independence day).

Akiva Koppel said the goal of his council, conventionally abbreviated SYMSSC, is to “allow students to develop professional relationships in the field and develop future business leaders,” as well as giving students better familiarity with specific professions. He noted that SYMSSC is uniquely coed, with the Wilf and Beren Campus councils working closely together. Koppel mentioned that the annual Syms Dinner, a large-scale, popular event planned by his organization, will be coming up and will take place this year at Citi Field.

Tzvi Levitin characterized the Yeshiva College Student Association as the “representatives to the Yeshiva College administration,” advocating for the creation of more interdisciplinary minors, changes to course offerings, and the enforcement of breaches of academic integrity. Levitin showcased some new clubs registered to his council, including the environmental action society and the continental philosophy book club. He anticipated that this year’s festival of arts and sciences will be even better than last year’s, serving to celebrate the publication of several annual undergraduate journals associated with Yeshiva College.

Shua Brick introduced the Student Organization of Yeshiva as the council responsible for religious activities on campus. He highlighted several ongoing and future initiatives, including the free shabbat meals in the Caf, a student-cooperative new siddur project for the campus synagogues, and the renaming of Talmud courses to names that look more attractive on transcripts.

After each president presented, Max Hoffman opened the floor to questions. First to ask was Yair Strachman, a Head Resident Advisor of the Rubin Residence Hall. He inquired what the presidents were doing to create a sense of community, noting that many people on campus have expressed that they feel that such a sense is lacking. The presidents of SYMSSC, YCSA, and SOY alternated in responding. Their approach had two main thrusts: sometimes, they denied there was a lack of community, offering alternative perspectives on the sense of community that students could feel. In a different vein, the presidents suggested that changing the underlying culture that leads to this feeling is a task greater than the student councils’ powers.

The next question came from Julien Saka, who asked about the presidents’ efforts to create more diverse event offerings on Shabbat that would allow students to have a shabbat-on-campus feeling for students who do not enjoy the traditional programming. Saka gave the specific

example of opening the Furst gymnasium so that students could “shoot around” with each other. SOY President Shua Brick responded that this would probably not happen in the near future due to resistance from Rashei Yeshiva who argue that this would change the feel of shabbat on campus, and because “things are best done, and most successfully done, when they are done in smaller steps.”

A handful of other questions were raised, including one about Minsky’s transition from Vice President of Clubs to Interim President. “It hasn’t been the easiest of transitions,” he said, noting he was transitioning “in the middle of the year while still involved in the things I’m involved in.” He did, however, say he does not have “very different visions than what the status quo was.”

Another question asked the presidents to disclose the councils’ operating budgets. The presidents declined, concerned that disclosing the budget could jeopardize the policy of treating each club event funding application on a case-by-case basis. SYMSSC President Akiva Koppel offered a rough breakdown of the funds used by his council: 40% to 50% is spent on the dinner, 20% - 30% is spent on food for events, and the rest is for schoolwide programs. He noted that SYMSSC does not pay guest speakers. YCSA President Tzvi Levitin offered the breakdown for his organization, saying that 50%-60% of the budget goes to food for events, with the rest going to the events run by all the councils. He estimated that 8% goes to the debate team and that 15% will go to the *Yom Haatzmaut* celebration. The presidents said they would explore the possibility of sharing more information about the budget in the future.

YU President Richard Joel has been holding biannual town hall meetings for a number of years. On some occasions, they have been contentious; recent ones, however, have been more uneventful. The student council town hall meeting, perhaps modeled after those of President Joel, is the first event of its kind in recent years and may serve to improve communication between elected student leaders and their constituents.



JEOPARDY, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

Exodus, and Lilly successfully identified Numbers, to bring her final total to \$24,399 (the highest score so far for the entire tournament) and securing her a spot in the semifinals.

While Netanel finished in second place, his high score all but guaranteed him a spot in the semifinals. His conservative wager made sense because, in addition to the possibility of a New Testament clue, all that Netanel needed to make the next round was a high score — the actual money would not become his earnings. Andy Saunders, an online *Jeopardy!* enthusiast and stats-tracker, tweeted on his “The Jeopardy! Fan” account Monday night that Netanel’s odds of advancing were 99.397%. Doniel Weinreich (YC ’20) predicted the same, noting historical trends in the college tournaments. Doniel also added that he “saw a picture on Facebook of Netanel outside the *Jeopardy!* studio in a blue YU sweatshirt (he wore a gray one on Monday), so I have a feeling we’ll see that sweatshirt on TV in future rounds.” Even Trebek told Netanel that he would “stand up pretty well” with his \$18,000 for a spot in the semifinals.

The show ended with footage of Trebek schmoozing with the three contestants as the credits rolled. The television muted the conversation, but Netanel could be seen standing with his hands in his pockets, listening seriously to Trebek and laughing occasionally too. Netanel explained to this author that Trebek “was basically making fun of Esteban for getting the final jeopardy wrong, and was saying it was a great game.”

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“Though the students were in competition, the

general feeling in the studio was one of fun,” explained Kira Paley, who was present in the audience. “All the contestants were friendly, good-natured, and generally just excited to be there and not really thinking about how they were all competing with one another.” Netanel emphasized as well that the atmosphere was not too intense. “We got to hang out a little bit before the taping while we were waiting to play,” told Netanel. “The other contestants hung out and watched movies in the green room while they waited to be called out for their shows, but I was first so I missed that. But I got to watch the other shows from the audience with the other contestants.” He added that “it’s funny, some of the other contestants theorized that the producers didn’t allow us to get to know each other so we would remain as competitive as possible.”

Many friends and family complimented Netanel for very politely saying “please” after each clue that he requested. There was communal excitement for Netanel as well. Hundreds of high school students took a break from YUNMUN (Yeshiva University Model United Nations) to watch Netanel and cheer him on together. Watch parties spontaneously formed by different televisions around YU’s campuses. Ari Tepler (YC ’17), who attended a watch party at the Teaneck Doghouse (with Netanel present), described about the event that “you certainly felt the energy and excitement from almost everyone, cheering for Netanel when he answered correctly. It was palpable and definitely an exciting atmosphere.”

As of Thursday night, Netanel officially secured a wildcard spot! Still holding the lead for the highest score of the non-winners, and with only one match left, it became a certainty Thursday night that Netanel would

advance. Thus Netanel is guaranteed to take home at least \$10,000. In a previous article about him, Netanel suggested that he might enjoy spending his earnings on a trip to an Ecuadorian cloud forest. Will this plan become a reality? “I don’t think so,” laughed Netanel, before adding with a grin: “But I’d like to put at least some of it towards a honeymoon fund.”

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Update: This article was originally published online before Netanel participated in the tournament semifinals. On Wednesday, February 22nd Netanel matched up against Gary Tse from the U.S. Naval Academy and Mari Hanley from Stetson University. The game was well-played and down-to-the-wire exciting, and featured another “Jewish moment” when Netanel successfully identified the Hebrew phrase “Shalom Aleichem.” Unfortunately for Netanel and his fans, Gary won the game and advanced to the finals over Netanel. In the two-day final match, Lilly Chin, who beat Netanel in the quarterfinals, performed so well (according to Gary, she “just went beast mode and just destroyed us”) that she did not have to wager any money for the “Final Jeopardy!” question and she was able to answer the clue with a joke response: “Who is the spiciest memelord?” Reflecting on his experience, Netanel said that “I’m so grateful to *Hashem* for allowing me to have had this amazing experience and to all my family and friends for their support, jokes, and retroactive well-wishes!”

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From the President's Desk: SYMSSC – Your Job Is What You Make It

By Deena Fuchs

“Something (as memories or knowledge) that comes from the past or a person of the past.” That’s how Merriam-Webster defines “legacy.” On March 3, 1993, Jim Valvano ascended the steps of the ESPY Award (Excellence in Sports Performance Yearly Award) show, an annual gala honoring athletes for their excellence in sports performance. Jim Valvano, known for his 1983 North Carolina State University basketball title, was a well-respected college basketball coach and a college basketball analyst. On that day in 1993, however, Valvano was honored not for his success or his coaching skills. Valvano instead was the recipient of the first ever Arthur Ashe Courage and Humanitarian Award. Battling the late stages of terminal cancer, Jim Valvano accepted his award without sentiments of thanks or honorary mentions, but rather with words of advice, encouragement, and life lessons. Passing away just eight weeks after receiving his award, Valvano left behind an interesting legacy. While prior to the ESPY’s Valvano would have left a legacy primarily as a great basketball coach and analyst, his speech made him better known for his tremendous inspiration and courage.

It was brought to my attention, in an interesting confrontation, that there are those who disapprove of Syms and the general pursuit of Jewish college graduates toward business degrees. This individual argued that those who pursue careers in medicine, education, or Rabbanut wind up changing lives. Those who pursue careers in medicine, education, or Rabbanut apparently impact, transform, and, most importantly, their lives are valuable. What about those that pursue business? Apparently their life ethos is purely fiscal, measured by net worth, dollar signs, and a lack in an established deeper connection to society. They don’t have the ability to change a life, they don’t have a meaningful reason to be alive, they have a less valuable motivation to wake up, and they go to sleep uninspired. These, he argued, are the discrepancies between those that pursue business and those that pursue a “valuable” career path.

**“NO JOB IS INHERENTLY HOLY,
AND NO JOB IS INHERENTLY
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SET TO BE A DOCTOR, TEACHER,
OR A RABBI.”**

Unnerved by the interaction, I started asking around, assembling my own form of market research to try and see what the Syms student body felt on the issue. Why do you want to graduate with a business degree? Is it for money? If so, do you feel satisfied with that? Or is your pursuit one of passion? If so, is that passion worth even half of what a doctor or a teacher can give to this world? Thus, I began to search for a deeper meaning behind the business industry, to find an ethic on which Syms students could lean in the future.

Where is business mentioned in the Torah? When it is, why is it mentioned? Bereishit (3:19) states how “with the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, until you return to the ground, because from it you were taken, for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” God, as a result of Adam’s sin, tells him that from now on, man must work for his bread. Although not directly about business, this verse does imply that working in order to survive (in this case by way of eating) is not only acceptable, but encouraged. Business. In Pesachim 113a and Bava Batra 110a, our sages describe how it is better to resort to public work, even if it is embarrassing, than to rely on gifts from other people. Let’s go further with another source. In Kiddushin 29a, Kiddushin 30b, and Makkot 8b, we are taught that a man must learn a trade and/or craft as well as teach his son a trade and/or craft in order to prevent his son (and himself) from thievery. It seems to be that there is an abundance of sources pointing to the potential acceptance



within Judaism of a career in business.

Rabbi Dr. Asher Meir (in a speech on ou.org) focuses on this issue of business and its deeper connection to our religious lives. He explains how there is a special importance and focus on business within the Torah. Jews always try to look for *kedusha* (holiness) in even the most mundane activities, to make each and every moment holy. Business may be mundane, but each day a modern businessman/woman has the potential and the opportunity to sanctify the name of *Hashem* and to establish the *kedusha* within the mundanity of business. How does one sanctify business? Through demonstrating honesty, integrity, modesty, and sensitivity. Life is not just about what we do - it is also about how we do it.

On my last day of a summer internship the marketing team gathered around my desk to say goodbye. They proceeded to tell me how impressive I was. They commended my attitude, how I carried myself with grace, and how it was obvious how great of a school Yeshiva University must be. They may not have outright commended Judaism, but I still felt that I definitely made a *Kiddush Hashem*. Did I save a life? No. Did I carry out a *kiruv* mission? No. But I co-existed, I impressed, and I brought *kedusha* into my day-to-day activities of business.

Business may be mundane, but so is teaching, parenting, and learning. Being a doctor is not in itself valuable. People don’t feel “fulfilled in life” simply by having a PhD. The reason that we look to the medical profession as one that is meaningful is not because of the title of being a doctor, but because of how a doctor acts while on the job. A doctor brings meaning into his mundane by taking his PhD, filling it with moments that matter, and helping to change or save the lives of those around him. The teachers that save lives, change lives, and create relationships are the teachers who take their degrees and give them meaning. Not every teacher and not every doctor does this, but the good ones do. And, conversely, not every businessman/woman wants only money out of their job.

In college, an activity may one day be marketing, another day schoolwork, and another day something as simple as sitting in your room and watching a movie. Does it matter? Is what you’re doing fulfilling? Maybe not. But I no longer look at a mundane activity as just a mundane activity - I now look at it as an opportunity. Whatever you might be doing, as crazy and absurd as marketing in corporate America, or as intense and extreme as plastic surgery, it’s not about what you do - it is about how you do it.

The fellow who confronted me was right: doctors and teachers do change lives. They do spark interest, passion, and development. But he was also extremely wrong: it isn’t only doctors, teachers, and *rebbeim* that can do this. Business may be mundane, but so is almost everything we do. Again, it’s not about what you do, but it’s rather about

how you do it. Yes, there are businessmen that only want money, that cheat and lie, but there are corrupt doctors, teachers, and *rebbeim* too. No job is inherently holy, and no job is inherently corrupt. We ALL have a role in this world, and it is impossible to imagine that each and every one of us is set to be a doctor, teacher, or a rabbi.

While I don’t believe that I am experienced or smart enough to give advice, I would like to impart this message, that life is short and you must make it valuable. Life is short so do what you love, even if it seems mundane or “worthless” to those around you. Do what you love, but make sure that you actually love what you do, and do it with passion and with vigor. If you would like to pursue medicine - cool. If your passion is teaching - cool. If you love finance - cool. Do it. But don’t just do it, do it well, do it honestly, and do it with a purpose. Remember, a certificate is just a few fancy words signed by a dean, which doesn’t give your life meaning by itself.

What does give your life meaning? It is what you do with those words on the certificate, how you live your life, and how you insert the *kedusha* of *Hashem* into the most mundane of activities. A job is meaningless until you give it meaning - and that goes for every job. So to he who confronted me: doctors are important, and so are teachers and *rebbeim*. But I do not see them on an inherently higher or lower level than a businessman or businesswoman. I see a teacher as better than a businesswoman when they take their job and use it for the better. But a businesswoman can do the same, and then she too can achieve meaning. It’s not the degree, nor is it the career, but it’s rather the person and what he/she does with the degree and the career.

Jim Valvano held a position, and from that position he was awarded a moment to speak. With that small moment, Valvano established for himself a tremendous legacy. Valvano’s coaching position alone would have been enough for others to remember him, but, by taking his time and using his position to inspire others and imbue value to his otherwise mundane job, Valvano is remembered for more than just the numbers that he left behind. It isn’t about what we do, but how we do it. Whether that is being a coach, receiving an award in front of the nation, working in accounting, or saving a life, it’s not just about the job. If you want your time to be valuable, then make your time valuable - no matter what you do.

As I leave Syms, no, I do not intend to be saving lives or furthering the Jewish youth in education. But I do hope to inspire, to establish *kedusha* in business, and to insert value into my daily mundane activities. I do believe that being a doctor, a rabbi, or a teacher is valuable, but I promise you, I will never lose sleep over choosing my path in life - and neither should you. Your legacy will be what you make it, no matter who you are or what you are doing.

*PITCHFORKS, CONTINUED FROM
FRONT PAGE*

and hoped no one would realize an imposter sat among them. A teacher's comment during the day meant crying myself to sleep that night, pleading to *Hashem* to change the way I viewed the world.

Unfortunately, my cries were never heard.

Self-acceptance didn't happen overnight. It took years until I realized that my perspective on life would be something I'd cherish, rather than detest. It was a long journey, and I'm still working to get there.

Towards the end of elementary school, a student once interrupted my seventh grade math class to make a declaration. "Brimm is gay!" he confidently stated, for some purpose I will never know. His comment destroyed me because it was a clear message that I would never be welcomed into the community I was raised in.

As my academic career progressed and my mental health regressed, I formed a new coping mechanism. Rather than allow myself the luxury of feelings, I repressed my thoughts. I entered a Modern Orthodox high school with an unspoken no-gay policy and a principal who openly made anti-gay remarks. It was known that if anyone came out of the closet, it would be a declaration of *halachic* neglect severe enough to be grounds for expulsion. I stopped experiencing emotion altogether and let myself travel through life knowing that I would never let my deepest secret out, and understanding that I would be alone forever.

I remember counting down the years until a *shadchan* would try, and inevitably fail, to marry me off to a woman. I would be the son that people whispered questions about in sympathetic wonderment. *Why is there a single son in the family who never dated anyone?* The community I grew up in would never assume I was gay; they would be saddened by the idea that I had not yet met the proper wife. "Gay" was a vulgar word, a secret which shouldn't be talked about. If a gay reference sneaked its way into a children's book

or movie, I heard statements like "Isn't this meant for children?" or "That's gross, I cannot believe they would show something like that on here." Why would the existence of people like me be anything unsuitable for children? I didn't know anyone with the same struggle who I could talk to about the battle I was going through.

I felt, and knew, I was alone.

Freshman year. I had developed my first crush on a boy in school and was horrified with myself. At the time, I still viewed homosexuality as the worst sin imaginable. I made a vow that no matter how strong my desire to sin was, I would never act on it. I saw my fantasies as the extent of any sexual experience I would ever have, and I was ready to buckle up for a torturous existence.

And for a while, it was.

High school went by slower than a child's long wait for their birthday party, and it was a lonely road. I had a secret weighing down my chest, letting me breathe less and less each day. I started dating a girl who was an amazing person, yet it was a futile attempt to conceal my true identity. Everyone still talked behind my back and wasn't fooled by anything I did. People would tell me that it made sense for me to attend the girl's gym class, or constantly told me I was gay before I was even ready to tell myself. "You're my gay best friend," was one of the most commonly expressed insights, meant to be a compliment. "My gay best friend." Not a true best friend, but a good enough listener who could play a supporting role in their life. Not a friend, but a good person to drag to Starbucks just to vent to about their most recent breakup.

When people tell me that they always knew I was gay, I'm tempted to respond by saying, "I knew I was gay too, but we all don't have the luxury of being ourselves when we're outliers from society." Throughout my four years in the high school cinderblock asylum, there was one student in particular who made my life a living hell by informing a room full of people that I was gay whenever I was around. We now attend YU together and have

both grown up from the people we used to be.

High school ended on a low note, followed by the anxiety bubble that my year in Israel was. I went to the Holy Land because it was expected that everyone

**"IRONICALLY, YU WAS THE PLACE
WHERE I FINALLY FELT ABLE TO
COME OUT!"**

from my school would take a gap year before starting college. I had no confidence in myself and no plan of ever revealing my secret. However, in Israel something shifted unexpectedly. When I moved away from home, I was forced to depend on myself more than anyone else. I realized that I needed to stop letting my anxieties turn me into a person I hated being. Instead of caring about the way others perceived me, I needed to care more about the way I perceived myself. I made it a mission to like myself first, which would inevitably cause others to like me in return.

Retrospectively, the method worked better than expected.

Unfortunately, I never came out in Israel, but I replaced my vow to never be with a man with a new one. I refused to accept that being gay was wrong, regardless of what my religious leaders dictated. My new vow was: "My parents will be the first people I'll tell, and, after them, I will tell everyone else. One day, I will be fully out of the closet."

Israel ended with new friends and a new life away from home. On a last minute whim, I decided not to attend the secular college I was intending to go to and instead enrolled in Yeshiva University in some act of hysteria. To this day, I cannot pinpoint what compelled me to make this crazed, impulsive decision to attend this

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Filtered Joins the Neighborhood

By Yitzchak Fried

Until recently, Washington Heights could claim proud possession of exactly one specialty coffee shop. The Starbucks on 181st and Fort Washington Avenue stood as a sole witness to the Heights community of young professionals, even as it hugged the edge of the Hudson so as to stay as close as possible to Fort Tryon Park. As of December, gentrification has made new inroads: Filtered has joined the neighborhood, pushing the yuppie boundary past Bennett, all the way down to 183rd and Broadway.

The new coffee shop (one of two in Manhattan), currently takes up a line of store fronts on Broadway, and marks a presence to rival Starbucks' corner franchise. But, as the

"FILTERED HAS JOINED THE NEIGHBORHOOD, PUSHING THE YUPPIE BOUNDARY PAST BENNETT, ALL THE WAY DOWN TO 183RD AND BROADWAY."

man behind the counter informed me, this is only for the next six months. The space is being transformed into a food mall, where Filtered will be one of several proprietors. Until then, though, the space is theirs, and Filtered uses it to good effect. Inside, it forms a long strip of a shop, gently lit by tall storefront windows and low hanging lights. The site is still

under construction, which is probably the reason for the bare concrete floor and the gaping ceiling's exposed steel rafters. But, as it is, the décor works; it's just finished enough to make you wonder if the warehouse-look might be intentional and here to stay.

Filtered is a coffee shop, so basically they sell coffee. They also offer a small selection of breakfast items: bagels, croissants and baby-muffins. The store isn't under rabbinic supervision, so for those who eat strictly kosher, the food is off limits and the coffee is the main attraction. In this department, the store offers a line of "counter-cultural coffees," a changing selection of bean blends from around the world, which are offered as either coffees or espressos. I sampled a coffee from Rwanda, whose label identified it as bearing notes of sun-dried raisin and black tea. The barista sheepishly told me that most customers can't make out the coffees' associated flavors. He was right; I couldn't. But labels aside, the coffee was interesting: sour, without being offensive, and richly bitter. The berry flavors of the espressos, he assured me, are more readily detectable.

Reminiscent of Starbucks, Filtered offers a condiment station where you have your choice of milk, sugar and stirrer (stick or spoon?), minus Starbucks' selection of powdered flavors. As its own shtick, Filtered gives you the option of adding honey to your drink and has a bottle of sugar syrup for iced-coffees. It also serves food on real flatware, another specious mark of class that makes for a more polished sit-down experience.

One touch that I did appreciate was that, in addition to the overhead lighting, each table along the shop's muraled wall has its own lampstand, that you can choose to turn on

or off. As someone who likes to sit and work in coffee shops, this is no small thing; good lighting is the difference between squinting at a book for an hour or studying in peace. Filtered may just become my new favorite study spot – if they ever get their WiFi properly set up.



Life in Room 823

By Michael Shavolian

At 9:10 AM you run into class, purposely panting so that the teacher will not bethink your late arrival as betraying carelessness. You scurry to your seat with urgency and after you get settled in you take a quiet look around the room. All seats in the room are taken but three. The teacher teaches, quite well in fact, but at this moment you are too busy caught up thinking about those three bare blue seats. One of the missing musketeers that you have come to know must have set the precedent for a late morning upon striking his snooze button. You chuckle. He must have done so with *kavanah*, keeping his two roommates in mind for a late morning. You miss their presence, if only because their participation in class makes for interesting

"YOU CHUCKLE AT THE ABSURDITY OF YOUR QUESTION, SO TYPICAL OF THE CONVERSATIONS THAT GO ON IN THIS ROOM..."

discussions. Soon enough, as you had hoped, one of the three, coffee cup in hand, walks in. Shortly after, two others scurry in and take their seats. Now the class is complete.

The day comes and goes. Classes start and finish, and when night falls you trace these three students back to their room. You enter the eighth floor of one of YU's residence halls; you walk nearly all the way to its end and knock on a bright green door conspicuously labeled with a quote from a millionaire. You take the liberty of opening the room's door and as you peer inside you notice the vast collection of blocks that line the room's three desks...blocks of different dimensions and hues - red, yellow, blue. You soon realize, however, that these are not simply blocks. They are the room's decoration, its soul, its life. *The Essential Kabbalah*-yellow- lies atop Abraham Joshua Heschel's Sabbath-green. They both rest against a brown Shabbos lamp which in turn sits beneath a glossed picture of Rabbi Menachem Froman (pictures, of course, have many colors). Rav Nachman's *Sichot Haran*-yellow-sits on tops of one of the dressers. Many of the books are covered with dust jackets that obscure their true colors. You ponder how many of them these roommates have actually read...how many colors have they really come in

contact with...and, of course, which books belong to whom.

As you wait to be noticed, you wonder how these three came to share this sacred space. How could a room this small hold individuals this interesting? It didn't take you long to figure that out...to notice that they are an intellectually rambunctious bunch. In fact, you knew the moment you met them that their colors ran deep. It did take you a bit more time to learn more about them... to learn that one is a self-proclaimed postmodernist and student leader, the other a Bostonian with a passion for mysticism, and the last, an unabashed rationalist. But even now, that the room has not yet spontaneously combusted is an enigma to you.

The room, you notice, is littered with clothes, some hanging out of drawers, others on the floor. Clothes and books, you realize, seem to be their choice of interior decoration. You observe as the rationalist lounges on the carpeted floor beneath a poster of the latest Iron Man film wearing only his *tzitzit*. He smirks as he scrolls through one supposedly witty comment after another on a Facebook post. His phone's backlight illumines his face. But does it illumine his mind? The mystic curls his brown hair over his forehead and clicks next on the Bon Iver album playing on Spotify. The last of the bunch sits on the top bunk with a book in hand-Benjamin Sommer's *Revelation* and *Authority*- so engrossed that he fails to notice when the door squeaks open. You open the door a bit further and more light from the hallway seeps into the room-a room only dimly lit by the Christmas lights decorating its perimeter. You pronounce your presence once again with a soft-spoken hello. The mystic removes his earphones and you commence with a

question. You aren't invited in; you almost never are and you don't mind. Your position at the door gives you the chance for a quick exit...just in case it's needed...just in case the conversation gets too deep.

You pause after conversing for quite a while and at that moment your eyes are caught in between the ceiling and the wall- a place where corners form. But what is a corner? Does it exist within itself? You chuckle at the absurdity of your question, so typical of the conversations that go on in this room, or rather by its doorway. The conversations that you hold inside this room are sometimes so deep that you often get tired quickly. Tonight is one of those times. It's late at night and you have yet to get started on your physics homework that's due in only a few hours. You thank your interlocutor and you let the door slowly close as you leave. You are thankful to have met such friendly and interesting individuals.



'The Bachelor' and Other Drugs

By Shoshy Ciment

The Bachelor is proof that modern entertainment has reached an all-time low. For some reason, we viewers delight in seeing our world sketched in caricature, divorced from any type of "reality" that exists in real life.

I started watching *The Bachelor* because I was bored. I continued watching because I got hooked. *The Bachelor* is like looking at our world through a funhouse mirror. It takes iconic elements of relationships and distorts them until they are exaggerated, barely recognizable versions of themselves. A rose here, a ring there. But love? Not so much.

We watch the show with the full knowledge that if there ever was a right way to find true love, this definitely isn't it. However, we trade our common senses for the addictive entertainment that the show provides.

"THE BACHELOR, LIKE MANY OTHER REALITY T.V. SHOWS THAT AIR TODAY, IS COMFORTING. WHEN WE WATCH IT, WE CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL MORE SECURE IN OUR OWN LIVES AND RELATIONSHIPS."

And it's entertaining as hell. When we overlook the ridiculous contestants and the blatantly scripted nature of the show, *The Bachelor* tempts our inner romantic, whether we like it or not. But the drama between the contestants is what fuels its following, in my opinion. We all want someone to root for, in earnest or in mockery.

The Bachelor pits women against each other by setting them up on group dates, two-on-one dates, and the glorified one-on-one. The stakes are always high and sometimes invite the use of "unorthodox tactics" by the desperate women to secure a rose, a confirmation that they are still in the running for another week.

One contestant this season, deciding to lead with her sexuality, boldly kissed the bachelor on the first night and proceeded to remove her top for him within the first week of dating - a move that has proven to be strategic for her in this setting, as it has led her to nab a spot in the final four contestants.

But if you do stop to think about it, you realize that *The Bachelor* represents anything but love. In fact, most of the relationships forged on the show never make it past the screen. According to a study done in 2015 by the Huffington Post, out of 18 seasons of *The Bachelor* only two couples took the leap from proposal to marriage. *The Bachelorette* (a show with a similar idea to *The Bachelor* except 30 men compete for one woman) didn't have much more success, with only three marriages resulting from ten seasons.

The failure of *The Bachelor* to cultivate a "petri-dish love" is not a surprise. Relationships are meant to be spontaneous, not contrived. No one falls in love because the producers tell you to. Moreover, nowhere else in the natural world do 30 women earnestly vie for the love and attention of one mediocre guy (except maybe in the shidduch world) but for some reason, these women sacrifice their sanity and self-worth for the possibility of finding some watered-down version of love.

The Bachelor sets up a relationship doomed for failure.

So if they show is as genuine as the painted faces of the contestants, why do we keep on watching it?

Aside from the drama that keeps us hooked, *The Bachelor*, like many other Reality T.V. shows that air

today, is comforting. When we watch it, we can't help but feel more secure in our own lives and relationships. Because however much we think we've screwed up, it can't get worse than the people who have left their professional (or pseudo-professional) lives to "find love" on national television.

It's the same reason we watch shows about manic hoarders. We may have neglected to toss the take-out for a little too long, but that woman on TLC can't even see her floor. We're doing just fine.

But let's not kid ourselves. The success of *The Bachelor* also points to issues within its viewers. Reality T.V. shows fulfill Americans the way that bread and circuses fulfilled the residents of ancient Greece. That is, the conscious mind knows that what it is seeing is purely meaningless, but the subconscious mind begs for more. We have resorted back to a society that basks in the hollow and shuns the reality in front of them.

But maybe that's just what we need today, an escape from a world that people deem too "unfair," too "hateful." To many, *The Bachelor* may be silly, but it's a welcome distraction from the bills, work, and protests of the world beyond the screen.

In this way, *The Bachelor* is like a drug. And like all drugs, it is something to be used in moderation. With all its exploitation, hyperbole, and dramatization, *The Bachelor* reminds us that entertainment is meant to do just that - entertain. And entertainment, like drugs, can comfort and alleviate the realities of life.

But I don't need to tell you what happens when you have too much.



Alcohol on Purim: The Neuroscience of Intoxication

By Jonah Stavsky

As the holiday of Purim approaches, the Jewish people are preparing once again, per our legislated custom, to commemorate the thwarting of Haman's plan to annihilate us. Traditionally, we celebrate this miracle of survival via a *sseudah*, or festive banquet charged with copious cuisine, joyous song, and, for many, consumption of alcohol. The source of the latter practice is taken from the Talmudic tractate Megillah (7b): "A person is obligated to drink on Purim until he does not know the difference between 'cursed be Haman' and 'blessed be Mordechai.'" While the precise nature regarding the logistical implementation of this excerpt is highly debated among Rabbanim, many, nevertheless, have retained the custom to consume alcohol on Purim.

Regardless of one's personal decision to drink, alcohol remains one of the most hazardous drugs worldwide, contributing to the death of 3.3 million people annually. According to the World Health Organization, chronic alcohol consumption is the cause of nearly 200 diseases and injury conditions in individuals, including a direct connection with infections such as tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. Symptoms of acute alcohol poisoning include severe confusion, lapses in and out of consciousness, vomiting while unconscious, seizures, and respiratory depression. Emergency treatment of acute alcohol poisoning includes the aggressive maintenance of a patent (clear) airway and supplemental oxygen administration. As a volunteer EMT, this is a treatment for which I am all too familiar. In order to understand the cause of many of these symptoms, the science will need to be discussed.

An alcoholic molecule is scientifically defined as any organic compound with at least a single hydroxyl group (-OH) attached, with differing types of alcohols

characterized by the location of such a group. Therefore, while many consider solely the drinkable variety of alcohol, several other types exist as well. Methyl alcohol, propyl alcohol, butyl alcohol, and glycerol are all common alcohols, each contributing differing effects on the body. Ethyl alcohol, better known as ethanol, is the drinkable type. The terms ethanol and alcohol are essentially

"SHOULD A PERSON CHOOSE TO DRINK ON PURIM, OR IN GENERAL FOR THAT MATTER, THERE ARE CERTAIN METHODS OF "DAMAGE CONTROL" THAT CAN BE DEPLOYED BEFORE ACUTE INTOXICATION."

synonymous, and will therefore be used interchangeably for our purposes. When ethanol is ingested, the molecule bypasses the stomach and is absorbed directly through the small intestine; after entering the bloodstream, the ethanol readily crosses the blood brain barrier.

The brain is the command center of the body. Whether the task consists of moving a limb, reading this article, or solving complex mathematical equations, the brain is in charge. At 3.3 lbs, the human brain contributes to roughly 2% of an individual's body weight and is one of the most complex biological entities known to mankind. Therefore, while the neuroscience is about to get relatively heavy, it is important and I urge you to bear with me! The brain consists of four lobes: the frontal, temporal, parietal, and occipital lobes, each responsible for various functions.

Furthermore, the brain contains on the magnitude of 86 billion nerve cells, or neurons. Neurons display dendrites, tree-like structures with branches that protrude from the cell membrane, in order to "catch" messages from neighboring neurons (comparable to a net catching fish). When a neuron desires to communicate it uses a complex electrochemical system to "launch" molecules, termed neurotransmitters, to a neighboring neuron and its associated dendrite. Common neurotransmitters include serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine, which are known for their mood regulating, rewarding, and attention modulating effects, respectively. For the context of this writing the neurotransmitters GABA and glutamate are also important, which are inhibitory and excitatory, respectively. If a person, for example, enjoys a delectable *hamantaschen*, neurons in the reward area of the brain will fire dopamine to its neighbor, which will, in turn, create a cascade of the neurotransmitter, causing the individual to feel pleasure. While the neurobiology is far more nuanced and complicated than I have explained here, this description will provide sufficient knowledge for this article.

When alcohol crosses into the brain it begins to cause a multitude of effects, mainly through the modulation of various neurotransmitters. At moderate doses serotonin is activated, partially explaining the tranquil, calming nature of alcohol. Furthermore, alcohol ingestion is correlated with dopamine activation, accounting for the addictive qualities of the drug. However, when assessing the lethal qualities of alcohol, two neurotransmitters dominate: GABA and glutamate. Recall that GABA is an inhibitory neurotransmitter; if it is activated, the person's neuronal activity will be suppressed. Contrastingly, glutamate is excitatory; if it is activated, neuronal activity

SEE PURIM, CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



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Finding La La Land

By Reuven Herzog

Movies are escapism par excellence. For two hours as viewers we immerse ourselves in someone else's story, with characters, visuals and audio that transpose us into that world. The light of the world around us dims, the screen lights up and we are sucked in. Sometimes that movie may be so realistic that it uses its world as a tool to illuminate our own. But the world we live in is scary, so many times all we wish is to be somewhere else. Indeed, that's why I like comedies more than dramas; I need something to make me laugh after a stressful day on planet Earth.

The opening number of *La La Land* immediately sets the stage with an air of fantasy. If the stress of a traffic jam can give way to an uninhibited dance number, then anything is possible. And we are told that even when situations let you down, remember the next day is yet another day of sun. The visual and audial color palette of the movie is bright and optimistic – it makes you want to dance with the characters. So when I met Mia and Sebastian, I rooted for their success. I wanted them to achieve their goals, and as their relationship blossomed in front of me I rooted for them to hold onto that love. And the plot developed as a stereotypical quest: starting off low, moving upwards, through happy periods and challenges, a final insurmountable breaking point. But when Sebastian trekked four hours from Los Angeles to Boulder City to bring his princess back to her throne of an audition room, I needed the fantasy to come through, to give me some vicarious bliss. Just give me the perfect ending; just this once, I pleaded with the film. For one time can't we just have happily ever after?

I rooted for that perfect ending; I wanted it so badly. But that's not what happens. We don't know what happened in the interval, but Mia shows up again five years later a star,

married to some random guy who is entirely irrelevant except for the fact that he is not Sebastian. And Sebastian is now the owner of a highly successful jazz club named by Mia, but he is alone at home. And as the story closes

**"IN OUR IMPERFECT WORLD,
AN IMPERFECT ENDING IS STILL,
INDEED, HAPPY!"**

the two ex-lovers see each other and share a flashback of what might have been. The film teases us with the perfect ending we knew was coming all along, accompanied by all the musical themes of the previous 120 minutes, telling us this is the right conclusion. But the montage is just a tease, and Mia and Sebastian are left looking at each other, once again in the original timeline. They look at each other; they smile; Mia walks away. Curtains fall; "The End" crawls across the screen as uplifting trumpets tell us this was indeed a good ending.

How can that be it?

At the end of the day Mia and Sebastian did realize their dreams. The love that bloomed over that fateful year in Los Angeles did not make it to the harvest, but both dreamers ended their quests successful; Mia the queen of the screen,

Sebastian the savior of jazz. As the film closes, Mia and Sebastian both know what they could have had, but know much more intimately what they do have. And with all that in mind they leave alternate history be, and they smile.

Perhaps *La La Land* is an escapist film. The idea of being content with an imperfect ending is so foreign to us, in the era of exclusively bigots, fools, or those who agree with us one hundred percent, in the era of Bernie-or-Bust. The movie leaves a confusing taste in our mouths; we don't think we should be happy for the characters, yet we are.

Perhaps, though, the film leaves us with more than an entertaining story. Its world is so close to ours – down to the imperfections – that we can relate its theme to our lives with little interpretive effort. *La La Land* doesn't leave us in ecstasy or hysteria, it leaves us with something more real, something more comforting: In our imperfect world, an imperfect ending is still, indeed, happy.

We don't have it all. But we still smile. Curtain falls; we all live (reasonably) happily ever after.



Genghis Khan: America's Founding Father?

By Yisroel Ben-Porat

Best-selling anthropologist Jack Weatherford recently published a provocative book entitled *Genghis Khan and the Quest for God: How the World's Greatest Conqueror Gave Us Religious Freedom* (Viking, 2016). In his book, Weatherford shockingly argues that Genghis Khan's religious tolerance during his rule over the Mongol Empire served as an inspiration for America's founding fathers, who enshrined that ideal in the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." This article will examine the plausibility of Weatherford's claim, comment on its significance, and reflect on some of

**"IT IS COUNTER-INTUITIVE,
PERHAPS EVEN LAUGHABLE,
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A BARBARIC WARLORD."**

its broader implications.

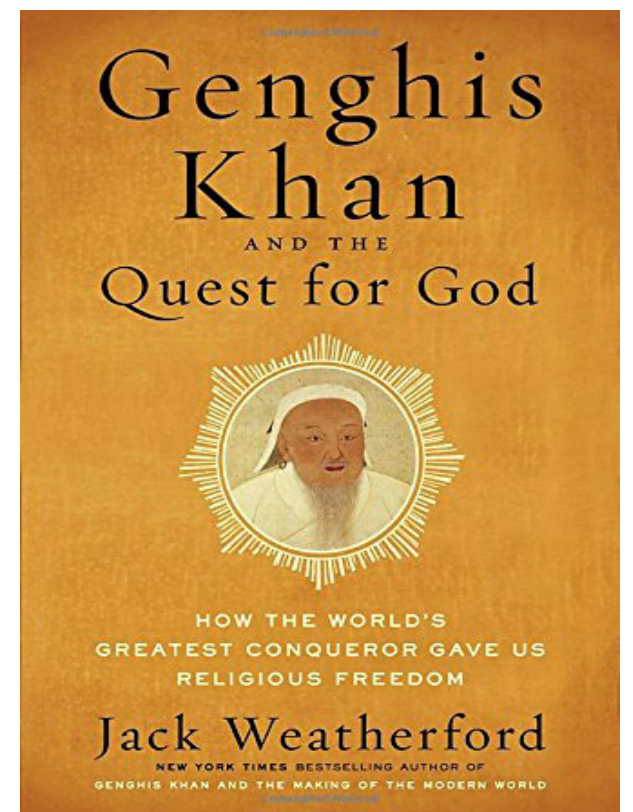
Weatherford's radical theory draws inspiration from a footnote in Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776–89). Gibbon, contrasting the Mongol Empire's religious freedom with Europe's religious fanaticism, argued that a "singular conformity may be found between the religious laws of [Genghis] Khan and Mr. [John] Locke." America's founding fathers drew heavily on Locke's political philosophy, and Weatherford discovered that Thomas Jefferson read *The History of Genghizcan the Great* (1710), an authoritative biography written by the French scholar Pétis de la Croix. The latter wrote that Genghis Khan, "far from ordaining any punishment or persecution against those who were not his sect, [forbade] to disturb or molest any person on account of religion, and desired that everyone should be left at liberty to profess that which pleased him best."

According to Weatherford, Genghis Khan's religious

tolerance served as an excellent example for the framers of the First Amendment. The founding fathers, lacking "a true intellectual history of their own, searched eagerly for models of moral government and justice beyond the pool of Western European experience. In the quest for alternate concepts, they read widely about the history of Asian leaders." Jefferson in particular was "deeply influenced" by de la Croix's biography, and he eventually proposed "A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom" to the Virginia General Assembly. Enacted in 1786, the bill declared, like de la Croix's passage, "That no man shall... suffer on account of his religious opinions or belief; but that all men shall be free to profess... their opinions in matters of religions."

Weatherford's argument is both novel and tenuous. It is counter-intuitive, perhaps even laughable, that a lofty value such as religious freedom may have originated in the law code of a barbaric warlord in medieval Mongolia. Additionally, it is extremely difficult to prove the extent of an idea's influence. Perhaps the most fundamental flaw in Weatherford's argument, however, is the 500-year gap: Genghis Khan ruled the Mongol Empire in the early 13th century, whereas America's founding fathers crafted the Constitution toward the end of the 18th. One may question why the idea of religious tolerance did not take root earlier, and why no political philosopher actually cited Genghis Khan as a historical precedent.

Yet, despite its difficulties, Weatherford's claim is noteworthy for several reasons. Firstly, if it is correct, it vastly alters our perception of the First Amendment. While no practical ramification emerges from this view, it is important to know the sources and origins of one's cultural values. Additionally, Weatherford's argument reflects a salient aspect of cross-cultural comparison: although different cultures across time and space may appear to be fundamentally dissimilar, one often discovers familiar elements within the alterity. Finally, *Genghis Khan and the Quest for God* reminds us of the beauty and importance of the religious freedom that we enjoy today. Not only should we be grateful for the liberty we have, but we should strive to protect it. In recent years, Supreme Court rulings have prioritized certain constitutional rights over religious liberty. It is our prerogative to uphold the latter to the fullest extent allowed by the law, and it is our



duty to advocate against its further erosion.

Genghis Khan and the Quest for God is certainly not the definitive work on the history of religious freedom in America. Weatherford's book is certainly fascinating and entertaining, but it belongs more to the realm of pop history than academic publications – hence the sensationalized title and the non-university press. Additionally, Weatherford ignores substantial scholarship on both Genghis Khan and America's founding fathers. So feel free to enjoy the novelty of Weatherford's claim, but be hesitant to view Genghis Khan as the intellectual progenitor of the First Amendment. Rather, I encourage you to delve into the vast body of works on the history of religious freedom and to use that newfound knowledge to defend and explain this important value.

The Hods: First Family of YU Basketball

By Judah Stiefel

For the first time in NCAA Division III history and just the fourth time in the over one-hundred-year history of the NCAA, three siblings appeared on the court at the same time. Jordan, Justin, and Tyler Hod played simultaneously on January 15, 2017 in the YU Maccabees 73-43 home win against Sarah Lawrence College. While the Macs basketball season came to a close this past Tuesday night with a 72-55 loss at Purchase, the Hod boys added a truly intriguing storyline to the Mac's winning season. This game was the last game for Jordan, the oldest of the Hod brothers, but

"FOR THE HOD BOYS, BALLING TOGETHER IS A PRIVILEGE WHICH BRINGS THEM CLOSER TOGETHER."

with Justin finishing his second season and Tyler finishing his first, there is sure to be a strong continued Hod presence on the team.

The Hod basketball legacy did not start with Jordan's freshman year four years ago, but rather dates all the way back to 1984 when Lior Hod, father to the current students, began to play with the team. If you don't know Lior, he's the one sitting with the camera next to his wife Janet in the center of the bleachers at *every single Mac's game*, home and away. Lior has hardly missed a single one of his sons' games dating back to their days playing for the Frisch Cougars in high school. He's barely even missed a practice; Varsity or JV. Janet (Mama) Hod used to do the books for Frisch during games, and the boy's older sister Samantha was herself a very successful athlete at Frisch.

After each game, Lior goes over each play with his sons and focuses very intensely on what they did well and what they can improve. A lesson that Lior emphasizes is, "Always be prepared." This applies on and off the court. Says Lior, "The videos help them get better. They're always improving and always learning from themselves. When the other team beats them somehow, they'll always win the second time." All you have to do to see how hard the Hod boys work is to drive past their house in Teaneck where you will almost always see two yellow Hummers, somewhere between one and eight dogs, and the Hod boys balling in the driveway. You're also likely to see half the Mac's squad balling with them.

For the Hod boys, balling together is a privilege which brings them closer together. Writes Tyler Hod, "After finishing a complete season playing for YU, as well as playing with my brothers, I truly realized how blessed I am to have the two older brothers that I do. Besides for making this transition (playing YU ball) much easier for me, they have also guided me and gave me constant advice. Jordan has shown me, through his actions, how to lead a team and how to have the proper work ethic. I truly appreciate all they've done for me."

When asked which of his sons is the best basketball player, a question Lior is rather used to, he explained, "They all play differently in a similar position. Jordan is more of a quick point guard. Justin is a shooter. He'll take twenty shots, miss twenty shots, and still take the twenty-

first. Tyler is a hybrid. He plays with a lot of passion and has great defense." Tyler won MVP of Sarachek his senior year of high school.

Jordan, Justin, and Tyler playing together is, believe it or not, not the first instance Hod brothers have played on the court together in YU. When Lior was on the team, he played with his brother Ayal who was one year his junior. Ayal was a 5'9" point-guard who grew six inches the summer of his senior year of high school. Lior and Ayal dominated the court and earned the nickname "The Twin Towers" for their dominance on the court. In his last game of the season in 1988, Lior broke the YU scoring record, scoring thirty points in a 115-79 win over St. Joseph, Long Island (he still has the tape). Lior never led the team in any individual year in scoring, and focused on every element of his game. Ayal broke Lior's scoring record the very next year.

For Lior and Ayal, their journey to the YU basketball team was no simple thing. In 1980, the brothers moved from Israel to Atlanta with their parents to open a restaurant. Their parents' business partner unfortunately died of lung cancer only three months after they arrived, and the restaurant subsequently failed. The Hod parents moved back to Israel, but the brothers opted to stay in Atlanta where they had begun to build lives. The Hod brothers would not see their parents for seven years, until Lior's father attended Janet and Lior's wedding. The fact that his parents never got to watch him play basketball inspired Lior to never miss his sons' games. Lior worked hard to keep their apartment, and he still managed to play five hours of ball a day. They met Rav Feldman of Atlanta who gave them jobs, but kicked them out after all they wanted to do all day was play basketball.

At the end of his senior year of high school, Lior tried out for Emmanuel College, a Baptist school which granted him a two-year scholarship provided that he would attend church each day. At the time, Lior was not religious and the church clause of his scholarship didn't bother him. One day a man at the Atlanta JCC saw Lior playing and called Johnny Halpert, the coach of the YU team at the time. Halpert got in touch with Lior and asked him if he'd ever heard of YU. "Why who?" Lior responded.

Johnny offered Lior a four-year scholarship, and Lior took a last-minute flight to LaGuardia with the help of Rav Feldman. Coach Halpert picked Lior up from the airport and dropped him off at YU where Lior was dorming on Rubin seven. When he woke up in the morning, he saw a guy with a beard and glasses staring down at him who turned out to be his roommate Moshe Mursky. For two months Lior was rather depressed in YU. All the guys around him had beards and glasses, the top of the backboard of the gym in the MTA building touched the ceiling, and there were no girls.



Eventually, Lior met Randy Schwartz from Pittsburg and he began to enjoy his time at YU. They played their games at George Washington High School. Lior worked in the YU cafeteria and would buy his hot dogs down the block where they were half the price. Knowing no one in New York City, Lior would spend many of his *Shabbatot* at Johnny Halpert's house, where he observed the warm atmosphere and religiosity with which the Halperts interacted at the table. Nowadays, the Hods have a massive dining room table which they are always using to entertain scores of people with their famous Hod hospitality. Lior attributes this to the inspiration he received from Coach Halpert. Johnny Halpert stayed on as coach for one extra year so that he could coach Jordan when he arrived at YU, and this past year Jordan was the last active player to have had the privilege of being coached by Johnny.

Lior says he won the lottery twice. Once through the Reagan immigration lottery through which he became a citizen, and once upon meeting his wife Janet. For everything else, Lior worked extremely hard, working late nights, taking every opportunity he got, and always being prepared as he has always been on the court. He eventually founded his extremely successful company Ellkay, a "nationwide leader in healthcare connectivity, enabling interoperability between 40,000 practices with 550 plus systems." When Jordan was born, he was named "Jordan, Michael" after guess who. When their rabbi, Rav Fulda, read the name, everyone at the *brit* started laughing, and Rav Fulda had no idea why.

Jordan writes, "It was always a dream of my father's to have all his sons play on the YU basketball team. The drive and go-getter attitude that he instilled in us at a young age is what turned his dreams into reality. I am truly blessed to have such great brothers that always keep me motivated and on top of my game. I am lucky enough to have played with not only Justin and Tyler, but with my other 12 brothers."

It is no coincidence that the Hod legacy is one of excellence both on and off the court. The Hod family takes their hard work and leadership they dedicate to basketball, and applies them throughout their lives. You should look forward to following the legacy of the first family of Mac's ball for years to come.



How White was My Movie: A Look at Whitewashing in Film

By Matthew Silkin

I was reading through some of the plot synopses for upcoming movies this year when one of them caught my eye as adapting something I had recently watched. The plot, without spoilers, reads as follows:

"A high school prodigy finds a book in the street one day. This book happens to belong to the God of Death, who decided to drop it in the human world out of sheer boredom. The rules for using the book, as reiterated in the inside cover, are that if you know someone's name and face, you can write their name in the book and they will instantly die. The high schooler uses the book to kill off criminals and other people he finds undesirable, while being tracked down by Interpol's best detective."

The movie, if you haven't guessed it already, is an adaptation of the hit manga and anime series *Death Note*, created by Tsugumi Ohba and Takeshi Obata. There is, however, one difference between the Japanese original and the American adaptation that I find a little baffling: Light Yagami, the protagonist of the manga, has been changed to Light Turner for Western audiences. And he's not the only character with this bizarre change in ethnicity - his father, Soichiro Yagami, is now James Turner, and pop idol and love interest Misa Amane is instead Mia Sutton. And while there's not a lot that Hollywood can do to Americanize a shinigami (Japanese mythological death god) named Ryuk, they did get the voice of Willem Dafoe for the character, instead of having someone of Japanese descent provide voice work.

This, surprisingly enough, isn't the only offender of whitewashing in the past few years. 2017 also brings us an American adaptation of the 1995 Japanese animated movie *Ghost in the Shell*, starring noticeably not-Japanese actress Scarlett Johansson as The Major, the cyborg leader of an anti-terrorism squad. And last year's *Doctor Strange* drew ire when it cast Tilda Swinton as the Ancient One, a character who in the comics is portrayed as Tibetan.

Do not take this article to mean that I do not think the actors I listed above are incapable of acting. Scarlett Johansson and Willem Dafoe have both proven themselves to be fine actors, and Tilda Swinton has, in the past, been nominated for many major awards, including winning the Academy Award for Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Michael Clayton*. What I have been seeing, though, and what I do want to point out, is that all of these actors are white, portraying characters of different ethnic backgrounds - specifically, in the case of those films referenced in this article, East Asian. The angry comments on the Internet following each of these casting announcements would have you think that this is a bigger problem than it is, but it still is a problem that needs to be addressed.

The goal of American movie studios is, first and foremost, to make a profit. They are businesses, after all; their product just happens to be anywhere from

90 minutes to three hours long and a good excuse for movie theaters to overcharge for everything associated with them, but I digress. The logic of the studio is that the consumer will only come see the movie if they recognize the talent behind that movie, regardless of the other aspects of the movie, such as the story. This is why Michael Bay's name, with all the CGI exploding nonsense that comes with it, still rakes in money, even though his movies are mediocre at best. This is also (partly) why the producers of *Doctor Strange* went with the Celtic background for their portrayal of the Ancient One, rather than keep the Tibetan aspect and aggravate the nasty dragon that is China in the process. And this is why we are seeing an American actress star as a Japanese cyborg, rather than an up-and-coming Japanese actress.

Oddly enough, this phenomenon has been happening the other way around as well. A 2015 Japanese live action adaptation of the manga series *Attack on Titan* received some criticism for casting Japanese people into the roles of German characters Eren Jaeger and Armin Arlert, and moving the setting of the movie from what was ostensibly Germany - or at least Western Europe - in the manga and anime, to Japan in the live action film.

But what I really wanted to bring to the spotlight is the whitewashing in the *Death Note* adaptation. Why was this done? Do producers think that people will refuse to watch something that isn't remotely connected to America or the West? What's the creative advantage to moving a story about shinigami, an inherently Japanese concept, from Japan to the USA? What's the point in further changing the names of the Japanese characters to English ones? Of course, the name Light doesn't make that much sense in the original work, but a name like Light Yagami makes (marginally) more sense than Light Turner!

And if you would think that this is the first instance of whitewashing ever in movies, you would be mistaken. Among other things, the 2009 film *Dragonball Evolution*, an American adaptation of the classic manga series *Dragon Ball*, was derided for the casting of American actor Justin Chatwin as the part of protagonist Goku. The American licensing company 4Kids Entertainment made a name for themselves in the 1990s by dubbing anime in English from the

original Japanese, but was infamous for making cultural changes in the process - rice balls became jelly doughnuts in *Pokemon*, and the characters Katsuya Jonouchi, Hiroto Honda, and Anzu Mazaki from *Yu-Gi-Oh!* became Joey Wheeler, Tristan Taylor, and Téa Gardner, respectively. Perhaps a little more egregiously, DIC Entertainment - another company responsible for bringing anime to the West in the 90s - heavily censored the show *Sailor Moon* in their broadcast by editing out any violence in the show, and implying that Sailor Uranus and Sailor Neptune, two characters who were homosexual in the original Japanese broadcast, were actually cousins (as if it makes any scene with them together more wholesome, somehow).

Even outside the realm of adaptations of foreign IPs, there has always been a problem of whitewashing. Going back to 1961, the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's* - which won two Oscars - has been taken to task for casting the late Mickey Rooney, a white American comedian, in the role of Japanese photographer I. Y. Yunioshi. In 1956's *The Ten Commandments*, the notably not-Middle Eastern Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner were hired to play Moses and Ramses II.

Am I asking for a solution to whitewashing? Well, I and the rest of the world can suggest to hire actors whose ethnicities match the characters, but that's beyond moot at this point. Directors will always hire who they believe to be the best actor for the role, all issues of race aside. But ultimately, from the innocent changing of Japanese characters to white ones, to the egregious censorship of the adaptation, each offense in this article stems from a lack of respect to the source material by the people bringing the adaptation. There is a reason why the original was beloved enough to warrant the market for adaptation, and changing any of that for cosmetic or marketing reasons is, at best, unforgivable.

I doubt this article will reach the ears of the Hollywood executives who need to hear it, so I will instead charge us, the future of the creative market - show respect to an original work. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. And maybe one day, we might see adaptations that actually hold up to the bar set by their predecessors.



PURIM, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

will be turned up. Alcohol activates GABA, yet it inhibits glutamate. Between these mechanisms, a synergistic neuronal inhibition ensues. Brain activity is reduced to the point of unconsciousness. If an individual vomits when in this state, it may result in aspiration, in which the fluids travel down the trachea into the lungs -- obviously concerning.

Underage drinking has become a culturally accepted norm on Purim (and on Simchat Torah too). While the legal drinking age in the United States is 21, many experts believe the human brain continues to develop, in a general sense, until age 25. Alcohol has long been theorized to disrupt brain development in the growing adolescent brain. One of the brain's four lobes, the frontal lobe, is often attributed to executive functioning, holding responsibility for long-term planning and decision making. From deciding on a college, a career, or even to experimenting with a drug, the frontal lobe is behind these choices. Backed by scientific research on mice, alcohol is theorized to damage the frontal lobe and

hippocampus in the growing adolescent brain, thereby contributing to substandard motivation and memory, decisive abilities, and general self control into adulthood. Notably, these damages can persist even past the legal drinking age of 21. Most college students fall into this age gap and are therefore risking permanent frontal lobe and hippocampal damage when ingesting alcohol. While these findings are preliminary, and additional scientific research is required, this should, nonetheless, be taken seriously.

Should a person choose to drink on Purim, or in general for that matter, there are certain methods of "damage control" that can be deployed before acute intoxication. Of the simplest measures includes consumption of a substantial meal high in fatty acids, carbohydrates, and protein prior to initiating alcohol ingestion, ensuring a delayed delivery of the drug into the body. Furthermore, proper hydration, alternating with non-alcoholic drinks, and pre-planning transportation could reduce the risk of injury. A quick tip for a person who may be unconscious and vomiting involves placing the incapacitated individual in the left lateral recumbent

position (lying him down on the left side), helping to prevent vomit from entering the lungs.

Societal norms dictate alcohol consumption to be relatively safe. However, upon rigorous scientific analysis, this is clearly not the case. After an extensive study of 20 common drugs of abuse including heroin, crack cocaine, and crystal meth, neuropharmacologist David Nutt, MD found alcohol to be "the most harmful drug to society and fourth most harmful drug to users". While the danger is widely applicable, underage drinkers, and perhaps those slightly older, possess a greater risk for both acute and chronic damages.

While Purim for many is an enjoyable holiday filled with family and friends, an inherent risk may threaten the integrity of the celebration. Come March 12th YU students, in addition to the larger Jewish community, should allocate attention to the potential detrimental effects of alcohol. Ultimately, however, through careful planning, intelligent decisions, and implementing general awareness, Purim will be infused with *simcha* and joy for all those who participate.

Purim Sameach!



Never. Stop. Commentating.

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

Featured Faculty: Professor Joseph L. Angel

By Arthur Schoen

Professor Joseph L. Angel is an Associate Professor of Jewish History at YU, where he teaches Bible and Jewish History courses in YC, IBC, and Revel. A recent tenure recipient, Professor Angel has been teaching at YU since 2008, the same year he received his PhD from NYU.

Arthur Schoen: Can you tell us a bit about your life story/background? Where are you from originally? Where did you study?

Joseph L. Angel: I was born and raised in the small, vibrant Jewish community of Seattle. As an undergraduate I attended the University of Washington, where I majored in Jewish studies and ancient Near Eastern civilizations. I spent my junior year pursuing *semikhah* studies at the Shehebar Sephardic Center located in the Old City of Jerusalem. After that I studied ancient Jewish history and literature at NYU in the Skirball Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies. In 2008, I completed my doctoral work and began teaching at YU.

AS: One of your primary academic interests is the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS); they were a major focus of your graduate work at NYU, where you wrote your dissertation about them (“Victory in Defeat: The Image of the Priesthood in the Dead Sea Scrolls”) and studied under Professor Lawrence Schiffman, a prominent DSS scholar (and former YU faculty member and administrator). How did you get interested in studying the DSS?

JLA: It's a long story, but I can share one formative episode. I was about twenty years old and studying in yeshiva in Israel. One hot summer afternoon, during a lull from our review of *hilkhot ta'aruvot*, my havruta pulled a book from the shelf just beside us that had caught his eye. It was Solomon Zeitlin's *The Rise and Fall of the Judaean State: A Political, Social and Religious History of the Second Commonwealth*. After reading just a few pages I was stunned by the detail and confidence with which he reconstructed the Maccabean era. (Later I would discover that Prof. Zeitlin taught Jewish history at YU several decades ago.) The book inspired a thousand questions in me. I felt that I had to know more about how sources like Josephus and the Dead Sea Scrolls could shed light on the development of Jewish history and tradition. Eventually I found a copy of Prof. Schiffman's *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* and enrolled as one of his doctoral students at NYU. The rest is history. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if Prof. Zeitlin's book had been stowed on a higher shelf.

AS: Briefly – can you tell our students how the DSS are relevant to us now, in 2017?

JLA: The DSS are by far the largest collection of Jewish religious texts from the Second Temple period. Before their discovery we had relatively few primary sources from this period. Among the DSS are some of the oldest examples of biblical manuscripts, biblical interpretations and translations, halakhic works, prayers, mystical texts, and *tefillin*, as well as a number of previously unknown texts authored by the members of an apocalyptic sectarian movement. The enormous influx of data (some 1,000 manuscripts) has revolutionized our understanding of several fundamental issues in the history of Judaism, including, for example, the development of the biblical canon, the transmission and interpretation of biblical texts, and the polemical social background of Rabbinic halakha. The DSS also provide an unparalleled window into the Jewish religious and social settings that contributed to the rise of Christianity in the first century. Now, the extent to which all of this is relevant for us today is very much a matter of choice. In my view, there is no question that the new vistas provided by the Scrolls are relevant beyond the bubble of the academy. If we take archaeology and history seriously, then the enriched understanding of this pivotal era has real implications for the self-understanding of modern Jewish and Christian communities, and may even foster constructive dialogue between these groups.

AS: Can you please tell us a bit about your dissertation?

JLA: The late Second Temple period was a time of religious turmoil, when Jewish society was comprised of several competing factions. At the center of the debate were issues pertaining to ritual purity and the proper administration of the temple. In the midst of this tumult some groups, including the movement behind the Dead Sea Scrolls, sought to extend priestly holiness and the experience of the divine presence beyond the walls of the temple. Within this framework, my dissertation gathers together and analyzes the numerous portrayals of heavenly and messianic priests in the Scrolls. The results of the study shed light not only on how the sectarian community of Qumran reformulated and relived the priestly experience of the temple in various ways, but also on the religious ideology of broader groups within Second Temple society. Moreover, by addressing the numerous shared concerns of the Scrolls and the writings of rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity, my study deepens our understanding of the common Second Temple Jewish heritage that placed images of temple and priesthood at its very core.

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AS: Outside of your teaching duties, are you working on any interesting projects?

JLA: One of my current projects centers on a previously unknown collection of hymns for protection against wicked spirits known as the *Songs of the Sage* (4Q510–511). As a research fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation hosted in Göttingen, I completed a material reconstruction of the scroll known as 4Q511, arranging the fragments into their original order, which yielded sixteen (very fragmentary) columns of Hebrew text. Then, as a research fellow of the Yad Hanadiv Foundation hosted in Jerusalem, I prepared a new full edition of the text, including original transcription, translation, notes on readings and philology, and contextualizing commentary. This work is set to be published by Brill in a series called Dead Sea Scrolls Editions.

AS: What are some of your extracurricular interests?

JLA: With three young children and a wife pursuing a PhD of her own, there isn't much free time. My favorite thing to do these days is to spend time with my family enjoying the outdoors. If I could find the time in the future I'd love to return to music. I have played the flute since I was a child.

AS: What does it mean to you as an Orthodox Jew to teach in YU?

JLA: It means that my students share core personal commitments with me—the love of Jewish tradition and the love of Israel. This creates a unique bond. Teaching at YU is not simply about giving over information or imparting a discipline to students. It is also a way of lending my voice to the future of Modern Orthodoxy.

AS: You held teaching positions at other universities before you came to YU. How has your experience teaching Jewish studies in a Jewish university differed from teaching them in a more typical university setting?

JLA: In other university settings you encounter many students with little or no connection to religion. Bridging the gap between a modern secular mindset and the world of Tanakh and ancient Judaism can be a major challenge.



At YU, students are already largely tuned in to the logic of Jewish tradition. The challenge in this context becomes getting students to appreciate familiar texts and traditions in a new light. At times this requires explicit reflection on the meaning and value of academic approaches to ancient Judaism.

AS: At the undergraduate level, you teach in both the Judaic studies program (in IBC) and the college. Are your goals in presenting your courses any different when you teach in IBC versus when you teach in YC?

JLA: The intonation may differ at times, but the goals are essentially the same.

AS: You also teach graduate Judaic studies courses in Revel. Some of our students might be interested in continuing their studies at Revel. How are academic Jewish studies at the graduate level different from the courses they have taken in their undergraduate years at YU?

JLA: In my graduate courses I begin from the assumption that the students possess a basic pool of knowledge in Jewish studies, both in terms of content and methodology. This frees up time for in-depth study of particular topics and allows us to engage the diverse variety of research methodologies and debates driving the current scholarly discourse. In addition, in graduate courses there is an effort made to support those students who wish to pursue a career in professional Jewish studies. This usually involves the writing of essays and book reviews or the giving of oral presentations with an eye toward the emulation of professional standards.

AS: At YU you teach Jewish studies courses in a few different areas: Later Prophets, Ketuvim, survey courses in Jewish history, and more specific history courses. What are your favorite subjects to teach about and why?

JLA: After eight years of teaching at YU I've found that it's not the particular topic, but rather the dialogical process of learning in the classroom that counts. To truly learn something new requires a certain openness and sense of adventure. For me, the most exciting part about teaching is that moment when a student has made an intellectual breakthrough. The world that he thought he knew is now transformed into something more complex. The student is more mature, empowered, and enriched. That is the moment when I feel like I've done my job. This is what keeps me engaged. You can't expect such moments to occur every day, but they won't happen at all if you're not constantly plugged in.

The Elusive Hunt for Adjunctification: Does Yeshiva College Have a Faculty Problem?

By Tzvi Levitin

It all began with a cryptic email in early September from Professor Gabriel Cwilich, Physics Department Chair and then-Director of the Honors Program. In it, he said he wanted to talk to *The Commentator* about “a subject connected to YU that has the faculty quite worried, and [which] I think it might interest you to explore.” (Cwilich is currently on sabbatical, after which he will return as a physics professor, with his position in the Honors Program assumed by Dr. Shalom Holtz, Chair of the Bible Department.) Intrigued by the mysterious message, and wondering if his request related to campus murmurs about a leadership change in the Honors Program, Editor-in-Chief Doron Levine and I quickly set up a meeting with Cwilich in his office.

But at the meeting, by which point the news of Cwilich’s departure from the Honors Program had already spread throughout the college, Cwilich was eager to move past that discussion and give *The Commentator* a lead on a story we hadn’t yet considered writing about: adjuncts.

Cwilich claimed that faculty members of Yeshiva College were worried about “adjunctification,” a phenomenon spreading across liberal arts colleges throughout the country wherein full-time professors are slowly replaced by part-time faculty. Adjuncts are hired on a by-the-semester basis and receive very low compensation and little to no benefits from the university. Adjunct faculty earn as little as \$500 per credit hour of teaching, oftentimes teaching multiple courses at several universities to stay afloat.



Joanne Jacobson,
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Cwilich cited recent and upcoming departures of full-time faculty members and the lack of plans to replace each one with a new full-time professor as evidence of Yeshiva College’s path toward a faculty supported primarily by adjunct labor. For example, the Biology Department lost three professors in the 2015-2016 academic year: Dr. Yakov Peter, who was tenure-track, left to Landers College for Men, while Dr. Carl Feit and Dr. Barry Potvin, both tenured, retired. Cwilich said that the administration had hired one full-time faculty member to replace these three professors (the Biology department is currently searching for another full-time faculty member as well), and that there were no plans to replace any full-time humanities professors who might leave or retire in the foreseeable future. After advising that we look into the issue further by talking to faculty members and the administration, Cwilich asked us to bear one question in mind: “What is the price that students pay when this happens?”

Before we left, Cwilich pointed us to a 2014 *Guernica* article, “The Teaching Class,” outlining the ramifications of universities saving money by employing adjuncts. The article claims that “in 1969, 78 percent of professors held tenure-track positions,” but “by 2009, this percentage had shrunk to 33.5,”

and that these changes had resulted not just in workers’ rights problems for professors, but also in worsened learning conditions for students. According to *Guernica*, adjunct faculty are primarily concerned with job retention, which is largely dependent on student evaluations. They will thus sacrifice quality of education for the sake of being liked by their students.

And what about the student experience outside of the classroom? Because the university is less invested in them, part-time faculty are less likely to be invested in their students’ success and in the mission of the university. If a professor has to teach courses at three schools just to put food on the table, they have less time and less motivation to hold office hours, help students explore and enrich their interests, and write graduate school recommendations.

After reading several articles echoing the points made in *Guernica*, it seemed indisputable to me that adjunctification presents a dilemma for the larger landscape of liberal arts education, both for the teaching profession and for the student experience. But was it a problem at Yeshiva College?

At the Yeshiva College Student Association’s open meeting with Joanne Jacobson, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, in December, I asked the Dean for her thoughts on how adjuncts affect the students in Yeshiva College. She began by praising the potential for adjuncts to bring diverse perspectives and interesting courses to YU. “Adjuncts can be fantastic. They’re often younger, often right in the middle of what’s going on in their field. [Interdisciplinary classes on] terrorism [and] capitalist economies, for example, can be a great reason to use adjuncts. [They] bring things we don’t necessarily have. That can be enriching, and they can be excellent faculty.” But Jacobson continued: “You need letters of recommendation, support and advice in applying to graduate school, and we can’t ask adjuncts to do that -- which is a loss for students. It’s not necessarily a poor experience in the classroom, but all these other things that are part of college, these are things that adjuncts can’t provide.”

Professor Daniel Kimmel of the Sociology Department (full-time, tenure-track), echoed Jacobson’s sentiments: “My father is an adjunct teacher in sociology and social work. He’s been teaching the same five courses over and over again, he has huge enrollments, and they pay him very little... The long and short of it is they’re taking advantage of him.”

While Jacobson provided valuable insight on the process of adjunctification and the implications for students and the University at large, she had limited information on overall trends in adjunct hiring at Yeshiva College and recommended I speak with Dean Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences for both Yeshiva College and Stern. In my January interview with Dean Bacon, her assessment of the situation was definitive: “We’re not moving in the direction of adjuncts. By no means.” When pushed a little more on the ethics of hiring adjuncts in place of full-time professors, as is being done in the Biology Department while the process of recruiting full time faculty takes place, Dean Bacon said: “it’s true that adjuncts are paid much less and do not have the benefits... [But we are] between a rock and a hard place. Is it unethical to hire adjuncts because the[ir] pay is low, or is it unethical to not hire adjuncts at all? Across the country, adjuncts patch together a living wage by teaching at many institutions, and we are part of that system. Here at Yeshiva, to create a full-time position that either doesn’t exist or is a replacement, we have to go through an analysis... If I as a Dean can’t justify a position, it’s not going to get approved, because it’s not in the budget.”

When asked about how faculty decisions are made when there is limited funding, Dean Bacon said that, in addition to academic considerations, a lot has to do with donor interest. “People don’t necessarily want to give money for courses. The younger donors tend to be savvy businessmen and women, who are philanthropists, who are more hands on with their donations... Some want bricks and mortar, to support facilities like a building. Others are interested to give



Karen Bacon, Dean of Undergraduate
Faculty of Arts and Sciences

to the programs that relate directly to the businesses they are in.”

I left the interview with a little more clarity on how hiring decisions are made from the administrative standpoint, but I still had not received any hard data on whether adjunct hiring was becoming more prevalent at Yeshiva College. Over the next few weeks, I compiled lists of all Yeshiva College faculty members from both Spring 2012 and Spring 2017. With the help of Senior Academic Administrator Yehudis Isenberg, who meticulously categorized my lists into “tenured,” “tenure-track,” “full-time,” and “adjunct” faculty members, I calculated the differences in faculty populations of 2012 and 2017. The most noticeable difference was the overall number of faculty. Whereas there were 151 faculty members in 2012 (not counting Undergraduate Torah Studies faculty who taught Yeshiva College courses), there are only 101 this semester, a decrease of one third. The number of tenured or tenure-track professors went down from 66 to 46, indicating a severe loss of faculty with job security and long-term commitment to the university. And things do not look so bright for the near future, either: whereas there were 27 tenure-track professors in 2012, there are currently only six. Percentage-wise, this is a drop from 18% tenure-track faculty to a measly 6%.

But what of the adjuncts? Somewhat surprisingly, the proportion of the Yeshiva College faculty made up of adjuncts has fallen slightly; whereas there were 55 adjuncts in Spring 2012 (36% of the faculty), there are only 33 adjuncts in Spring 2017 (33% of the faculty). It seems that while Yeshiva College has suffered a large loss of full-time and tenured faculty over the past five years (perhaps in response to lower enrollment, perhaps causing lower enrollment, but more likely a little bit of both), the strategy has not been to replace these faculty members with adjuncts. Rather, the strategy, for better or for worse, has been to not replace them at all. Retired tenured professors are not being replaced by new additions to the tenure track, and full-time professors who find greener pastures are seldom replaced by new hires unless the department is desperate.

I think Dean Bacon put it best: when the University is in a tough spot financially, we find ourselves between a rock and a hard place. Institutions, like people, only truly reveal their priorities and their values when their resources are limited. Do we sacrifice the number of courses we offer to avoid dubious adjunct hiring practices? Do we freeze salaries, or do we discontinue the Philosophy Department? Do we demand more of our professors, so that our students don’t come to expect less from the University? These questions are not easy to answer, but students paying tuition certainly have the right to know how and when these decisions are being made.

The Case for Free Tampons at YU

By Yardena Katz

Pizza, toilet paper and swag. Why are they free at Yeshiva University?

Pizza at club events is free because it enhances student life, toilet paper is free because it's a sanitation essential, and swag is free because it fosters school pride. Simply put, our university provides us with these items either because it is impractical to expect students to purchase them, or because it deems them worthwhile investments. With Brown, Columbia, Emory and many more American universities now beginning to supply free tampons in their bathrooms, we should evaluate whether YU should give it a try. Would it be practical to facilitate better access to tampons on campus? And would free tampons be a worthwhile investment for our university?

About half of YU undergraduate students are female and 86% of female adults have unexpectedly

gotten a period in public without menstrual supplies. Typically, students purchase and pack their own tampons because doing so is a personal responsibility. A practical problem only arises when a student is unable to access her own tampons nor accessibly buy one, since this leaves her in a position of discomfort and diminished dignity. If she finds herself unexpectedly unequipped on the Beren campus, she must either wait until a friend with a tampon shows up, exit the building and trek to a pharmacy or dorm, or test the consistently empty tampon dispenser.

The accessibility of all of these options is even lower on Wilf since fewer women frequent the campus, a pharmacy is further away, and many bathrooms do not have tampon dispensers. I tested out nearly all of the dispensers on Beren and those that I knew of on Wilf, but surprisingly found that not one single tampon dispenser actually contained any tampons. The empty Beren dispensers all have buttons marked "FREE," while some of the empty Wilf dispensers have slots for dime payment.

Conducting an unplanned wild goose chase for menstrual supplies also takes time. Just search "tampons" in the Facebook group "Stern College: In the Know" to see several posts from students seeking them during class. One exasperated Facebook commenter on Beren summed up: "How can I not find a single tampon in an ALL GIRLS SCHOOL?" The inaccessibility of tampons across campuses has proven to be an academic and social disruption.

I am not suggesting that we get carried away here. Aren't these students simply too forgetful to pack what they need, or too shortsighted to plan for the biologically unpredictable? Do we owe each one a Nobel Prize for engineering her own discomfort? Do we owe free pencils to forgetful note takers and free Golan to the spontaneously hungry for chicken? Obviously not; university funds are limited. But tampons are a basic sanitation need akin to the free toilet paper on campus, and although YU is only societally expected to supply the latter, as a university it should go beyond this expectation.

At absolute minimum, YU should install tampon dispensers in more of its bathrooms and actually stock them with tampons for purchase. Even with that improvement though, the problem of inaccessibility would persist since tampons in dispensers would remain locked away from coin-less students. The reality is that for tampons to be reliably accessible to students unexpectedly in need, YU will need to make its tampons figuratively and monetarily free.

Practicalities aside, YU already religiously and academically acknowledges the period. Stern offers courses on hilchot niddah, YC teaches reproductive biology, RIETS studies Masechet Niddah, and Einstein conducts hormonal research. Tampons would be a worthwhile investment for our university because it is ideologically inconsistent to teach respect for the laws of niddah and biology, yet ignore the mitigable indignity of having a period while unequipped on campus. At a university rooted in both Torah and

"AT A UNIVERSITY ROOTED IN BOTH TORAH AND MADDA, INVESTING IN MAINTAINING THE DIGNITY OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING THEIR PERIODS IS A MATTER OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY."

Madda, investing in maintaining the dignity of students experiencing their periods is a matter of institutional responsibility.

Improved tampon access is an attainable reality for which female YU students have already tried advocating behind closed doors. It's a reality for which I also wanted to privately advocate. Instead, I am suggesting it in a public forum because I think that unless tampon access is publicly discussed and supported by YU students, it is unrealistic—and perhaps even unfair—to expect our administrators to monetarily invest in its improvement.

So assuming that our university decides to conduct a free tampon trial, how much would it cost YU to try supplying free tampons? The University of Chicago recently conducted a monthlong trial for only \$75. That would be a modest cost for an initiative that could greatly benefit about half of our student body. We should spare some university dollars, test the logistics of a free tampon supply for students unexpectedly in need, and gather student feedback to assess its practicality.

Let's go ahead and give this free tampon thing a try.



Using the Mural: Let's Lay Down Some Ground Rules

By Yosef Sklar

Twice in the past few weeks groups of students have used the mural in the library lobby as a space to either promote a particular idea or raise awareness for an issue that they feel passionate about. The first turned the wall into a collage of pictures and quotes highlighting the similarities between the present United States' current immigration policy and their rejection of Jewish immigrants during WWII. The second sought to raise awareness of sexist comments being made on campus, as well as YU related online forums by posting name-disassociated printouts of those comments for all to see.

Considering the general complexity of the Jewish community that we live in as well as the heated political climate in which we currently find ourselves, I would not be surprised if students continue to utilize the mural in this way as the year progresses. I personally hope that they will. The students of our university are passionate about many important ideas and it is beneficial to have a recognized space in which they can promote their views in a public fashion.

However, if we are to continue using the mural in this way, and grant the practice of doing so legitimacy, then it would be to everyone's benefit if we the students came up with some ground rules to make

sure it operates smoothly and properly. Here are some suggestions:

"IF WE ARE TO CONTINUE USING THE MURAL IN THIS WAY... THEN IT WOULD BE TO EVERYONE'S BENEFIT IF WE THE STUDENTS CAME UP WITH SOME GROUND RULES."

-Every display must be taken down within twenty-four hours by the students who posted it:

The purpose of this rule would be twofold. First, it prevents anyone one opinion or idea from becoming a too substantial a part of the school's scenery. Second, and perhaps more importantly, this rule would likely prevent the displays from being torn down by people who disagree with them. If a student vehemently disagrees with the ideas portrayed on the wall and there is no rule forcing the people who originally posted it to take it down after a period of time, the bothered student will feel compelled to take action into his or her own hands and tear it down. If such students

knew that it would only be displayed for twenty-four hours they would likely let it remain on the wall for the interim.

-No one can tear down any display within 24 hours of its being put up:

There is no way to actually enforce this rule. However, if we care enough about campus dialogue and the uninhibited exchange of ideas then perhaps the student government can email the student body condemning this action if it ever again takes place.

-No personal attacks:

Nothing on the wall should ever be attacking any particular students or faculty.

-Nothing vulgar or risqué:

While freedom of expression is important, we must also taken into account that the mural is in a very public and unavoidable area and is also in very close proximity to the Beit Midrash.

At this point I would like to turn over the conversation to the student body. Would any of these rules be beneficial? Are there those you disagree with? Are there others that you would suggest? What are your thoughts?

Is it a Contradiction to be a Patriot and a Zionist?

By Berel Gold

Like many Americans, I participated in part of Super Bowl LI festivities a few weeks ago, but not for the reasons you might think. To say that I don't follow football is an understatement--I only found out who was playing the day before the game. So why would I watch the Super Bowl? The answer is, I love to watch the annual rendition of the national anthem.

Watching servicemen and servicewomen from each branch of the United States military march out onto the field, the seriousness and silence of the stadium and all the players, and the giant American flag stretched across the field, formed the core reason why I went to the Morgenstern lounge on Sunday night.

As a child in elementary school, we always used to start off class (after davening of course!) by reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. I recall how those moments gave me a sense of pride of having the privilege and honor of being an American. Reading about our country's principles and history, I never fail but to marvel at the freedoms we enjoy in this country--freedoms that aren't even available to people in "first-world" European countries.

However, lately I've been having misgivings about my distinct patriotic feelings and how I should feel about the state of Israel. If I really think that the US is the greatest country in the world, what does that say about how I feel about Israel?

As a Jew, Israel is not just my homeland, but it is also the land of my roots: my past, present and future. Visiting Hebron never stops to instill in me a

sense of awe, with the realization that Abraham, my forefather, walked on this very earth. When I look at the Temple Mount, I don't see the Dome of the Rock. I see it as how it should be--with the holy Temple in all its glory, smoke from the ketoret (incense) and the sacrifices filling the air and pilgrims coming from all over the world to offer praise and thanksgiving to G-d.

Walking through the city of Jerusalem testifies to the direct fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy: "...There shall yet old men and old women sit in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for old age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in her streets" (Zech. 8:4-5). This is the very stuff of Rabbi Akiva's wildest imaginations (Makot 24b). The very Land breathes the history of our people; she pines for our presence, and we for hers. If I believe that we Jews truly belong nowhere but the Land of Israel, how can I also be a patriot?

I believe there is an answer to my emotional conflict. What makes the US the greatest country in the world is its founding principles, that every man, woman and child was bestowed by their Creator certain inalienable rights that can never be taken away by any government. That, and limiting power of the government, is what caused the US to thrive in the modern world. Immigrants (including my parents) flocked to the US for the hope of a life

unencumbered by limitations and prosecution from government.

Israel represents many of the same things to me. Israel is where the Jewish people can enjoy autonomy and be able serve G-d without fear of persecution (except, ironically on the Temple Mount). It is the land promised to us by G-d, a holy land entrusted to our people to guard and delight in.

The United States is the place where my family found refuge fleeing from the former Soviet Union. The United States accepted my parents and grandparents and provided us a home to live securely and practice our faith freely. In the words of Rav Moshe Feinstein, America is a "medina shel chessed". It is a home for the afflicted of all nations, seeking a better life for themselves. The founders were worried about the dangers of an unbound democracy, where mob rule would be law. Therefore, they created a representative republic, a government where the rights of the minority would be protected from the will of the majority.

Yes, the US is truly an amazing country, one whose kindness I recognize and where I live, able to wear my yarmulke in public (unlike in some countries in Europe). However, Israel is our true home, the land which was promised to us, and land where we could fulfill halakha in the ideal way. We Jews must never forget our roots, our history and most importantly, the G-d who entrusted the Land to us.



Milo: Be Outspoken, but Not Our Spokesperson

By Alyssa Wruble

Milo Yiannopoulos, a journalist and public speaker often viewed as the face of the alt-right, is at his best when he is in the eye of a storm--preferably one instigated by the liberal Left. Recently, however, he found himself in the middle of a conservative tornado. Videos surfaced of Milo, that he claims were "edited deceptively," in which he essentially defended pedophilia and made light of his own history of sexual abuse. CPAC, the Conservative Political Action Conference, had announced Milo as a keynote speaker at their upcoming conference, but dropped him following the public outcry from the video. Simon and Schuster, a publishing company, had also previously offered Milo a book contract and dropped that as well not long after.

A day after the incident, Milo held a press conference in order to clarify his beliefs on sexual abuse (he doesn't support it), to apologize (partially), to talk about how this incident affects his future (it won't), and name the real culprit (not him). He blames the media and said that the entire incident is part of a "cynical media witch hunt from people who don't care about children. They care about destroying me and my career, and by extension my allies."

While I agree with CPAC's decision to drop Milo, their choice to have him speak in the first place troubles me. CPAC is a conservative conference. Key word: conservative. Milo may not fit in one box, but he is certainly not a conservative. He is debatably part of the alt-right, a movement that rejects the mainstream conservative outlook, and likes to test the line of what can and cannot be said on national TV. At a time when it is controversial to say that the Republican president is, in fact, a Republican, there is no need for the conservative movement to shine its spotlight on a person like Milo. There is a place for Milo in the world of political discourse and debate, but not as a keynote speaker for CPAC and not as a posterchild for the conservative movement.

As for the book deal, I can only assume Simon and Schuster first offered Milo the deal because they supported his 'no filter' shtick. So why would more controversial statements make them take the deal



away? It was probably an easy way out for them, after all the flack they've been getting from the Left since the deal was publicized. While both CPAC and Simon and Schuster have the right to accept or reject any speaker or writer, that does not lessen Milo's right to free speech. As independent entities, they have their rights--and as an independent individual, Milo has his.

Free speech is Milo's main platform, referring to himself as "a warrior for free speech and creative expression." As a person banned by Twitter and often forced off campuses due to violent riots, Milo has definitely won the right to advocate for freedom of expression from a personal position and is, in fact, quite successful at it. He is entitled to free speech along with the rest of this country. That does not mean, however, that CPAC should promote Milo as a keynote speaker at the largest conservative gathering of the year--essentially proclaiming to the rest of the world that Milo is the conservative leader of the free speech movement when he most certainly is not.

To clarify, Milo is definitely an effective advocate for free speech, but should not be representing the conservative fight to defend our First Amendment rights. The problem is that free speech is very much under attack in this country and the conservative movement needs a better face to lead the fight. David French, a writer for the National Review, rightly explains that "His very existence and prominence feed the deception that modern political correctness is the firewall against the worst forms of bigotry." Milo represents the extreme, and conservatives need to be able to show that free speech is about more than just being able to glorify pedophilia.

As conservative commentator Andrew Klavan explains, Milo is a performance artist. As a performer,

he is permitted to say and do as he pleases, no matter how wild. The same way we excused Lady GaGa for wearing raw meat to an awards show and Flo Rida for producing an entire song about oral sex by calling it all "art," we can excuse Milo's antics as well. His job is to be a performer and in that space, Milo succeeds. He pushes boundaries, saying what most are too afraid to say in the modern PC (politically correct) culture.

CPAC, however, is not a place for performers--it's a place designated for current conservative leaders and thinkers to address the country. The politicians who speak at CPAC represent what the larger conservative movement stands for and not just what they stand against. The Left's contempt for Milo does not make him an honorary conservative. Regardless of how much the Left hates him, and consequently how appealing that may make him to right-minded individuals, Milo does not hold conservative values and therefore should not be included in CPAC. He neither shares their ideology nor does he garner enough respect to be on the same speaking list as Senators and Cabinet members.

This is a precarious time for conservatives. It is a time in which the Republican party controls both the Congress and the White House. As a result, conservatives have undertaken the vital responsibility to be critical of this new Republican government. Conservatives must only praise our government when it is deserving of it and rebuke it when their actions contradict our values. That's why it is imperative we see the Milo incident for what it is. While he may be an impressive free speech advocate who is certainly entertaining to watch battle the Left, he is simply not a conservative and not the right person to lead these movements. The conservative and free speech movements are in peril and conservatives cannot allow Milo to be viewed as a representative for either.

Milo has many important things to say, and he should say all of them. He should say them on college campuses, on Twitter, in his own book--but not on the CPAC platform. That platform should be reserved for those who truly represent the future of the conservative movement. It should be reserved for those on the frontlines fighting for stronger foreign policy, for a better healthcare system, and for every person's right to free speech--Milo's included.

Realism Abroad, Idealism at Home: An Alternative Vision for 'America First'

By Elijah Diamond and the Board of the College Republicans

Depending on what type of reader you are, the title outlined above will mean a variety of things. Whether you're a seasoned student of foreign policy or a layman looking for some perspective, the terms above have likely come across your news feed at some point. I ask you now to forget everything you know about them. We're going to try a thought experiment.

Pretend, for a moment, that you have never encountered any of these terms. Pretend that you live in a world where the term realism does not subconsciously associate with 'isolationism' or 'global retreat.' Forget, moreover, that realism refers to a formal theory of international behavior; just think of it as a set of instincts that emphasize being realistic about the world and about people. Pretend that idealism is not a watchword for liberal utopianism at home or neoconservative 'nation-building' abroad, and instead think of it as a humble belief in the legitimacy of *values* and the ability for some values to be more exceptional than others. Likewise, forget everything you have heard, read or felt about America First. It will not help you where we intend to go. And finally, set aside the fact that the author of this piece is a conservative Republican.

"PRUDENCE SHOULD DICTATE WHETHER PROMOTING OUR VALUES OR SIDELINING THEM IS ADVISABLE; THE KEY IS RETAINING THE FLEXIBILITY TO CHOOSE."

The goal here is to suspend the comical state of reality in 2017 and contemplate, for a brief moment, the world as it actually exists. Beyond the headlines, false binaries, and alternative facts of our political theater and mainstream media, meaningful debates are being had about what America's role ought to be in a world where it is no longer the sole superpower and where liberal-democratic values do not universally hold sway. In this Twilight Zone of civil exchange, where reasoned argument, cordiality, and a shared sense of American identity are the basis for dialogue, an alternative vision for America First — one buttressed on its flanks by prudent realism abroad and reenergized idealism at home — is beginning to take shape.

Getting to Reality

This alternative vision rests on a few key pillars. The first among these is the basic idea that **when it comes to international politics, circumstances, capabilities, and norms are mostly determinant.** In other words, getting a grip on what is actually happening around the world, studying closely how powerful our adversaries have become (and what their interests are), and appreciating the profound changes happening in our own country will not only define the spectrum of possible foreign policy choices the U.S. can undertake, but will also influence the character of those choices.

When put to the ever-reliable test of circumstances, current trends point to an ineluctable conclusion: America — as a country and as an idea — is no longer the world's sole superpower or paradigm. Despite what pundits, politicians or your president might tell you, the United States cannot extract any concession it wants from foreign states without a cost, deploy military might wherever it pleases with immunity, or destroy and reconstruct weaker nations at will. The liberal, rules-based order America built during the post-war years and upheld for seven decades is likewise beyond the point of mere fraying: the most prominent member states of the so-called 'international community' — China, Russia, and now the United States — appear to no longer be bound by

its rules and norms.

At this point in most articles, the author will present you with some melodramatic binary (e.g. the U.S. will have to either 'retreat' from all its commitments abroad, or confront all of them head on with all its might). I intend to do no such thing. In the real world, choices, especially grand strategic ones, are not reducible to dichotomous platitudes; policymakers can take an assertive approach in one region and a more accommodative approach in another. The U.S. can take a hard line defending international norms against China in the South China Sea while tolerating, in some degree, disruptive Russian activities in Eastern Europe. While American values must surely play a role in defining America's interests, the most basic question underlying any strategic choice must always be: **What is the relative importance of American interests involved and how much blood or treasure is America willing to expend in securing them?** To get a better grasp of how this guiding proposition bears out in our present geopolitical moment and what "relative" importance exactly means, we need a bit more context.

Relativity and its Rules

Despite diminutive trends, the United States still carries more weight — militarily, economically, and diplomatically — than any other great power. Nevertheless, it is not as relatively powerful as it was even ten years ago. Given current levels of spending on national defense, the U.S. cannot practically fight three wars at once in three different theaters (e.g. Russia in Europe, China/North Korea in Asia, and ISIS/al-Qaeda/Iran in the Middle East). This means that the U.S. must rank-order which threats it believes are greatest, and possibly sacrifice certain goals, values, and resources for the sake of tackling more important ones. This requires that policymakers be realistic about the threats America faces, but it also implies the need to grapple with, and improve, America's material ability to respond to them.

This reality implies another one: If it hopes to survive in a world of renewed great power competition, the U.S. will have to engage with uncomfortable actors. In this sense, President Trump has to this point been a bad messenger of a mostly necessary idea — working with Russia on areas of mutual interest. As Americans, we should rightfully view the regime in Moscow as abhorrent; the recent turn of parts of the Republican electorate towards affection for Vladimir Putin is something all principled Americans should decry. Despite our moral reservations, however, the nature of our challenges, from the Middle East to East Asia, mandate some measure of cooperation with Russia and other distasteful actors who share U.S. interests. The choice may be a reluctant one, but it is indeed necessary: if the U.S. fails to take advantage of potential partners, more powerful (and threatening) adversaries like China will happily fill the void.

Though it sounds amoral, what is outlined here should not be viewed as an abdication of American values. As naval Captain Frank Ramsay famously remarks in the film *Crimson Tide* regarding questionable U.S. tactics during the Cold War: "We're here to preserve democracy — not to *practice* it."

As brash as it sounds, this aphorism offers a profound insight into the distinctive morality of a state when it comes to foreign policy: On the international stage, where the U.S. is responsible for its own security and no global sovereign can regulate the use of force, the rules of the game are different from what they are here at home. When its power was sufficient to enforce norms adversarial states would not otherwise accept, the U.S. was able to maintain an international playing field bound (generally) by liberal-democratic rules. With the U.S. no longer able to play the role of umpire everywhere and at all times, it cannot simply rely on the goodwill of other states in order to protect its interests. And while promoting liberal values overseas is commendable and at times strategically shrewd, it can oftentimes have the reverse effect of alienating potential partners and



stoking the insecurities of our enemies (the example of Russia is a case in point). Hence, whatever the circumstance, **prudence should dictate whether promoting our values or sidelining them is advisable; the key is retaining the flexibility to choose.**

Making Exceptionalism Great Again

Finally, it is here on the home front, rather than through moral crusades abroad, where America must reinvest in its values and recast its exceptionalism. Checks-and-balances, representative government, and an open society are embedded in our historical experience and they must be defended vigorously. Recent attempts by the Trump administration to undermine those institutions through executive fiat and rhetorical assault are perversions of putting "America" first, for they misunderstand the essence of what America is (or, more dangerously, intentionally mean to transform it). Regardless his interpretation of the American spirit, though, President Trump has rightly argued that U.S. foreign policy must first and foremost commit itself to preserving American values for the sake of American citizens. Period.

Where President Trump falls short, or fails to tread entirely, is in the discussion of how to repurpose America's historic idealism for this new age. Communism no longer exists to organize the forces of democracy against it, radical Islam has proven an elusive follow-on, and China's imprecise character makes it an unlikely moral counterpoint. Vladimir Putin's Russia is gaining momentum as the next likely candidate, but the imperatives imposed by common interests will inevitably disqualify the Russians, too. Against which foe, then, must the American people direct the energy of their exceptionalism? If such a moral adversary cannot be found, whither must America's enduring exceptionalism be deployed?

The beginning of an answer, to quote Henry Kissinger, goes something along the lines of this:

"In traveling along the road to world order for the third time in the modern era, American idealism remains as essential as ever, perhaps even more so. But in the new world order, its role will be to *provide the faith to sustain America* through all the ambiguities of choice in an imperfect world [emphasis added]."

Mr. Kissinger authored this paragraph more than twenty years ago, and yet his advice remarks presciently on our current moment: In this imperfect world of 2017, where realities impress upon us the limits of our power but compel us, nevertheless, to take action in the world, American ideals must serve as the *motivation* for our engagement abroad, not as policy *ends* to be secured with some terminal finitude: for as recent memory painfully reminds, "such an attitude would turn innocence into self-indulgence." By drawing strength from our values and reengaging the world as it actually exists, we can begin, with renewed confidence and clarity of purpose, to put both America and her ideals first.

Deporting Our Illegals: Facts, Rhetoric and Our Constitutional Principles

By Yitzchak Fried

President Trump is cracking down on illegal immigrants. This isn't a surprise, given his strident campaign promises to rid the country of illegals and, famously, to build a wall on the Mexican border. By all accounts, the crackdown has been vigorous, with over 600 suspected immigrants arrested in a single week.

This should give us pause. The United States has the right to deport illegal immigrants. But it is also true that even illegal immigrants have Constitutional rights. This point may be surprising, and so bears emphasis. Most of the fundamental liberties enshrined in the Constitution are equally applicable

“WHATEVER YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS, THEIR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS SHOULD BE PROTECTED, BECAUSE THEIR RIGHTS ARE OUR OWN.”

to non-citizens, legal and non-legal, including equal protection under the law, due process, and freedom of speech, assembly and religion. In the words of Georgetown professor David Cole, the presumption that noncitizens have less Constitutional protection than citizens “is wrong in many more respects than it is right.” (For more on this, see Cole’s article, “Are Foreign Nationals Entitled to the Same Constitutional Rights As Citizens?” in the 2003 edition of *The Thomas Jefferson Law Review*.)

Although the Supreme Court has given Congress a wide berth to decide how to deal with immigrants, it has upheld that the “due process” protected by the Fourth, Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments equally applies to illegal aliens. This means that illegal immigrants are entitled to due process before being

deported – in other words, to a hearing in which they are presented with the reasons for their deportation and in which they have access to legal counsel. It means that illegal immigrants cannot be detained unduly without trial. And it also means that, without a warrant from a judge, members of Immigration and Customs Enforcement cannot enter an illegal immigrant’s home in order to arrest them.

But it doesn’t seem like the Trump administration cares about preserving these protections. As the NYT reported, Trump seems to be bent on using a procedure known as “expedited removal,” which allows the government to bypass due process rules in some deportation cases. But while the Obama administration limited this policy to immigrants within 100 miles of the border and who had been in the country for less than 14 days, John Kelley, the director of Homeland Security, has directed it towards immigrants who have been in the country for up to two years. The due process protections of these illegal immigrants have essentially become a dead letter. As Greg Siskind, a lawyer for the American Immigration Lawyer’s Association put it, “I see now what the plan is; their plan is basically to have everyone thrown out of the country without ever going to court.”

Even ICE veterans of previous Republican administrations find the current policy disquieting. Julie Myers Wood, head of ICE under George W. Bush, said that expedited removal “[has] never been used that way. The administration is really testing the boundaries of what’s acceptable, [and t]here’s some litigation risk here.” Far from being a standard matter of executive discretion, Trump’s current policy is a historic challenge to basic Constitutional liberties.

This is scary. Whatever your feelings about illegal immigrants, their fundamental rights should be protected, because their rights are our own. Probably to dispel fears, the government has erected a careful smokescreen to hide the fact that Constitutional liberties are being eroded. The Department of Homeland Security has termed the

removal of illegal immigrants a matter of national security. Illegal immigrants, they claim, “routinely victimize Americans,” “[ignore] the rule of law” and “pose a [danger]” to the American people. Indeed, the current administration has gone out of its way to characterize illegal immigrants as a unique category of threat. It plans to open a separate department in Immigration and Customs Enforcement to help families victimized by undocumented immigrants. Government action primes our perceptions, and we are being primed to see illegal immigrants as an ominous class of outsiders.

By using the rhetoric of national security, the government fosters a judgement-adding panic and claims that its curtailment of civil rights is necessary in the face of public danger. As Trump proclaimed in a Twitter message on February 11, “the crackdown on illegal criminals is merely the keeping of my campaign promise. Gang members, drug dealers & others are being removed!” But this rhetoric is both dangerous and untrue. As the NYT reported, research shows that lower levels of crime exist among immigrants than among native born Americans. And the Trump administration’s raids are hardly directed at drug lords and gang members exclusively, or even predominantly. Rather, Trump’s executive order prioritizes all illegal immigrants for deportation – even those without a criminal record.

A case in point is the recent, well publicized arrest of Guadalupe García de Rayos, a mother of two who has lived in the U.S. since she was fourteen. Her children are legal American citizens, and she is neither drug lord nor gang member. If de Rayos is deported using expedited removal (watch for it in the news), it will be chilling evidence of how a narrative of fear is being used to deprive people living in the United States of their civil rights.

Americans must unite around the fundamental liberties guaranteed by our society. The Constitution enshrines the basic goods that all persons living on American soil deserve – legal or non-legal. Let us not lose them in an orgy of fear.



Investing in Stocks You Love

By Adam Kramer

The internet is filled with articles pitching various companies as being good investment ideas. Found on sites like MarketWatch or The Motley Fool, or recommended by an expert like Jim Cramer on his TV show Mad Money, these pitches often contain impressive data on the stock and are generally articulate. However, these pitches are generally for esoteric companies that the average consumer likely hasn't heard of, and whose products the consumer has undoubtedly never used. Examples might include a Venezuelan financial services firm, a Chinese chemical producer that exports to the United States, or a company that makes piping and other equipment for oil producers in Southeastern Texas.

I was recently researching stocks that pay out a high dividend, and was scrolling through lists of such companies. Besides for the companies' tickers, some basic financial data, and the fact that they pay out high dividends, I didn't know anything about the actual companies themselves. Some were Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), some were mortgage companies, and I didn't even pay attention to what the others were. I went into this project with the intention of doing some basic research, but definitely not planning on investing any money right away. However, inexperienced or younger investors definitely could invest in a company they don't know anything about, based on a spur of the moment research project like I did, or on the recommendation of MarketWatch or Cramer.

Instead, I believe that investors should emphasize researching—and then investing in—companies that they are actually interested in, are familiar with, and whose products they've used before. I don't suggest that this be the only criteria for choosing investments and come to

replace the fundamental analysis that should occur before investing any money. Rather, this interest in the company should be a precursor to conducting any further analyses like modelling out the company on Microsoft Excel or reading analyst reports on it. Similarly, this obviously isn't to say that an investor can't have tremendous returns from an investment where they don't know a whole lot about the company or its product offerings.

Two reasons come to mind for why having a passion for the company and its product is critical for making investing decisions, particularly for younger and inexperienced investors. First, this will encourage

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the investor—especially investors with longer-term horizons—to maintain interest in the stock over a long period of time. So two, five, or twenty years later, the investor will still be interested in the company's quarterly earning reports, and attentive when they hire a new CEO. When the investor is active and engaged in the company it will help ensure he/she becomes a long-term shareholder and takes advantage of any gains in the stock over the

holding period.

Second, when a person invests in a company that they are familiar with, they have the added benefit of understanding what the company does, the products that it makes, and the company's competitors. For example, many college students have a thorough and firsthand knowledge of what Facebook, Apple, Amazon, and Netflix do—they understand the companies' product offerings and general markets that they compete in. Contrast this with our previous examples of the Venezuelan financial services company, the company that manufactures pipes and other products for oil exploration companies, or the Chinese chemical producer. It would take a lot of research to understand the complex financial services regulatory environment in Venezuela, or to understand the need for various pipes and other equipment in an oil producing plant, and how OPEC's decision-making will impact this. Ditto for understanding complex trade tariffs that'll affect this Chinese chemical producer—in addition to all the scientific and technical information that you would need to understand how chemical producers work.



PITCHFORKS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

university, but nevertheless, I still jumped into what I expected to be homophobic shark infested waters.

I never looked back.

I have never regretted my decision to come to YU. It has changed my life for the better and was the turning point for life moving forward rather than backwards. I remember thinking while on the plane home from Israel that this could easily be the worst mistake of my life. I was riddled with anxiety, convinced that this was the most foolish move possible. Two short years ago, I had promised to never come out of the closet; now, as I planned on coming out in the near future, I was headed to a place where it seemed impossible to ever do so.

Ironically, YU was the place where I finally felt able to come out.

Freshman year I came to YU knowing only one person: my roommate from the kibbutz where I had lived in Israel. He would be one of the first I would eventually tell after my best friend. I developed a large group of welcoming friends, and finally began to feel comfortable being my true self. I took a huge leap in my comfort level of privacy and made an account on JSwipe, a popular Jewish dating app. I set my profile in search of other Jewish men my age. I was terrified to make the account, but I didn't know any other ways to meet other gay, Jewish men who were battling the same struggles as me. No one else was openly gay in YU at the time and there are still no LGBTQ support groups on campus. JSwipe opened up doors for me that I didn't know were closed. It was a huge stepping point for me; it was the first time I was comfortable publicly revealing who I had been hiding.

Within a few months of having the app, a friend found me on there, and I realized it was time to tell my parents before somebody else did. When I went home for Purim and told my parents, they were more supportive than I could have possibly imagined. Their unconditional love was like an open set of arms ready to embrace me in a long awaiting hug. I returned to YU apprehensive to open up about my sexuality to others, but I pushed through and told my closest friends.

And no one minded.

After telling others, they all reacted with open

hearts. A few days after I told my parents, I texted my roommate letting him know the identity I was hiding. He excitedly asked me to FaceTime him that night so he could ask about my experience and commended me on my bravery. He was so proud and happy for me.

What I realized was that none of my friends were really interested in my sexuality, as it wasn't what defined me. Instead, they cared about who I was as a person. I also came to realize that everyone was facing a deeper battle of their own anxieties or stresses that inhabited their personal lives. Where was the crowd of angry protesters ready to chase me away from this religious establishment? Where was the mountain of hate I expected to crush me, or the homophobic slurs that would be spray-painted across the door of my dorm room?

They never appeared.

Since coming out of my hidden sexuality cocoon, I have joined two life-changing organizations: JQY (Jewish Queer Youth) and Eshel, both designed to help LGBTQ, Jewish members feel part of a community which they no longer feel welcomed in. Both are small, united communities, filled with love and an abundance of acceptance. Through these organizations, I've met a number of amazing people who have changed my life. These people empowered me to feel safe, comfortable, and confident as a Jewish gay man. I even hosted two events of my own for LGBTQ Jews and allies in my home on the YU campus. I never imagined a life like this would have evolved in an environment as religious and constrictive as Yeshiva University.

While I consider myself one of the luckier warriors to walk the halls of YU, I still face my own struggles while being here. The heteronormative expectation can get out of hand, and I cannot express how many times I've been told that I will build a beautiful Jewish home with my future wife. When speaking to a class filled with men, our professors always talk about our future spouses with the pronoun "she." It gets tiring to constantly hear about a world where couples are always expected to consist of a man and a woman, with no wiggle room in between. Awareness of this issue is the first key to implementing change in an age-old system.

In my past YU experience, I've had a *gematria*-obsessed professor proclaim the unforgivable sin of homosexuality, talking with complete disgust about

people like me. I dropped his class and rid my life of him. It's hard to feel welcomed into a community that doesn't want you. There needs to be a change in YU so that students can feel that they are welcome and that the community wants them to be a part of it. For so many years I was scared to come out because I felt unwanted and ostracized by a community that commends itself on its unity.

I rarely felt like I belonged and felt like an outcast.

My JSS Hebrew teacher was the first professor I had at YU who addressed a class of male YU students with, "In your future, when you have a wife or a husband, I honestly don't care...." That comment uplifted me with an incredible amount of elation. I experienced an incredibly euphoric moment when I heard a YU professor not assume that we were all the same. Better yet, we were allowed to be different.

It was not until I recently attended my first Eshel retreat, a Shabbat full of queer Jews, that I sat in shul amazed the entire time by the fact that every person sitting there was someone like me. I didn't feel like the only one who was hiding something. I didn't feel like I needed to bolt the moment someone turned their head and realized an outsider was sitting with them. We were all outsiders sitting together before the Torah. YU needs to create an environment where the closeted gay students who sit in shul don't feel scared to be themselves, a place where they feel that they will be embraced with open arms and that their future is not only possible, but also probable.

An important part of the process that I will always remember is that in my very first JQY meeting, we were asked to give a piece of advice to our past selves, a piece of information that would have been beneficial for us to hear. My response was: "What is impossible today is not impossible tomorrow."

I look forward to a possible tomorrow.

If anyone is currently dealing with similar issues, please don't hesitate to reach out to me on Facebook or by email at moshe.brimm@gmail.com.

The Super Bowl: A Money Perspective

By Noam Zolty

This year's Super Bowl LI was certainly one of the most exciting Super Bowls in NFL history. Down 28-3 in the third quarter, the New England Patriots were able to claw back in regulation time and eventually defeat the Atlanta Falcons in overtime. Historically, there had never been a larger Super Bowl comeback greater than 10 points. And now over 111 million people witnessed a comeback of 25 points. According to ESPN Stats and Info, shortly after the Falcons scored their last touchdown and went up 28-3, they had a 98.9% probability of winning the game. It was one of the most riveting events of the year, with many sports fans proclaiming it the greatest sporting event they had ever witnessed. However, aside from the action happening on the field, this year's Super Bowl shattered many other metrics. Notably, the amount of money generated by the Super Bowl made it one of most profitable sporting events in recent history.

The Super Bowl generated some \$375 million in media revenue. This includes the money that the Fox Network paid for the rights to broadcast the game, the amount of money advertisers paid to broadcast commercials during the game, as well as radio and other media. This year's Super Bowl broke the record for the price of a commercial broadcast. An average thirty-second commercial cost \$5.2 million. That is almost double the cost of 2010, a clear demonstration of how valuable an advertisement during the Super Bowl is for corporations. An additional \$145 million is generated through licensing revenue, which is the revenue received when companies use the NFL and Super Bowl logos and copyrights in their advertising campaigns. With an added \$88 million via tickets and concession stands and \$12 million made from the halftime show, the NFL generated almost \$620 million in total revenue due to the Super Bowl.

This number doesn't even include the amount of money that average Americans spent on their own personal Super Bowl viewing experiences. According to the statistics website Statista, around one in five Americans hosted or organized a Super Bowl Party. The average amount of money spent on each party was \$154. This is an increase in \$87 from seven years ago. An estimated \$14.1 billion was spent on Super Bowl related purchases this year. To put that in perspective: that is greater than the total annual GDP of over eighty countries in the world. Not

"AMERICANS WAGER MORE MONEY ON THE SUPER BOWL THAN ON ANY OTHER SPORTING EVENT."

only are more and more Americans watching the Super Bowl every year, but they're becoming more invested in the game as seen by their increased spending year over year.

Most significant of all these mind-blowing numbers is the amount of money that was spent on the most famous Super Bowl related activity: gambling. According to BoydsBet, a gambling statistics website, Americans wager more money on the Super Bowl than on any other sporting event. Nevada casinos report that over \$138.5 million are placed on bets taken in by their sports bookies. Since the spread of the game was +3 for the Falcons, most bettors placed their bets against the Patriots. What this meant was that if the Patriots won by over three points, those who bet on the patriots would win, but if they won by under three points or lost the game then those who bet on the Falcons would win the wager. When the Falcons took their enormous lead, most Patriots fan were in all likelihood extremely despondent and nervous about their

team's chances. However, the bookies at the casino were probably even more worried. If the Falcons had gone on to win the game, according to BoydsBet, they would have lost almost \$25 million in total. When the Patriots made their miraculous comeback and were able to win by over six points, clearing the spread, the casinos in Vegas recouped their money and reaped a profit of over \$10 million.

Although these numbers are quite astounding, they pale in comparison to the amount of money that is wagered amongst family and friends. These days there is an entire industry devoted to crafting different types of wagers that people make on the Super Bowl. These vary from betting on the winner of the Super Bowl, to the amount of points scored in each quarter, to which brand's commercials will be shown. Other wagers include the length of the national anthem and halftime show, which team will win the coin toss, and whether or not a player will be carted off the field of play due to injury. Around 65% of all viewers of the game placed at least one wager on the game. Although it's impossible to note exactly how much money is gambled by Americans during the big game, most conservative estimates believe that it's around \$6 billion. This means the average American wagers over eighteen dollars on some facet of the game.

The Super Bowl is no longer just a sporting event. It is now considered a national holiday. Americans spend more money on Super Bowl Sunday than on any other American holiday, excluding Christmas, Thanksgiving, and the Fourth of July. Through a combination of our love of football and our affinity to gamble, Super Bowl Sunday has become a cultural phenomenon and an American pastime.



The Beauty of Free Trade and the Dangers of Protectionism

By Mendel Harlig

One of the focal points of President Trump's campaign was trade, specifically criticizing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deals. Trump cited the huge deficits and loss of manufacturing jobs as evidence that the trade deals were hurting the U.S. Throughout his campaign he proposed placing tariffs on foreign countries, even to the extent of placing a 45% trade tariff on the U.S.'s largest trade partner, China.

Trump's position against free trade extends further than just campaign rhetoric to appeal to his supporters. In December, Trump chose Peter Navarro to lead a newly formed White House National Trade Council. Navarro is known for his negative perspective on China when it comes to trade; he has authored a book called "Death by China: Confronting the Dragon – a Global Call to Action." It's therefore no surprise that one of the first executive orders from Trump was to withdraw from TPP.

Furthermore, one of Trump's focal points during the campaign was his promise to build a wall along the Mexican border and make Mexico pay for the wall. However, the Mexican president has refused to pay for the wall. In January, the White House stated that Trump is contemplating placing a 20% tariff on imports from Mexico in order to fund the wall. Finally, a senior Trump transition official said in December that the Trump team is discussing placing a tariff of 10% on all imports. This is after Reince Priebus – the current White House Chief of Staff – had suggested placing a 5% tariff on all imports in meetings with people in Washington.

Yet, free trade has been fundamental to the growth and prosperity of the world's economy and the U.S.'s economy. In order to understand why free trade increases the GDP of all the countries involved in trade, one must understand the basic economic theory behind free trade. The first economic philosophy on trade was established in the 17th and 18th century, in Europe, called mercantilism. The Mercantilists believed that a country becomes rich and prosperous by exporting more than they import.

Thus, governments should discourage imports and encourage exports in order to increase its amount of money (in those days, gold). With more gold, a country can have a larger army which would enable it to expand their empire. However, this is not the correct way to measure the economic success of a country. The level of consumption and standard of living of a country is the optimal way to gauge the success of an economy.

Adam Smith first discovered the notion that for two nations to trade both must gain. Both nations gain based on the idea of absolute advantage—a country is

"PRESIDENT TRUMP'S POSITION AGAINST FREE TRADE EXTENDS FURTHER THAN JUST CAMPAIGN RHETORIC TO APPEAL TO HIS SUPPORTERS... YET, FREE TRADE HAS BEEN FUNDAMENTAL TO THE GROWTH AND PROSPERITY OF THE WORLD'S ECONOMY AND THE U.S.'S ECONOMY!"

more efficient in producing a commodity than another country. For example, Country A can produce one hundred computers but only fifty bicycles an hour, while Country B can produce fifty computers and one hundred bicycles. If each country specializes and produces the commodity it has an absolute advantage in—for Country A that would be computers, and for Country B, bicycles—and produces enough to export that commodity while importing the commodity it has a comparative disadvantage in, both countries will be able to consume more than they would have if they hadn't traded.

Later, David Ricardo published "On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation" in which he explains the idea of comparative advantage. Even if a country is more efficient in producing both

products than the other country, both countries can still increase their consumption through trade. The less efficient country should produce the product that it has a smaller absolute disadvantage than the more efficient country. For instance, Country A can produce three phones and five boxes of cereal in an hour while country B can produce ten phones and eight boxes of cereal an hour; Country A should specialize and export boxes of cereal because it has a smaller absolute disadvantage in boxes of cereal (only half as productive as opposed to more than 1/3 less productive) than phones. Smith and Ricardo formulated the economic theory behind free trade and globalization, namely that countries will increase their overall consumption if they allocate their resources towards the commodities that they have a comparative advantage in and import items that they have a comparative disadvantage in. Despite the discoveries of the Smith and Ricardo, politicians and groups still propose the old mercantilist ideas usually due to high unemployment or a loss of manufacturing jobs.

Despite all the benefits of free trade, it does adversely impact the domestic producers of the commodity that is being imported, many times causing unemployment. However, the negative repercussions from imports on domestic producers of the imported commodity do not outweigh the positive net effect it has on the overall economy of the nation. Through trade, the nation is able to use its resources towards the production of the commodities that it has a comparative advantage in and is able to import items it has a comparative disadvantage in, thus increasing the country's overall consumption. But the negative effects on the producer is much more drastic than the benefits to the average consumer. The domestic producer can experience job loss while the average consumer is able to purchase more with his/her earnings because other countries can produce the imported items cheaper than the domestic producers can—the foreign country has a comparative advantage and, or, an absolute advantage in the imported item. This is why politicians, counter to basic economics, at times advocate protectionist policies because domestic producers of an imported commodity are much more likely to voice their distaste for free trade than the average consumer who is not likely to notice the benefits of free trade. Tariffs help the domestic producers of the imported commodity, yet the negative impact on consumer prices outweighs the benefits to the domestic producer causing deadweight loss—a loss of economic efficiency. Additionally, depending on how big the tariff is, it limits or eliminates the imported commodity forcing the country to take away resources from the commodity where it has the comparative advantage in and use it for the commodity that it has comparative disadvantage causing further deadweight loss.

The National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP) during the Trump presidential run calculated the effects of a 45% tariff on imports from China and Japan and 35% tariff on Mexican imports (things Trump has said during the campaign). It is highly probable that these tariffs on China, Japan, and Mexico will fail in protecting American industries. The NFAP collected data for thirty duty orders that the United States had placed on foreign countries, and the majority of the time it did not lower the total imports of the commodity that the U.S. restricted. This is because many other countries can either produce the same product or have substitute for the commodity, leaving no change in total imports. The NFAP then calculated if Trump decided to propose a 45% tariff on all countries because tariffs on Mexico, China, and Japan did not curb imports, he would essentially be placing a regressive tax on U.S. consumers because people with lower income spend a larger percentage of their income. Furthermore, the U.S. economy would experience significant deadweight loss. In a time like this, with politicians publicly calling for drastic policy changes, it is critical to reexamine some of the economic history and theory behind trade policies.



New Ability for the Disabled

By Benjamin Zirman

There are few events that can change one's life more than paralysis, which can confine people to an inactive lifestyle in a wheelchair, causing health deterioration, poor quality of life, and high medical expenses. These burdens weigh down on the disabled person as well as their families and health insurers. In the developed world there are about 8 million wheelchair users; worldwide that number rises to about 70 million people. For centuries, a wheelchair was the best that technology had to offer. But as the number of wheelchair and scooter users grows, due to both increasing accidents and aging populations, there's demand for a smart mobility device that will provide fully-functional standing and sitting mobility, improved health, enhanced social inclusion, and reduced healthcare and living expenses. Thanks to an Israeli startup company that created UPnRIDE, a revolutionary device that allows quadriplegics to stand up and move around almost anywhere, thousands of paralyzed people are about to have their wish come true.

It all started with the invention of Argo Medical Technologies, now known as ReWalk Robotics, in 2001. Their product, the ReWalker, a wearable robotic exoskeleton that provides powered hip and knee motion to empower individuals with spinal cord injuries to independently stand upright, walk, turn, and climb and descend stairs. The battery-powered system features a light, wearable exoskeleton with motors at the hip and knee joints. The ReWalker controls movement by detecting subtle changes in an individual's center of gravity. A forward tilt of the upper body is sensed by the system, which initiates the first step. Repeated body movement generates a sequence of steps, which replicates a natural gait. ReWalk went public in 2014 and is a publicly traded company listed on the NASDAQ exchange. In 2012, a woman completed the 2012 London Marathon in 17 days and Radi Kaiuf completed the 2013 Tel Aviv Marathon, both using ReWalk. In 2015, the US Department of Veterans Affairs announced it would provide ReWalk exoskeletons for eligible veterans with spinal cord injuries. But there was one big problem. Only paralyzed people who had full use of their arms could use ReWalk, which limited its applicability to roughly 10 percent of handicapped individuals.

Dr. Amit Goffer, the creator of ReWalk, is actually a quadriplegic himself, following an ATV accident in 1997. Goffer, an ex-air force captain got his Bachelor's in Science from the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology, a Masters from Tel-Aviv University, and a Ph.D. from Drexel University, all in Electrical & Computer Engineering.

Prior to founding ReWalk, he founded Odin Medical Technologies, a company that develops, manufactures, and commercializes Intraoperative MRI systems, designed for use by neurosurgeons in standard operating rooms, which was later sold to Medtronic. Dr. Goffer was never able to take advantage of his own product because his paralysis was too severe for him to use the ReWalker. This led him to continue innovating and creating UPnRIDE.

Founded in 2013, UPnRIDE Robotics is headed by CEO Oren Tamari and by President and CTO Goffer, both graduates of the Technion. Tamari went on to receive an MBA in Entrepreneurship and Technology Management from Tel Aviv University and had previous experience in multiple positions at ARGO Medical Technologies. The startup received a grant from Israel's Chief Scientist for around \$550,000, \$2.08 million in funding from Israeli crowdfunding platform OurCrowd, and a little under \$600,000 from angel investors. So far, UPnRIDE has raised around \$3 million, and is in the process of raising another \$4 million in Series B Funding. The company is in large part a product of the Technion, as in addition to its leadership, six of the eight members of the engineering team at UPnRIDE are also from the Technion. The company is based in Yokneam Illit, Israel with around 20 employees.

UPnRIDE is a wheeled robotic device, providing upright and seated mobility both for wheelchair users, and for anyone who is unable to, or has difficulty standing or walking. It offers numerous medical, psychological, and economic benefits, ensuring safety while standing, sitting, and shifting between positions, in practically any urban environment. The first commercial model was debuted in September 2016 at the Rehacare International Convention, the International Trade Fair for Rehabilitation and Care, in Germany. Numerous studies have demonstrated the physical and mental health benefits of wheelchairs with a standing position, which enables users to mobilize body parts, and reduce falls when reaching for high objects. The device has 4 key features. First, it has jointed braces and harnessing straps that provide safe support for disabled users. Next, it maintains the same center of gravity in both sitting and standing positions to prevent tipping over and falls when standing. Third, the user stands on a stabilized platform, similar to a Segway, which serves as an 'active stabilizer' that automatically adjusts the angle of the user's body to be vertical to earth, even on uneven and sloped surfaces. Lastly, there are sophisticated algorithms that are programmed into the UPnRIDE that detect upcoming hazardous situations and reacts accordingly. "I have had a long-standing vision that all people confined to a wheelchair should have access to enhanced mobility, and

enjoy the many health benefits associated with the ability to transition to a standing position," Goffer said. "With the introduction of UPnRIDE, that dream has become a reality."

UPnRIDE provides tremendous benefits to its users. To start, it increases independence allowing users to move freely and safely without and help or aid. Second, it improves health as standing up vertically has been proven to be a vital medical necessity. Standing upright counterbalances the impact of prolonged sitting, empowers functional activities, and enhances overall health. For people with serious spinal cord injuries, the act of standing also helps stave off cardiovascular, respiratory and other problems that can arise, said Gabi Zeilig, director of the neurological rehabilitation department at Israel's Sheba Medical Center. Next, it diminishes the visibility of the disability. Users are positioned at an eye-level view in social interactions, enhancing dignity, social inclusion and self-esteem, and heightening quality of life. Lastly, it will reduce medical costs especially the secondary complications of long-term sitting, lowering the need for hospitalization, medications and physiotherapy. This provides savings for health insurers, users, and their families. "There are other standing wheelchairs available on the market," said Tamari, "But UPnRIDE is unique in that it provides users with full, safe, functional mobility in an upright position in practically any urban environment, both indoors and outdoors. By enabling upright mobility, UPnRIDE delivers numerous health, economic and societal benefits. It shifts attention away from the disability, providing wheelchair users with a fresh, new perspective of the world, of themselves and of life."

How close are we to having this life-changing product hit the market? UPnRIDE is waiting for results from two important trials. Zeilig ran a clinical trial of the product and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in New York did a second study. Once these two studies are completed, UPnRIDE will be ready to start manufacturing and selling its commercial product, which they hope to do starting in the second half of 2017. In terms of price, high-end wheelchairs cost between \$15,000 and \$50,000 and UPnRIDE has set its target to be somewhere in the middle at roughly \$32,000. Though it isn't manufactured commercially yet, in August 2015, Goffer was able to leave his home standing up for the first time since the accident, using UPnRIDE. At the time, he said "It was a very strange feeling, an extremely good one." A brighter future for many disabled people is closer than we might think, and that will be a tremendous advancement in the lives of so many.





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