

YCDS Goes Off-Script, Produces Witty and Tragic Original Play: A Review Of I'll Be Right Here

By Tzvi Levitin

For the first time in its history, the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society presents a play entirely written, scored, and, of course, produced, by Yeshiva University students. *I'll Be Right Here: A Modern Political Tragedy*, written by Yeshiva College junior Etai Shuchatowitz, explores the tragic downfall of a charming and promising presidential hopeful, and poses important questions about friendship, loyalty, and glory.

The play opens with chief of staff Thomas Greene (Yadin Teitz) reeling from the shocking death of Senator David Peters (Matis Axel) and being interviewed by a police officer (David Cutler) investigating Peters' presumed suicide. We learn that Peters had been a well-liked politician until scandal brought his campaign to a screeching halt. Through alternating (and often conflicting) memories of Greene and entries in Peters' diary, we are quickly thrust into a series of flashbacks to Peters' fall from grace, a dramatic and nuanced plot involving bribery, fabricated evidence, and even a drunken night spent with prostitutes.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the script is its deft creation of tangible and highly intriguing characters. From the very first scene, Shuchatowitz hits the ground running, pulling the audience through a labyrinth of time and space, shaping his characters through their

SEE PLAY, CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



Yeshiva College Dramatics Society performs "I'll Be Right Here." From left: Judah Gavant, Yadin Teitz, Matis Axel, Binyamin Bixon, Gavriel Guttman, and David Cutler.

IBC Adds New Opportunities for Students

By Eitan Lipsky

As the semester begins to come to a close, many people will start turning their attention towards next Fall. For students in IBC, they will notice several new developments that will enhance their program in the upcoming year.

What sets IBC apart from the other morning programs is its diverse student body. Students join IBC for a plethora of reasons, and as such, the student body has many different needs to be filled by the course offerings and programming. In order to accommodate the needs of its students, IBC offers a wide range of course offerings in Tanach, Jewish History, Jewish philosophy, Talmud, Halacha and other classical Jewish texts, and encourages its students to choose courses that most appeal to their interests and abilities. IBC also places an emphasis on having courses taught which assume different backgrounds and fluencies with Jewish texts and concepts, allowing everyone to be taught at their appropriate level. Additionally, IBC offers different forms of programming that intend to have something for everyone. Students are thus able to create their own personalized experiences and schedules in the way that best serves their individual needs. This task of making sure that such a diverse program can truly serve its students needs is not an easy one. The Office of Undergraduate Torah Studies, under the caring leadership of Dean Rabbi Menachem Penner and Associate Dean Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, together with the rest of the IBC staff, work tirelessly to keep molding the program so that it can accomplish this task. Next fall, this desire of the staff of IBC to meet the needs of its students will be very apparent, as highlighted by several new initiatives.

One major goal of the IBC administration is to enhance the cohesion among the students and staff of the program. "IBC Rabbeim are there to do more than im-

part information to their students. They build relationships with the talmidim," said Rabbi Kalinsky. In order to meet this goal, for the past several years IBC has offered a Freshman Seminar for students starting off their college careers, bringing students of all different backgrounds into one classroom. The seminar has recently been taught by Rabbi Beny Rofeh, who creates a class environment that is more open and engaging for students to have discussions about many important topics. This course is specifically designed to be less demanding in terms of coursework so that students can gain maximally from their time in class and their discussions. Rabbi Rofeh has also made a point of giving his students exposure to new personalities, frequently bringing in other IBC staff members, staff from BMP and YP, and other YU personalities such as President Richard Joel and Dean of Students Chaim Nissel to speak to the students.

In the upcoming semester, IBC will be focusing in even more on its first year student by transforming the Freshman Seminar into a new First-Year Chaburah Seminar Program. "The program is designed to give the students an experience much like the Israel Yeshiva environment, with smaller groups and intimate personal learning," said Rabbi Rofeh. In this new program, all first year students will be invited to participate in the 9:00 AM IBC minyan, where they will be able to daven with several of their Rabbeim. After davening, the students will break up in the same room into assigned chaburos of 7 or 8 students, which will each be assigned an IBC staff member to learn with them. This out-of-the-classroom learning will create a more informal setting than what has been in the past, and will also

serve to create a centralized location for IBC learning to take place, which existed only to a limited extent in the past. The strong hope is that these chaburos will

SEE IBC, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

"IBC ALSO OFFERS DIFFERENT FORMS OF PROGRAMMING THAT INTEND TO HAVE SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE. STUDENTS... CREATE THEIR OWN PERSONALIZED EXPERIENCES AND SCHEDULES IN THE WAY THAT BEST SERVES THEIR INDIVIDUAL NEEDS."

The EDITORIAL

Stop Focusing on the Face; Focus on the Rest

By Avi Strauss

We humans like to draw our attention to the face. A quick scan is all we need to generate a first impression, and given that faces tend not to be hidden, we figure our cursory evaluation is more than sufficient for sizing up the visage to which we've turned our attention. Similarly, we use the face as a means to describe a large part of the whole, even when it only represents a fraction of that whole. Sure, we recognize the face can't exist without the rest of the body, but that doesn't stop us from zeroing in on its features and flaws and using it to explain much more than it realistically can.

Sure, I could be referring to the way we assess other people's looks—but that would make this too straightforward. Rather, this is the lens through which I wish to evaluate much of our political and institutional discourse, specifically as it relates to finding new leaders.

The most obvious place to start is the office of the presidency. Contrary to what news outlets may have you believe, politics does happen during the years in between presidential elections. Sure, talk about Donald Trump's latest whining—ehm, I'm sorry—"winning"—or Hillary Clinton's most recent non-answer, or Ted Cruz's responses to both, or Bernie Sanders lone inequality act, may consume huge percentages of 2016 headlines and air-time, but they can hardly be considered practical politics—the kind of stuff that actually affects everyday people.

Yet, at the same time, the public is just fascinated by anything and everything they have to say. Relevance or practicality be damned. Let's listen to more of what these faces of their parties have to say. Sure, one could make the case that the outsized attention given to the candidates over, say, the 143 acts passed by the 114th Congress in the past 15 months is the media's fault; they are the ones who chose what gets covered and what doesn't. But the media only sells what we buy. And we buy faces.

I'd argue this political tic of ours has deep roots. We know presidents by their consecrated portraits, with each individual centered perfectly, devoid of any other person or object in the background. We name libraries and aircraft carriers after presidents. We put them on mountains and dollar bills. However, our extreme veneration for the individuals who held the position, regardless of how great their tenures were (or should how well the country did while they held the office) feeds the narrative that the president is more a supreme figure, uninfluenced by anything or anyone, than a mortal subject to other's opinions and who must deal with unforeseen circumstances out of his control. Sure, this could be explained by the fact that the president is the one with the final say on many matters—the decision maker who bears sole responsibility in some of the nation's toughest decisions—but to think he is the only one who needs to be seared into our collective political memories is folly.

I'm also willing to entertain the argument that we focus so much on the candidates because of the very real possibility they will be the next president crafting the policies that will affect us for the next four years. They are the ones who may have their hands on the nuclear codes. They may serve as the commander-in-chief that leads our country to new heights or brings us to new lows. Of course they need to be scrutinized meticulously.

But when we consider the legacies of past presidents, especially more recent ones, we realize that there is huge disagreement over which policies enacted under which president made which impact on which economic scale or which social group. The extreme focus on the individuals who may assume the presidency in the next term neglects the many circumstances that are and will remain out of their control.

Moreover, while many will always jump to the quickest or most clear cut answer regarding a presidential legacy; academics, scholars, or even ordinary journalists can always pull one more curtain back, or connect causative dots back to some earlier or extra-political factor that influenced the outcome of some issue under whichever President, spinning the effects in whichever direction they choose. Essentially, it will always be

difficult to assess the impact any one singular president had in steering the country differently on the macro-issues like the economy and global events, which largely remain out of the president's control.

My point is—while focusing on a president and their policies we very quickly—and very naively—lose sight of the myriad factors that go into making reality, reality. Politics happens every year, not just the ones that are multiples of four. We elect 468/9 Congresspeople every two years to craft laws, and new presidents every four to institute them. The supreme court rules on big cases with huge political ramifications every time it's in session. CEO's and large institutions innovate, create, destroy and revamp huge sectors of our economy on a daily basis. Wars start and wars end, completely out of the control of our president, all the time. I don't doubt the leader of the free world has some say—even an outsized say—over how to proceed, but to believe one man or woman will drastically affect our political or economic fortunes on their own is just plain silly.

A few contemporary examples:

-While stumping for his wife Hillary on the campaign trail, former president Bill Clinton has caught flak for his 1994 crime bill, with activists and fellow politicians blaming it, and by extension Clinton himself, for high incarceration rates in the black community. Yet, as recently as April 14, The Atlantic published an article demonstrating how, when passed, it was a bipartisan effort in both Houses of Congress and was supported by African American mayors across the country. Yet, Bill Clinton has been and remains the main target for those who demonize the law.

-Former President George Bush will be forever remembered as the president who presided over the Great Recession and housing market collapse, with critics blaming him for not doing enough to regulate big banks beforehand, and not holding them accountable afterwards. They tie his name and the financial crisis together, without considering the fact that several administrations before his, as far back as

President Jimmy Carter and the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977, encouraged banks to give out high-risk loans to prospective homeowners who could barely afford a down payment.

-Under President Barack Obama, starting with the Arab Spring early in his first term, the Middle East and North Africa could be described as anything but stable. After popular uprisings against dictators in some countries and violent jihadist insurrection in others, the region has descended into chaos. Much of the blame for the chaos falls squarely on the President for his inaction or insufficient action to assert American military might and quell the unrest. Yet to blame one administration for the chaos—wrought with centuries old religious divisions and deep-seated hate—is myopic.

Sure, we can critique the way the administration speaks about the chaos or suggest new courses of action (as I did in an earlier edition of The Commentator regarding the ongoing Syrian crisis), but to wrongfully assume fault lies squarely with the current president is to give in to our basest political inclination—the face is responsible—while wrongfully misattributing omniscience to a single individual or the position that individual holds.

Yes, the faces of our country are important, but their colleagues, political foes, foreign counterparts, amorphous and faceless economic trends and a whole host of other social factors carry a great amount of inertia.

Similarly, we need to recognize the problems a president must deal with originated in the months, years, even decades and centuries that proceed them. We may fault leaders for things that occur on their watch, but we need to remember the watch was ticking way before any single president took office.

This isn't to say people in powerful positions, with the control and authority to steer entire institutions or countries don't deserve blame when things go sour or praise when they work out great—they do. Leaders are still leaders. But we certainly need to start framing larger pictures.

"WE MAY FAULT LEADERS FOR THINGS THAT OCCUR ON THEIR WATCH, BUT WE NEED TO REMEMBER THE WATCH WAS TICKING WAY BEFORE ANY SINGLE PRESIDENT TOOK OFFICE."

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The Commentator is the official student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

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

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

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



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1 Perth, Australia

According to the internet, this is the farthest city in the world from our campus. If you happen to be looking for Richard Joel next summer, this is where he will be.

2 Valedictorian Candidates

Regarding these brainy young men, Dean Sugarman wrote, "their futures, like all of yours, are bright." But make no mistake -- their futures are just a little bit brighter than yours.

3 Israeli Shuk Event

What could be better than getting a henna tattoo, chowing down on pickles and rugelach, watching a push-up contest, and getting free Zionist propaganda books all while listening to swanky Israeli pop music? You had me at the free food.

4 KB

Fries and veggies? Ok babe. What else? Talk to me kid.

5 That Black Plastic Bag

You know, the one that is always floating somewhere near the entrance of Rubin, either caught in that tree, wandering aimlessly in the grass, or being spun in one of those unexpected wind vortexes.

6 Tuition

The dorms are improving, so tuition is going up! At times like these we must ask ourselves, why do we have a special word for the money you pay for education? Why don't we also have a unique word for the price of oven mitts or grape soda?

7 Lake Como Pizza

Ok I've been holding it in for a while, but I'm just gonna say it. Como is the better pizza. End of story.

7 UP 7 DOWN

1 The Rope Around The Grass

Just when spring arrived and campus began to blossom again, they went ahead and walled off my favorite grazing spot. But the motivation is pure -- I can relate to the desire to spread seed and fertilize; every last blade counts in this concrete jungle.

2 Tight Pants

Your suffocating calves can breathe a sigh of relief; these provocative leg chokers appear to be going out of style.

3 Yeast

Not sure if I'm comfortable with bacteria digesting my food and then defecating it before I do. I propose we go yeast free for the next few days.

4 Sriracha Mango and Chipotle Pineapple

Only such tongue-burning, eye-watering, throat-tickling, liver-destroying yogurts like these can make me happy by comparison to see PB&J Chobani flip yogurt in the Caf.

5 Urinating in the Dorm Sinks

My roommate gave me a pretty judgy look when I suggested the virtues of this practice. So for the time being, the sink is not for peeing.

6 Furst Hall Urinals

Speaking of urine, what's the deal with those rows of urinals in the Furst bathrooms with no partitions in between them? I mean, c'mon man. What has been seen cannot be unseen.

7 Hillary Clinton

In the past three weeks she has lost 7 straight primaries to Sanders. If she doesn't win New York this week, she'll not only have fewer delegates than The Bern; she'll also have to rely on Guam, the Dakotas, Puerto Rico, and New Jersey for future votes. Not sure about you, but I'd sooner pee in a sink than campaign to Jerseyans.

Remembering Professor Thomas Otway

By David Tribuch

Tuesday April 5 marked a day of great loss for the greater Yeshiva University community as it suffered the loss of Professor Thomas Otway, a distinguished and popular professor on campus for over twenty-five years after a heart attack. After receiving his PhD from New York University's prestigious Tandon School of Engineering, Professor Otway joined the ranks of Yeshiva's mathematics department, where he would eventually rise to be chair for both Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women. He would also go on to be chair of the computer science department on both campuses, and helped found Yeshiva University's graduate program for mathematics. In 2015, he won the Dean Karen Bacon Faculty Award.

But above all, he was a popular professor who was loved for his wit, eccentricities, and caring for his students' well-being.

Dr. Otway was "A man of incredible wit. Always sharp, but he never hurt when he cut", according to Joshua Skootsky, a senior math major who took Otway for multivariable calculus. Many of his students commented about Otway's quick sarcastic humor, and how this always kept class interesting. Ariel Chernofsky, a YC graduate from May 2015, recalled a story of Otway promising a car for whoever would do the most problems on the board by the end of the semester. When the time came, Professor Otway handed the winner a small matchbox car telling the student "I told you that you'd get a car".

In addition to his strong passion for mathematics, Professor Otway also displayed his love of art. Some of his former students tell over the story of how he always wanted to be an artist, and how as a mathematician he was able to express his artistic talents. "Normally, math problems involving the measurements of globes, you would just draw a sphere and proceed to the doing the problem. Otway, however would start sketching The United States and other countries", said Shaya First, a YC graduate who took Otway for five classes. First also recalls how Otway would discuss what he called old hat and new hat math, where Otway would drop what he was doing and literally start drawing an old beat up hat and a newer, hipper baseball cap. Danny Poritz, a senior computer science major, remembers an incident where Otway suddenly broke out and began to recite Shakespeare's sonnets from memory.



"A MAN OF INCREDIBLE WIT. ALWAYS SHARP, BUT HE NEVER HURT WHEN HE CUT!"
- JOSHUA SKOOTSKY

But most importantly, Professor Otway was loved for devotion to his students. Poritz tells over a story about how Otway sent him over to the Beren campus to listen to a prospective computer science professor give a lecture. He describes how Otway arranged for him to get a cab downtown, and make the trip as easy as possible. When Otway heard the cab did not arrive, he made a whole fuss to make sure that he would get back safely. Many of his students rave about how where most professors give short curt responses to their emails, if any at all, Professor Otway would take the time to write out lengthy thought messages to students queries. Sarah Nagar, a senior at Stern who at the last minute switched to a computer science major, details how she "always received lengthy replies from him outlining and explaining why I should take a certain course and not another--even if it was at 1:00 AM. He bent over backwards to meet with me to discuss my future". She details how when she was first seeking guidance from Professor Otway he really took the time to get to know her, and did not just view her as another GPA.

Nagar's limited experience with Dr. Otway had such a profound impact on her that she was moved to compile a book honoring Professor Otway's memory that will be sent to his family. According to Nagar the book has "gotten about fifteen responses so far; from students who took his classes in the 1990s, to current students, to students who have never met him, to students who have only had one interaction with him, but that one interaction was memorable".

In the meantime, Otway's teaching duties are being split between Professor Wenxiong Chen and Professor Freddy Zypman, while his administrative duties will be assumed by others. Detailing the difficulty of refilling all the positions left vacant with Otway's passing, Dr. Marini said "It's a lot of work to pick up. He was doing a lot".

Needless to say, Professor Otway's personality will be sorely missed by many here at Yeshiva University.

Letter to the Editor

To the Editor,

My mother recently spent time in a local nursing home that was visited by a group of Yeshiva University students on Purim. Along with festive cheer, these wonderful students brought mishloach manot to all the patients. While I'm extremely grateful to them for sharing part of their holiday with patients in nursing homes, I would like to offer some suggestions that would make their contribution even more meaningful, in my opinion. After observing some of the puzzled looks evinced by the recipients upon receiving mishloach manot, two things struck me. First, many patients/residents probably hadn't celebrated Purim since childhood. Even if they had, they were likely having a hard time relating to the themes of Purim while stuck in a nursing home. Both the student's gifts and their singing were somewhat fleeting; I wonder whether they could add a meaningful card to empathize and/or explain the meaning of the day. It's so easy to add a dose of

Torah, and I'm sure that everyone would enjoy the visit even more! Second – the "maddah" aspect: my mother and approximately a third of the residents are diabetic and therefore couldn't eat the contents of the gifts. I was deeply sad when I overheard the staff of the facility complain that they were put in the tremendously difficult position of having to take away some of the shalach manos from their patients to prevent them from consuming it and chas v'shalom (further) compromising their health. To prevent this situation, perhaps YU could consider crafting gifts that are sensitive and respectful to the dietary restrictions of patients. Ultimately, true chessed comes from considering the needs of the person you are visiting and/or trying to assist. With a little more education and thought, Iy"YH the students will make a greater Kiddush Hashem and be even better ambassadors for Torah U'maddah, next year – in Yerushalayim.

Shana Frankel

News Brief

By Commentator Staff

Yeshiva College Names Yosef Frenkel Valedictorian of the Class of 2016

On April 12, Yeshiva College announced the valedictorian of the Class of 2016, Biology major Yosef Frenkel. In an email to the student body, Associate Dean Fred Sugarman said Frenkel "embodies the very highest standards of scholarship, devotion to Jewish values and dedication to community." Frenkel was one of five finalists for valedictorian, each of whom gave presentations to the Deans and several faculty members about their most valuable academic experiences at YU. The other finalists were Yadin Teitz, Shai Ber- man, Alexander Maged, and Elan Teichman.

At Town Hall Meeting, President Joel Emphasizes University Community Development

By Noam Feifel

Yeshiva University President Richard Joel addressed the YU community at this semester's Town Hall Meeting this past Wednesday April 13, in the Heights Lounge of the Wilf Campus.

The event serves as a university-wide forum intended to promote an open and meaningful dialogue between President Joel and the YU community on contemporary issues important to academics and student life.

The event, however, was not well attended, especially by students. With around just 100 students in attendance, seat vacancies and semi-filled rows could be seen throughout a room set up for a much larger crowd.

President Joel accordingly commenced his opening remarks by asserting his presumption that the college's students were likely too busy doing schoolwork to show up and engage in the meeting with him. "I wish they would have come and bonded with me here," said Joel, as he expressed the importance of community, a theme that he touched upon throughout the duration of the meeting.

In the remaining portion of his introductory comments, Joel briefed the audience on recently announced updates and improvements that the university has made, namely to its dining and housing programs. Regarding the former, Joel was sparse with his words and merely explained that modifications have been made to increase "optionality" for students' meal plans. The reformed dining program will implement its new options beginning next semester Fall 2016.

He elaborated in far more detail regarding the updated policies and arrangements that the housing office will be implementing next semester. Continuing with the theme of community, Joel informed that as of next semester, all incoming students' first two semesters must be spent living in the university's dormitories. President Joel reiterated that this move was motivated by the prospect of building an even stronger community on campus.

Returning students living in the dorms next semester will also notice some changes. President Joel stressed that "real change" will be forthcoming in order to augment the quality of living in the dorms. The additions of air conditioning units to every room in Ruben Hall, newly allocated areas for student cooking, and general refurbishment in the other dormitories stood out as some of the most impactful upcoming changes that Joel and the housing office hope will translate into the "real change" that the longtime president described.

To conclude his opening remarks, President Joel redirected his focus onto updates to the academic side of the school. He discussed the growing, and thriving summer school program that the school boasts, as well as YU's expanded graduate school options, and encouraged students to consider registering for these opportunities.

The Town Hall Meeting then shifted gears, as President

Joel opened the floor to questions.

Students in attendance were eager to to probe President Joel about a variety of topics, but one that garnered perhaps the most attention was the subject of YU's next president.



"What are we looking for in our next president to best help the university?" inquired YC senior, Elan Teichman. President Joel responded that while it is a board of trustees who ultimately search for candidates and make the decision, not him, his successor must demonstrate a tremendous amount of understanding and appreciation for the unique dynamic and complexity of what Yeshiva University is. Joel also stressed that his successor must be a prodigious fundraiser, as this has been, and continues to be, a time of financial instability for the school. Lastly, answered Joel, the next president of YU must be a cognizant one, who is aware and well informed of what is really going on with the students, and who can understand their views and respond to their needs.

On the same topic, Syms senior Jacob Herenstein, asked a follow-up question. "Shouldn't students, alumni, faculty, administration, and Roshei Yeshiva be included for this search process for the next president? Why are these personalities, who best know what is really going on in this school, excluded from the decision making process, and instead have the decision be left solely up to a 'diverse group of trustees'?" In what seemed to be the only moment of the evening that the president appeared just slightly hesitant, he responded, "No candidate for the presidency will be instated without having the opportunity to encounter these people closer to student life, such as alumni and faculty, in order to ensure they are fit for the job." He continued by explaining that the search process is a complicated one, and that often times, candidates will only agree to speak to the university on certain terms due to confidentiality issues. "A quiet process, conducted by

this group of trustees," offered Joel, "is the best way to go about this."

No specific names of potential candidates were mentioned throughout the night by either president Joel or members of the audience.

Herenstein, after the meeting drew close, shared what motivated his question. "Those not on the list of trustees know the most about what is going on in the school and with the students. Alumni, faculty, and Roshei Yeshiva are the most in the know. It would make a lot of sense to find a way to incorporate people closer to student life in aiding this search for the next president."

Other students were more curious about less bureaucratic issues, such as the ongoing politics regarding YU's food services department and restaurant Golan Heights. "Does YU owe it to its students to fix the situation with Golan?" asked Syms senior Eitan Neiman. He reasoned that if so many YU students enjoy eating the restaurant's food, then the university should find a way to rectify the problem and settle differences between the two parties. Joel, in response, offered that business differences do happen, and aren't always that simple to settle. He ensured that the university is working on reaching a resolution and ultimately hoping to reinstate the Caf Card and its Omni Funds as means to pay at the coveted Israeli restaurant.

Aaron Landy, who introduced himself before asking his question as head of YU Hackers, a computer science oriented club, asked, "YU Hackers wants to help improve the shuttle app and just in general with technological matters. Can we get more involved?" President Joel acknowledged the impressive club and offered thanks for what the club has already contributed to the school. He did note, however, that YU is considering outsourcing for all technological services, largely in part due to lackluster quality of some of the university's existing services.

Other topics that were briefly touched on were the art and music departments at YU, which President Joel said he hopes continues to flourish, and the business school deviating from the YC core curriculum, which Associate Dean of Syms, Avi Golani, explained is meant to provide the utmost flexibility to business school students.

Throughout the duration of the evening, President Joel appeared comfortable and uncontested behind the podium. His witty, comical quips engendered a calm, light-hearted atmosphere from the get-go, and no real controversy or tension arose throughout the meeting.

While the meeting's mundane dialogue may have seemed underwhelming, it raises the question whether students would show up if the conversation had been more riveting and divulging. It is evident from such a small turnout, that the student body, for the most part, had little interest in hearing from, and engaging in conversation with President Joel. Perhaps one of the areas that needs attention, discussion, and improvement, from students and administrators alike, is student apathy for campus events.

Philosophy Department Restructures to Familiar Format as Professor Segal Departs

By Benjamin Koslowe

With Professor Aaron Segal's upcoming departure from Yeshiva University at the end of the semester, students may be wondering what YU's philosophy department will look like in the future. Segal, who is finishing up his third year as Assistant Professor of Philosophy on Wilf campus, is making Aliyah this summer with his family.

In his three years he has taught 15 classes, including Metaphysics, Theory of Knowledge, Ancient & Medieval Philosophy, and First Year Seminar Honors ("Philosophy and Science Fiction"). After he leaves to Israel, where he will teach philosophy at Hebrew University, the only full-time Yeshiva College philosophy professor will be Professor David Johnson.

Segal, after graduating YU, went on to pursue Rabbanut Semikhah, studying at Yeshivat Har Etzion for several years. He also studied in Notre Dame under Drs. Peter van Inwagen and Alvin Plantinga, earning his Ph.D. in philosophy in 2013.

Johnson, co-chair of the philosophy department, described Segal's move to Hebrew University as "a great honor for him and the enormous loss for us. He is quite brilliant and I'm sorry to see him go, though it's good for him to be at Hebrew University."

In a similar vein, Professor Daniel Rynhold, Associate Professor of Jewish Philosophy at Revel, noted that "having such a talented young philosopher as Professor Segal at YC was a real coup for the university, so it's obviously a real blow to be losing him so soon. But even were YU in the best of health, I'm not sure we could compete with the pull of Aliyah."

Professor Johnson mentioned that he doesn't imagine YU is currently looking for a replacement for Professor Segal. "You're aware of the financial difficulties of the college," Johnson said, "so I don't think we're in a hiring mode. I don't foresee a search to replace Professor Segal's position, though I haven't heard anything one way or the other."

Karen Bacon, Dean of the Undergraduate Faculty of Arts and Sciences at YU, confirmed that "at the current time we are not initiating a search for a full time appointment to replace Dr. Segal. We are currently focused on the Compute Science and Biology Departments and, unexpectedly, the Math Department. Up ahead we will look at all our other departments to review staffing and plan for the future."

The philosophy department has fluctuated in size over the years, at times having as many as four philosophers on staff at YC. These included Rabbi Walter Wurzburger, Rabbi Dr. Sol Roth, Drs. Michael and Edith Wyschogrod, Dr. Peter Achinstein, Dr. Linda Brown, and Dr. James Otteson, among others. Rabbi Wurzburger and the Wyschogrods have passed away, and several others have all left YU recently. Achinstein left in 2011, Brown and Otteson both left in 2013, and Roth retired just this past semester. Professor Segal joined the staff as Brown and Otteson left, but with Roth having retired this year and Segal's impending parting, the department will be on the historically small side.

Current and recent philosophy majors will indeed notice that the course lineup for the upcoming semester is thinner than in the past few years. Since 2012 the philosophy department has been relatively large, and there have always been at least seven philosophy courses offered each semester in YC. Some semesters offered as many as ten philosophy courses. Next semester there will be only five. While this is small compared to the previous few years, it is actually not so unusual compared to the philosophy department's longer history.

"When I first came here in 1996," related Johnson, "the department consisted of myself and two adjunct professors. The department was able to offer six courses. It looks as if [going forward] probably each semester there'll be five or six or so [courses], something in the general ballpark of where we were in terms of the offerings. So there'll be enough courses offered so there's no trouble for people majoring in philosophy."

The philosophy major requires 30 credits, or ten courses. "You need a seminar," explained Johnson, "Ancient & Medieval [Philosophy], Modern [Philosophy], a Value Theory, three of the 'Big Six,' meaning roughly Logic,

Metaphysics, and Epistemology. And then there are three electives." Johnson figures that being a philosophy major or minor in YC "should not be a problem. With regard to requirements for the philosophy major, Ancient & Medieval will be taught every fall, and Modern Philosophy, meaning roughly Descartes through Hume, is offered every spring. There'll be at least one, maybe more than one, seminar each term, that's another requirement course. And there'll be lots of things available for Value Theory, which roughly means ethics, legal philosophy, or things in that ballpark, though they'll be mostly done either by [Rabbi] Shalom Carmy or by political science cross-listed courses."

Cross-listed philosophy courses feature professors such as Rabbi Carmy, Dr. Ruth Bevan, and Dr. Jamie Aroosi from the Jewish philosophy and political science departments. Johnson suggested that he may look to get the economics course "Game Theory" cross-listed as well

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- PROFESSOR DAVID JOHNSON

at some point in the future. In addition to cross-listings, Professor Daniel Rynhold from Revel regularly offers one philosophy course a semester. Next semester he is offering a seminar on Kant's First Critique.

Additionally, professors from YU's Straus Center sometimes teach courses at YC. This semester features a cross-listed political science/philosophy course by Dr. Neil Rogachevsky, the Tikvah Postdoctoral Fellow at the Straus Center. Next semester Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveitchik, the Director of the Straus Center, will be teaching an honors philosophy course on "Judaism and Democracy." He previously taught a Jewish Philosophy course in fall 2014 on Yehudah HaLevi. In spring 2014 he offered his "Judaism and Democracy" course, lecturing jointly with Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks. Rabbi Sacks has been YU's Kressel and Efrat Family University Professor of Jewish Thought at Yeshiva since he stepped down from his role as Chief Rabbi of Great Britain in 2013.

Professor Segal, like Johnson, feels that students majoring in philosophy shouldn't be concerned. "A department in which Professors Johnson, Rynhold, and Carmy teach is without question one that can provide a stellar and well-rounded philosophical education," offered Segal. "When I was an undergraduate the department was roughly identically constituted, and I was and still am delighted with the experience I had in the department. And we shouldn't forget that the political science department, the Jewish studies department, and the Straus Center offer courses and resources that expand and supplement the offerings in the philosophy department."

Certain courses that Professor Segal has taught a few times will be still be offered, albeit less frequently for the time being. "Professor Segal has been teaching regularly for a couple of years Metaphysics in the fall and Theory of Knowledge in the spring," said Professor Johnson. "I may hold off for a year, but probably the year after this coming one I'll start teaching Metaphysics once in a while, and Theory of Knowledge once in a while." Professor Johnson also regularly offers different types of philosophy seminars. "When I do seminars, they're very often on Advanced Logic or Axiomatic Set Theory. But if I'm not doing that, I'll once in a while do a seminar on miracles or something like that."

In terms of other courses, Johnson imagines that "I'll be more or less teaching Logic every fall, and then Advanced Logic when people are interested in that sort of thing. Oth-

erwise I'll teach Philosophy of Language or Metaphysics or Theory of Knowledge or a seminar. Historically, we've had a lot of double-majors, in math and philosophy, physics and philosophy, things like that, and we'll make available what people need. I don't think it should be a problem."

Dr. David Shatz, co-chair of the philosophy department and professor on Beren campus, expressed that "no philosophy department, no matter how good, can lose someone like Dr. Segal without the departure having an impact. He is an extraordinary philosopher and teacher who stands at the cutting edge of analytic philosophy and who cares deeply about his students and the university. He has already received two highly competitive international awards in metaphysics while publishing rapidly in both general and Jewish philosophy. He created imaginative courses such as 'Philosophy and Science Fiction' and 'Mortality and Meaning.' His humility, I must add, is remarkable. When you combine his philosophical achievements with his prowess in 'learning,' honed during many years at Gush, and add his refined character, his menschlichkeit, he is a wonderful model of Torah u-Madda. We will miss him."

"Still," added Professor Shatz, "with Professors Johnson, Carmy, and Rynhold, and with Rabbi Dr. Meir Soloveitchik teaching as well, sponsored by the Straus Center, we'll have a very good curriculum that nicely combines historically structured courses with courses focused on topics. Our professors are versatile, which isn't always the case in universities, and I think we'll get good coverage for a small department as well as first rate pedagogy."

Students who have had the opportunity to learn from Professor Segal will miss him as well. Shua Katz remarked that "with the departure of Professor Segal, the philosophy department loses a core component, a person who exudes Yirat Shamayim while teaching a lucid and thought-provoking brand of philosophy." Doron Levine said that "Professor Segal's ability to explain complicated and potentially confusing topics in the most clear and precise terms is unparalleled by any teacher I've ever had. The fact that someone with such clarity of thought and intellectual integrity is a committed Orthodox Jew is inspiring. His methodology has had a profound impact on me and on all of his students." Isaac Shulman related that "Professor Segal has been one of the most enjoyable and educational teachers I've had the pleasure of studying with. I will surely miss his clear presentation, rigorous analysis of arguments, and commitment to each of his students." Katz, Levine, and Shulman are all current philosophy majors at YU.

Professor Johnson described Segal as "one of the most brilliant philosophers I know. I was very happy when he came. He was my student long ago here, and he was a double-major in philosophy and mathematics. I wish Aaron were staying, for the good of the college, but I'm happy for him that he can be at Hebrew University and living in [Israel]. He's one of the most brilliant philosophers I've ever known, and I'll miss him."

"My three years here were really wonderful," remarked Professor Segal. "My colleagues were very supportive, and my students were curious, dedicated, bright, fun, and menschlich. I had the privilege of discussing philosophy, Torah, and more, both inside the classroom and out, with others who share my intellectual passions and religious commitments. I am going to miss YU a good deal, and I hope to remain connected in one way or another."

Pondering the future and philosophy in general, Johnson assessed that "philosophy's great virtue, which I hope will still attract students, is, you learn logic, you learn how to reason, and that changes you in a profound way. Most of our students learn that and like it. Logic is wonderfully useful, and you learn to be rigorous; that is, you learn to be precise and explicit and meticulously correct about matters of logic. Philosophy departments are never, in their nature, big. There are larger different universities, but philosophy attracts some people, but it's never gonna attract masses of people. But it attracts those who need it and want it and it is valuable in many ways. So I assume that tradition will continue."

NYC Councilman Addresses YU Students After Meaningful Trip to Israel, Extolls Unity

By Eric Shalmon

Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez, the Washington Heights representative to the New York City Council, recently visited Yeshiva upon invitation by Professor Cwilich to address a group of honors students at one of their weekly luncheons. In his speech the councilman focused on his two week trip to Israel last August which left a tremendous impression on him and reinvigorated his sense of mission on the City Council

"I felt that his points were very important to hear," acknowledged Professor Cwilich, director of the honors program.

Hailing from the Dominican Republic, the Councilman began his career as a schoolteacher. After 13 years as an educator, Rodriguez joined the City Council to connect different peoples and to help them build a future together. The Councilman said that he always looked to two nations for inspiration: the Jews and the Chinese. As a history teacher, Rodriguez realized that 100, 200 years is nothing in the view of history and "no one has learned that better than the Jews."

Because both nations have such vast, impressive histories, the Councilman explained, "they know who they are;" they know how to plan for the future.

He visited China during his last semester of college and finally made it to Israel earlier this year. "It is a very diverse place," Rodriguez remarked. "Going from Tel Aviv, a very liberal place, to Jerusalem, the holy city...and then going to the border - it's an experience that can never be described."

To him, it was also amazing to see how many young men and women were in the army fighting together for their country. More than just the people, the land itself was awash with history. A lifelong Catholic, the Councilman viewed stepping in the Jordan river after reading all the passages in the bible and setting foot in the holy city as an unparalleled experience. However, he deemed the different communities there taking history and building a thriving society to be equally impressive.

The simultaneous display of diversity and unity that

the Councilman observed in Israel reinvigorated his fight for unity between the cultures here in Washington Heights and in greater New York City. One hundred years ago people were more separate and generally thought of themselves in terms of their culture of origin, whether it was Jew, Latino, Chinese, etc. Today, however, Councilman Rodriguez believes that things have changed and that those lines will continue

**"WE DON'T NEED TO GO TO AFRICA ON PEACE CORPS TO FEEL THAT WE HELPED OTHERS OR LEFT A LEGACY: A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF NEW YORKERS LIVE IN POVERTY, WE CAN LEAVE A LEGACY HERE."
- COUNCILMAN RODRIGUEZ**

to blur in the future. "Our next generation," said the Councilman, "will interact with people from other cultures from the day they are born - and only they can claim that. Adults today," he continued, "say that they do interact with and have opened up to other cultures but this is only later in life, they didn't grow up with it."

The Councilman has taken one of his classes to the Dominican Republic to explore their roots, study their history and learn where they came from. "I learned that the job of a professor or educator is not to teach, but to facilitate and I carry those values with me now." The history of a person's culture should inspire him to move forward into the future. "Your lives aren't only yours," explained Rodriguez, "they are your ancestors' as well."

In response to a question, the Councilman stated, "We don't need to go to Africa on Peace Corps to feel that we helped others or left a legacy: a large percentage of New Yorkers live in poverty, we can leave a legacy here." Councilman Rodriguez hopes to accomplish

this in partnership with both Latinos and Jews - "with you here at Yeshiva University."

Chaim Metzger, President of the Honors Student Council, observed, "The Councilman seemed genuinely interested in synthesizing the two communities here in Washington Heights and was very passionate about fulfilling those goals."

His goal is to turn Washington Heights into a middle class community, "build[ing] a Silicon Valley here in our community," because the most important thing for Councilman Rodriguez "is to go to sleep in peace, knowing I have helped our community."

"I was very excited to hear that the Councilman wanted to come," said Professor Cwilich. "He had very interesting things to say, and we are currently taking steps towards solidifying his visions, including a possible convention of Yeshiva University and City College students."



Changing the World One Good Deed at a Time

By Elie Lipnick

Whether it be from flyers lying around the YU campus or ystuds sent out, the phrase "join millions around the world by participating in Good Deeds Day" might have caught your attention. If you did not actually read through the entire email or meticulously scrutinize each detail on the flyer, then you may have missed the opportunity to take part in Good Deeds Day 2016. On Sunday, April 16th, 2016 tens of millions of people, thousands of organizations and business in over 60 countries around the globe united to do good and volunteer.

Good Deeds Day was initiated in 2007 by businesswoman and philanthropist, Shari Arison, and launched and organized by Ruach Tova (NGO), a part of The Ted Arison Family Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the Arison Group. According to Arison, "I believe that if people will think good, speak good and do good, the circles of goodness will grow in the world. Good Deeds Day has become the leading day of giving and this year individuals, school children, students, soldiers and employees from many businesses are joining in for the annual Good Deeds Day with the aim of doing a good deed for others." As well as starting good deeds day, Shari Arison is American-born Israeli businesswoman and philanthropist, and Israel's wealthiest woman.

Specifically at YU, the Bnei Akiva Society, Tzedek Society, Social Justice Society, and Eruv Society, all under the auspices of Shira

Feen (SC, '18) and Devora Siegel (SC, '17), sponsored the event and lead the group of students throughout the day. Good Deeds Day actually began weeks before the day itself, when members of the aforementioned clubs collected donations for a soup kitchen. That Sunday, however, students went to Masbia Kosher Soup Kitchen, donated the food collected, and peeled 350 pounds of carrots. As one of the only fully kosher kitchens, Masbia's model is to "feed any empty stomach." Afterwards, participants headed back to Broadway pizza and stopped in Herald Square where they had many booths to do quick small good deeds.

According to Feen, "the day went absolutely amazing, I couldn't have imagined it any better." More-

over, she claimed that the best part of the day was coming back to Herald Square where the big NYC event for good deeds day was taking place and just feeling part of a bigger movement. Also, hands-on helping at the soup kitchen, and feeling like we were actually making it a difference, and the gratitude of the masbia staff showed towards us, made it all worth it. The most difficult aspect of coordinating this event was collecting donations in the cafeterias before the actual event to bring with us on good deeds day to donate to the soup kitchen. Siegel says that she "definitely wants to make this an annual event at YU."

Efraim Benscher (Syms, '18) thoroughly enjoyed himself. "It was an awesome time, people took off from their busy schedules to help others not as fortunate as us. I would absolutely participate again next year, because as I always say 'time is a most precious gift from g-d but it is a gift that must be shared with others.'"

The only thing that Feen and Siegel would change, however, is that they would try to do it at a location that can handle more volunteers. Unfortunately, Masbia could not accept that many volunteers so we had to limit advertising, and next year it would be great to get more students involved.

With the first annual Good Deeds Day at YU going in the books as a huge success, students are anxiously awaiting for it to come around next year.



Yeshiva College Hosts Alumni Panel for English and Writing Students

By Tzvi Levitin

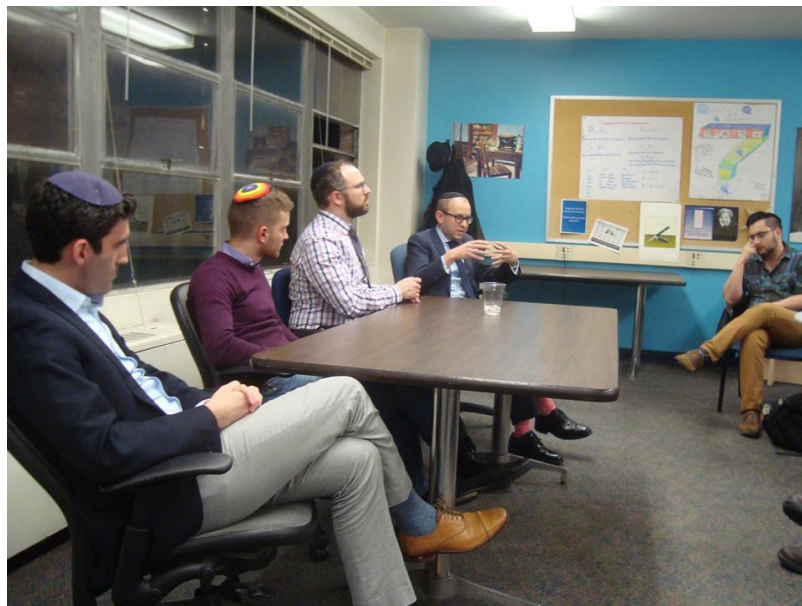
On March 29, students and professors of English and Writing gathered in Furst Hall to hear several distinguished alumni of Yeshiva College discuss the impact of their English education upon their career paths and experiences after graduation. Facilitated by Professor Lauren Fitzgerald, chair of the English department, the panel discussed several questions likely plaguing the minds of many students studying literature and writing instead of more career-oriented programs like pre-med or accounting.

Members of the panel included Ben Abromowitz (YC '12; Sarah Lawrence MFA '15), editorial associate at Vanity Fair, Aaron Roller (YC '06; Harvard Urban Planning MA '08), Director of Special Projects at the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services,

Matthew Schneider (YC '03; Fordham Law '07), Associate General Counsel at Silver Point Capital and investor in Broadway shows, and Sam Singer (YC '03; AECOM '07), attending neuro oncologist at the John Theurer Cancer Center at Hackensack University Medical Center.

Professor Fitzgerald asked the panelists to reflect upon their experiences as English majors and articulate the impact of their literature and writing studies upon their careers. Dr. Singer noted that when he began writing research proposals in medical school, he was surprised by the frequency at which his classmates' papers were returned covered in red ink while his own papers earned him the high regard of his professors. Abromowitz claimed that his English classes, as well as his work in the Writing Center, taught him how to communicate about writing more effectively and contributed to his ability to work with others to improve their writing. Schneider felt that his background in literature, narrative, and writing gave him credibility in the Broadway investment scene among investors who had spent their entire careers working in the industry.

Each of the panelists took the opportunity to thank their former professors, many of whom attended the event, and



encouraged current students to take full advantage of the world-class education we have available to us at relatively miniscule student-to-professor ratios. When asked if there were any classes they wished they had taken during their time at YU, Roller and Schneider agreed that financial literacy, or even a course in Microsoft Excel, could have prepared them to enter government and law, respectively.

While each panelist had a unique perspective on how their English studies at YU influence their day-to-day responsibilities, they all agreed that becoming well-rounded people who can express their thoughts efficiently and effectively has proven to be the most valuable takeaway from their undergraduate education.

Illuminate Your Networking with YU ALUMinate

By Judah Stiefel

In this fast paced sink or swim society, it's easy to find oneself treading in place. Decisions may be unclear. Job opportunities may be scarce. Finding the right contacts to help you navigate the waters, even for the brightest students, may prove a difficult task. Thankfully, there is a solution. YU ALUMinate is a professional networking platform available exclusively to YU graduates. The website provides valuable resources to YU students who've finished college and have joined the graduate school and professional communities.

YU ALUMinate provides undergraduate alumni with an exclusive and unique networking recourse, assisting former students to connect with other alumni in a wide range of fields. The platform is a huge privilege afforded to any YU student who has graduated Yeshiva College, Stern College for Women, or Sy Syms School of Business. Said Rachel Lebowhl (Marketing Associate, Alumni Affairs), "YU ALUMinate is a powerful tool that we can offer our alumni as a benefit of graduating from Yeshiva University. The ability to connect with seasoned professionals on a private and secure platform within the trusted YU alumni network is novel and exceedingly valuable."

The well-structured, vibrant website allows students to create a profile in which you can share professional and personal information with fellow alums. It's a safe space for alumni to come to seek anything from professional advice, to job opportunities, to connections in the plethora of fields in which YU alumni are involved.

As Suzy Schwartz, assistant vice president for alumni affairs and strategic development, was quoted saying in YU News, "ALUMinate is a wonderful demonstration that mem-

bership in the YU alumni family has its privileges. We have finally created a tangible way for our powerful alumni network to leverage the benefits that come from sharing their knowledge and expertise."

The site is taken very seriously and gives alumni the special feeling of belonging to an exclusive community. There is a brief vetting process one must go through to sign up, and graduating seniors will be eligible upon successfully receiving their diploma.

There are currently over 800 alumni on the site, and growing daily, in professional fields ranging from graphic design, to banking, to social work, to rabbinate, to much more. The community also ranges in age from alumni in their seventies and eighties with vast experience to newly graduated students with exciting potential. The site allows you to engage in dialogue with alumni who share your field, but also network with professionals in other fields. It also provides opportunities to participate in community wide discussions, post job opportunities, and access a newsletter

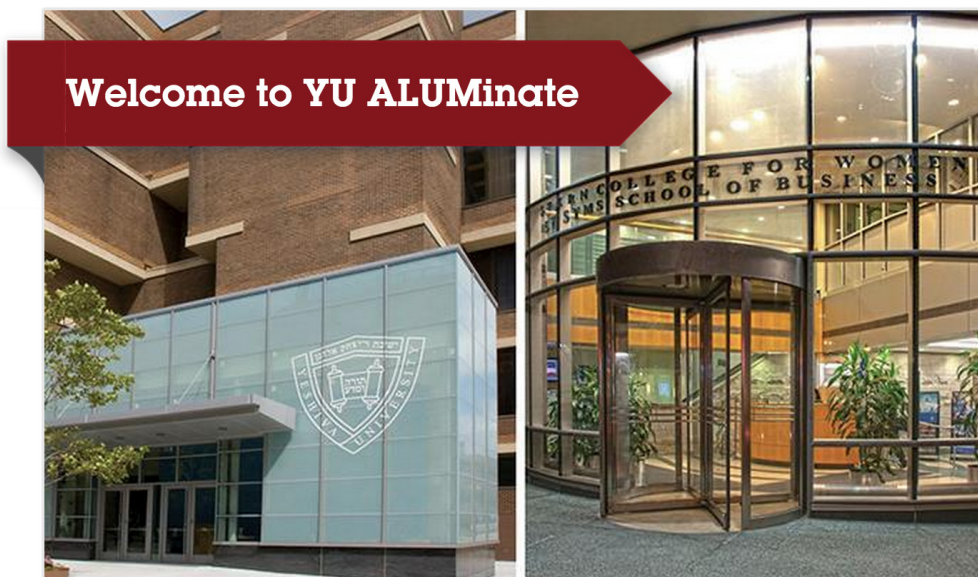
to existing users and professional networking events.

Dina Burcat (Director of Alumni Affairs) explained, "Being a member of YU ALUMinate is one of the most beneficial ways that we can leverage the diversity of the YU alumni community and connect our graduates with professionals and mentors in their career fields who want to and are willing to help other alumni because they share the common bond of a YU education."

To see examples of the site at its finest, look no further than Joel Strauss (YC '86 Cardozo '92) and Mouchka Darmon Heller (SCW '11). As described on the YU News website, "Heller, who is currently Trade Commissioner at the Consulate General of Canada in New York, posted on ALUMinate that she was organizing an event for engineers, architects and real estate owners/managers/developers. Strauss responded to her pitch, and after several rounds of private messaging, they began discussing internships for YU and Cardozo students, an area of strong interest for Strauss."

The site observes, "The upshot of their conversation is the likelihood of several summer internship opportunities with the consulate as well as a possible international trade legal internship program for a Cardozo student. This "will hopefully result in beneficial business connections," said Strauss. Heller sees ALUMinate as "a wonderful opportunity for connection and growth."

The site has had major growth since it was first rolled out in the past few months. As students continue to graduate and join the site, the networking potential will grow, providing more and more diverse avenues for entrepreneurial and highly achieving alumni to strive for success.



YCSA and SCWSC invite you to the 2nd annual

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY LIBERAL ARTS FESTIVAL

Dedicated in memory of Dr. Thomas Otway



TUESDAY APRIL 19TH
8:00 PM
WEISSBERG COMMONS

UNDERGRADUATE JOURNAL LAUNCH:

The Journal of Fine Arts - The Political Science Journal - CHRONOS -
Undergraduate Research Abstracts - Derech HaTeva

WITH performances by the Jazz and Rock Ensembles and a viewing of
a short student film

*Hors d'oeuvres and
mocktails will be served*



RAK and The Jewish Home: New Initiatives Create Communities, Avoid Structure

By David Rubinstein

For Ilan Farber, this year has been busy and fulfilling both in class and beyond the academic curriculum. Farber, a junior from Toronto studying biology and psychology, takes a full Yeshiva College course load. But in addition to his class work, Farber has been hard at work creating opportunities for YU students to find fulfillment in their lives both during the week through the Random Acts of Kindness club and on weekends, at the Jewish Home.

The two initiatives have a lot in common, even if they are not always thought of together. For one, Ilan Farber is intimately involved in both. Beyond this, however, they are both outlets for and sources of meaning in the lives of YU students. And perhaps most strikingly, both seek to foster a sense of community informal structures.

Random Acts of Kindness, referred to as “RAK,” is a club that coordinates initiatives that focus on giving to other people and making people’s day better, specifically in unexpected ways.

Presently, RAK is hosting the social media initiative “What’s Your RAK,” in which participants share images of themselves engaging in acts of kindness. The unstructured nature of the initiative encourages even those who are not committed RAK members to promulgate acts of kindness. This winter, RAK sponsored hot chocolate for passerby on the Wilf Campus and distributed bottles of water to weary travelers at the 181st Street 1 train subway station.

The RAK concept was conceived last year by Yaakov Green, a biology major at York University in Ontario, Canada. The club soon became the largest on campus. Inspired by the RAK idea and the success it showed at York, Farber began trying to start a RAK chapter at YU.

RAK at YU didn’t start, however, until Avi Kohanzadeh approached Farber with his parallel interest in starting a RAK chapter. “As soon as Avi approached me,” Farber related, “I knew that RAK could start. Here was someone who was equally passionate as me.”

Kohanzadeh, RAK co-president and a pre-med junior majoring in biology, explained his inspiration for starting the club: “I come from a small college town in Ontario, Canada where the small Jewish community is very closely interconnected and is also very connected to the greater community surrounding it.” Kohanzadeh found that YU didn’t have the close-knit college community with which he was familiar.

Farber echoed that in his experience, “sometimes, YU feels like a commuter school. You have a vibrant student body but there isn’t such a strong sense of community.”

Kohanzadeh explained that through RAK, “we wanted to change this reality and connect our university campus internally. We also wanted to establish a warm, close-knit community with the remainder of the neighborhood.”

Both Kohanzadeh and Farber emphasized the importance of “randomness” in the acts of kindness organized by RAK. “The ‘random’ aspect is a call to action for all our members,” Kohanzadeh explained. “Kindness does not always require a direct or specific subject, or agenda. Random acts of kindness can be anything and be done anywhere by anyone. Our goal is to use a similar form of randomness to promote kindness that can be spontaneously manifested everywhere by anyone.”

Farber explained that RAK’s initiatives aren’t random to him -- “that’s the irony. They are random for the recipients of what we give out.”

Looking ahead, Farber expressed some apprehension about the future of the club. He expects involvement to be a challenge for RAK, especially if he is not at YU next year to steward its growth. He does, however, hope that RAK can continue to grow on the

Wilf Campus and expand to “other campuses, in New York and farther,” including the Beren Campus.

If RAK seeks to forge ties between YU students and the community around them, the Jewish Home’s mission is to build a community YU students currently lack one. The Jewish Home, which is led and attended by YU students and alumni, is not officially affiliated with YU.

Farber, one of the students who spearheaded the Jewish Home’s initiation this year, described the movement as fulfilling the need, unserved by YU, for “informal version of religious life on campus.”

The Jewish Home seeks to offer “an alternative experiential outlet and catering to the needs of the demographic that would otherwise not attend extracurricular Jewish programming at university.” It does so through its primary program: Friday night prayer services that consist of “passionate singing, lively dancing, and inspiring short-thoughts from

“IF RAK SEEKS TO FORGE TIES BETWEEN YU STUDENTS AND THE COMMUNITY AROUND THEM, THE JEWISH HOME’S MISSION IS TO BUILD A COMMUNITY WITHIN YU FOR THOSE WHO CURRENTLY LACK ONE.”



Rabbi Danieli,” according to the Jewish Home’s promotional flyer for potential sponsors.

Friday nights at the Jewish home have been attended by a range of 30 - 50, according to Farber, including a visit by Rabbi Yosef Kalinsky, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Torah Studies at YU.

Rabbi Gaby Danieli, spiritual leader of the Jewish Home, said that the Jewish Home services “lots of the chevre [who] need an alternative place to daven, have a warm, tasty Shabbat meal with friends, and be a part of a learning group.” The Jewish Home, he reflected, has been able “to create a micro-community that welcomes everyone.”

“I also believe lots of the chevre come because they feel accepted regardless of who they are,” Rabbi Danieli said. “We give them authentic Judaism -- spirituality, but with a smile and hug and lots of simcha. It’s the same cake that everyone else is serving, but we add sprinkles on top and chocolate syrup!” Rabbi Danieli, who received ordination from RIETS

in 2014 is currently an instructor in the Isaac Breuer College of Hebraic Studies and in the James Striar School of General Jewish Studies. He previously served as assistant rabbi at the Carlebach Shul on the Upper West Side.

Rabbi Danieli’s warmth and welcoming personality is among the foremost draws to the Jewish Home. “Gaby Danieli is what makes the Jewish Home have its special flavor,” Farber remarked. “He has a network of guys from IBC and Mechina who are very close with him. They don’t see a divide between student and teacher.”

Ari Drazin, a junior studying finance who frequents the Jewish Home, said that “it all starts with Rabbi Danieli, who has a way about him that makes everything so much fun and inspiring at the same time.” And what inspires Drazin the most about the Jewish Home, he said, is “how it makes serving God so enjoyable. I always leave the Jewish Home not only having had a great time, but with a greater feeling of closeness to God than I had before.”

According to Rabbi Danieli, the idea of the Jewish Home has been in works for years dating back to when he was a student at YU (“it wasn’t called the Jewish Home then,” he reminds us). In the past year, however, the Jewish Home “sprouted and blossomed to [include] a wider student body and community because the students themselves -- like Ilan [Farber] -- and other chevre and alumni of my IBC class have invested in it.”

Unaffiliated with Yeshiva University, funding can potentially be hard to come by. Despite this, Farber relates that current students, and especially alumni, are excited to donate to the cause they wish had been around when they studied at YU. Farber also noted that the Israeli restaurant Golan Heights has been particularly generous, sponsoring large quantities of food. Current students have also contributed on a more individual level by participating in the Jewish Home’s BYOB policy for the meal following the prayers.

Farber said that the Jewish Home is intentionally unaffiliated with Yeshiva University. “We don’t need that added pressure of YU telling us what to do,” he said. “We don’t need YU’s logo -- I don’t think that would be conducive or good for growth.” Farber also said that affiliating with Yeshiva University “makes it more organized; this is something that’s for the people, by the people, and there’s something about that that’s sweet.” Rabbi Danieli did not comment about the Jewish Home staying unaffiliated with YU.

Despite being unaffiliated with YU, the Jewish Home does characterize itself as “an alternate way to fostering a powerful and meaningful Yeshiva University experience.” This is perhaps in recognition that most of the Jewish Home’s constituents do have YU affiliation.

Looking to the future, Farber expressed more optimism for the Jewish Home than for RAK. “Involvement has never been an issue for the Jewish Home,” Farber said. He would like to see the principles of the Jewish Home extended even to Rabbi Danieli’s IBC classes, perhaps in the form of a class that would have class meetings in the more informal setting of Rabbi Danieli’s home.

Rabbi Danieli is hopeful that the Jewish Home will “continue to give and provide what the chevre needs and wants -- to inspire and be inspired to have fun being Jewish, smile when we learn, and sing when we pray.”

The rise in popularity both of RAK and the Jewish Home seem to highlight a common thread. RAK is intentionally random and the Jewish Home is intentionally outside of the YU framework. As the two initiatives seek to create communities for YU students, they find it best to avoid structure.

The New Syms Jewish Cores- Values Versus Texts

By Michael Klein

This past year, the Sy Syms School of Business decided to revolutionize its General Education requirements within Jewish Studies. In the past, Syms students, just like Yeshiva College students, were required to take 20 credits of academic Jewish Studies courses on the Wilf Campus. Of these 20 credits, six were from Hebrew Language, eight were from (two-credit) Bible classes, and six were from (three-credit) Jewish History classes. Now, Dr. Moses Pava, the Dean of Syms, has changed the requirements by offering two options for business students: either follow the YC core curriculum (like the old Syms requirements), or take the new Syms cores. The Syms cores consist of three consecutive Jewish studies classes, each offered only once per year. Additionally, students are obligated to take Business and Jewish Law, taught by both Rabbi Ozer Glickman and Rabbi Daniel Feldman, during a semester of their choosing.

So far, only one of these new courses has been given- “Jewish Engagements: Jewish Values in a Contemporary World,” taught by Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter, Senior Scholar at Yeshiva University’s Center for the Jewish Future. The second course in the new curriculum, titled “Jewish Values in a Contemporary Society,” will be taught by Dr. Daniel Rynhold, an Associate Professor of Modern Jewish Philosophy in Revel Graduate School. The third and final course has not yet been finalized, but it will focus on being a leader while upholding Jewish values, according to Dean Pava. It will likely be called “Jewish Public Policy”.

There have been some rumors swirling that President Richard Joel might teach or co-teach the course. After all, who better to teach a course about incorporating Judaism into leadership than the President who advocates shleimut, the combination of Torah and secular matters? However, when asked about the opening, Joel responded that he declined to teach the course, noting that he wasn’t the appropriate person. Said Joel, “I’m happy to teach, and I want to teach more. I’m happy to give a course on leadership, or on management, or an elective on how leadership and Jewish values intersect. But I believe that the courses in the Syms core should be taught by a legitimate, bona-fide, Jewish academic. I might be a legitimate Jew, and a knowing Jew. But these courses need legitimate Torah content -- legitimate Jewish academic content.”

With such a star-studded line up, expectations are running high. I was lucky enough to participate in Rabbi Schacter’s “Jewish Engagements” class, which was stimulating and practical for everyday life. There were some mixed feelings amongst the students due to the fact that there were many weekly reading assignments, especially considering that the class was

only worth two credits. However, there were review sessions held by TAs which were helpful in aiding the students to understand the depth and spectrum of Rabbi Schacter’s lectures. The impression made was

“IN SUCH A HIGH-PRESSURED ENVIRONMENT, HOW ARE WE TO MAINTAIN OUR INTEGRITY AND CONDUCT BUSINESS PROPERLY IN CONSISTENCE WITH OUR JEWISH PRINCIPLES?”

that Rabbi Schacter and his TAs were more interested in the students gaining from the class and participating in it, than in testing them on their memorization skills of different opinions. One particular challenge for Rabbi Schacter, and presumably the rest of the professors in this series, is catering to such a wide audience. Students from all different backgrounds and identities are taking the same class, so it will be difficult to keep everyone captivated without letting pupils fall behind. The review sessions with TAs were helpful, and they will be the key for future classes to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Dean Pava explained the reasoning behind the change in curriculum. He believes that young adults in the business world will be confronted with situations which will cause conflicts between business intellect and Jewish values. In such a high-pressured environment, how are we to maintain our integrity and conduct business properly in accordance with our Jewish principles? This is the purpose of this new series: to instill students with the necessary tools to be successful in the business world, while upholding the values of Judaism. To paraphrase Dean Pava, if one wanted to study Judaic texts and history, one could go to just about any college and find similar courses, often taught by religious Jews. What makes Yeshiva University unique is that it instills Jewish values and focuses more on developing individuals than on studying texts and history. “Business students especially need to be equipped with courses dealing head on with these issues, rather than extrapolating on their own,” says Dean Pava. The cores have become more practical than theoretical. This focus on real-world application is especially critical for Syms students, as such conflicts of values are quite frequent in the business world. Be it a conflict as grand as the Volkswagen scandal or as small as junior analysts cheating on their company exams, moral dilemmas come up all the time. We need to be firm in our beliefs and Jewish values to succeed in

the real world.

Another reason for focusing on values, rather than texts, is the disparity between students. With classmates on such different levels of Hebrew comprehension and exposure to Judaism, it is nearly impossible for the professors to cater to all of them in textual understanding. This, as mentioned previously, will also be a challenge in the current system, but it is far easier to teach values, which are equal to all, than scriptural texts. Additionally, many students complained that this part of their education was previously irrelevant. Students feel that they will never be asked to explain age-old texts, so it shouldn’t be a core part of their education.

So why hasn’t Yeshiva College made the transition as well? Because their administration believes that the understanding of Jewish scripts and history is an integral part of our Jewish identity, said Dean Pava. For this reason, Dean Pava is still allowing students to choose between the YC and Syms core Jewish programs. We have the power to choose what we feel is more central to our growth in Judaism. Dean Pava also hopes that YU will become the forefront of a revolution amongst yeshivot and educational institutions to place a much stronger emphasis on values and application of Judaism to contemporary society rather than the more traditional focuses of expounding texts and the past. This revolutionary method of educating is what Dean Pava hopes will become the standard for all Jewish institutions throughout the world.



The Atheist in the Closet

By Yitzchak Fried

Jewish parents want their kids to be like them. This is understandable: most parents do. In Judaism, however, the expectation that children assume their parents' values and lifestyle takes on a special urgency. It is no accident that the Torah personifies the relationship between God and Israel as that of a parent and child: "Will you disobey God? Oh foolish and unwise nation! He is your father..." (Deuteronomy 32). Judaism can conceive of no more authoritative source of demands on one's personal behavior than allegiance to one's parents. And in a nation with a strong historical memory, the line of parents reaches far back into time: Jewish parents impress upon their children the same demands that their parents made upon them. Twenty-first-century America is no Russian village, but we can still hear the fiddler's tones and the adamant cry of "Tradition!"

But, Judaism is more than a religion of tradition. It is a religion of ideas. Despite efforts to characterize it to the contrary, its truth has always been its foundational principle and the underlying source of its ethical demands. It was the quest for truth that motivated the Jewish philosophers of the middle-ages, the legal interpreters of the Second Temple era and the prophets before them. And truth, unlike tradition, is a profoundly individualistic project. To know what is true is an epistemological journey. It involves thinking, not belonging. Judaism's plea for continuity, its emphasis on community and filial loyalty, is thus tempered by its correlate command to value what is true.

There is perhaps no more striking example of the individualized and ideational nature of Judaism than a responsum from the thirteenth century Talmudist, Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet (Rashba). Like many mediaeval Jewish philosophers, Rashba was frank on the matter of faith. When asked to explain the fundamentals of Jewish belief contained in the paragraph of the shema, he responded: "[We] were commanded to listen (to theological teachings) and to study them, for if we do not hear and study them we will never come to contemplate them. And after we listen to, study and analyze them well to see whether there is any contradictory proof, Heaven forbid, and after our studies lead us to true analysis, our analysis will bring us and compel us...to accept and believe that God exists, and that he oversees our actions" (Vol. 5, Res. 55).

For Rashba, commitment to Judaism is the outcome of a personal, rational judgement: a rational judgement that means considering the possibility – "Heaven forbid" – that Judaism is false. As his words show, he was deeply convinced that an individual's honest assessment would validate the fundamentals of Jewish faith. But as is the case with all thinking, a personal assessment is, well, personal. One is blessed when this personal assessment runs the way the Rashba hoped. In that case, one's inner world of thought corresponds with the demands of family, community and history. But when this meditation doesn't run the way Rashba anticipated – when the value of truth leads an individual to negate Judaism's fundamental beliefs – then a person has a serious problem. The two most important values of his or her upbringing -- commitment to truth and commitment to tradition -- collide.

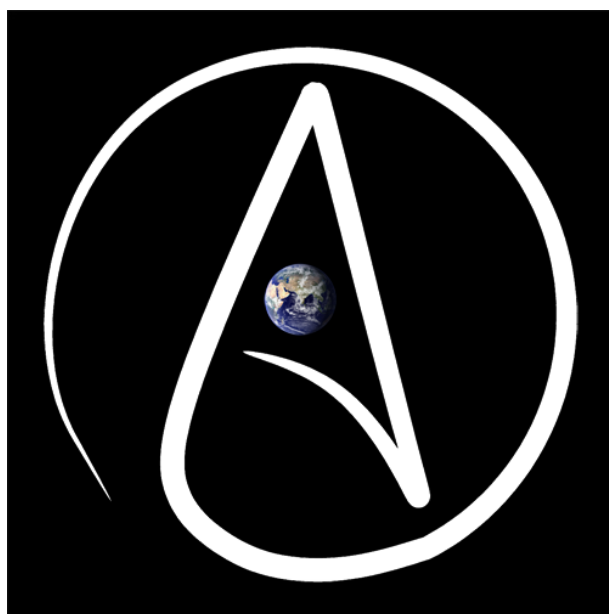
To Orthodox society, such a person presents a conundrum. This is not the familiar problem of how to deal with the apathetic or rebellious child, the question of how to draw those distant back into the fold. It is not the question of what resources should be made available to a young (or old) Jew who has doubts. This is the question of how Orthodox parents should deal with their sons and daughters – responsible, thoughtful, conscientious people – who turn to them one day and say, "I don't believe." What I've come to learn is that the number of people who fit this category is surprisingly large.

A good friend of mine, Yosef, came out as an athe-

ist this year. Since "coming out", he has connected with many other non-believers; it was through him that I first learned of the sheer number of them, both on campus and in the wider Orthodox world. The religious YU community, including yeshiva boys who spend their mornings studying Talmud and who share divrei torah at Friday night Shabbos meals, turns out to harbor many closet atheists. As one might imagine, living as an atheist under these circumstances is miserable. There are scant places in YC where an atheist can feel comfortable openly discussing his beliefs. To do so risks ostracization, especially for those whose primary peer group was formed in a yeshiva. Yosef spent years quietly closeted. And, as he's learned, so have many others.

It's interesting to speculate what these non-believers have in common. As far as I can tell, it's not much. Each person I meet who confides that they are

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an atheist has a different story: a different family, a different educational and religious background. Some were very devoted, even "intense", while still religious. As one friend, who I share with Yosef, joked: "I was the annoying religious type." To take a different example, Jack (not his real name; all names in this article have been changed), grew up in Brooklyn, spent time in the Mir, and attended an ultra-orthodox yeshiva in the Haredi city of Betar Il-lit. Others come from mainstream, modern orthodox circles. Akiva and Chaim are both graduates of Yeshivat Sha'alvim. Baruch is a Gush alum. Then there's Ike, a soon-to-be law school graduate who spent two years in Kerem B'Yavneh. Nearly all -- with the exception of Jack, who has since transferred to UPenn and stopped wearing a yarmulke -- describe themselves as "closet atheists".

Each has their own story of coming to non-belief. Yosef's doubt grew out of an argument with his chavrusa over the basis of rabbinic exegesis. Some claim that they never "really believed" but that they "wanted to". They hoped that dis-belief was something you grew out of -- like acne or a bad habit -- and that, at any rate, yeshivot or seminaries would certainly quell their doubts. But when the anticipated belief failed to materialize, they realized that they were in trouble.

A friend of mine, who's an atheist, agreed to review an earlier draft of this essay. She e-mailed me that I'd neglected to discuss the pain that comes

with losing belief. Becoming an atheist, she said, "wasn't some callous combination of cynicism and arrogance, but a...process of realizing that you don't believe in everything you held sacred in the world. Of desperately wanting to be wrong and grasping at straws to hold onto faith..." For those like her, the path to atheism is painful, protracted and unexpected. Mark, too, falls into this category and was willing to share some of his memories: "My friend called me – he was having a crisis of belief. I prided myself on being a thoughtful person, on not shying away from difficult questions and having faith in [the possibility of] honest answers. He thought I could set him straight. He was wrong. We talked for hours. He pointed out my own assumptions...When I hung up the phone, I was scared." In the confusion that followed, Mark looked desperately for closure. "It was like finding the ground pulled out from under me. I cried a lot. I couldn't see how I would ever get back my belief, but I felt I had to try. I spoke to two of my rebbeim, both of whom I respected a great deal. I remember the first time I sat down to speak with one of them...I was shaking. My rebbe asked me 'Are you cold?' and I told him, no, I just can't stop shaking." Mark spent extra years in yeshiva in the hope that he would recover his faith. By the time he entered YU, he was an atheist.

Regardless of how one comes to atheism, the subsequent isolation is painful. Many of Yosef's friends speak frankly of depression, of feeling rootless, of their sense that they are hidden pariahs. They struggle with relationships with their parents and family. Some have told their parents of their beliefs. Some haven't.

If you've been watching the winds, the rise of closet atheism in the Orthodox world is not news. Jay Lefkowitz's 2014 article in Commentary magazine flagged the existence of "Social Orthodoxy", a sector of the Jewish community that comfortably identifies (as least amongst themselves) as atheists or agnostics. This group, however, is deeply committed to a (at least partially) halachic lifestyle. As Lefkowitz explains: "Social Orthodox Jews fully embrace Jewish culture and Jewish community. And they are committed to the survival of the Jewish people. Indeed, that is their *raison d'être*. Furthermore, because religious practice is an essential component of Jewish continuity, Social Orthodox Jews are observant—and not because they are trembling before God...And so for me, and I imagine for many others like me, the key to Jewish living is not our religious beliefs but our commitment to a set of practices and values that foster community and continuity."

Lefkowitz is comfortable acknowledging his own non-belief while still identifying strongly with Orthodox practice. This differentiates him from the people I've described above. This group doesn't find Lefkowitz's solution to the belief/community conflict appealing. For some of them, commitment to Judaism was always more rooted in Judaism's theology – its account of human existence and its mandate to the individual -- than in its group identity. After the intensity of a religious experience invested with cosmic significance, Lefkowitz's view of Judaism seems disappointing. Others find Lefkowitz's position to be inevitably compromising, given that Orthodox Judaism comes with normative beliefs about women, homosexuals, and non-Jews that, even through the most liberal of lenses, differ from those of the avowedly secular. Theirs is the rationale (although not the conclusion) of Joshua Fattal, in his article for Tablet, "The Problem With Social Orthodoxy". Fattal cringed at the contradiction within Social Orthodoxy between belief and practice – ultimately a contradiction between communal values and private conscience. But while Fattal argues that Orthodoxy should evolve to reflect modern Jews' beliefs, the atheists I know respect the integrity of Orthodox Judaism too much to accommodate such

SEE ATHEIST, CONTINUED ON PAGE 13

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IBC, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

allow students to begin their IBC careers knowing that they are part of a warm family made up of Rabbeim and fellow talmidim.

In the beginning of this year, IBC made a significant change in its daily schedule to create more opportunities for students to build relationships with their Rabbeim. Classes were shortened by around twenty minutes each. This change allows many students to have free time at noon, a slot that is now specifically designated for students to speak with their Rabbeim over lunch. In the upcoming year, students and Rabbeim will continue to be encouraged to take advantage of this time and build those close relationships that will truly enhance the entire IBC experience.

Other efforts to increase camaraderie among the student body and Rabbeim include several on-campus communal Shabbat meals and speakers. Additionally, Rabbeim made more of an effort to invite students over to their houses for Shabbat as well as for the Purim Seudah. There are plans for more Shabbatons and Shabbat invites next year.

IBC also prides itself on placing more of a focus on experiential learning for its students. On April 5th, Rabbi Rofeh brought 58 students to Paterson, New Jersey, where they met with shochet and former IBC staff member Rabbi Avidan Elkin. There they watched several animals being slaughtered and learned many of the intricate Halachot of shechitah and kashrut. Rabbi Rofeh plans on having more experiential learning opportunities in the coming semesters. "We were able to attract 58 students without even advertising other than word of mouth. This shows that there is a strong interest in having these kinds of programs," said Rabbi Rofeh.

Of course, the main way IBC desires to help its students is by offering them classes that really stimulate their minds and that deepen their love for Torah. "Engaging and stimulating courses will serve to enhance the program for students who prefer learning in classroom settings. We are offering a variety of subjects ranging from the thought of Rav Kook to Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, to Jews in Medieval Islam, and the laws of kashrut," said Rabbi Kalinsky.

One particular group of students that IBC tries to appeal to are those students who came to the administration at the end of last semester requesting that there be more academically rigorous courses. In response to their request, a class was created given by Rabbi Ozer Glickman on Jewish Philosophy which featured this component of rigor and academic scholarship. In the upcoming semester, Rabbi Glickman will be giving another class entitled P'sak Halakha from Talmudic Times until Today. In addition, Rabbi Hayyim Angel will be giving a class in which he will seek to discover the shleimut between classical Yeshiva understandings of Tanach and those of academia. In addition, Rabbi Yosef Bronstein will be teaching a new course on the Thought of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, and Dr. Aaron Koller will be teaching a course on Akeidat Yitzchak.

In addition to the classes that are meant for students looking for academic rigor, IBC also has many classes that appeal to other types of students. Many classes, such as the Freshman Seminar, are geared towards students who do best in a more informal and intimate learning environment.

In order to further accommodate the students and their busy schedules, the upcoming semester will offer more opportunities for students to take online courses, and will also expand the "Night Seder" class option. The

latter will be run by Rabbi Gaby Danelli and will ensure that students are able to learn Torah daily without feeling too overwhelmed by their schedules. In addition, for the first time, Sy Syms students will be able to take all of their Academic Jewish Studies requirements as part of IBC.

These changes in IBC will truly solidify its status as the morning program that is most flexible to its students. These changes are likely just the tip of the iceberg for the how program will continue to improve in the future in response to its students' needs.

*ATHEIST, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11*

tampering. They are ironically "frum" atheists.

Their attitude reminds me of an 1886 address from rabbi and Assyriologist Morris Jastrow Jr., son of Marcus Jastrow of Jastrow dictionary. Jastrow Jr. wrote "Jews and Judaism" the week that he stepped down from the position of synagogue Lecturer, an antiquated post roughly equal in importance to community rabbi. A short article in the New York Times summarized his decision: "A man could be a Jew but not necessarily believe in the doctrine of Judaism, which demanded a belief in the divinity of the Ten Commandments, the divine authorship of the Scriptures and that Judaism had a special mission among the nations. To this [Jastrow] could not subscribe, and refused to maintain a position demanding adherence to such doctrines. Judaism was a religion of dogmas, and as such he could not accept it." The drama of his decision was intense: Jastrow Jr. was only twenty five at the time, and the community rabbi was none other than his own father.

Jastrow Jr. also felt that Judaism could not be compromised because of Jews' changing beliefs and values. You either accepted the fundamentals of the religion, or you didn't. And the worldviews associated with each stance were, at some point, incompatible. In his words: "In the collection of legends and tales known as the Midrash, there is a story told to illustrate the particular hospitality of...Sodom. It is said that they had a room, containing a bed of a certain size, which they placed at the disposal of strangers. If the bed was too short, they cut off the stranger's legs until he could accommodate himself to it; if it was too long they stretched his limbs. It is much the same way Judaism is treated today. We stretch it or shorten it to suit our convenience; we fashion it according to our views. Now, I do not believe we are obliged to fashion our views according to it, but we are certainly not justified in compounding any mixture we please and labeling it Judaism" ("Jews and Judaism", 9). For Jastrow, like the NYT article reported, Judaism "was a religion of dogmas". And his respect for those dogmas precluded the attitudes of either Lefkowitz or Fattal.

Orthodox Jews who hold belief central to the integrity of Orthodoxy will find Jastrow's attitude re-

freshing. Rabbi Avi Weiss's Open Orthodoxy is probably the latest attempt to adapt Judaism, as much as possible, to modern thinking and values. But the consequences of following Fattal's approach have been dire: the RCA has declared the movement beyond the pale of Orthodox life. The title of a 2015 article in The Jewish Press, "Saying Kaddish for Open Orthodoxy", seems to reflect the general sentiment of the Orthodox world. In some respects, then, atheists give traditional Orthodoxy something to be grateful for. They both hold beliefs to be foundational to Judaism and respect the integrity of those beliefs. That is precisely why they cannot reconcile themselves with it.

The question is: How should Orthodoxy respond to these people? In some respects, it is silly to speak of a communal response to atheists. Each person who defects from his or her Judaism faces unique parents, siblings and friends; settling each of those concrete relationships is a deeply personal affair. However, there is one aspect of this painful process that is communal and which begs our attention. This is the taboo within Orthodox society against atheism. Obviously, Orthodox Jews are stridently not atheists. I mean something else: that for many Jews, atheism is perceived as the worst form of moral degradation and intellectual dishonesty. I believe that this attitude is actually a part of contemporary religious education. Like the tzduki or Roman of Talmudic tales, the atheist or maskil is the archetypal, arrogant antagonist. The Orthodox attitude toward someone with the hubris to be an open atheist takes a leaf from the Haggada: "For since he removes himself from the community, he denies the (faith's) fundamentals. And you - blunt his teeth!" But there is nothing about atheism, per se, that makes one immoral or intellectually dishonest. The atheists that I know are neither. This is not the place to discuss morality without God or why some intellects find atheism more reasonable than theism. But it is a place to hold up this taboo for our collective scrutiny.

Orthodox Jews who believe in practice motivated by belief cannot fail to realize that observance, too, is an act of agency. The decision to serve rests not in the force of tradition, but in decisions and beliefs constructed in the inner sanctum of one's mind. Orthodox tradition admires those willing to suffer for their beliefs -- think of Daniel in the lion's den, Chanania,

Mishael and Azaria thrown in a fiery furnace. I hope I don't offend people by using heroes of faith to evoke sympathy for atheists. But closet atheists face a similar choice between integrity and conformity.

It's interesting that Orthodoxy shares many of its fundamental values with the people it most demonizes. Morality, truth and existential meaning are just as important to atheists as to theists. They are the values that drive the atheists I have been describing. A poll by the Pew Research Center in 2015 found that 31% of American atheists "feel a deep sense of spiritual peace and well-being at least weekly"; 35% "often think about the meaning and purpose of life" and over half (54%) "frequently feel a deep sense of wonder about the universe". These people are not religious. But as one rabbi I know put it, these are "religious feelings".

Obviously, Orthodoxy relies on more specific claims than "sensing wonder in the universe" or "thinking about the meaning and purpose of life". Orthodoxy is based on particular historical events -- God's covenant with our forefathers, the Exodus, and the divine revelation at Sinai. Atheists deny these historical claims; their universe lacks the warmth of a divine relationship. But they don't deny the underlying values that Orthodox Jews hold dear. I was sitting with Yosef and a group of friends when someone asked: "Who here is a proud Jew?" Nearly all responded with a loud "Sure." These people value their Judaism, admire their people's history and speak fondly of much of religious life. They just don't believe Judaism is true.

The "anti-atheist" taboo serves a purpose. For Orthodoxy, Judaism is not a reasonable possibility -- it is a communal reality. And taboos play an important role in demarcating the boundaries of possibility. If you want to ensure your children's faith, it's useful to establish strong walls between "us" and "them". Maybe such walls are necessary. If atheists must suffer for their nonbelief, if they must choose between living a lie and living stigmatized, so be it. Perhaps this essay is a misguided, foolish attempt to call attention to something better left unspoken; if that is the consensus, I bow out. But if Orthodoxy insists on treating atheism as something monstrous and degenerate, how does it reckon with the human cost? Or is that question, too, best swept under the rug?

An Inside Look at Upcoming Housing Changes on the Wilf Campus

By Doron Levine

Most YU students probably ignore most of the studs they receive. But if you've kept abreast of the constant tidal wave of announcements flooding your inbox, you might have noticed that, a few weeks ago, President Joel announced plans for a number of improvements to student housing on both undergraduate campuses.

These exciting changes have been in the works for some time now, and many of the ideas actually stem from student input. A group of RA's and students who reside in the dormitories presented a list of possible improvements to Rabbi Brander and Dean Nissel who, together with Wilf Campus Associate Director of University Housing and Residence Life Jonathan Schwab, discussed the various suggestions and came up with a list of key renovations. Though this degree of student involvement in major decisions might seem unusual for YU, Mr. Schwab underscored the administration's openness to students' suggestions: "we are always open to ideas; if any students – residents or not – have any, we'd love to hear them." In fact, students who live off-campus were also involved in the planning stages of these renovations – the administration assembled and questioned a focus group of students who live in local apartments to get a sense of what factors motivate students to live off campus and improve on-campus housing accordingly.

While none of the dormitory buildings will un-

dergo major structural changes, some interior elements will be upgraded to facilitate a more enjoyable housing experience. Students who live in Rubin Hall have learned to dread the end of the spring semester and the beginning of the fall semester when the hot sun beats down on Rubin's dark brick exterior and the building comes to resemble an oversized toaster, baking its unfortunate inhabitants to a crisp. To combat this oppressive heat, air conditioners will soon be installed in every room in Rubin Hall. This process will begin after students move out for the summer, and the air conditioning is expected to be installed and functional by the time students move in for the fall semester.

But even while temperatures drop in the newly air-conditioned Rubin dorms, its residents will have the opportunity to turn up the heat; in response to repeated requests from students, the university will be creating communal cooking spaces in the dormitory lounges for food preparation. Seven such facilities will be installed – three in Morg (floors 4, 6, and 8), two in Muss (floors 3 and 4), and two in Rubin (floors 3 and 6), though the specific layout of the cooking spaces will be different for each building. Each space will include tiled backsplash walls, stainless steel counters, additional electric wiring to support appliances, a sink to allow students to wash their dishes and appliances, and a table and chairs for eating. These specialized spaces will help to keep the rooms safe and clean even in the presence of generated heat, a serious concern in dormitories

which lack safe spaces for cooking. Appliances (and, for that matter, ingredients) will not be provided by the university – students who wish to cook will need to bring their own electric heat-generating devices such as crockpots, Panini presses, electric grills, hot water heaters, and Shabbos hot plates, and use them to whip up Shabbos or weekday meals for themselves and their lucky friends.

In anticipation of a resultant uptick in food intake, the dormitories will also see upgrades at the other end of the digestive process; the bathrooms in Morg and Rubin will be receiving new lighting, cubbies for storage, and new shower curtains.

Through channels of student feedback, the administration has learned that students in the dormitories lack appropriate spaces to hang out and unwind. To fill this void, many dormitory lounges are being made more conducive to relaxation. The Burdick Lounge in the basement of Morg will be receiving a new TV, and a card reader will be installed on the door so that only dorm students can access this room (and, for that matter, only students who have traded in their old ID's for a new one). The lounges on each floor in Rubin and Morg, which, as of now, are simply converted dorm rooms, will be made much more lounge-like – the closets have already been removed from these rooms and the sinks are being replaced with water fountains. In the coming months, new furniture, TV's, and video game

SEE HOUSING, CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

PLAY, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

relationships, motivations, and fast-paced conversations. The dialogue, ripe with witty banter, cultural references, and sharp intellect, brings distinct notes of critically acclaimed screenplays such as *The Social Network* and BBC's *Sherlock*. While some references seem a bit forced (at one point Peters himself admits to "Seinfeld-ing," assigning catchy titles to everyday events), others land perfectly and lend an upbeat and modern quality to the script.

Multiple timelines and narrators, while useful for conveying the themes and deep undercurrents of the play, make it difficult to follow the first act, which is jam-packed with exposition of the characters. However, before intermission, when we are taken far into the past to the moment when Greene and Peters first meet in college, the audience can get its bearings and appreciate what lies at the core of the play: the friendship of this unlikely duo. The second act brings the energy onstage to a new level, ending in a crescendo sure to leave the audience both satisfied and wanting more.

Across the board, the acting is truly commendable. Axel, a YCDS veteran, hits the nail on the head with his portrayal of the charming but terribly misguided and insecure Senator Peters. But the scenes that shine the most are those featuring Peters surrounded by his campaign staff, including Greene, Paul Union (Gavriel Guttman), Kevin (Judah Gavant), and Stan (Binyamin Bixon). The actors have great chemistry onstage and one can sense the camaraderie allowing the dialogue to flow so naturally.

I do offer one minor gripe in the form of Teitz's Thomas Greene. Greene, a man with noble intentions but an inability to charm people the way Peters can, is presented to us as the best in the business when it comes to political strategy. During the campaign he seems confident and commands the respect of everybody in the room. However, at other times, instead of the poise and gravitas one would expect from such a character, we get an anxious, and at times desperate, man trying to clear his name and distance himself from the ugliness of Peters' miscon-

duct. I think these issues arise from constant fluctuations in Thomas' attitude demanded by the script, and I believe Teitz does the most he can with a character whose temperament seems inconsistent compared to the otherwise concrete personalities in the play.

The score, arranged by Yeshiva College senior Aryeh Tiefenbrunn, lends a perfect soundtrack to the story, harmonizing with the mood and accenting dramatic moments deftly. The set, which doesn't change throughout the entire play, is very minimalist.

"FROM THE VERY FIRST SCENE, SHUCHATOWITZ HITS THE GROUND RUNNING, PULLING THE AUDIENCE THROUGH A LABYRINTH OF TIME AND SPACE, SHAPING HIS CHARACTERS THROUGH THEIR RELATIONSHIPS, MOTIVATIONS, AND FAST-PACED CONVERSATIONS!"



The stage, brilliantly split into two platforms, physically manifests the conflicting memories of Peters and Greene. The abstract graffiti-filled backdrop looks like Uncle Sam's interpretation of the Berlin Wall, perfectly intimating the disorder of American politics and the disarray and unreliability of Peters' and Greene's

individual narratives. Props are limited to stools and the occasional beer bottle, and while scenes take place in dozens of settings, there are never any set changes to reflect changes in location.

At the heart of this play lies the tumultuous relationship between Peters and Greene. In many ways, some obvious and some subtle, they are foils for each other. Peters is charming and likeable, while Greene is strategy-minded and occasionally abrasive. Peters, whose favorite book ("It's actually a play," ribs Greene) is *Death of a Salesman*, identifies with Willy Loman, a character motivated solely by a burning desire to be liked. Peters doesn't really care much for politics, only pursuing it because he craves the adoration of the public. Meanwhile, Greene seeks to actually make a difference in America, but doesn't have the charisma to become a politician. Each one helps the other to pursue his goals, and neither would thrive without the other, so they establish a symbiotic relationship. Towards the end of the play, Greene, in a moment of reflection, asks, "Do you think friendship is anything other than a person we use to feel better about ourselves and the mistakes we make?" Their friendship had always been doomed for failure because of its basis upon each character's selfish desires.

In addition to the theme of friendship, the play encourages the audience to question the nobility of motivation. While it's easy to see through Peters' façade (at one point, his estranged wife sharply critiques: "You've confused admiration with love."), one is left wondering if Peters is anything more than a victim of Greene's manipulation. Furthermore, underlying Greene's supposedly noble motivation to make America a better place is his desperation to go down in history and be remembered for the difference he made. Greene cannot love or be loved, so he seeks a legacy instead. At the end of the day, Peters and Greene are not so different from one another; the former craves approval while the latter wants a legacy. On the surface, the play's subtitle, "A Modern Political Tragedy," would seem to suggest the tragedy lies in Peters' untimely death; however, in truth, it manifests itself in the very souls of the play's main characters. They are both tragic figures: David Peters needs to be loved while Thomas Greene does not have the capacity to love.

HOUSING, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

systems will be installed in the lounges on every floor in Morg and Rubin. Similar spaces will also be created in new floor lounges on Muss 3 and 4. A new TV will be installed in Muss Hall and water fountains will also be placed on every floor.

In addition to these projects, the university is also working on a handful of miscellaneous refurbishings. Hallways and stairwells in Rubin, Muss, and Morg, along with dorm-room doors in Morg, will be receiving a glossy coat of fresh paint. Carpeting will be removed from certain spaces in Rubin Hall to give it a crisp and less frizzled look. The Rubin Lobby will be refurbished and the laundry rooms in Morg and Muss will be redone. Weary-legged students will be glad to hear that the elevators in Rubin and Morg will be fixed – the elevators often require maintenance and it is expected that a significant overhaul will greatly reduce elevator downtime. This improvement alone is expected to cost around \$30,000.

Of course, all of these enhancements come at a cost, most of which will come out of students' pockets – the improvement in the quality of the dorm experience will see a concomitant increase in housing prices. Next year, the annual cost of living in Muss, Rubin, and Morg will be increasing by 300, 750, and 785 dollars respectively (for standard, two-person rooms). Small tuition increases are also helping to pay for the project. Aware that rising tuition and housing costs are a major concern for students, Rabbi Brander explained that the plans were formulated with an eye towards thrift and frugality. "We examined numerous factors to get the most gain for the lowest cost," said Rabbi Brander. "Taken together, the entire package of coming to YU went up only 4%." Though all housing prices are going up, Muss Hall's prices will be increased only slightly, so Muss continues to be a feasible option for those seeking economical housing. Moreover, the university will, for the first time, be offering housing grants.

An adjustment to the housing rules will also help to fund the improvements. Students matriculating in fall 2016 have been informed that they will be required to live in university housing during their first year on campus. There will be a process for waiving this requirement for those who have specific reasons not to live in university housing, but these students will be the exception rather than the rule. At the Beren Campus town hall meeting, President Joel explained that this sort of policy is in place at most universities similar to ours, and that many universities even have two-year residency requirements and some even have three. However, this claim can be questioned given the fuzziness of the similarity criterion – Columbia University has a similar rule but NYU does not.

Many students have assumed that our university has a rule requiring first year students to live in the



dorms, but recently more and more first year students have elected to live elsewhere – local apartments are often cheaper than the dorms and they allow students more space and freedom. In fact, this year approximately 20% of first year students lived

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off campus. But the administration firmly believes in the importance of living on campus, and this belief is a major factor motivating the dorm renovations. Rabbi Brander explained, “Student success is driving our decisions. From our experience, FTOCs who live on campus have a better transition to college life and take fuller advantage of campus activities.”

Meal plans will also be changing next year for students on both campuses to offer students with varying appetites a wider variety of alimentary options. The current plan compels students living in university

housing to sign up for the standard \$3400 meal plan, but many students require less than the allotted funds, forcing them to splurge on voluminous quantities of cookies, soda, and paper towels as the year winds down in order to balance their budget. To avoid this end-of-semester gluttony, the university will now offer two meal plans to first year students and three options to returning students, who will be able to put either 4,000, 3,500, or 2,800 dollars on their cafeteria cards. Though the university might lose revenue by offering a \$2,800 plan, Rabbi Brander emphasized that “giving students choice is important and appropriate.”

Other YU campuses will also see changes to housing and residence life. Perhaps

most notably, YU will be selling the Cardozo student residence on 11th Street called The Alabama. The building is in need of repairs, so rather than invest in this project and seek temporary housing for its law students, YU will instead sell The Alabama and move Cardozo student housing to 148 Lexington Avenue, adjacent to the Schottenstein Residence Hall on the Beren Campus. Some have expressed concern about housing undergraduate women next to a co-ed graduate student dorm, but the administration has insisted that the buildings will not be connected and that all facilities—including lounges, gyms, study rooms, and laundry rooms—will be separate. The two dormitories will have separate entrances and the buildings will have two different addresses. Rabbi Brander did not wish to speculate on the price tag of The Alabama, but he reiterated that renovations on both undergraduate campuses will be funded by the revenue generated by the increased housing prices.

There is also talk of other possible improvements around campus. The plaza on 185th Street is expected to be redone over the course of this coming year. There are no specific plans for Strenger Hall other than some cleaning to prepare it for students enrolled in the Post-Pesach Program, but Rabbi Brander confirmed that there has been talk of knocking it down in order to build new apartment residences (similar to what is offered on the Beren Campus) and a guest-house for Shabbos.

When asked about the upcoming improvements to the dorms, Wilf Campus Associate Director of University Housing and Residence Life Jonathan Schwab emphasized that these physical improvements are only one aspect of the changes that are being implemented on the Wilf Campus in order to improve the student experience: “As the Commentator has already written, the Office of University Housing and Residence Life, in conjunction with the Office of Student Life, launched several programs this year focused on creating a warmer, more social, more supportive environment on campus. These include Escape the Dorm, Nerf Wars, Dorm Talks, and far more interactive floor parties, which will continue (even more strongly) next year. The renovations and physical changes are not happening in isolation; they accompany additional programs and ideas that have the common goal of making sure students can succeed at YU – academically, socially, and personally.”

Rabbi Brander similarly explained that the university has been making a concerted effort to improve residence life on campus, and he pointed out that bringing Mr. Jonathan Schwab and Dr. Esty Rollhaus to the uptown campus was motivated by this impulse. “Dorm life is safer,” said Rabbi Brander, “it leads to student success but we need to make it warm, personable and attractive. Everything that we are trying to do both in the programming and the bricks and mortar is reflective of this goal.”



From The President's Desk: YSU President Noam Safier on Failing Marriages

By Noam Safier

An unstable marriage can be a source of relentless stress and burden for the people experiencing it and those around them. When a couple feels they can no longer bear the lifelong commitment they once made to each other, they are forced to acknowledge the uncomfortable divide that exists between them. For many struggling couples, marriage counseling is an important yet often last resort that can provide them with the tools they need to get their relationship back on track. The proper therapist can bring stability back to the couple and create the framework in which they can begin to once again imagine their lives as a single unit.

A marriage is very similar to a community. A community joins together over a shared set of values, goals and aspirations, much like a marriage. A community must make decisions that affect all others within it and can be fraught with problems, just like a marriage. And, just as a marriage can fail, so can a community.

The Modern Orthodox community is like a failing marriage. Changes to traditional, Orthodox practice has sparked what has metastasized into a full blown communal schism. For example, disputes regarding the place of homosexuality in our community or those about expanded women's roles are two of the major issues tearing at the fabric of our union. Division lines fall among neighbors, friends and family members and tempers flare, quite strikingly. The problem is growing. We are indeed in a troubled marriage headed towards divorce.

An oft utilized tool in couples counseling offers insight on this decline. Marriage therapists recommend to couples the use of verbal validation to serve as the foundation of disagreement. A failure to convey a sense of empathy with the other's concerns creates a significant roadblock to resolution. Verbal validation, according to Psychologist Karyn Hall, is "the recognition and acceptance of another person's thoughts, feelings, sensations, and behaviors as understandable." It involves communicating a clear sensitivity and appreciation of the issue that the other is struggling with. Hall stresses that validating someone's concerns does not necessarily condone their actions, but rather accepts the person and appreciates the issues that are troubling them. A failure by our leadership specifically, and community more generally, to validate those among us who find difficulty with traditional Orthodoxy has widened the gap between us.

A clear indicator of our improper attitude took place in 2014 when two girls in SAR began to wear tefillin in school. Some in the Orthodox community responded with anger and disgust, instead of sensitively, with warmth and compassion. They leveled accusations of efforts to destroy traditional

Orthodoxy or utter rejection of the mesorah. They denounced supporters as misguided Jews, drunk on the feminism that modernity, not Judaism, values. Instead of conveying a sense of understanding and acceptance, these voices pushed away others and reinforced the painful, anger-stricken rift that we so clearly find in our community. And, in the short span of two years, the chasm between the sides has seemed to increase and grow.

When a member of our leadership makes an insensitive remark about others' beliefs or practices, it serves only to marginalize and isolate the people they're referring to. The weight of our rabbinic leadership is diminishing as a result; their authority, weakening. Inappropriate statements broadcast a lack of appreciation for the significance of the problem and understanding of the issue. As a result, outside of the walls of YU, and even within them, the clout of our leadership is waning. People are increasingly turned off by a governance they dismiss as "out of touch". Although some in the leadership have made attempts at conveying understanding, these endeavors seem to be overshadowed and outnumbered by more negative statements. To be clear, I am not advocating a unilateral embrace of the proposed changes. Tradition is of the utmost importance to Judaism and, I believe, changes should be left only to

"WE MUST LISTEN AND VALIDATE. WHEN WE DISAGREE, WE MUST DO SO RESPECTFULLY, BEARING IN MIND THAT WE ARE REJECTING THE IDEA, NOT THE PERSON."

our most trusted sages. I do, however, feel we must alter the way in which we approach these changes and more importantly, the people driving them.

However, like a marriage should be a two-way street, everyone in the community must communicate appropriately. The side seeking to make changes must also recognize the positions of the establishment pushing against them in a way that expresses respect and appreciation for their reasoning. Strongly worded reactions from both sides tend to fall on deaf ears and only serve to keep a solution out of reach. Only once we create an atmosphere of mutual respect for every side of the issue can we begin to heal the fracture.

We must listen and validate. When we disagree, we must do so respectfully, bearing in mind that we are rejecting the idea, not the person. Although no obvious solution exists, it is the obligation of our

leadership to create transparent lines of communication that effuse a deep, sensitive understanding of the problem. It is very important that we do not see these issues as the sole responsibility of the struggler to resolve. This "blaming" outlook will develop a relationship that will only worsen when stressed. To revert to the example of marriage, therapists emphasize that couples must view problems as not the responsibility of "him" or "her", but of "us". If one member of the community struggles, the problem belongs to the collective.

As a student leader, I've had the opportunity to interact with people on both sides of the issues and this idea is a product of those conversations. This concept, however, is not new. In fact, Rav Kook espoused the same notions in the early 1900's. In response to the drastic changes enacted by the Enlightenment (to be clear, I am NOT comparing the changes introduced by some in our community to the Enlightenment but Rav Kook's response remains salient), Rav Kook, who believed there was a kernel of truth in every ideology, advocated for a response that stressed sensitivity and warmth. Although he never shied away from refuting what he believed were false claims, he always did so in a way that communicated kindness and respect. When we angrily react to our struggling spouse we push them, and a solution, away.

Marriage therapy, although often resisted by struggling couples, has an incredibly high success rate. Couples report stronger, healthier relationships after attending a number of sessions with the proper therapist. We must begin to view our community as a valued marriage; one in which we exhibit genuine care for the other members and their problems, one in which we validate, even if we do not agree with, the desires of every member. As a nation that values achdut, it is our duty to do all that we can to ensure the bonds among us remain unbreakable and, like the struggling couple, embark upon the path towards recovery.



Manny Dahari: The Most Interesting Student in YU

By Josh Blicher

Meet Manny Dahari, a Yeshiva University junior majoring in marketing and minoring in political science. At first glance, his stylish haircut, dark skin, and American accent make him appear no different than a North American university student with Sephardic ancestry. But having recently had the pleasure of interviewing Manny, I can confidently assert that his childhood strongly contrasts with the privileged upbringing of most of his North American peers. Underneath his conventional exterior lies a narrative that renders him one of the most interesting and courageous students at YU.

Born in Raida, a village near the capital of Yemen, Dahari is the fourth of eight children. He describes the Jewish community in Yemen as close-knit and extremely devout—very few Yemenite Jews are irreligious. Almost all male members of the Ye-

menite Jewish community wear kippahs and keep their sidelocks unshorn, which they refer to as a siman, a sign to remind them of their heritage and unique value system. Most saliently, their simanim and head coverings differentiate them from the Arabs indigenous to Yemen, and render them easy targets for anti-semitism. Unlike most adults who have warm memories of their childhood, Dahari remembers the horrors of the vitriolic anti-semitism that he experienced at a young age. He recalls Arab children preparing rocks and other make-shift weapons to throw at him and his siblings as they walked to school.

Despite the size of the Jewish community in Yemen, all of the Jewish children attend an orthodox elementary school funded by Satmar Chassidim. The curriculum places a large emphasis on the rigorous study of classical Judaic texts—like Talmud and Chumash—and not on secular studies. Upon

graduating elementary school, Yemenite Jewish males generally attend yeshiva for one to two years, shortly after which they go to work, get married, and start families; Jewish females start working and usually get married earlier than their male counterparts.

But around the time of his bar-mitzvah, Dahari's life-course took an unconventional turn when the Satmar representative of Yemen gave Dahari the opportunity of a lifetime: to attend yeshiva in the United States for two years. Dahari's father was overjoyed that his son would be the first of his family to leave Yemen in many generations, and he therefore encouraged Manny to take the leap of faith. So shortly after his bar-mitzvah, an excited Manny boarded a plane—an infrequent occurrence

SEE DAHARI, CONTINUED ON PAGE 17

DAHARI, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

among Yemenite citizens—and left his family and his war stricken home country behind.

Several hours later, clad in his large kippah and long side locks, Dahari arrived in New York where he stayed briefly with his cousins in Lakewood, New Jersey before starting yeshiva in Williamsburg. Lakewood is one of the largest ultra-orthodox communities in the U.S, and Dahari felt comfortable there since the culture of Lakewood was not too different from his community in Yemen. Dahari's hospitable cousins gave him a sense of comfort and stability, but, unfortunately, these feelings did not carry over into his time in Yeshiva.

After leaving Lakewood, Dahari went to Williamsburg where he attended a Satmar yeshiva. The languages of instruction were Yiddish and English, two languages which Dahari barely spoke. He also recalls that aside from side locks, large kippahs, and a distantly shared heritage, he and his Satmar peers had few cultural similarities. He was the only student in the yeshiva with dark skin. He was assigned a mentor, a Satmar adult, to help him during his time in the United States, but this mentor did not speak his mother tongue, making communication difficult and jeopardizing their relationship.

During his time at the Satmar yeshiva, Dahari experienced a culture that was vastly different from the one in which he was raised—the Satmar yeshiva required him to spend the majority of his time in a cloistered study hall, and he was not permitted to leave the yeshiva without wearing a hasidic hat and jacket. He also faced social ostracization by his peers who attended the yeshiva. After six months of social difficulties and culture clashes, Dahari decided to leave the yeshiva.

When his mentor heard of this decision, he gave Dahari an ultimatum: return to Yemen and embarrass his family, or remain in the U.S. but live independently. Dahari chose the latter option. Having grown up in an ultra-orthodox community, Dahari's natural course of action was to continue his Jewish education at a different yeshiva in the U.S. So he promptly switched to another Chassidic yeshiva, where he studied for another six months. He then attended several non-Chassidish yeshivas, including one in upstate New York. At each yeshiva he attended, he did not engage in secular studies. During his several year stint in yeshiva, he stayed in various dormitories and worked on Fridays and Sundays in order to earn spending money and to purchase clothing (his tuition was covered by various yeshiva schol-

arship funds). During this period, though he primarily studied Hebraic texts, his English language skills rapidly improved.

But when he turned 18, he decided to earn a high school education and to leave the world of full-time Torah learning. Dahari stated that the impetus for his decision was his desire to understand the world in which he lived and to not become a stereotypical Yemenite teenager with little worldly knowledge. A series of complex events resulted in his travelling to Chicago where he was introduced to an orthodox family which took him under their wing for an extended period of time.

His decision was bold, especially given that he had not received any secular education since he left Yemen when he was thirteen. However, with support from the family in Chicago and hours of diligent study, Manny completed several grades of high school in about four months. He then attended a yeshiva high school in Indianapolis, a short drive from the family in Chicago, where he graduated when he was 19. Upon graduating high school, he attended Oakton Community College in Chicago, where he earned a B.A. in Liberal Arts. He then applied to several universities, including Yeshiva University.

However, after having lived in nine different cities in 9 years, Dahari sought stability. He thus decided to attend Loyola College in Skokie in September 2014, which enabled him to stay near the aforementioned family. During his first semester at Loyola College, Dahari studied Biology with the intent of

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going to medical school. It was during this time that he also decided to try and help his siblings leave Yemen. Although he achieved academic success, Dahari disliked the lack of Jewish culture on campus—he felt that something was missing.

But during his second semester, he started to invest more time into helping his siblings escape

Yemen—his parents needed more time to prepare themselves financially before leaving. Toward the beginning of the semester, he came in contact with the Jewish Agency, an Israeli organization that specializes in helping Middle-Eastern Jews emigrate to Israel, and then offered to help Dahari's siblings leave Yemen and come to Israel. Dahari decided to suspend his studies at the university to devote more time to working on helping his siblings escape. As soon as he withdrew from his classes, he received a call from the Jewish Agency: they were able to arrange for his siblings to emigrate to Israel via Jordan.

Shortly thereafter, Dahari boarded a plane where he planned to meet his siblings an hour after his flight landed. After having been in Jordan for 24 hours, his siblings' flight did not arrive. Dahari was notified by the Jewish Agency that the plane which was supposed to transport his siblings had not arrived in Yemen. As Yemen is constantly in a state of war, commercial airlines seldom travel there.

A disappointed Dahari continued to Israel where he worked with the Jewish agency from May of 2015 until August. Although he planned on returning to Loyola College, he decided to re-apply to YU to which he had been previously accepted. He was re-accepted and decided to attend YU a week before the Fall 2015 semester began.

Dahari describes YU as a difficult but worthwhile adjustment. At yeshiva, Dahari feels that the vibrant Jewish community allows him to participate in student life in many ways that he could not at Loyola college: he is currently involved in a number of student clubs and activities.

This past October, Manny received a call from the Jewish Agency. They were able to help some of his siblings escape. That night, Manny flew to Jordan, where he planned on meeting his siblings an hour after landing—he was not permitted to tell anyone where he was going. But the plane did not arrive, for the runway in Yemen had been bombed. Fortunately, his siblings were re-routed. Several nerve-racking hours later, Dahari's siblings arrived. It was the first time that Manny had seen these siblings since he had left Yemen. They then traveled together to Israel. Unfortunately, their reunion was short lived. Manny only spent two days with his siblings before returning to YU.

Although he had difficulty explaining his absences to his professors, Dahari successfully completed the term. A few weeks ago, Dahari and the Jewish Agency were able to help his parents and younger siblings escape Yemen. Like their children who had left before them, there were a number of events that complicated Manny's parents' travel plans; a war broke out, preventing them from leaving on time. They had to postpone their flight for several days, and they could not leave the safety of a hotel near the airport where they subsisted on a limited supply of fruits and vegetables. Finally, after enduring a great amount of physical and emotional turmoil, the remaining Daharis finally emigrated to Israel. The Daharis were also able to bring an ancient Torah scroll that they have had in the family for over 600 years.

Although Dahari successfully adjusted to life in the U.S., it was an arduous process, especially as he learned of what his family and the Jewish community of Yemen had to endure. In 2008, Dahari's rabbi and mentor was shot in front of his house. And in 2011, Dahari's cousin was kidnapped, forcibly converted to Islam, and married to an Islamic man. His other cousins were physically threatened: their backyard was bombed. In 2011, Dahari's sister's father-in-law was stabbed to death.

But fortunately, Dahari's entire immediate family has successfully left Yemen. Manny Dahari's story is nothing short of inspiring. On April 16th, Manny will travel to Israel where he will spend Passover with his family. Looking back on the events that occurred over the last 10 years, this Pesach will serve as a true night of freedom for the entire Dahari family.



Trends in Politics

By Jonathan Livi

People often form their political opinions based on micro-issues. By this I mean that they look into fine details of economic and social policy, and develop views in accordance with the policies they identify with. I do not do this. I like to form opinions based on macro-issues. Instead of engaging in frivolous research into policies and statistics that I cannot understand or vet, I look for trends in political movements, and look to my values to see if these trends are acceptable to me or not. These trends are easily discernable and usually not up for debate. Therefore, not only do they provide me with a more reliable understanding of things, they make political discussion more substantive or fruitful, as the discussion does not necessarily deteriorate into a quarrel over obscure facts and conflicting premises.

In full disclosure, I agree with conservatives on most positions. Thus, the following will be a description of the broad trends and macro-issues that have led me to develop a conservative worldview.

One of the most important trends in politics is that conservatives always attempt to shrink the size of government, while the left always attempts to expand it. This trend is a giveaway, as it tells me that conservatives are more responsible when it comes to granting people power than liberals. Responsible is the key word here. As someone who believes that humans have a strong natural tendency to amass power and rule over their peers, seeing the left expand the power of the bureaucratic elite so willingly is not only bothersome, it is worrisome. It implies that the left is irresponsible when it comes to the allocation of power. I fear a world in which the left has the unrestricted ability to expand the power of the few individuals who reside in the Capitol. I am convinced that such a scenario would end in tyranny, and only then would people wake up and realize the danger of granting people power gratuitously.

Now, consider the fact that senior citizens tend to vote conservative. This is another good indicator of the superiority of a conservative worldview. Why? For anyone who was raised by an older authority it should be obvious. Older people are wiser than younger people are. They have by definition experienced more, and are less controlled by their irrational emotions. Older people have made stupid decisions and have learned from them. Younger people still haven't made those decisions, and if they have, they probably have yet to face the consequences.

It does not stop there. Not only are older people more likely to be conservative, so are married people. And married people with kids—even more so. This too must be indicative of something; for marriage and parenthood are character-building institutions. They make people better. They force people to learn responsibility by making them worry about putting food on the table and making sure their kids get a decent education. They teach people selflessness by having them provide for their offspring with the expectation of nothing in return. It is unthinkable to me that this all means nothing. It is unthinkable that such people's faculties of thought are no better than a college edu-

cated millennial's. Thus, when having to choose between the politics of the young and hip and the politics of the old and responsible, I'll take the latter, even though I'm only twenty years old.

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Another very important aspect of politics is the media. Why is it that conservatives have a virtual monopoly on talk radio, while liberals have a virtual monopoly on the television and movie industries? What caused this divide? Ostensibly, the reason for this divide is happenstance, and it has no major ramifications. This was my position on the matter as well. But that all changed when I came across a book titled "Amusing Ourselves to Death" by Neil Postman. In the book, Postman makes the reasonable argument that different types of media permit very different kinds of discourse to take place. For example, smoke signals, used in more primitive societies, cannot be a conduit for elevated theological discussion. That much is obvious. But this reasoning also applies in ways that are not obvious. For example, can television provide

undeniably allows for a much more elevated and rational discussion than does television. A radio show host often has over three full hours to dwell on one topic. A cable news channel, by way of comparison, would be committing ratings suicide if it devoted one hour to only three topics. Similarly, the lack of imagery in talk radio means that information is processed through the ear, where rational thought prevails. Television however, enters information through the eyes, where emotion—not reason—dominates.

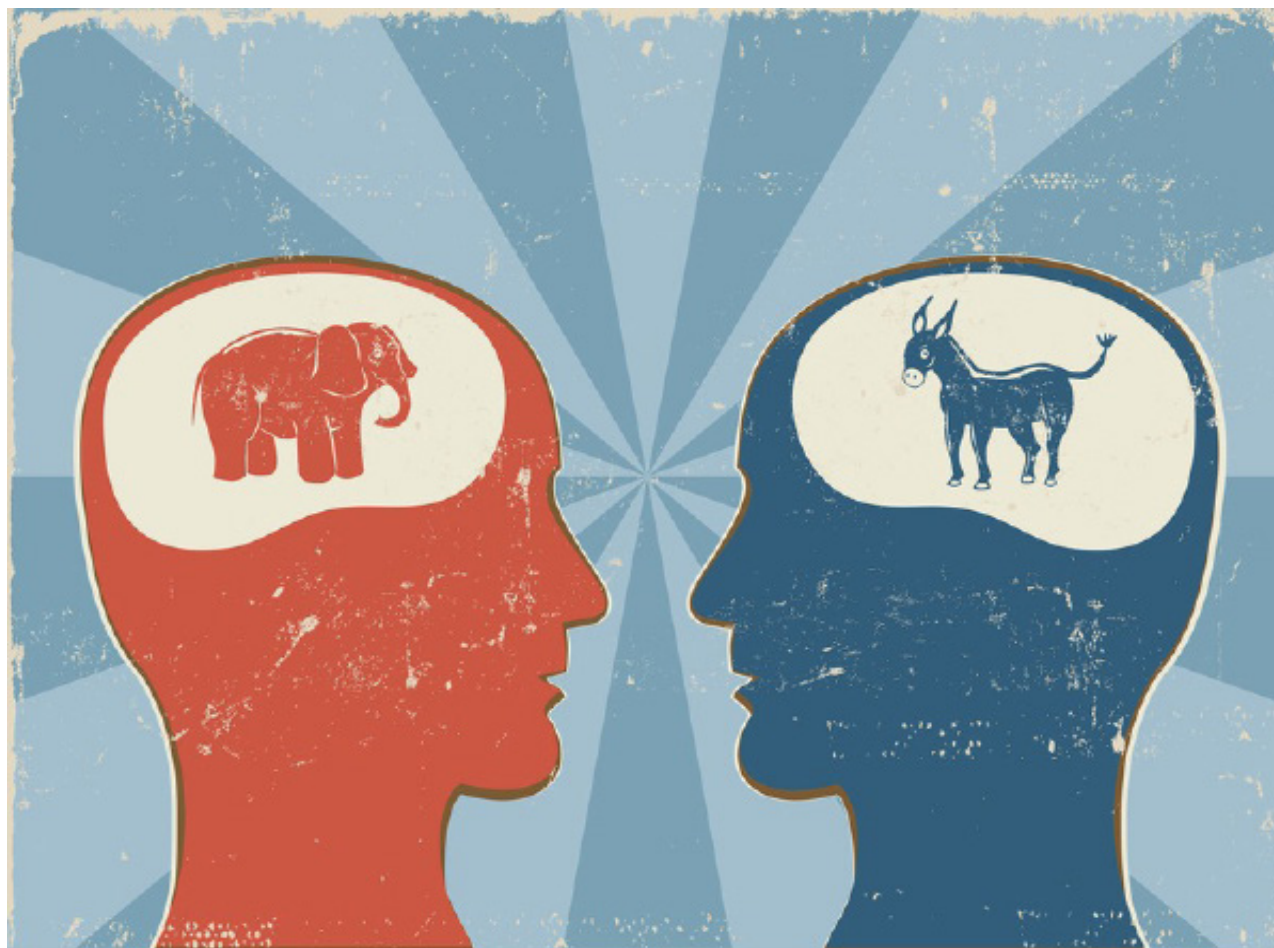
The fact that conservatives have come to dominate talk radio is no coincidence. It is entirely to do with messaging. Where rationality pervades, conservatives seem to flow. Where emotion pervades, conservatives are understandably absent. When seeing this phenomenon, I have no choice but to assume that conservative discourse is probably more serious and thoughtful than that of their liberal counterparts.

This leads me to the next trend: the fact that Hollywood practically unanimously votes left. The lesson to be learned from this is simple and it can be gauged using a metric called "the Hollywood test." The metric works as follows: whatever Hollywood does, do the opposite. Hollywood, in today's culture, represents the epitome of decadence. Its obsession with material wealth, good looks, fame, glory, and hedonism makes it a perfect model of how not to live. When seeing Hollywood in all its glory, I'm constantly reminded of the first verse of Psalms that says: "Happy is the man that hath not walked in the counsel of the wicked, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful." In keeping with this verse, I try not associate myself with Hollywood at all, whether physically or intellectually. Thus, when Hollywood votes left, I vote right.

The final trend I would like to discuss has to do with Israel. Favoring the Palestinian cause over Israel's safety is an immoral position. It is immoral because it puts the lives of innocent Israelis at risk while strengthening the causes of Islamist groups who have a record of committing heinous crimes against humanity. This is so clear, that someone who is against Israel must have something wrong with his or her moral compass. There is no other way to explain it. So what am I supposed to think when I see that almost all anti-Israel sentiment comes from the left? Am I supposed to ignore it? Am I supposed to assume it is an isolated incident? That the left is getting this wrong, but on every other issue, the leftist moral compass works just fine? Such reasoning is baseless. When someone commits murder, it is not an isolated incident. It is rather indicative of deep

moral flaws that have been unattended to. The same should apply to the left's hatred of Israel. It is so backwards a moral position that it is impossible to isolate. It must be indicative of something badly wrong with leftist thinking and with leftist morality. This is the only reasonable conclusion. I am thus dumbfounded by the scores of Jews who have such passionate love for Israel, but who still cling to every other leftist position fervently. It makes no sense to me.

I hope this was a clear exposition on why I believe in conservative principles. The goal was to stay as far away from the fine details as possible, which will hopefully bring, if not agreement, clarity.



for as substantive a discourse as the written word? According to the Postman, it cannot. While the written word is static and can be analyzed from generation to generation, television is constantly moving and does not allow the viewer more than a few moments to analyze what was seen. This qualitative difference led the author to conclude, that while typography can be successfully used for entertainment and deep thought, television can only successfully be used for entertainment—and not deep thought (barring a few rare exceptions.)

The same distinction applies to the divide in the talk radio and television/movie industries. Talk radio

The Panama Papers And How Affluence Can Corrupt

By Joey Chesir

One of the most recent problems to make headlines worldwide has been the so-called "Panama Papers" scandal, which involves politicians and other worldwide leaders using offshore financial accounts to keep their funds without being taxed. This scandal, which has been referred to as the biggest leak of documents in history, has led to a number of high profile individuals, including politicians, businessmen, lawyers, being placed under a heavy degree of public scrutiny, with one leader, Iceland Prime Minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson, actually resigning as a result. Without question, this scandal has caused major fallout worldwide, with many of the involved figures facing heavy criticism from the public. However, the biggest nega-

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tive outcome of this scandal exists on a more philosophical level. The Panama Papers scandal reveals that within our society, being rich, powerful, or famous often gives individuals a feeling of entitlement that they do not deserve, and often causes them to disregard rules that apply to every citizen, including themselves. The Panama Papers scandal is just one example of public figures using their wealth and influence to further their own self-interests, while considering themselves separate from laws to which all citizens are accountable, both legally and philosophically.

The Panama Papers situation arose from doc-

uments leaked from a Panamanian law firm, which implicate a number of powerful individuals across the world in hiding funds in offshore accounts, far from the reach of their respective countries. By employing various methods, including hiding funds in shell companies and hidden accounts, these figures hoped to avoid paying taxes in their respective countries. Individuals tied to prominent heads of state, such as Russian President Vladimir Putin, British Prime Minister David Cameron, and Chinese President Xi Jinping have all been connected to the papers, and the fallout has caused these individuals to face increasing scrutiny. Superficially, this scandal has shown significant flaws in worldwide financial policies, which have allowed wealthy and powerful people to circumvent the system for their own ends. Philosophically speaking, however, this scandal shows how being rich and powerful often causes individuals to disregard legal and ethical principles that apply to every citizen, simply because of their own previous fortune. When analyzing this case, the motivation for these individuals' transgressions seems somewhat shaky. These people are among the wealthiest and powerful people in the world. If there's one thing they do not lack for, it is money. Therefore, it seems remarkably curious that these people would break the law, and put themselves in heavy public scrutiny once their crimes were revealed, all simply for the possibility of not having to pay taxes, which would essentially mean them keeping more money. When you're among the richest people in the world, it seems highly unusual that the one thing that you'll risk public humiliation and legal scrutiny for is more money. This simply proves that in many cases, having wealth and power causes individuals to forget their societal obligations to follow laws that everyone is subject to. These individuals simply choose to ignore these laws, and follow the prospect of further financial gain, even when a serious argument could be made that financial gain was probably the one thing that they needed the least. Having power, fame, or vast wealth often means that individuals will ignore both legal and moral codes, not for any overriding reason

regarding their own best interests, but simply because they can. This scandal, ultimately, may have involved these figures committing financial misdeeds, but this incident's real meaning is that the individuals involved considered themselves separate from the laws of their respective citizens.

This mindset is a major societal problem, because many wealthy and influential people can be subject to thinking that both legal mandates and moral principles of human interaction don't apply to them. For example, both Republican presidential frontrun-



ner Donald Trump and Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton have garnered significant political followings, despite neither being a stranger to scandal. Trump has almost consistently managed to make inflammatory and prejudiced comments throughout his campaign, often targeting minorities, women, and even specific individuals who have challenged him, including Fox News reporter Megyn Kelly. Meanwhile, Clinton has faced significant backlash regarding her role in the Benghazi attack in 2012, and her possible illicit use of a private email server during the crisis, which may have revealed indiscretions of hers regarding the situation. The actions of both candidates have been questioned and condemned by many, and have tarnished their respective reputations, even while both

SEE PANAMA, CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

A Respectful Approach to Child-Rearing

By Hillel Field

As a child, it always left me frustrated when my parents or anyone else called something that I did "cute." I specifically remember one time as a five-year-old when the host of a Shabbat dinner asked me to share a devar torah based on what I learned in kindergarten that week. Although I was embarrassed at first, I reluctantly began to share my thoughts. At that point, a couple of guests began to fawn over the way I spoke. This just encouraged my shame, and I promptly decided to stop speaking. Why should I bother to share what I have to say if nobody will take me seriously? This sort of experience consistently left me embarrassed. I remember specific times when I felt like I had something valuable to add to a conversation, albeit at a very young age, and all I got in response were compassionate smiles and nods. Adults seemed to ignore the content of what I was saying, and focused on the way I was delivering it. Looking back, Maimonides' words, "Accept the truth, no matter its source" ring especially true.

The Christian-influenced notion of "Original Sin" may have something to do with how we look at children. By taking the biblical creation story at its literal word, people get the idea that it's an unquestioned fact before one develops a sense of sexual awareness, they are necessarily pure. It is much more beneficial and meaningful to see the story as a psychological allegory, for how human beings make mistakes and use their judgment improperly. This is something that adults and children do

equally, and places no burden on parents to keep their children sheltered and free from the outside world. By seeing kids as our equals, we give them a better chance at practicing for the "real world" before they are thrown in at full force.



If someone asked you a question while you were a child, and asked it again at your current age, would the gist of your opinion have changed drastically? While

you might use longer words and more articulate phrasing, the basic principles that form your outlook on life are usually in place early on in life. At least, this has been my experience. Once I reached a certain level of maturity deemed acceptable by society, adults all of a sudden started to consider what I had to say as a peer. But this just seems so arbitrary. Of course we get a kick out of how cute kids can be and the unique way they put things. But we should put the pleasure we get out of them on hold for the sake of their own sense of self-worth. As we all know, children are highly impressionable, and experiences that leave them feeling inadequate can stick with them for the rest of their lives.

It's a common occurrence during conversations among adults, that if a child asks about the topic at hand, a parent will respond along the lines of, "We're just talking about adult stuff." I think this is a serious mistake. Children have the tendency to take something that can be written up into a highly technical essay and capture the essence of a message with simple language. By going out of our way to invite kids into our conversations, and explaining to them the basic issues at stake in simple language, we can give their critical thinking skills a favorably early jumpstart. And not only would they be the sole beneficiaries, but by articulating ideas in ways that a child can grasp, we sharpen our own views at the same time. Nobody will expect a child to

SEE CHILDREN, CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

The Dark Side of Factory Farming

By Kochava London

Today, over 99% of farm animals live on factory farms, also known as concentrated-animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Factory farms are large industrialized farms in which hundreds of animals are raised indoors in conditions that are intended to maximize profit and minimize cost. For hundreds of years, animals were raised on small family farms. This changed around the 1960's, when the fast-food industry became increasingly popular and there was demand for mass quantities of meat that could be produced at low costs. This led to the development of the ever efficient industrialized factory farm. Despite the efficiency, the inhumane conditions of these facilities, coupled with the numerous environmental and health risks, are a major cause for concern.

Every year, billions of chickens, turkeys, and cows are raised for human consumption. Over the past twenty years, the average number of animals per facility has increased dramatically. Because of this, the animals are confined to extremely small cages or overcrowded feedlots. More than 95% of egg-laying hens live in wire battery cages that typically hold between eight to ten birds. The hens are packed so tightly that they can't even spread their wings. Each bird typically has about 67 square inches of space. To put that in perspective, a standard sheet of paper is about 94 square inches. The wire cages are also sharp, and cut into the hens' feet. Many starve to death after getting caught in the cage and being unable to free themselves.

According to Ben Carlson, a former employee at Rose Acre Farms, the second largest egg producer in the U.S., "If you haven't been in a hen plant, you don't know what hell is," he says. "This gust of ammonia and urine stench hits you when you open the door, there's chicken [feces] piled up six feet high before they tractor it out with Bobcats, and your nose and lungs burn like you took a torch to 'em."

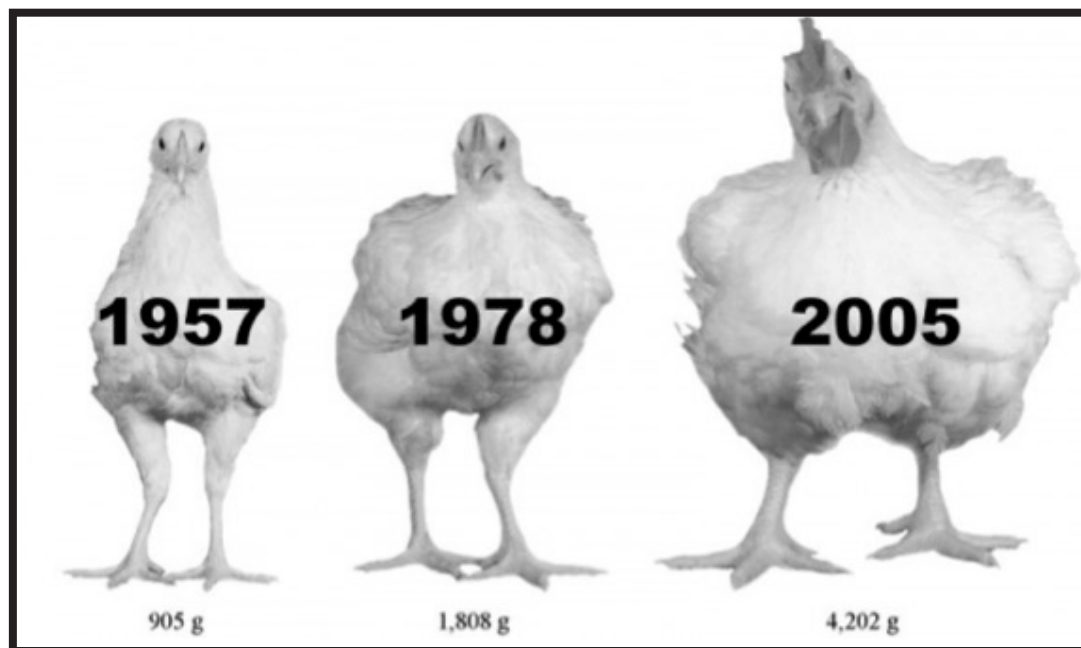
Cows raised for meat and dairy are similarly confined to overcrowded feedlots, where they live in their own manure and are surrounded by flies and mice day in and day out.

Living in these horrific conditions causes extreme stress and depression in animals that typically explore their environments. The stress manifests in unusual animal behaviors like cannibalism, excessive feather plucking, and even pecking other birds to death. Instead of addressing the root of the problem, farmers will remove chickens' sensitive beaks, castrate and dehorn cattle, and clip piglets' teeth, all without the use of anesthesia.

In order to maximize profit and keep up with con-

sumer demand, chicken and cattle are overfed with corn and soy so they grow larger, faster. Cows, who prefer to eat grass, are fed massive amounts of grain, which causes them extreme gastrointestinal distress. Broiler chickens, or chickens raised for meat, are kept in windowless sheds with artificial light to enhance their appetite. This ensures that they will have fatter breasts and drumsticks, as per consumer preference.

Between 1957 and 2005, chicken growth increased by more than 400% (Zuidhof, et al., 2014). Because of the excess weight, it is almost impossible for chickens to walk more than a few feet without dropping. Osteoporosis, heart and lung disease, broken bones, and other skeletal problems are now common in chickens. Professor John Webster of the University of Bristol's School of Veterinary Science says that broilers are the only livestock that live in chronic pain for the duration



of their lives. They don't move around because it hurts their joints so much.

According to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), dairy cows and hens are genetically bred to produce more milk and eggs than they naturally would. For example, cows on factory farms produce 12 times more milk than necessary to feed their calves, and a single cow today can produce a whopping 20,000 pounds of milk in a single year.

The inhumane living conditions on factory farms dramatically reduce the lifespan of the animals. Chickens can live up to eight years, but on a factory farm they typically die by age two. Cows can live up to 25 years, but they are usually killed after four years when the extreme stress causes their bodies to stop producing milk, rendering them useless to the farm.

As Orthodox Jews, many of us are comforted by the fact that kosher meat is supposedly produced in the most ethical way. One of the reasons for the stringent laws of Shechita, the kosher slaughtering process, is to ensure that the ordeal is as painless as possible for the animals. Unfortunately, most kosher meat today comes

from the same abusive factory farms as non-kosher meat.

However, there have been efforts to improve animal welfare on kosher factory farms. Empire Poultry, the largest kosher chicken producer in the U.S., has phased out the use of antibiotics and even has an organic line of meat that is sold at Whole Foods and Trader Joe's. KOL Foods, founded in 2007 by Devora Kimmelman-Block, is one of the only grass-fed meat retailers that is certified kosher by the Star-K. According to their website: "Our mission is simple: Honest & healthy. Sustainable & Humane. Deliciously mouthwatering. We help balance modern & traditional values by producing Glatt kosher meat that is environmentally and ethically sound." Although these are important steps, there is still significant work to be done in raising awareness about animal welfare in kosher meat production.

Besides the ethical issues of factory farming, the practice is associated with numerous human health hazards. The CDC estimates that one in six Americans contracts a foodborne illness like Salmonella or E. coli every year. These illnesses spread much more rapidly on factory farms because manure-covered animals are packed into overcrowded feedlots. The origin of swine flu, for example, has been linked to the unsanitary conditions on factory farms.

Because of these unsanitary conditions, animals on factory farms are administered antibiotics to prevent them from contracting diseases. When we eat meat products, we ingest these antibiotics as well, which increases the likelihood of antibiotic resistance developing. For this reason, the European Union banned the use of antibiotics in livestock in 2006.

Factory farming is also detrimental to the environment. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States (FAO), animal agriculture accounts for 18% of greenhouse gases and 65% of nitrous oxide emissions, which contribute to global warming and air pollution. The 500 million tons of animal waste generated each year leaches into our food and water supplies, contaminating what we eat and drink.

It is for these ethical, environmental, and health reasons that I believe factory farms should be banned or strictly regulated by the government. As a society, we cannot simply disregard the abuse that occurs on factory farms across the country. Particularly as Jews, we have an even greater obligation to treat all life with respect. As Rav Meidan, the Rosh Yeshiva of Har Etzion says, "The Torah has succeeded in bringing humanity to a higher level of sensitivity of life. In today's world, if kosher is not synonymous with the welfare of animals, the world will continue to try to ban Shechita. Judaism must not fall behind the world, but rather lead as an example."

PANAMA , CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

are experiencing strong electoral success. Trump's status as a wealthy, famous, and powerful figure has essentially given him a mindset of allowing himself to disrespect anyone who challenges him, essentially blame minorities for several of America's current problems, and even, inexplicably, accuse GOP rival Ted Cruz of cheating when Cruz defeated Trump in a recent primary. Essentially, Trump being rich and famous has caused himself to believe that he has permission to act like a terrible human being, and can fail to treat others with dignity and respect. Simultaneously, Clinton has allowed herself to fall into scandal by failing to adhere to regulations that any gov-

ernment official is subject to, and caused citizens to question her honesty as a human being, despite being a comparatively capable politician. Both Trump and Clinton are examples of powerful figures allowing themselves to think that their power and influence allow them to act without regard for both legal and moral principles. This is highly similar to the current Panama Papers fiasco, where rich and powerful figures felt their influence sanctioned their ignoring of financial laws.

The Panama Papers debacle shows how wealth, fame, and power can corrupt the thinking of individuals into a dishonest and incorrect mindset. Being rich, famous, or powerful does not give someone permission to break the law, treat people with

disrespect, or ignore regulations that apply to both yourself and others. Part of being wealthy and powerful is understanding that your wealth and power does not make you superior to anyone else, and does not remove your obligation to act within the confines of both the law and human morality. The Panama Papers fiasco proves the importance of adhering to both legal and ethical principles, even when you have more resources and influence at your disposal than other citizens.

It's Time for Desegregation

By Yadin Teitz

The first day of class is always awkward. There's that moment of confusion, when everyone tries to figure out where they'd like to sit for the rest of the semester. There's that mad dash for the seats near the windows or near the back, depending on what kind of person you are (and where the WiFi signal is strongest, honestly). While they wait for the professor to show up, people pull out their cell phones, clearly too cool or too busy to get to know their classmates right now. Better to stick with the familiar. And then the professor walks in and tries to make it less awkward, by taking attendance. Several professors will go a step further, asking students to say something interesting about themselves, about where they're from, what they're majoring in, etc., and the all-famous (and never quite successful at alleviating the awkwardness) "Share something that people don't know about you". But depending on the class or on the information volunteered by students, talk tends to include which yeshiva one attended in Israel. This is key information, even more important than determining who's funny, who's spoiled and entitled, who's cool, and who's a total slacker. With this innocent question, we can judge intelligence, religiosity, and worldview, all in one or two simple words. Shraga. Gush. Hakotel. Sha'alvim. Reishit. Netiv. KBY. Eretz Hatzvi. And so on, and so forth. Oh, and for that poor true freshman who didn't attend yeshiva in Israel, well, the jury is still out on him.

Outside of class, the same holds true. In my observation, one's friends are overwhelmingly drawn from one's yeshiva. True, the argument can be made that this is natural: it makes sense that we should be closest with those who share similar intellectual inclinations, who hold the same levels of religiosity, and who share the same worldviews as we do. Except for the fact that it seems that no yeshiva has a homogenous student body. I have yet to meet a student who fills all of the stereotypes of his yeshiva, and I have yet to meet a population of yeshiva students who share the same qualities, even in terms of intelligence. In fact, the opposite is true. So often, the reputations of people from particular yeshivot are wholly exaggerated or simply wrong. I'm convinced that each yeshiva boasts a diverse and wonderful student body, filled with bright, inquisitive, and thoughtful individuals. It's a shame to simply group all of these talmidim into one category, especially when our purpose is to then dismiss them altogether by looking up to them or down to them.

Which is what ends up happening, by the way. Sure, we can point to some examples of inter-yeshiva friendships. But even if they do occur, the mingling of students from different yeshivot leaves something to be desired. When was the last time we saw a group of guys from Gush hanging out with a couple of Reishit guys? Who went to the last Sha'alvim/Eretz Hatzvi get-together? My colleague Josh Blicher wrote about this phenomenon in a Commentator article several months ago, in which he urged students to stop the judgement that goes on and work on integrating tables in the Dining Hall. Rabbi Jeremy Wieder, Rosh

Yeshiva at YU, among others, has on multiple occasions stressed the need to get to know other elements within the student body and reach out to them. And yet, there is still much to be done.

In my time at YU, I've tried very hard to cultivate a diverse group of friends. I recognize how much there is to gain from people of different backgrounds and from people who have had different experiences than me, and I've worked to build sincere and enduring relationships with these people alongside my yeshiva friends. But I haven't quite succeeded. I've frequently

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gotten the sense that friends of mine who have interacted together with my yeshiva friends feel left out, even if there were sizeable amounts of other people in the group who did not attend the same yeshiva as I did. Because no matter what happens, the group of people who were in yeshiva together share a tighter bond. It's much, much easier to fall back on this tighter bond, and to limit one's group of close friends to these compatriots. But I know that we are missing out in the process.

There is a problem here, which is that in a school of our size, we must devise artificial ways of dividing ourselves. We cannot be like the Hillels and Chabads of secular colleges, where the small numbers of Jewish

students band together, because of the sheer scope of our population. We don't have fraternities, or tight-knit residence halls, or even clubs and extracurricular activities in which students meet up often enough to form real, lasting friendships and peer groups. And it seems that the most comfortable and likely division to be made is based on where we spend the previous year or years of our lives before entering YU.

But what happens when you didn't go to yeshiva in Israel? What happens if you've changed and become a far different person than who you were in yeshiva? What if you just didn't enjoy your year in Israel, and want little to do with the people you knew there? Do you go through your college years as a relative loner? Do you transfer out of YU, looking for a place with people like you? Or do you try hard to make friends from across the board?

We need to make this process easier. We need to switch things up, to divide up our campus in a more organic way and in a manner which ultimately produces greater unity. I'm not sure how exactly to do that. Like University of Chicago and Yale University, for example, perhaps we should devise a system in which students are divided into houses or societies, where they can form brotherhoods of students from many different backgrounds and be united by common interests and a desire to build lasting bonds with members of their house. Perhaps it is enough to encourage students pursuing a particular major to get together socially, outside of class. I'm not naïve enough to think that these changes will actually happen anytime soon. But let's start now. Perhaps, perhaps, it's enough to sit with those other kids at the table in the cafeteria. Perhaps it's enough to walk over to that group of students whom you know vaguely and strike up a conversation. And if you're in one of those groups, invite others in. Without sounding too preachy, seek others, and you will find yourself feeling enriched by your newfound friends.



CHILDREN, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

comprehend a discussion about theoretical physics, but I am confident that most conversations can be boiled down to simple and universal principles.

Treating kids in a more empathetic way also means we shouldn't engage in unnecessary praise, constantly letting children know how good they are at a single thing. This might seem counter-intuitive at first. Isn't it the epitome of compassion to help other feel good about themselves? I'm not advocating withholding compliments from kids when they are proud of something they've done. That's just downright cruel. But endless praise probably does more harm than good in the long-run. Children need to be prepared for the fact that later in life people won't take it for granted that they are special snowflakes; it's critical to earn

respect.

The objectification of children expresses itself in many forms in contemporary society. It is a common weekly sight on Shabbat to see parents dressing their kids up as carbon copies of themselves, making sure their 'family reputation' is upheld. The stereotype of the 'soccer mom' who vicariously lives through their child to resolve their own insecurities unfortunately seems to play out accurately in real life. If children don't end up perfectly reflecting their parents' worldview, it shouldn't be considered a tragedy. This doesn't mean we should avoid disciplining children, but if they make relatively innocuous choices that cause neither themselves or others harm, we shouldn't feel obligated to police their every move.

A non-patronizing view of children is the logical follow up to the gradual decline in recent decades of

child corporal punishment. Are children any less created in the image of God that their rights to not be struck by another are revoked? If we apply the golden rule to children in one area, then it should apply across the board consistently.

Instead of viewing children as angelic creatures that need to be protected from impurity at all costs, we should see them as sensitive and fully aware human beings with infinite potential. It is critical that they see their parents as peers who are fully invested in them, and aren't determined to fit them into a pre-prepared box. Don't take my word as a parent, a department in which I have zero experience. Consider my words as coming from a young adult with vivid, and relatively recent childhood experiences.

The Inside Scoop on YU's Own Professor Robert Tufts

By Gary Feder

I recently had the opportunity to interview former Major League Baseball pitcher turned Sy Syms Management Professor Robert Tufts, who offers a truly unique and inspiring life story. After graduating college with a B.A. in Economics from Princeton University, Tufts was drafted by the San Francisco Giants in the 12th round of the 1977 MLB Draft. He went on to play in the MLB from 1980 to 1982, first for the Giants and then the Kansas City Royals. After his retirement from baseball, Tufts went back to school to get an MBA in Finance from Columbia University, which led to a successful twenty-year Wall Street career. In 2009, as Tufts was preparing to transition into academia, he was tragically diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma Cancer. Tufts was reported as cancer-free in 2010, and in response to his battle with cancer, co-founded My Life is Worth It, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping fellow cancer patients.

Feder: Many of us have dreamt or maybe even still dream of playing professional sports for a living. At what point in your lifetime did you dream of playing Major League Baseball?

Tufts: My brother was an All-State pitcher at Massachusetts and got a scholarship to the University of Florida to play baseball, so I viewed that as the be-all-end-all. My thinking was that if I could do anything that approximated what he did, that would be great. However, I was fortunate enough to surpass him, which was a shock to me as a younger brother, and get drafted by the Giants. Once that happened, I realized that the door was open, and I began to really concentrate on my moving my baseball career forward.

Feder: When did your dream of playing in the MLB begin to seem like a possible reality?

Tufts: Actually never, ironically. In 1980, I had a terrible year for the Giants minor league affiliate and thought I would get released. However, since I was a left-handed pitcher, they told me that I could hang around and play another year, so I thought 1981 would be my last year as a professional baseball player. As the story goes, I actually threw exceptionally well that year. The Giants, meanwhile, decided to revamp their relief pitching mid-year and call up some minor-leaguers. Just like that, I was a major-league baseball player.

Feder: What was your coolest memory from your time in the MLB? How about your biggest challenge?

Tufts: Pitching the first game was great, but I think my best memory was actually in Kansas City, where I got to hang around the legendary George Brett (who has the 16th most hits in the history of baseball). He is one of the most genuine and outgoing people that I have ever met. As for my biggest challenge, it was sometimes difficult to keep the enjoyment of the game up, realizing that I am getting paid a lot of money to produce results. Baseball in a lot of ways mirrored a typical business job. I had a to do my work and continuously do it well, because if I didn't, there was someone right behind me ready to take my place.

Feder: According to Baseball Almanac, you are one of six Major League Baseball players to have converted to Judaism during their careers. Can you describe what led you to convert?

Tufts: When I was at Princeton, people came to my room and tried to proselytize me and basically told me to just accept Jesus as my path to a relationship with God. I thought to myself, "Why can't I have my own relationship directly with God?" That got me thinking about my mother's experience in her church, which was

more focused on social justice than personal advancement. I attribute this line of thinking as to why I started looking for another way to connect to God.

Feder: After your time in baseball, you decided to go back to school and get an MBA, eventually leading to a successful Wall Street career. What was the transition from professional baseball to corporate America like and was it something that you had always planned on doing following your professional baseball career?

Tufts: Well, I had always planned on doing something after baseball. I knew that if I didn't play baseball for an extended period of time, I would need to get an MBA and become a traditional business person. If I had

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-PROFESSOR ROBERT TUFTS**



played longer and accumulated more wealth, I probably would have done something more focused on my hometown community. Switching to corporate America, though, was a shock. At Columbia's MBA program, I was about three or four years older than nearly everyone. My classmates were largely less mature and in it for the money, as opposed to actually trying to learn something. It was humorous to me because when I was in college, I wasn't exactly the most dedicated student, and now I was all about the education.

Feder: It's really interesting how things change after gaining a new perspective on life, especially after having a job such as a professional baseball player.

Tufts: It actually made me more mature, because I had already done all of the stupid things when I was younger.

Feder: How did teaching become a passion of yours?

Tufts: I love the fact that being a teacher is in a lot of ways similar to being a coach. Like a coach, a teacher sees if their students are happy or not and how they react to different situations. The teacher can help the student in many different ways, such as coaching in the classroom and advising.

Feder: Why did you decide to take your talents to YU?

Tufts: I actually turned down an offer to teach full-time at NYU, because I would have been teaching only one, maybe two classes. At YU, I teach freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Sometimes, I have the same student in as many as four different courses, which enables us to develop a bit of a relationship and discuss topics beyond the basic classwork. That's what teaching should be about.

Feder: Can you tell me about the charity you co-founded, My Life is Worth It?

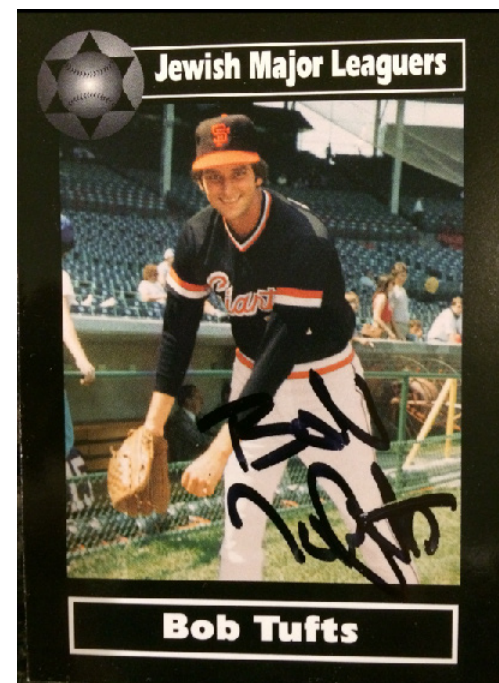
Tufts: My Life is Worth It is dedicated to strengthening doctor access for patients, choice treatments, and choice medicines, which are all key in order to achieve better results. We are basically fighting those people who want to focus on the numbers and dollars of health-care, as opposed to the treatment and the lives. I'm a perfect case study of what our mission is all about. When I got diagnosed with cancer, the current American system or the European model would have said that my treatment would cost too much for how long I was expected to live, so I'm not going to get it. However, I got the treatment and happened to have been an outlier on the positive side, and I have paid it back thousandfold. I went back to work, paid taxes, paid premiums, and advocated for and helped those with chronic diseases. Now, I want to move towards doing more of the patient advocacy, which in general will be pro-innovation and pro-entrepreneurship.

Feder: What are some of the life lessons you have picked which you would like to impart upon the YU students?

Tufts: Never give up. I've reached the point where I could have died to illness two or three times, and I have fought the illnesses off. It hasn't changed my view of life, but it has made me appreciate that every thing that I do, big and little, has an impact. With this approach in mind, I am going to dedicate myself as I turn 60, seven years past cancer diagnosis, to helping other cancer patients and make sure that they have the same chance that I had.

Feder: Let's close this out properly, by bringing it back to baseball. Who is your pick to win the World Series this year?

Tufts: Hmm. I've been waiting a few years for the Pittsburgh Pirates to finally get over the top, so I'm looking to see if they can take the World Series. The same thing goes for the Cleveland Indians.



It's Time To Get LIT

By Benjamin Zirman

Urban dictionary has two definitions for the word "lit": "When something is turned up and popping" or "the state of being so intoxicated that all the person can do is smile, so that they look lit up like a light." There is a new app hitting college campuses across America crafted by a student here at YU and his friends that is letting people know where the lit (Urban Dictionary first definition) parties are happening. Most people want to go out and grab a drink as statistics show that over 80% of college students across America drink alcohol. The average male freshman, according to the Core Institute, which surveyed 33,379 undergrads on 53 U.S. campuses in 2005, consumes 7.39 drinks a week. But there is a consistent problem that arises when students try to go out and have a fun time. They don't know where the best venues are and how to best spend their money on any particular night. One night the party could be at one venue and the next night that same locale is empty. Girls spend hours in advance texting their friends trying to make plans and constantly updating their social media accounts for information about where to go out. A group of guys sometimes show up to bars or clubs and are upset that they are the only ones in the whole place besides for some questionable looking older man in the corner. The struggle is real! Thanks to LIT we might be looking at the solution to all of our nightlife problems.

The CEO and co-founder of this app is sophomore Mark Weiss, or as some people know him Mordechai Weiss. Mark went to the Rae Kushner Yeshiva High School in Livingston, New Jersey and upon graduation in 2014 he went straight to Yeshiva University. He is in the Rennert Entrepreneurial Institute and plans to major in Accounting and the Entrepreneurial Program. He co-founded the app with his friend since middle school, Avi Jerushalmy. Avi is currently a junior at Binghamton majoring in History and serves as the COO of the company. The LIT team consists of three other partners who help run the business and legal sides of things. The two co-founders were inspired to create the app when they realized that partying was extremely inefficient. Students like themselves were wasting a lot of time and money at terrible expensive parties which they didn't enjoy. It was impossible to find out real time information about a venue and if the hype and potential of a scene was real. About a year ago they started researching the industry, problems, as well as what it takes to bring an app to market. After doing their due diligence and developing an understanding of the partying market and mobile app business they were ready to build their party app.

LIT is a mobile application that allows users to find the optimal venue to spend nights out with friends. How does it work? According to its official description: "LIT revolutionizes the nightlife of college students and the older millennial crowd by giving them a real-time look at everything happening in their area including an interactive map intuitively exhibiting which venue is the "hottest" and quick-look "party stats" showing them if the party is at its peak crowd, if their friends are there, and more. Our mission is to provide real-time and accurate information as well as a simple user experience." The app works if you're at an official LIT campus. The interactive map of a given area will allow you to get the scoop of what is happening and where it's happening, as the night unfolds. Users have the ability to rate various characteristics of the venue including crowd, door, cover charge, and music in addition to how many of your friends are there. The real time information points you where to go based on the partying communities' experiences and feedback, not store advertising. You will see flames on the application's maps which represent differ-

ent hotspots on campus. Once the night starts and users begin to check in at venues, the flame will build based on real time ratings. The bigger the flame the more lit the party is ranging from a small blue dead flame to a large red lit flame. Once you check out the place and its party statistics you can navigate directly to the venue to meet up with your friends and the best crowd. It is very simple to understand, and Mark stressed how important simplicity is for their user experience. The simplicity, accuracy, and real-time aspect set LIT apart from anything we have ever seen.

Another really cool aspect of the app is the community it creates through a social network. The app has built into it a strategic game that encourages users to constantly use the app. The more active the user, the bigger a party animal the user becomes which gets them apparel and discounts at local venues. Everyone starts off at the rookie level as a cat and can try and reach the highest status on the app which is represented by a lion. You can compete against your friends to see who the bigger party animal is. This allows users to interact with each other and strive to reach their full party animal potential. The more friends you have on the app allows you to see where they are and what they are up to on a given night. This is perfect for that crush a boy might have on a girl who never notices him or that stalker ex-boyfriend a girl wants to avoid at all costs. The partying

venues to spread their revolution to the best venues on every official LIT campus. It is beneficial for venues to work with LIT because when a user checks in, all their friends are notified which will increase traffic to their venue. Venues have been so excited about the idea of working with LIT that all have been working with LIT free of charge. Additionally, they have been reaching out and searching for campus ambassadors to be the people on the ground at different colleges to develop and implement marketing strategies, provide strategic feedback and help run any LIT events. Lastly, they have been in touch with some celebrities to promote the platform. As LIT grows, they are looking for seed investment to help acquire users and incentivize activity because the app is based on user feedback. Since LIT needs a concentrated amount of people using it at the same time for it to be effective, it needs to have motivations for users to be active on the app. All the work they are doing now is laying down the foundation for a very bright looking future for LIT.

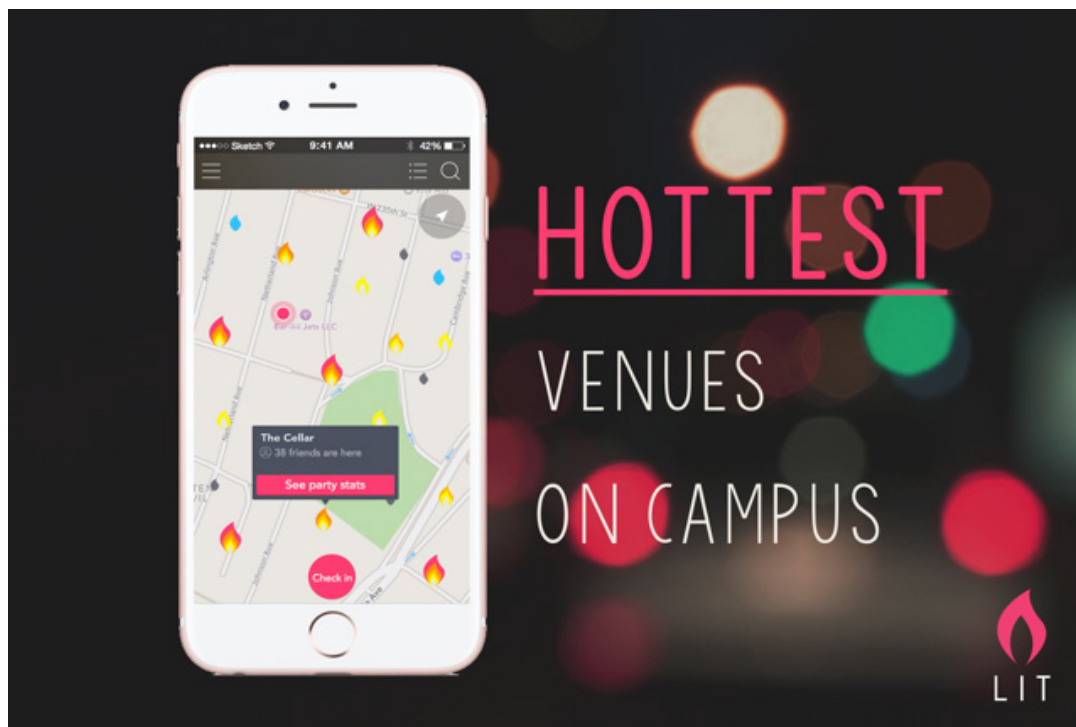
There are many other aspiring CEO's and app creators in YU, so Mark wanted to let them know what his own experience as a founder and CEO is like. Mark described to me how he and Avi are accountable for everything going on in the company from user experience, planning events, hiring ambassadors, figuring out ways to incentivize activity, and making LIT go viral. There

is a need to constantly be updating and innovating their app, making it more simple and more user friendly. In short, the work doesn't end. But that's the nature of a startup, you are never done. In order to get their work done, they both cleared their schedules last summer and didn't plan anything for this summer in order to completely devote themselves to the app. Although he is sacrificing his summer, he also spoke about what a blessing it was and how much fun he was having getting the chance to work with a childhood friend. Some of their hard work is about to come to fruition as they are working on their website, Igotlit.com, which he ensured will be state of the art.

I asked Mark to share with me some insights about being an entrepreneur and pursuing his ambitions. The first piece of advice he conveyed to me was: how important it is to speak with experts and experienced people in the industry

who have done it before you. Odds are that you will run into the same mistakes and problems others have run into, but if they figured it out they can help you avoid or overcome any similar challenges. He spoke extremely highly of Dean Michael Strauss, Head of the Honors Entrepreneur Program, who has helped Mark tremendously and always has an open door policy, no matter what time or hour you email or want to speak with him. His guidance has been a big part of their success and can be an extremely important resource for other entrepreneurs.

A second big thing Mark emphasized was time management. He said there are no vacations and you need to always be working if you want your dream to become a reality. He hates the words "good enough" because products can always be better. Complacency truly is the biggest barrier to innovation. There is so much to do, improve on, and accomplish in addition to personal and academic obligations, it seems that there isn't enough time in a day. Also, don't panic at the first set back. Nothing happens overnight and Rome wasn't built in one day! A lot of times you think everyone is going to run to your product with the same excitement and enthusiasm that you have. The truth is that the market is more similar to a crying baby, you don't know what it wants but you need to keep trying until you satisfy it. These pieces of advice have been the key to Mark's personal success and could be the key to other aspiring entrepreneurs at YU.



community on the LIT app will go stronger and help the app become even more effective once more and more users hop on board.

Bars and clubs, and students, were both very receptive to the platform when it was pitched. In fact, LIT received over 200 campus requests to try and bring LIT to their campus. Mark stressed their biggest focus is to make sure college students are having a good time. They launched the app this spring semester at Binghamton and Rutgers to test the market and gauge how students and business owners would react to their platform. They recently launched their app at West Virginia, the number one party school in America according to the Princeton Review. They want to continue this and expand to many other large state schools across America. They have future goals to have a majority of students across American campuses be on the LIT platform.

Mark and his team are extremely busy at work trying to turn their vision of LIT into reality. They are focusing their efforts on social media marketing and meeting with frats and sororities as well as other campus influencers. They have hosted LIT Events, where they host a party at a bar or frat. To enter you are required to have downloaded the app, and inside they have branded paraphernalia all around the venue. Their LIT Events have been extremely successful in raising brand awareness and ensuring a good time for everyone who attended the party. At the moment they have about 3,000 users on it right now. The LIT team has been pairing up with local

Clarifying the Financial Crisis: The Banks

By Evan Axelrod

The Big Short, a recent Hollywood movie detailing the underdogs who bet on the housing collapse and ensuing recession, has once again refocused society's attention on the financial system and its shortcomings during the Great Recession of 2008. Grossing \$132 million worldwide since its release, the film brings to life Michael Lewis's depiction of the brilliant men who "went short (bet against) the global financial system."

What did these underdog investors see, which economists and government regulators missed? On a larger scale, what impact did this crisis have on the global banking system? In order to answer these questions, we must examine what instigated the crisis. Most people who watched the film would offer answers such as "subprime mortgages," "CDO's," or "derivatives." These were, indeed, some of the reasons why the entire financial system almost came crashing down during the economically grim years of 2007-2009. For those who aren't familiar with these terms because they didn't see the movie or (spoiler alert!) didn't pay attention to the film using Selena Gomez to describe these terms, here's a rundown.

Starting in the early-mid 1990's, the world, particularly the United States, started to experience positive trends in GDP (global production), job creation, low inflation and all the good things that go along with these conditions, including a stock market boom. Libertarians and Republicans might attribute the boom to lesser government regulation originating during the Reagan administration. Others might credit the success to the proliferation of technology and to the increasingly global economy which resulted in higher trade output for many developed countries. Regardless of the exact cause, people were happy, especially the ones who had invested in the stock market. Although there were some bumps in the road, corporate earnings and global growth were on the rise. As conditions consistently improved, the providers of capital, the banks, got a little too giddy. With government encouragement, they attempted to boost or inflate homeownership rates for minorities and low income borrowers, which would lead to higher revenue from the loan interest. They executed this by relaxing their loan quality discretion so that they could provide more loans to people. However, it wasn't only the government and private sector that acted negligently. Consumers also became irresponsibly aggressive, buying houses they couldn't afford, hoping that they could sell it for a premium a year or two later. This created a real estate bubble. Housing prices kept going up but without any real fundamental reason for it.

Banks started to experiment with the creation of new financial instruments using a process known as securitization. The technical details of these instruments and the process of securitization are complex. Securitization is basically the following: banks purchased individual residential loans or mortgages, packaged them together into a MBS (the Mortgage Backed Security is a derivative, in other words it's value is based off the performance of an underlying entity- for example a mortgage), then sold them to "sophisticated" investors, and collected on fees. Investors purchased these instruments often with little due diligence on the quality of the loans. Instead,

they focused on the lucratively high rates of interest received from the mortgages. These new products started to trade like any other financial instrument, or security. As opposed to a stock or bond which is basic, or plain vanilla security, banks and insurance companies started to dabble with more complex, or exotic instruments. These complex sounding instruments became a large part of the banks' balance sheets over the 1990's and into the 2000's. To sum it all up, with the globalization of the world economy and the complexity of the derivatives market, few realized what the effects of a potential downturn in the housing market would have on the underlying value of these instruments, and the grave consequences a downturn would have on financial markets.

leverage the banks were taking was extremely risky, but unfortunately, the banks were indirectly encouraged to pursue high leverage by the government. Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, both government backed private companies, were pushed to promote an increase in homeownership rates among lower income demographics. This automatically entailed higher risk of defaults. Along with low mortgage rates, average Americans were enticed by the little restrictions put on new types of mortgages. Many people bought houses using adjustable rate mortgages or teaser rates that they would not be able to afford if mortgage rates rose. While most of America was blind to all of these flaws within the housing market, the underdog investors in The Big Short seized on the housing

bubble. They did the unthinkable and bet directly against the housing market, the heart of the American economy.

In 2007, with the banks' balance sheets at record highs and the market for credit default swaps growing daily, banks and insurance companies of all sizes, many of them levered up, became interconnected in this complex web of derivatives contracts. The impact of all these firms being connected was that if an unusual event took place and one firm had too big of a loss on its contracts and couldn't pay up, a domino effect would occur leaving all firms affected by the one insolvent party. Soon enough, the unusual event, a drop in housing prices, became a reality. As mortgage rates went up, so did the defaults on many home mortgages. A lot of the loans the banks made were losing value. As a result of the high leverage, the losses were magnified and then liquidity

(cash available to pay back debts) started to dry up at the big banks. As losses mounted, the investment bank Bear Stearns fell in early 2008 and Lehman Brothers famously followed in September. Many mortgage and insurance companies similarly collapsed. AIG, one of the biggest global insurance companies, had to be bailed out by the government to the amount of \$85 billion.

As the dust settled, new regulation was prepared. Banks were going to have to answer for a lot of their risky dealings during the boom years. The most impactful piece of regulations was the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform Act of 2010, especially sec. 619, the Volcker Rule. This rule forced banks to rethink how to replace much of their profits made during the boom years.

To understand the Volcker Rule, it helps to gain familiarity with legislation that came about from an earlier economic crisis, The Great Depression. After the Depression, Congress passed the Glass-Steagall Act, which barred banks from engaging in stock trading. To put it simply, banks would be disallowed from trading using their customer's deposits. Instead, they would have to choose between becoming a commercial banking operation or investment banking operation. (Think your local bank branch in town versus the big skyscrapers in New York City.) This act was in place for 66 years but was repealed in 1999, opening the floodgates for financial firms to bank on (pun intended) bigger profits with their newly accessible client capital.

Similar to the Glass-Steagall Act, the Volcker Rule set up restrictions on banks to engage in proprietary trading, or using the bank's own money for direct gain from securities. Preventing prop trading would

SEE CRISIS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



"FEW REALIZED WHAT THE EFFECTS OF A POTENTIAL DOWNTURN IN THE HOUSING MARKET WOULD HAVE ON THE UNDERLYING VALUE OF THESE INSTRUMENTS, AND THE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES A DOWNTURN WOULD HAVE ON THE FINANCIAL MARKETS."

In addition to the banks pushing these reckless mortgages, another major contributor to the meltdown was a concept known as leverage. In other words, many of the big investment banks (think Goldman Sachs, Lehman Brothers, Morgan Stanley, etc.) used debt (borrowing) to buy new assets, instead of just using profits received from regular business operations. This allowed for them to put less money down for a higher dollar amount of assets, since the debt covered most of their purchases. If those assets rose in value, the banks' profits would be significantly higher relative to their initial investment, but if the value went the other way, the cost of borrowing would be much higher than the investment. In response, the bank would have to sell off other assets to pay back the loans used to execute the leverage.

Leverage allowed banks, for instance Lehman Brothers, to hold assets worth \$691 billion while only having a shareholder's equity (amount they in actuality own) of \$22 billion in 2007, an astounding debt-to-equity ratio of 31 to 1. As the housing market rode higher, more and more of these leveraged instruments were mortgage-intensive insurance contracts. The premiums from these insurance contracts were seen as easy money, as almost no one saw a significant decline in the housing market as a real risk.

In reality, even in any environment, the kind of

YU Alumnus Running for Congress

By Adam Kramer

As a Yeshiva University alumnus running for Congress in New York's 10th District, Oliver Rosenberg already has a unique story to tell. And, when coupled with the rest of his background, namely his participation in a panel in 2009 on gay people in Orthodox Judaism, his employment as an investment banker at JP Morgan specializing in renewable energy, founding a Jewish congregation for LGBTQ people and his experience starting multiple companies, he's truly a fascinating candidate and person. It's this background--of which Rosenberg views YU as a major part and catalyst--that is critical to his story, and understanding both his decision to run for office and his positions as a candidate.

Rosenberg grew up in Los Angeles and attended Yeshivat Sha'arei Mevaseret Zion before attending YU. He graduated from YU in 2007 with a degree in Finance, and began working at a utility company called Sempra Energy. He worked in Connecticut for Sempra's credit division, which was responsible for lending to small businesses that needed funding for their business. Rosenberg received a promotion right before the 2008 financial crisis, and was responsible for reducing the company's overall risk and exposure to companies like Lehman Brothers, at a time when big banks like that were going down. The Sempra Commodities division was acquired by RBS, which subsequently had its own trouble and became government owned, so they put up the Sempra division for sale. JP Morgan stepped in to purchase it, but only took 20-25% of the company with them. With JP Morgan, Rosenberg first managed a portfolio of clients who were in the ethanol business, which at the time was a popular form of alternative energy. Later on, his job involved financing power and energy companies and projects, and he had the opportunity to work on financing wind power projects in about 7-8 states. Rosenberg relates that his last year and a half working on renewable energy was the most intense time in his professional experience, and was a big contrast from the entrepreneurial culture of Sempra. It included many late nights--Rosenberg said there were probably fifty nights in 2012 when he was at the office there past 1:00am. Looking back on his time at JP Morgan, Rosenberg related that one of the most important things he learned at JP was getting things done.

In September of 2012, Rosenberg left his job at JP Morgan and moved back to LA where he totally switched gears professionally. He consulted for two hospitals, which gave him the opportunity to see how the business side of hospitals runs, and where he could help them cut costs and be more efficient. He also started a small software company called UrgentCalm, which developed software to help improve the emergency room experience.

After a year though, Rosenberg wanted to move back to New York. He approached a few potential buyers to gauge their interest in purchasing UrgentCalm, but ultimately pushed the project to the side. With his next venture, he wanted to impact people directly, as opposed to having to work within a framework of a hospital and trying to affect change there.

Rosenberg moved back to NY and took a few months to utilize some of the resources in the New York startup scene, and plan his next venture, Prealth. Prealth, which stands for Prices of Health, is an app that lists healthcare options for consumers and compares prices. Rosenberg explained that he's very motivated to work for companies and on projects that contribute to society in some way. His work at JP certainly fits into this paradigm as he was working extensively on alternative energy, and his startup projects also fit into this realm as well.

He believes this drive to help society began during his time at YU. He illustrated this through discussing how he sees and understands leadership. He believes that there are two types of leaders, those who covet

a title and those for whom their leadership "comes from a sincere wanting to get something done or see something better in the world." In this sense, Rosenberg quoted Gandhi who once said "Be the change you want to see in the world," and remarked that it's also a very Jewish concept.

Rosenberg's first memory of stepping up to get something done was during his time at YU. He saw that fellow students in Syms were having trouble getting internships and jobs, and he realized that the alumni network needed to be leveraged much more extensively to reach this goal. He ran for president, wanting to bring new ideas to the school, one of which was a gala dinner for over 600 people. Against the wishes of the school, Rosenberg approached the board of directors directly, to try and secure the necessary funding for a gala dinner and networking event. The board agreed to the plan and gave the necessary seed money, and the first annual Syms dinner, which coincided with the 20th anniversary of Syms, took place. The dinner raised a profit of \$150,000 which they earmarked for future student-alumni dinners. The dinners continue to this day. It is very much through this light that Rosenberg launched his



entrepreneurial ventures.

Rosenberg made it abundantly clear how much value he places on leadership and doing good for fellow people and the larger community. Another value he holds dear is Shabbos, and he touched on his shabbos observance as well as his general religious beliefs and practices. In Rosenberg's own words, "I view myself as very modern orthodox. Some might call it very modern orthodox, some might call it very traditional." On a practical level, Rosenberg tries to keep Shabbos every week. Rosenberg related that Shabbos observance is especially difficult these days, since his campaign office is actually his house. Rosenberg mentioned a story that a few weeks ago late on Friday afternoon, Shabbos was about to start so he had to ask all his campaign workers to leave his house. And then around five minutes before Shabbos ended, they all started streaming back into his apartment to get back to work. He added that with the craziness, he didn't end up saying havdala until around 11:00pm that night.

Though it might be a little unorthodox having a home double as a campaign headquarters, this is actually one of the most concrete parts of the campaign for Rosenberg. For his campaign, there's no such thing as an average day; each day has different events

and every week has a different style. This past week's challenge was finalizing the signatures that candidates need to file to be added to a state's ballot. In New York State congressional races, you need 1,250 signatures, but the Rosenberg campaign filed with four times more signatures than that. To get these signatures, the campaign utilized a whole volunteer operation.

These volunteers work together with Rosenberg, a campaign manager, two people working under the campaign manager, and a campaign strategist. The campaign is looking to add people too.

Rosenberg likened his campaign to "operating a lean tech startup. At first you're trying to keep costs down, and you want to move fast, and it's people coming together to work together, who haven't worked together before, and every day is just go, go, go. Because of the time frame, it doesn't really allow you to plan as much, and so it's really just about doing something, learning from what happened, iterating, and acting again."

For Rosenberg, leveraging his tech background isn't just important in building out his staff and ensuring that they all operate like a tech startup--it's also his essence as a candidate. In his own words, "I'd like to think of my campaign as fresh, young, energetic, tech-savvy, and it's important that in Congress we have millennial voices, and also just like voices that understand the tech world and the new economy and social media."

As was mentioned earlier, Rosenberg was one of four speakers on a panel at YU in 2009 on gay people in Orthodox Judaism. The event was organized by JQY, a social and support group for young frum gay Jews, and through the great efforts of its founder Mordechai Levovitz. Reflecting on the event, Rosenberg recalled that YU had to change the event space 3-4 times before they settled on having it in Weissberg Commons in Belfer Hall. Even though hundreds of seats were set up, and the rest of the room was packed with people standing up, there were still hundreds of people standing outside who couldn't even fit into the room. "It was very fascinating for me, because it showed that even though Rabbis at the time were still very challenged by what to say, by the place of gay people in the community, but there was a very strong desire to hear about this from the students."

Rosenberg was dismayed that there was a lot of backlash in the days after the event, but in hindsight, that backlash paled in comparison to some of the positives that emerged from the event. For example, Rosenberg recounted that there were rabbis in the crowd who in the weeks after the event, put out divrei Torah and led other campaigns calling for inclusivity for LGBTQ in the Jewish community. Furthermore, around that time, previous organizations were remade into the organization Eshel, which has provided a lot of resources for LGBTQ people, including many shabbatons and other events. Rosenberg believes that there are more people who are remaining observant or somewhat observant than there were before. "People can be gay and have a very positive attitude towards Judaism."

Rosenberg is also the founder of Or Chayim, a traditional/Orthodox Jewish congregation for LGBTQ people and allies, which he founded after seeing a need and wanting to fill the niche. This niche consisted of people who grew up religious or traditional, or people who just wanted a traditional Shabbos experience, and for a multitude of reasons, wouldn't feel comfortable in a liberal denomination of Judaism. So though they're LGBTQ and there might not be a place where they feel comfortable, they want to be Jewish. Or Chayim is allowing people to enjoy Shabbos while being comfortable.

In around two years of existence, with minyan once a month on Friday night, they've had over 400

SEE ROSENBERG, CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

ROSENBERG, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

people attend, and they get around 75 people on an average Friday night. Rosenberg explained how he attracts so many people to a niche minyan like Or Chayim; "I learned growing up that the best way to attract people to a minyan is to have cholent and kugel afterwards. So even though its Friday night, ...we have our kiddush hour. And afterwards, for people who are interested, we have a shabbat dinner."

Rosenberg views this idea of inclusive shabbat experiences as critical to the Jewish future, and it's something that he has worked on, both with Or Chayim, and as a spokesperson for One Table, a non-profit organization that promotes the practice of shabbat dinner for people in the 20s and 30s. Through this organization, he's hosted dinners and coached others on how to host dinner themselves.

"Judaism has a very innovative spirit; the concept that ten people can create their own minyan." Rosenberg cited the fact that communities around the country will often have shuls that split and new minyanim form as proof of this innovation. "People don't like the cholent at one minyan, so they start their own minyan." Rosenberg felt that at this point in his life, starting his own minyan was the best way for him to be able to maintain his Jewish observance, and he has helped countless others do the same.

As a candidate for political office, Rosenberg also took the time to articulate his positions on various issues. "One of the reasons why I'm running is that tens of millions of Americans--on both sides of the aisle--feel that the American system is completely broken." That we have a broken system shouldn't come as a surprise given Congress' abysmally low approval rating. Rosenberg explained that historically, Congress wasn't nearly this partisan. For example, in the 80s, Democrats worked with the Republican president at the time, President Reagan.

In the aforementioned panel, Rosenberg mentioned in passing that he identified as a Republican. Today, he attributes this to having grown up in a household that was politically and religiously conservative. Shortly after the panel, and as part of a larger soul searching, Rosenberg realized that the Democratic Party fit his ideals far more. Rosenberg explained that this wasn't only because of his coming out as gay at that time, but also through his work with renewable energy and

healthcare--policy areas that Democrats either emphasize more, or hold positions that align more closely with his.

Rosenberg believes in fiscal responsibility. He explained his concerns with where the country is headed economically, and cautioned that even though the unemployment is going down and the economy is growing, on a real rate, wages aren't growing so it's more difficult for people to afford necessities, even if they are employed. He views small businesses as imperative to the country's economic growth, and remarked that as a Democrat who believes in small businesses as the engine of growth for this country, he believes that "All people should have access to the opportunities to create their own small businesses." We're living in a time where people, specifically minorities, still have trouble securing the necessary funding for their small businesses, and this is something that Rosenberg wants to change.

To say that Israel is a policy issue that is dear to

of his district--which includes various parts of Manhattan and Brooklyn--that he is in the race and challenges Nadler. Nadler hasn't been challenged in 20 years, and without a primary, there isn't democracy. Because congress' approval rating is so low, there are a lot of people who want change. This actually pressures the incumbent to campaign for people's vote.

Looking back on his time at YU, Rosenberg remarked that "I still really believe in YU's cause of Torah u'Maddah." Furthermore, he credits President Richard Joel with having had a great effect on him. "Richard Joel was a very inspirational person...it was his first few years, and he had a very broad vision about impacting America with Jewish values and I think that that still carries a little bit forward with me."

One of the themes of this election season has been the political outsider and the success that many such outsiders have been having. Donald Trump--who has never held political office before, yet is winning the Republican primary--is the premier example of this phe-

nomena. I asked Rosenberg if he felt like an outsider, and if this is something that could help his campaign. He responded that he "is an outsider that also has experience." He cited his experience analyzing energy and healthcare projects, working in the banking sector, and the fact that he's been learning and talking about Israel

for much of life, as proof of this.

As students, we talk about, research, and then ultimately live out different career paths. The path that Oliver Rosenberg has been fascinating and impressive, and depending on how he fares in the upcoming June primary, could be even more impressive. But even more impressive than Rosenberg's specific list of achievements is the synthesis he has in all that he does. For example, his policy positions as a candidate draw upon experiences he had in his professional career and on his personal life; his campaign draws upon his experience in the tech world; his leadership role with Or Chayim draws upon experiences and changes in his personal life. This synthesis reflects on how much Rosenberg has done in his life already, but also that he's primed to do so much more in the future.

"ONE OF THE REASONS I'M RUNNING IS BECAUSE OF THIS DISASTROUS NUCLEAR DEAL WITH IRAN LAST YEAR." ROSENBERG SEES THE ISSUE OF IRAN AS ONE THAT ENCAPSULATES HIS POLICIES IN MULTIPLE AREAS--AS SOMEONE WHO IS BOTH STAUNCHLY PRO-ISRAEL AND AN ADVOCATE FOR GAY RIGHTS, OF WHICH IRAN IS AN EGREGIOUS VIOLATOR."

Rosenberg's heart might be an understatement. "I've been to Israel like fifteen times, I studied there for a year, I interned there for a summer in college. One of the reasons I'm running is because of this disastrous nuclear deal with Iran last year." Rosenberg sees the issue of Iran as one that encapsulates his policies in multiple areas--as someone who is both staunchly pro-Israel and an advocate for gay rights, of which Iran is an egregious violator.

He mentioned how with Or Chayim, he's organized support for Israel, all the more impressive given that many synagogues and organizations in the LGBTQ community aren't as vocal in support of Israel, or are even vocal against Israel. Rosenberg and eighteen other community leaders published a letter last year to Congressman Nadler expressing their disdain for the Iran deal and urging him to vote against it.

Rosenberg is taking on a sitting congressman, Jerry Nadler in the democratic primary. Rather than view this as insurmountable, Rosenberg is actually energized by this challenge and feels that it is important for citizens

CRISIS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

keep the banks from taking too much risk on their own capital. If certain high risk bets went the wrong way, the government would have to step in again to protect the banks from failing. After being passed in 2013, the Volcker Rule cut off what used to be a high profit center for the banks.

Getting back to my initial question of what the effect the crisis has had on the global banking system, although many banks haven't shrunk in terms of asset size since the crisis, they've had to rethink their business models to respond to the new regulation enforced on them by Congress. For example, one of the leading investment banks, Morgan Stanley, has beefed up its wealth management department by focusing more of its resources on wealth management services and by buying out Citigroup's wealth management arm, Smith Barney. Additionally, banks have also had to put aside money for settlements with the government over the misconduct during the crisis. One of the largest settlements came in 2014, when Bank of

America had to settle for \$16 billion. The most recent settlement was a \$5 billion penalty levied against Goldman Sachs.

Looking forward, it is tough to be sure what the future of banking holds, but for the time being, there is no question that banks have to keep much more capi-

tal in reserve for those "just-in-case" scenarios. They also can't act as carelessly as they did pre-crisis as a means of soaking up profits; rather, what banks will need to do is focus on their core operations and what really brings value to the economy. This includes providing credit for corporate and individual clients,

advising companies on corporate actions, and making markets for equity and fixed income products. As the global economy grows, banks will be there to provide for the capital needs of the people and companies so that they can all reach their financial goals. Regarding the social perception of banks, financial institutions have to work towards regaining the public's trust and show how they are for the individual's economic progress along with their own corporation's growth.



Economics, Politics, and the Primary Elections

By Zach Porgess

Forecasting election results based on historical voter turnout has demonstrated little success this election season. Mainstream media has not helped, and its integrity continues to decline because of increasingly obvious political biases. So where does one turn to for clarity? The YU Commentator, of course. This article examines what's really driving the shocking primary results we've witnessed thus far, and what the candidates' positioning on economic policy portends for the general election.

As the primaries continue to unfold, it's become clear that we don't understand voters as well as we did in previous elections. Traditional assumptions about voters have proven invalid, but one central premise does remain true: domestic economic policy trumps foreign policy in elections. Yes, we fear terror and are concerned about foreign conflicts, and we care deeply about the victims and refugees these conflicts produce. But our tangible fears center around having a job that enables us to provide our family with food, shelter, clothing, and education, and to put some money away for an uncertain future. Immigration, foreign policy, and defense policy gain importance as viewed through an economics lens. How are defense dollars best spent? How does immigration policy impact employment? How do we maintain our global standing without increasing our overwhelming national debt?

The traditional political spectrum of liberal and conservative ideologies is a disagreement over the balance between individual rights and the power of the government. Democrats and Republicans differ in their approaches of how best to achieve this balance in an equitable way to "insure domestic tranquility, provide for common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty." The difference between the two parties with regards to economic policy fits right into this paradigm as well, and it revolves around a disagreement over how best to achieve a balance of equality and efficiency. Put simply, equality is about distribution of resources across society, while efficiency focuses on optimal production and resource allocation. Democrats believe in a strong government that needs to take an active role in creating jobs, paying for social programs such as healthcare, and raising taxes on citizens to pay for these programs. The result is a system that emphasizes equality--it's the government's job to ensure income equality for all. Conservative policy emphasizes government efficiency and enabling citizens to achieve greater wealth through increased autonomy, less regulation, less government spending, and lower taxes. The idea relies on providing greater incentive to work, which in turn results in greater productivity, idea creation, and increased opportunity for everyone. Further, it increases competition, which results in optimal resource production, thus creating economic growth.

It seems simple enough--people should vote for the party that has the policy they favor more. But how does the difference in policy explain the events of this current election, namely the rise of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump? The answer is that it extends beyond just this difference in policy between the two parties.

Supporters of these two candidates have seemingly emerged out of nowhere and have staunchly support-

ed their candidates to much success thus far. But who are these Sanders and Trump supporters? There is strong anecdotal indication that a good many of them are people who did not vote in previous elections. So unsurprisingly, analysts struggled with gaps in their previously reliable demographic patterns. Interpolating results across demographics proved futile. Insufficient empirical data resulted in inaccurate forecasts of primary results and candidate viability. But in the process of being wrong, we learned that this election is less about who people vote for than who and how many people vote. We learned the obvious: we can't accurately predict voting patterns of people who have not previously voted. For polls predicting continued success for Trump and Sanders to come

protected bases. Enter Sanders and Trump who did just that.

With Hillary and Jeb busily focused on protecting their near-middle bases, Sanders and Trump spoke in simple language about changing the status quo to people who didn't care to comprehend the incomprehensible policy-speak of the front running candidates. Using plain language, they attracted a following that has at times appeared viral.

Sanders' emergence as a viable candidate with a base even further left than Hillary puts her in a precarious position. She expected the primary battle to be little more than a necessary formality that would be over months ago, allowing her to completely focus on her Republican competition in the general election. Further, her long-standing game plan presumed the Republican candidate to be from the establishment--if not Jeb, then Marco Rubio or someone of his ilk.

As a result of these two developments, Hillary has to simultaneously balance two tasks. On the one hand, she has appeal to voters outside her left-center base--a difficult proposition in and of itself given her track record and strong alignment with the current administration's policies and her association with Wall Street bankers who are bankrolling her campaign, at least according to Sanders. And if that isn't difficult enough, it'll risk alienating the political middle--many of whom reside in the battleground states that decide presidential elections. On the other hand, Hillary has to keep a close eye on the Republican circus and plan for multiple scenarios in the general election, since she could face Trump, Ted Cruz, John Kasich, or perhaps a different candidate altogether if a brokered Republican convention results in the nomination of a different candidate.

But interestingly, the heated battle has kept Cruz and Kasich repeating their original economic policy positions, while Trump has been consistent in his willingness to say pretty much anything at anytime to anyone without the burden of explaining how he will do what he says he will do. That's exactly why many

of his backers support him, and they love it when the mainstream media flails trying to get him to explain anything. Other than the occasional barb hurled Clinton's way, the three Republican candidates' rhetoric has not swayed much since the start of the primaries. So ironically, whoever emerges from Cleveland as the Republican candidate may in fact be stronger because of the circus from which he emerges.

When looking at, and planning ahead for, the general election, the most important number is the aforementioned roughly 40% of eligible voters who have not bothered to vote in previous elections. How many of these voters emerged from their silence only because they support either Sanders' or Trump's plain-speak economic policies? Will they retreat back into their cocoons if their candidate is not the nominee, or will they vote for one of the other candidates? Or perhaps they may vote for the other party's candidate simply because of their disdain of how the government operates today, with any drastic change being better than the status quo. For many of these people, their vote will be an anti-vote--anyone but the other candidate. Our next President will be decided by how many people energized by Sanders or Trump will show up at the voting booth even if their candidate is not on the slate, and who will get their vote. That's at least as good a prediction as the media experts have been able to put forward.

"TO EXPLAIN THE RISE OF THESE TWO CANDIDATES, ONE HAS TO LOOK THROUGH A WIDER LENS WHICH INCLUDES ANGER OVER TRADITIONAL POLITICAL CANDIDATES AND THEIR ECONOMIC POLICIES, AS WELL AS THE ECONOMIC POLICIES OF PREVIOUS PRESIDENTS."

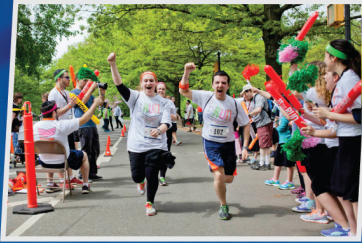


true, it is these "people who don't normally vote" who will have to continue showing up at the ballots in primaries and eventually in the general election.

But how do we understand these "people who don't normally vote" in light of the two parties' economic policies? Presumably, if you're a fiscal Republican, you'd be happy to vote for any Republican candidate, establishment candidates like Jeb Bush or Marco Rubio included. And if you believe in the Democrat's economic policies, you'd coalesce around Hillary Clinton. So why have people gravitated so strongly to Trump and Sanders? To explain the rise of these two candidates, one has to look through a wider lens which includes anger over traditional political candidates and their economic policies, as well as the economic policies of previous presidents.

Prevailing consensus, up until this election, stated that general elections would always come down to a traditional Democrat versus an establishment Republican. (Left-leaning Hillary Clinton against a right-leaning opponent, with Jeb Bush as the likely frontrunner). Both Hillary and Jeb made important decisions up front to focus on protecting their political bases rather than spending money and effort trying to expand their bases. This decision was important because it dictated their economic policy positions as comfortably near the political middle. But these decisions created an opening for a candidate (or two in this case) to appeal to those outside these

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