

## 24 Hours of Creativity and Fun at Invent:YU

By Sam Gelman

On Saturday night, October 29th, the YU Hackers hosted Invent:YU, Yeshiva University's 3rd 24-hour hackathon. The event, hosted in Heights Lounge and Nagel Atrium, was organized by over 30 volunteers and was attended by over 200 people. Free meals and snacks were also provided to all that attended.

For those that don't know, a hackathon is basically an invention marathon. For 24 hours students shuffle in and out of the lounge, sharing and building websites, applications, robots, and more. The atmosphere is usually very relaxed and welcoming as you don't even have to have programming experience to participate and people studying anything from history to computer science are invited to attend. The YU hackathon also featured special mini events such as a nerf war and drone races. Josh Deutch, one of the participants of the event, said that "I'm no coder but still had an amazing time because of all the fun activities that went on. I was captain of one of the teams in the nerf wars and it was intense. Tables, chairs, boxes all over the place, bullets flying. It was chaos."

Most hackathons span entire weekends, leaving Shabbat-observing Jews excluded from the enriching experience. However, with the help of Joshua Weisberg and Natan Bienstock from Student Life, the YU Hackers were able to create an event that honored the

SEE HACK, CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



In partnership with YU, the city breaks ground on the 185th street plaza. Pictured (L-R): Tom Foley, DDC Associate Commissioner of Infrastructure; Rabbi Dr. Josh Joseph, YU Senior Vice President; and Luis Sanchez, DOT Manhattan Borough Commissioner. Read more on Page 4.

## Is the YC Core Interdisciplinary?

By Yisroel Ben-Porat

When Yeshiva College implemented the Core Curriculum in 2012, it fundamentally changed its educational philosophy. Whereas the old curriculum required students to take classes from specific disciplines, the Core claims to be interdisciplinary. According to the official description on YU's website, Core courses transcend traditional divisions between disciplines; CUOT courses "engage academic methods and approaches in more than one field," and INTC courses "provide students with foundational tools for... various domains of the creative arts." However, it is worth assessing this claim. Is the Core truly interdisciplinary?

Unfortunately, it seems that the Core merely pays lip service to the interdisciplinary ideal. Several of the Core categories draw heavily from particular disciplines. CUOT and INTC courses are usually stand-ins for history and literature electives respectively. Although many Core courses appear to be interdisciplinary, a closer look at their syllabi reveals their true intradisciplinary nature. Many professors simply repackage old courses – changing the titles and descriptions – in order to comply with the new curricular requirements. For example, "Old Regime & French Revolution" was retitled as "Origins of Democratic Political Culture," the content of which belies the broader implications of its title. Additionally, many professors do not even bother to pretend that their Core courses are interdisciplinary.

Moreover, the increasing phenomenon of cross-listing contradicts the Core's supposed interdisciplinarity. Last semester (Spring 2016), six of seven CUOT courses and four of five INTC courses were cross-listed with other departments. Cross-listing a Core course under a particular department implicitly acknowledges that the course belongs only to that discipline. In fact, one course – "History of New York City" – was initially offered only as a history elective, yet when the number of CUOT courses proved insufficient, it was subsequently cross-listed under CUOT. If "History of New York City" were truly interdisciplinary, it should have been a CUOT course from the start.

Despite the shortcomings enumerated above, the Core is indeed interdisciplin-

ary in some ways, and there are several notable examples. Prof. David Lavinsky's Core courses – such as "The Monstrous" (CUOT) – often employ methods from both literary and historical studies. Lavinsky's interdisciplinary endeavors stem from his scholarly work; his area of expertise is medieval literature, a field closely connected to medieval history. In fact, Lavinsky's forthcoming book – *Inscription and Sacred Truth: The Material Text in Wycliffite Biblical Scholarship* (Boydell & Brewer, 2017) – has little to do with literature as it is conventionally understood; rather, it is a mix of philology, biblical studies, and medieval history. Lavinsky describes his work as a "cultural history," a broad term that encapsulates multiple disciplines. Thus, Lavinsky's work constitutes an example of effective interdisciplinarity.

Similarly, Prof. Will Lee's course "Shakespeare & The Arts" (INTC) draws upon art history, film criticism, and literary studies, and Rabbi Carmy's course "Ethics & Character" (CUOT) combines philosophy and history. Prof. Lee is known for his curricular innovation, as he develops new courses almost every semester; Rabbi Carmy is a prolific generalist who teaches courses across multiple departments. Yet for the most part the Core has failed to fulfill its mission statement. In 2013, the Commentator noted that "Yeshiva College has... few opportunities for serious cross-discipline intellectual engagement" and concluded that "an interdisciplinary campus was still an ambitious and distant goal." Three years later, that goal has yet to come to fruition.

Effective interdisciplinarity is difficult to achieve. Many professors have taught in the traditional, intradisciplinary method long before YU adopted the Core, and they are uninterested in changing their style. Additionally, interdisciplinarity by definition requires expertise in at least two fields, while most professors only have one area of expertise – the one in which they hold a PhD. Financial difficulties also pose a significant problem. According to a Commentator article from last year, Dean Joanne Jacobson acknowledged that cross-listing "was created in part due to YU's precarious financial situation... Originally, Yeshiva planned to hire more faculty to staff the core, but obviously they were not able to do so." As a result, YU is forced to balance its resources between the Core and the

# THE CORE

RELAX. EXPLORE. THE YC CORE.

SEE CORE, CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

# The EDITORIAL

## What Sort of President Does YU Need? President Joel's Unwitting Advice

By Doron Levine

Nothing flies higher than a lame duck. Blissfully freed from his ability to effect real change on the ground, a president at the tail end of his term has the opportunity to peacefully soar; to zoom out and survey the landscape of his service from a wide angle; to draw conclusions and proffer advice to those of his subjects who are still willing to listen.

Enjoying this panoramic perspective, President Joel recently published an article in The Huffington Post called "It's Not Just The Economy; Our Country's Social Fabric Needs Repair." The article describes the tear in America's social fabric in only the vaguest of terms, but its upshot is the distinction laid out in its title: the success of an institution cannot be measured by bank statements alone. The true American experience, President Joel explains, might be contingent on the unfettered pursuit of wealth but is defined and sustained by "core ideals," "a sense of meaning," and "the value of values." And the same, he says, applies to institutions of higher learning. Those familiar with YU's recent history will find this argument ironic.

Though the interpretation of YU's recent financial struggles is a matter of considerable debate, the basic facts are well documented. YU's endowment shrunk from \$1.7 billion in 2007 to about \$1 billion in 2009. In recent years, YU's budget deficit has reached as high as \$100 million. YU's Chief Financial Officer Michael Gower resigned in 2013. In an interview with The Commentator in 2014, President Joel blamed Gower for withholding and misrepresenting important financial information. But the shrinkage continued; in 2014, among all universities with endowments over \$1 billion, YU was the only one to see its endowment shrink – from \$1.18 billion to \$1.09 billion.

In May 2014, shallow pockets forced YU to sell ten apartment buildings in Washington Heights for a total of \$72.5 million. Desperate to lower its budget, YU recently reached an agreement to transfer financial management of Einstein Medical School to Montefiore Medical Center, and with it almost half of YU's endowment. Einstein was responsible for two-thirds of YU's annual operating budget, but also granted YU substantial prestige in the academic community. Administrative positions have been cut and the university has offered employees early-retirement packages. Housing prices increased considerably for the current academic year. For seven of the past eight years, faculty salaries have been frozen.

Whose fault was it? The ensuing blame game was inevitable. But while finger pointing can be exhilarating and fun, it does tend to tire out the fingers. In the spirit of moving forward, let's set aside the question of culpability and ask instead how this crisis has affected YU's institutional climate. For the moment, let's consider the phenomenology of this crisis instead of its ontology.

Here I speak from personal experience and appeal to the collective impression of YU's studentry. It seems to me that our university's focus on finances has filtered down to life on the ground and injured student morale. Of course, given the muddle that YU finds itself in, President Joel cannot be faulted for setting his sights on financial solvency. But our obsession with money has taken its toll. As much as our administration wishes to preserve and even improve the student experience despite shallower pockets, we students are not blind to the fallout. We notice that faculty morale is low; we notice when teachers leave and aren't replaced; we noticed when Moody's downgraded YU bonds to a B3 rating; we noticed when YU fell fourteen spots in national university rankings.

Of course, it's not all bleak and gloomy. Many students, including myself, remain proud of YU and optimistic about its future. But morale matters, and it's hard for students to be as effusive and passionate about an educational institution that appears to be focusing all of its effort on staying afloat. When President Joel was originally nominated for the presidency, he assured students and faculty that "We have to look at vision

questions before financial realities," and that "more and more funding will become available." In hindsight, though, his presidency seems to have achieved just the opposite. At least from the perspective of the students, it seems that more and more funding has not become available and that financial realities have often taken precedence over long-term vision.

Money is everything and money is nothing. Of course, money is necessary for any institution to do anything at all. But in a vacuum, money is meaningless – financial stability is an entirely instrumental goal. YU is not a bank; its goals include advancing traditional Jewish values, sending young professionals out into the workplace with a sense of integrity and commitment to Jewish tradition, and training the rabbis who will serve as spiritual guides for the next generation. But financial woes have naturally shifted our focus away from our primary values and school spirit has suffered.

Perhaps a strong ideological leader could have preserved morale even in the face of financial adversity. Students in previous generations were led by Rabbi Lamm, a theologian with a PhD in philosophy who penned many articles, delivered countless sermons, and authored books on theology and philosophy including the definitive exposition of our university's motto. But current YU students arguably have no ideological leader to look up to in the ranks of their university's leadership. There is a natural tendency of people experiencing crisis to turn inward and reaffirm loyalty to their basic values, but President Joel, with all his strengths and unique talents, was less than qualified to lead this introspective charge.

President Joel's expertise is supposed to be his financial savvy; his weakness is his lack of rabbinic and academic credentials. Acknowledging the arguments of his detractors, President Joel stated in 2002, "I will not be the leader of modern orthodoxy," and this prediction has proven accurate: President Joel is no Rabbi Lamm. So while the calculation

by the 2002 Board of Trustees to sacrifice ideological vision for financial acumen might have been theoretically sound, President Joel was dealt a terrain that he was under-equipped to navigate. Counterintuitively, a spiritual leader might have been better suited to lead us through financial hardship.

I won't claim to know whether Rabbi Ari Berman is best qualified to succeed President Joel or whether he would even prove an effective leader of YU. Many have expressed legitimate doubts, pointing to his lack of leadership and managerial experience, the very qualities that President Joel was supposed to exemplify. Moreover, I hesitate to speculate about the search committee's intentions; in stark contrast to the previous presidential search process, this search has been marked by heavy secrecy on the part of the board with respect to their criteria and decision-making procedure. But their decision speaks for itself: Rabbi Berman would presumably be a fundamentally different sort of president from Richard Joel. A teacher with a PhD in Jewish philosophy and experience as the spiritual leader of a prominent and sizable Jewish community, Rabbi Berman has, at least on paper, the potential to be the "leader of modern orthodoxy" that President Joel was not and to reignite our community's passion for its holy mission.

So when President Joel criticizes America for focusing too much on its economy and not enough on its values, perhaps here we have an instance case of the pot calling the kettle black. We of course do not fault the pot for making this declaration, for it did not choose to be black. Remember, also, that the pot is speaking the truth – its own blackness does nothing to lessen the kettle's. But even as we praise the pot for its accurate assessment of its companion's color, we cannot help but notice the manifest irony. President Joel's argument—his claim about the social reality in the United States and attendant charge to reorient our perspective and prioritize values over capital—while perhaps true and relevant, is even more applicable to the institution that he has led for the past fourteen years.

**"THERE IS A NATURAL TENDENCY OF PEOPLE EXPERIENCING CRISIS TO TURN INWARD AND RENEW THEIR LOYALTY TO BASIC VALUES, BUT PRESIDENT JOEL, WITH ALL HIS STRENGTHS AND UNIQUE TALENTS, WAS ILL-SUITED TO LEAD THIS INTROSPECTIVE CHARGE."**

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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 YAS**  
Awesome word that people started using recently. It also happens to be the title of a YU club with obscure intentions.



**2 Chicago Cubs**  
In your face, Curse of the Billy Goat.

**3 Professor Neer Asherie**  
This YU physics professor is running for president. Actually. Look it up, he's an official write-in candidate in New York State. Since news broke, pre-med students who still haven't taken Intro Physics have been flocking en masse to the voting booths.



**4 Bob Dylan**  
After politely ignoring the Nobel Prize committee, Dylan finally confirms his acceptance with a resoundingly clear "Absolutely. If it's at all possible." Man he's cool.



**5 Library Printer B**  
This is the better one, and everyone knows it.



**6 Vine Shutting Down**  
Early studies are suggesting that since this looping video-clip interface closed, the rate of new ADD diagnoses has declined by roughly 10,000%.



**7 President Joel's Wardrobe**  
These past few days, PJ's wardrobe has been described as having become "fuzzier" and "YU-ier." Unrelatedly, no one is quite sure what happened to all the leftover free YU Swag...

# 7 UP 7 DOWN



**1 Moving the Clock Back**  
Nothing screams that Winter Is Coming like the sun going down after the first afternoon class.



**2 Congrats After an Aliyah**  
Not deserved, getting an Aliyah is really easy.



**3 Parking in the Heights**  
Take it from someone who circled around the Heights for almost 2 hours in the pouring rain. It sucks.



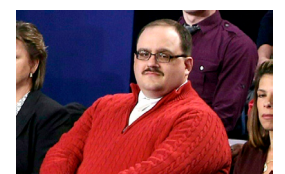
**4 Scary Clowns Roaming the Streets**  
Ever wonder who's driving those ice cream trucks you hear at 2:00 AM? They're clowns! Try falling back asleep now.



**5 Passing Gas in an Empty Elevator**  
Someone will definitely walk in. Trust me. It's just not worth it.



**6 Apple Annual Sales**  
Down for the first time since 2001. Honestly, I'm not surprised, seeing that their latest iPhone improvement was removing the headphone jack.



**7 Ken Bone**  
Wears red sweater, rises to fame, before proceeding to be forgotten about forever.

## YU Adds New Katz School of Graduate and Professional Studies

By Judah Stiefel

Innovation meets graduate education as YU's Katz School of Graduate and Professional Studies kicks off its exciting first semester. The newly opened graduate school takes a refreshing, practical approach to education, using careful market analytics before creating a degree. The Katz School currently offers three graduate degrees: an MS in Quantitative Economics, an MS in Speech Language Pathology, and degrees in marketing and accounting offered through YU's AACSB-accredited Sy Syms School of Business. Three more degrees are expected to be made available as soon next year.

There is a progressive professional aura about the Katz school which stems from its hands-on approach to education, its diligent market analytics when it comes to degree selection, and its invested and creative faculty. All three of these factors contribute to the school's mission of creating capable, well-rounded professionals who can navigate the modern trend towards emerging and expanding fields. As Dr. Paul Russo, experienced educator and Dean of the Katz School put it, "[We are a school] informed by industry. A thorough process of research and planning goes into each degree the school offers."

Before establishing a degree, the Katz School's administration goes through four steps in determining the viability of the field in question. An initial analysis of the labor market is conducted in order to determine whether graduates for the field in question are in high demand. There is also research done to determine the availability of local jobs, job security, expected growth in the field, and wage mobility. The administration of the school then does detailed research into forecasts for the future of the field in question. They are only willing to offer degrees that will guarantee their graduates stable careers in the future with room to grow.

Lastly the school looks into other graduate programs, a process Dean Russo describes as an "art form". Dean Russo wants to ensure that any degree that the school offers is unique. If there are a sufficient number of competing programs that offer the same or a similar degree, the school won't go forward in creating it. The results of this selective process are invaluable. This guarantee that there will be quality and potential in each degree that the Katz School offers.

Consistent with its research-oriented approach to which degrees it chooses to offer, the school takes a similarly rigorous and practical-minded approach to its education. Says Dean Russo, "Students are evaluated on what they build, not on what they can regurgitate." The evaluation of students is meant to test their practical skills with the goal of creating well-rounded innovators in the workplace. Courses are project-based and the learning is practical and experiential. Energetic faculty facilitate this approach to education. When selecting faculty, each interviewee is required to demonstrate what they have done to improve their field. They are expected to maintain a high teaching level, show proficiency in research, and demonstrate genuine care for their students.

Dean Russo originally became an educator after working for years in high-tech at Texas Instruments. He worked for 20 years at CUNY, focusing on higher education startups. He built four major initiatives at CUNY including an online education initiative. Dean Russo sees YU as an academic powerhouse and has brought his 20 years of experience to create a graduate school that can apply YU's great potential.

Overall, the Katz School has three main goals. Firstly, to create graduate degrees in emerging and expanding professions. Secondly, to create attractive graduates and to connect them with the right employers. Thirdly, to create an exemplary experience for students while maintaining an informed and welcoming environment. The school wants employers to feel comfortable and at ease in doing business with the school.

While it is currently in just its first year, the school is growing quickly, and it plans to add three more majors by next year. The Katz School for Graduate and Professional Studies is a great opportunity for driven students within and beyond the YU community to obtain a unique and well-rounded education.



## Israel Kumzitz at Times Square - United in Song and Dance

By Leiby Deutsch

Everyone knows the constant start and stop of the New York City subways. Everyone is familiar with the hustle, bustle, pomp and circumstance that mark Times Square. That is a typical night in the city that never sleeps.

Only this was not a typical night.

There was something unique about Sunday night, September 25. Walking the streets of Times Square, one encountered the usual tidal wave expected from the capital of the world. However, those that kept walking that night encountered something else. They witnessed something unusual emerge from the mainstream dynamic: a hum of tranquility and serenity. A hum characteristic of the Hatikvah.

Of course, that hum was only the very beginning of a two-hour Yeshiva University kumzitz in honor of the State of Israel. Attended by approximately 1,000 students, the event is likely to once again take the crown for the most attended student-run event of the year. For two continuous hours, students of all creeds and breeds danced to tunes ranging from the classics, such as Hatikvah, Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, and Acheinu, to the more contemporary: Mi'shema'amin, Hashem Melech,

Yisrael Hi Habayit Sheli, and much more. The students never wanted to stop singing, even after the event was over, offering to sing their own songs with others following their lead. Tani Polansky, one of the entertainers for the event (along with well renowned Aryeh Tiefenbrunn), had what to say about playing for this event. "Playing at the kumzitz was incredible - watching hundreds of people dancing together - all different types of people, united in support of Israel - barriers fell away and it was beautiful to see such tremendous achdut and a kiddush Hashem. It was an extraordinarily exhilarating experience to say the least".

The participants could not help but express that exhilaration by smiling and dancing, whether it be in circles or in one giant pile of bodies jumping up and down. Undoubtedly, there were many Israeli flags to go around. The kumzitz helped Yehuda Greenfield, a student who had the privilege of waving one of those flags, reawaken his experiential love for the Jewish homeland. "It was inspiring to me to see students getting together of their own initiative and creating an event supporting Israel. Dancing with my fellow students and waving an Israeli flag, for no other reason than the fact that we love Israel is something I got a lot out of. I came with my sister and mother and there was nothing they enjoyed more than seeing me wave the Israeli flag. I miss Israel

dearly every day and I hope to move there once I graduate, and this kumzitz gave me a respite and helped me remember and keep Israel in my heart."

The YU community was not the only one that was affected by the festivities. A number of spectators not involved with YU or even with the Jewish community could not help but dance along. Anyone distracted from singing and dancing noticed people watching from atop of tour buses or from the surrounding businesses. The world stopped to notice the Land of Israel and Those who love it. Shlomo Anapolle, co-President of the YU Israel Club and co-organizer of the event could not have been more pleased with the power of the event.

"This year's event was 100% a kiddush Hashem to the max. Over 1,000 people gathered in one of the busiest places in the world to show their support for Israel - connecting through song." Anapolle reflected that "putting together such an event is a lot of work, but it is worth it for the smiles. Not only the hundreds of students' smiles, but also the many, many passersby who stop and see that this is Israel - the mutual love and appreciation for our fellow human beings - and not what the media portrays it. Standing at the event I was proud of our students who really showed the world that YU stands with Israel now and forever!"

## And Then There Was Swag

By Judah Stiefel

Student Life gave undergraduates complimentary swag as they returned from a long holiday break. As Assistant Director of Student Life Linda Stone put it, "The Student Life professionals looked forward to welcoming students back with an upbeat, inspiring event to enhance the YU school spirit and pride in our campus community." There's no doubt that it was successful as the throng of students that waited to receive their swag wrapped around the entire Heights Lounge. As of press time, 1,400 pieces of apparel have been given out and there are still going to be more chances to receive for students that haven't yet received swag.

Over the last week, everywhere around the school there are students donning their YU swag with pride. Sophomore Daniel Jerome Schwarz said, "seeing people wearing YU apparel has been quite uplifting. It's nice to feel that students are really proud of this school." There's no doubt that school spirit is on the rise.

As for the selection, the Student Life department felt it was important to give students a nice selection of apparel. Sophomore Avery Ennis commented, "it's clear that the blue hoodies were the best thing to get." I personally am a big believer in the grey long sleeve-T, and there are plenty of those who preferred the grey crew neck sweatshirt. The two Stanton Fellows, Sarah Sheps and Natan Bienstock worked with student life to create what ultimately became the three selections. The event was encouraged and supported by Rabbi Brander, Vice President for University and Community Life.

The atmosphere in the room was electric as students waited for their swag. Music was blasting and there were even complementary blue and white cookies at the end of the long line along with some excellent balloons. The wait was long and if time is money, then free swag is expensive, yet all the more worth it. Suffice it to say that the boost of energy and school spirit will be helpful as the days get colder and the long stretch of a semester kicks in.

## City Officials Join YU for 185th Street Plaza Groundbreaking Ceremony

By Doron Levine

Construction on YU's \$3.6 million pedestrian plaza on 185th street has been progressing since the summer, but it symbolically began on September 28. Over the past few months, the pavement of the 20,000-foot space has been broken in various places by orange-vested construction workers powering jackhammers and hydraulic excavators, but on the Wednesday morning it was broken by formally-dressed YU administrators and NYC officials using decorative golden shovels.

The ceremony began in Nagel Lounge. The infamous Nagel Lounge Wall was folded away for the festivities, and the lounge was set up for speeches with a podium, rows of chairs, and velvet ropes and stanchions. The crowd was greeted by light refreshments as YU students and administrators were joined by officials from NYC's Department of Transportation and Department of Design and Construction for the groundbreaking ceremony kicking off the construction of the new pedestrian plaza.

Yeshiva University Senior Vice President Rabbi Josh Joseph spoke first, emphasizing the value of community and explaining that the plaza will be an open space with no walls, allowing members of the larger Washington Heights neighborhood to interact and socialize. "The plaza will be open to everyone to be used by everyone," said Rabbi Joseph. "It is a blessing that we have this chance to embrace the richness and diversity of each other

and move forward in building a community." NYC Department of Transportation Manhattan Borough Commissioner Luis Sanchez then spoke briefly, followed by NYC Department of Design and Construction Associate Commissioner Tim Foley who described the details of the construction and predicted its completion in around a year's time by next Labor Day, September 4, 2017. City Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez was also scheduled to speak, but he unfortunately had to cancel at the last minute.

When the speeches concluded, the crowd headed outside for the symbolic groundbreaking. A wooden rectangle filled with dirt was placed in the center of 185th street. Gold-painted shovels with blue ribbons tied to them and construction hats emblazoned with YU's logo were distributed to YU administrators, city officials, and construction workers who posed for pictures in various combinations, smiling for the cameras while symbolically sticking the shovels into the dirt. When completed, the new space will house chess tabletops, bicycle racks, ornamental street lighting, stone benches, flowering perennials, and native shrubs, and will serve as a spacious and centrally-located outdoor space for students and faculty to work and socialize. Rabbi Kenneth Brander, who was not present at the ceremony, explained that "the driving force behind the project is what drives YU - to provide the students with a great academic and campus experience."

## In Israel, Students Spend a Summer Building Camps and Experiences

By Yosef Kerendian

The school year was finally over, and to some that meant only one thing. Every year, Yeshiva University sends 24 individually picked students from a pool of well over 100 applicants to Israel for three and a half weeks. The aim is to run an American-style summer day camp for underprivileged teens coming from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds from different cities. The cities are all in the southern part of Israel, namely Arad, Dimona, and Kiryat Malachi. Each city had its own camp and every counselor was assigned a city, teaching partner, and two or more Chugim to teach and participate in with the Israeli campers and students. The Chugim encompassed activities ranging from basketball and football, to cooking, dancing, and drumming. Without exception, every camper walked away from camp gaining a few new skills and discovering some new hidden talents.

For the Israeli campers, each day became a new day to

learn, strengthen, and build their confidence in English, play a new sport, participate in a "Minute to Win It" challenge, and make friends. For the counselors, there were new campers to meet, classes to teach, and goals to reach. The experiences over the course of the three and a half weeks were life-changing for some. "My first day of summer camp was nothing like I expected it would be. It was overwhelming, exhilarating, and everything in between," said Rina Ben-benyamin, an Aradnik counselor hailing from Brooklyn, New York. "While I feel that the overall experience is deeply personal and often indescribable, certain moments will stand out in my mind for years to come."

Another counselor, this time a representative to Dimona, mentioned, "The campers were all highly enthusiastic, amazingly creative and outgoing soon-to-be young adults with ambitions greater than most other students their age," said the Counterpoint participant from Los Angeles, California. Taking just one example of many, three Israeli

"graduates" of the program Ronny, Chaviv, and May created a team of robotic experts called RoboActive and, in fact, won 2nd place in the state of Israel in robotics! Their achievement demonstrates how much more confident these teenagers are after spending hundreds of hours with Yeshiva University students.

Many compare the impact they make while on Counterpoint to the way the moon changes in size every night. When you take a look at the moon on a clear blue night, you might not notice the slight change it has made since the previous night. However, over the course of a few days, let alone a week, you will see the noticeable difference in impact and size. So to, on any given day during Counterpoint, a counselor may not realize the major impact he or she is making on each and every individual, but over the course of the trip everyone will notice the incredible differences made on these bright, creative, and ambitious Israelis because of that one thing you did this past summer.

## Make Commentator Polls Correct Again

### Serious Flaws in Poll Showing Trump Favorite among Students

By Avraham Wein

In his recent article “Poll: Plurality of YU Students Support Trump, 27% Support Clinton,” author Avi Strauss both presents and analyzes the results of a poll concerning the upcoming presidential election conducted by the Commentator. As indicated by the title of the article, the author infers based on the poll results that a plurality of students support Donald Trump. While the article should be seen as an earnest attempt to gauge the voting preferences of YU students, the poll contains several basic and severe methodological flaws and thus it should be discredited as an accurate depiction of the views of the YU community. Moreover, although it is certainly possible that a plurality of students favor Trump, the claim itself is certainly a significant one with a number of repercussions as it would mean that the YU community supports a historically controversial candidate. Thus, despite the understandable lack of time and resources possessed by the Commentator, a more rigorous study would nonetheless be necessary prior to making such a weighty claim.

Prior to discussing the faults with the poll, a brief description of the methodology employed is of order. The details of the methodology used for this poll, while not provided in the article itself, were both described and confirmed by editors of the paper. The survey was sent out by Editor-in-Chief Doron Levine to all undergradu-

ates. Additionally, students traversing through the Rubin residence hall were polled in the lobby of the building. The survey asked three questions about the participant’s status in YU, their voting preference, and their confidence in the candidate they intended to vote for.

A prominent issue in the poll is that the author is guilty of sampling bias more generally and self-selection bias in particular, a violation of one of the most basic tenets of survey methodology. Sampling bias is a bias in which a sample is gathered in a manner that some members of the intended population are less likely to be included than others. This is quite clearly an issue in this study. An online survey about political views is likely to attract people who are more active online, interested in politics, read their emails, and have sufficient time and interest to fill out a survey. Furthermore, by polling those in the Rubin building, the sample is biased towards those who live in Rubin Hall and against those who live in other dormitories or off campus. Moreover, participants in the survey were able to vote as many times as they liked, thereby severely damaging the legitimacy of this poll. This flaw in the survey left the door open to Trump supporters to vote as many times as they liked. As has been noted with past controversial presidential candidates like Ron Paul, supporters of these candidates often have a disproportionate online presence. Simply put, Trump supporters may be louder than Clinton supporters and more easily

drawn into participating in a survey. Finally, while not appropriate for both the scope and forum of this article, it is noteworthy that the surveyors chose to use a four-point scale for evaluating confidence of the participants as opposed to a five- or seven-point scale. Four-point scales force participants into taking a side because there is no “middle ground.” This may be another fault in the study.

The repercussions of claiming that a plurality of YU students favor Trump are varied in their severity but a few are of note. The author himself notes that surprisingly, a larger percentage of female students support Trump than male students, despite Trump having a history of sexist or negative comments. While left open to interpretation by the author, the implication of such a statistic is that these comments and stances are of lesser significance to Beren Campus voters than other issues. Additionally, regardless of one’s political stances, it is quite clear that Donald Trump is a historically controversial candidate that has made a number of loaded comments against certain religions and ethnicities. The Commentator should not be so quick to attribute such opinions to the YU community if it does not have sufficient basis for doing so. I hope the newspaper will be more wary in both conducting and interpreting future polls.

## MTA Celebrates 100 Years With Alumni

By Yosef Sklar

The Yeshiva University High School For Boys (MTA) is celebrating its centennial anniversary by organizing a lineup of alumni events to take place over the course of the year both on and off the Wilf campus. The school kicked off the year by inviting all alumni to a special Kollel Yom Rishon, a Sunday morning learning session, featuring Rav Moshe Tzvi Weinberg and Rabbi Dr. J.J Schachter on the topic of “Introspection and Repentance”. Another learning program – a larger scale celebratory Yom Iyun – is set to take place on Sunday, December 18. It will feature keynote speaker Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks as well as other notable Modern Orthodox educators.

A wide range of accomplished alumni will be coming back to speak throughout the year as part of the “Centennial Lecture Series”. Notable upcoming speakers include Yossi Klein Halevi (class of ‘71), popular American-Israeli journalist and author of “Like Dreamers”, as well as Joseph Gitler (‘92) founder and CEO of Leket Israel – Israel’s largest charity food bank.

This coming spring, MTA will be hosting an athletics celebration featuring Hockey and Basketball “reunion” games in which former athletics teams will be able to

turn back the clock and play alongside their former teammates.

Alumni are also front and center in MTA’s commemorative video “Building Foundations” – which in 3 minutes beautifully encapsulates the legacy of the institution by alternating clips of high school students in the classroom and Beit Midrash with clips of notable Alumni putting their knowledge and values to practice in their respective fields and personal lives. The school plans on putting out more celebratory videos throughout the year.

The school has also been reaching out to Alumni asking them to send in their fondest memories of their high school days to be shared on the MTA website.

As MTA was the first high school in America to include both Jewish and secular studies, and served as a model for our contemporary “yeshiva high schools”, its historical milestone is worthy of celebration beyond its own doors. In the words of MTA principal Rabbi Joshua Kahn: “As we celebrate the 100th year birthday of MTA, it is an opportunity for the entire community, the entire large Yeshiva University and MTA community, to celebrate together.” All students are encouraged to take full advantage of this opportunity.



### HACK, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

spirit of a hackathon while also being open to Shabbat-observing students.

“Hackathons are changing the world” said Aaron Landy, the head coordinator of the hackathon. “Every university needs a hackathon if it wants to enable its students to contribute to the future.” Yeshiva University looks like it is contributing just fine, having created 14 applications in 24 hours at the Hackathon.

The YU Israel Club and Tamid Club were also heavily involved in the planning as the hackathon had a special Israel theme this year. Six Israeli companies, including Nefesh B’Nefesh and Masa, participated, allowing students to meet with representatives of these companies and talk to professionals from a wide range of fields. “The hackathon taught that Israel can affect all of our students and not just the students involved

in our traditional events” said Tamar Shiller, one of the Israel Club presidents. “There are so many different ways to benefit Israel and showing our students that creating apps and websites can help our country, it shows that it is always possible to connect our future jobs to helping Israel in some way or another.



## RAFT Hosts Discussion with Aaron Koller on Biblical Creation in the Modern World

By Yakov Stone

In its opening event of the year, RAFT hosted a discussion with Professor Aaron Koller about approaches to resolving the apparent contradictions between modern science and the creation narrative in the first three chapters of Genesis. Over forty students attended the event, held in Rubin Shul, during which Professor Koller presented medieval Jewish thinkers who argued that the creation story ought to be read non-literally as well as the lessons that this kind of reading teaches.

RAFT (Religious Approaches to Faith and Theology) is a new student group which aims to promote discussion of Orthodox theology at YU. RAFT is beginning its first full year at YU, and the group hopes to offer monthly events that will take place on both campuses. Benny Aivazi, one of the co-founders of RAFT, described participants in RAFT events as “a group of students who are interested in creating a forum for discussing the major questions pertaining to Orthodox Judaism and having them addressed from an orthodox perspective.” The group intends to focus on the creation of productive debate of theological topics at events.

Shlomo Fried, a new student who was impressed by the RAFT event, said that he “appreciated how Professor Koller opened up a discussion after the presentation was over. Everyone at the event got to hear new ideas and approaches to the problems we discussed,” he explained. Many students spoke with Professor Koller after the event, and the event even attracted non-YU students who came to hear the discussion.

Part of RAFT’s vision is to foster these intellectual discussions at their events. When questioned about the types of events that RAFT might provide in the future, Mr. Aivazi said, “We are hoping to run more events similar to the one we just had in the sense that we want there to be a lecture component with time afterwards for discussions and questions. It is important to us that we create a space for discussion where we can seriously engage with all kinds of questions in a respectful and sincere way.” For future events, RAFT hopes to bring in both professors at YU and other speakers who are knowledgeable about the topics RAFT aims to discuss. There is no concrete plan yet, but students should look out for an event scheduled right after the break.

## TEDx YU Spreads Ideas to the Yeshiva Community

By Eitan Lipsky

On Tuesday, November 1st, YU joined the TED community, as 100 Yeshiva University students, alumni, administrators, and guests gathered in the Schottenstein Theater for a TEDx Yeshiva University event. All sat with great anticipation for this momentous event which had been advertised since June and had now finally arrived.

A TEDx event is one that is organized independently by groups such as schools, businesses, or neighborhoods. It features several talks restricted to less than 18 minutes in length, just as they are at the official TED conferences. TEDx was created as an opportunity for students to attend TED conferences without having to pay the exorbitant prices that are usually charged for the major gatherings. For the YU event, a \$10 entrance fee was charged to cover the costs of running the event, which was also sponsored by Neal's Fund. (This small admission price did not seem to deter many people, as the tickets were sold out within 8 minutes of their going on sale back in September.)

The stage was set very simply, in classic TED style, with the trademark giant red letters and round red rug that have been featured in thousands of TED conferences. The event was introduced by its organizers, Noam Safier and Esti Hirt, who laid out the rules for audience behavior during the talks, which were being recorded to be placed on the TEDx Youtube page.

The speakers for the event were affiliated with YU in some way, and were selected after a very thorough search process by the TEDx Yeshiva University committee. "We were looking for speakers that have interesting experiences, research or ideas to share and also have the ability to communicate it effectively to a broader audience," said Safier. "We were very selective and only chose the people we thought our community would find most compelling." Arielle Zellis, a Psychology major and the only current YU

student to speak, was selected out of more than 20 student applicants after a rigorous interview process. Reuven Russell, a Professor of Public Speaking at YU and Artistic Director of Stern's Dramatic Society, spent time training the speakers in preparation for the event. He also served as emcee to introduce the diverse panel of six speakers.

The first speaker was Dr. Jesse Itzkowitz, Assistant Professor of Marketing at the Sy Syms School of Business. In an eye-opening talk, Itzkowitz described the research that he has recently conducted about the effect of names on the way people live their lives. He demonstrated that through certain psychological principles, people will often make important life decisions, such as choosing a career or deciding which stocks to purchase, based off of their subconscious associations with names.

Next came Monica Dugot, a Cardozo alumna and the Senior Vice President and International Director of Restitution at Christie's, the world's leading art business. She described her role and some of her experiences retrieving art that was lost or stolen from Jews during the Nazi era. As the child of two Holocaust survivors, she committed her life to the tireless pursuit of many of these works of art. "The looting of the Nazis sought to destroy the culture of the Jews, thus dehumanizing them and removing people from their roots and possessions", she said. For her, the process of retrieving these items for family members was her way of fighting against this attempt of the Nazis and connecting families with their history.

She was followed by Zellis, who spoke about having a "person-first" mindset in dealing with people who seem different from ourselves. She described the tendency of people, even when they are helping out those in need, to not treat them the same as they would treat others or to not take their preferences into consideration. She highlighted this by speaking about her brother Chaim, who has Down Syndrome, but thrives as a result of his being treated like a regular kid by his friends and family. In Zellis' words,

"person first language creates meaningful relationships and conversations with those who originally were so different than all of us, but now they are eye-to-eye, face-to-face, and they are equal."

Mark Weingarten, a semicha student in RIETS, spoke next about the need to "become a king". He referred to his own life experiences as a proof that a person needs to be strong to his or her values, even if they are against popular perception. He described how this mindset helped him create his organization, Music Vs., which tries to unite diverse groups of people through music, and which has spread internationally.

Following him, Shy Krug, a YU graduate and therapist at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center entertained the crowd with magic tricks while discussing the commonalities between psychology and magic, and how they both require knowledge of human thinking and assumptions.

The final speaker of the evening was Ariel Fishman, a former professor at the Sy Sym's School of Business who is the Assistant Vice President of Academic Program Planning, Development, and Approval at Fordham University. He spoke about the year he was forced to spend in a wheelchair as a result of being hit by a car. He spoke about the accommodations that society makes for people with disabilities, and how often times these inventions turn into something that is used by everyone. He then stunned the crowd by removing his prosthetic legs and revealing that he was a double-amputee.

The event was very well received and concluded with a standing ovation for all of the speakers and organizers. A long and arduous process by the committee to coordinate the event, including several previous attempts that did not pan out, resulted in a very successful TEDx Yeshiva University event.

Videos of the talks will be posted for the public on the TEDx Youtube page in the next few weeks.

## Swiss Army Man and the State of Modern Entertainment

By Hillel Field

Since its initial screenings at the 2016 Sundance Film Festival, audiences and critics have come to a rare consensus about the film *Swiss Army Man*: it's impossible to categorize. Apparently, this predicament was troubling enough to make the movie notorious for the noticeable amount of people that walked out during its initial screenings. At first glance this behavior seems strange, given that by now, the film has received generally favorable reviews, and gained somewhat of a cult status.

To empathize with these early audiences, we need to realize that they were going into this film with no context or expectations. The contrast between tones in *Swiss Army Man* can be stark, and often jarring. The first scene shows the protagonist, Hank (Paul Dano) at his wits end, attempting to hang himself on an apparently deserted island. His salvation comes in the form of a corpse played masterfully by Daniel Radcliffe that floats to shore, who manages to prove that he can even display his acting talents while playing dead. An episode of over-the-top flatulence from "Manny" the corpse, quickly thwarts the viewer's tonal expectations, eliciting laughter in the most innocent of ways. Hank comes to the realization that he can utilize this corpse's unique talents to his advantage, and Manny becomes his main source of survival.

Yet a corpse is merely a corpse, and while watching this film, the viewer might get suspicious that Hank's seemingly fortuitous situation is not all that it's cracked up to be. When Manny somehow gains the ability to speak to Hank, the knee-jerk reaction is to either conclude that Hank is slowly but surely going insane, or that this movie is deciding to place itself in a universe where the laws of nature are easily broken.

Both of these interpretations face difficulty in light of the rest of the movie. If this movie wanted us to think that its protagonist's faculties were dwindling, you would expect there to be a major "plot twist" reveal in the vein of countless movies. This never comes. Instead, the film revels in Manny's extraordinary abilities, each one less believable than the last. If we take the other route and conclude that this movie fails to represent "real life," we're also in a pick-

le. Without giving important plot points away, it eventually becomes clear that there is nothing supernatural about the world of *Swiss Army Man*. While some movies certainly hold back from answering major questions viewers might have (I'm looking at you *Inception*), this one doesn't seem to attempt to 'befuddle' the viewer. We simply are left to conclude that this movie is comfortable, and even thrives, with the contradictions it suggests.

Even *Swiss Army Man*'s score, a feature of movies that people often overlook, is highly original. Lines of dialogue from the film bleed seamlessly into songs, many of which are purely a cappella. The music in this film serves as an unusually creative example of diegetic sound, where sound is experienced or produced by the characters in the movie themselves. This gives *Swiss Army Man* an intensely organic tone, as various sounds in Hank's environment coalesce into a full-blown musical mosaic. This consistent theme of the blurring between reality and fantasy is also symbolized musically: the sounds experienced by the characters themselves can be classified as "real," while it's difficult to consider the fully blossomed musical piece as existing within the universe of the characters.

The entirety of the film weaves between scenes of pro-

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found joy, visceral sorrow, and ridiculous laugh-out-loud humor. While one might be put-off by the juxtaposition of clashing tones, we should consider the possibility of embracing this form of entertainment. Life is full of instances where a moment of despair is abruptly followed by a reason for jubilation, and vice-versa. A film that is able to cover a significant range of the human experience is in some ways more relatable, and a more fulfilling type of entertainment.

For much of the short history of movies, the theater was a place to go to escape from the banalities of everyday life, and experience something truly otherworldly. Audiences were astounded by early films like Georges Méliès' *A Trip to the Moon* that featured fantastic creatures and seemingly impossible situations. The otherworldliness that people crave is still fulfilled in large doses with massively successful movies such as Marvel's endlessly profitable *Avenger's* universe.

On the other hand, times certainly have changed. Paradoxically, because we are inundated with so much cinematic content that revels in the otherworldly, we cherish entertainment that feels like a reflection of real life. Going to the movie theater is no longer an escape when we are bombarded on all fronts by the latest Hollywood box-office topper; we can easily dive into Netflix's ever-expanding pool of original content. Even in the world of television comedy, we've seen a recent smattering of shows beginning with *The Office*, that strike a balance between dry sarcasm and warm, personable characters that formed complex relationships. People crave a sense of sincerity, something that gets lost if a film or TV show solely relies on pushing the boundaries of the imagination, or delivering line after line of razor sharp sarcasm and irony. The modern consumer is no longer engaged by what this world lacks, but yearns to be reminded of the thrills that life has to offer.

Despite its somewhat silly and arbitrary premise, *Swiss Army Man* feels like the perfect movie for the jaded film appreciator of 2016. It's gorgeous filming, outstanding acting, and profound themes overshadow the fact that it fails to follow traditional film practices. Not only is it a breath of fresh air in the age of franchises that are endlessly rebooted, but *Swiss Army Man* gives viewers the opportunity to reflect on the emotional breadth of life, something people may not realize they have been missing in the first place.



## Tales of a Cubs Fan

By Etan Neiman

Sorry Theo Epstein. Sorry Joe Maddon. Sorry (World Series MVP) Ben Zobrist. This is way bigger than you, the team or any of its members. This is about the city of Chicago. This is about the fans who waited a lifetime for the win they were sure would never come. This is about the fans who waited a lifetime only to watch Wednesday night's spectacle from Heaven.

Just ask Cubs fan Wayne Williams, who drove from North Carolina to Indiana to keep a pledge he made to his father. The pact: when the Cubs got into the World Series, they would listen to the games together. So, the 68-year-old Williams strolled into the military section of Greenwood Forest Lawn Cemetery in suburban Indianapolis, found his father's grave, and flipped on the radio. Together, they listened to the Cubs make history. When the thriller was over, he simply told his father, "We did it."

Many Cubs greats have risen and fallen trying to bring peace to Chicago. This is as much about them as anybody named Kris Bryant or Jon Lester. Ernie Banks, fondly known as "Mr. Cub", spent 19 years trying so desperately to do it. Ron Santo, superstar third baseman and beloved Cubs radio commentator, gave his life to the cause. Both were surely smiling down from Cubbie Heaven when Zobrist smashed the game winning hit to left. Harry Caray, the eternally opti-

mistic broadcaster, spent 16 seasons assuring Cubs fans that next year would be different. When he departed the booth, the faithful were left with just his iconic promise that "as sure as God made green apples, someday the Chicago Cubs are gonna be in the World Series." Somewhere in the clouds on Wednesday night, Caray was taking a big bite out of a bright Granny Smith apple.

Wednesday night's magic brought closure to the generations of living former Cubs players who couldn't deliver the city to the promised land. On a cold October night in 2003, Cubs ace pitcher Kerry Wood sat in the pressroom, looking the city of Chicago in the eye, tears streaming down his face, and reported, "I choked." He had just lost game 7 of the National League Championship Series, leaving the Cubs one game short of the World Series. Shortly after the Cubs took the 2016 World Series, surrounded by reporters, the retired Wood cried again. Only this time, his report was, "It happened Chicago." Similar sentiments were shared by many more former Cubs icons, such as Ryne Sandberg, Billy Williams, Shawon Dunston, Mark Prior, and Derek Lee.

When first baseman Anthony Rizzo squeezed the final out at 12:47 AM ET, my feelings were irrelevant. It was time to think of my grandfather, Kenneth Neiman, who has waited his whole life to watch that trophy be lifted. It was time to think of my father, brothers, and the rest of the family huddled together in my Chicago basement. It was time to think of my great-grandfather, Harry Neiman, who was two months old when the Cubs last won in 1908 and spent his entire life waiting for them to win again. This would have meant the world to him.

Don't accuse the Cubs of not getting what this is about. When Zobrist arrived at his Chicago home the day after the game and found some 3,000 fans lining his front lawn waiting to thank him, his natural reaction was to spend three hours signing autographs and posing for pictures. Immediately upon spotting Cubs legend Ryne Sandberg a few minutes after the game, Rizzo stopped what he was doing, walked up to the Hall of Famer, and hugged him. His message: "This is for you." On the executive side, shortly after the game,

Cubs President of Baseball Operations Theo Epstein refused to allow himself any joy. "I'm just so happy for Cub fans over the last 108 years, generations, some still here, some not," Epstein said. "They were all here tonight. Everybody who ever put on a Cubs uniform, this is for you." Cubs General Manager Jed Hoyer chimed in, "I know there are so many that are thinking of their grandfathers and their fathers right now. It's bigger than these 25 guys (on the team). It's bigger than the organization. It's about the city that stuck with the team forever."

**"THIS IS ABOUT THE FANS WHO WAITED A LIFETIME ONLY TO WATCH WEDNESDAY NIGHT'S SPECTACLE FROM HEAVEN."**

The facts are not in question. Wednesday night's number two hitter, Kyle Schwarber, recorded zero hits in the regular season over three games after tearing the ACL and LCL in his left knee. He made it back for the beginning of the World Series and provided some of the most important base knocks. Pitcher Jake Arrieta's career was left for dead in 2013 when the Baltimore Orioles gave him to the Cubs for practically nothing. He pitched two of the Cubs' four World Series wins. Zobrist, the devout Christian and son of a pastor who took less money to join the Cubs' larger than life journey, came up with the biggest hit in the history of baseball in the top of tenth inning. Manager Joe Maddon outmaneuvered the world to lead this team to the promise land. Epstein is the greatest executive in the history of sports, presiding over the Boston Red Sox breaking their 86 year championship drought and supposed curse, and now guiding the Cubs to breaking their 108 year drought and supposed curse. However, all of these are simple footnotes for the history books. This is all about the long-suffering city of Chicago. To my fellow Cubs fans, both alive and departed, there are only three words that matter: We did it.



## Thoughts on a First Time on Campus

By Lilly Gelman

I'm not going to sugar coat it, this semester has been rough. Like many other students in YU, this is my first time on campus, and the adjustment has been quite a bit more challenging than I anticipated. On top of trying to force myself back into school-mode after a year long hiatus in Israel, I have also been desperately trying to learn the names of the buildings, the cafs, the dorms, and the campuses.

The problem is that everything is different. In high school, each new year had its changes, but it was always the same building filled with familiar faces (excluding the new teacher or two). I knew the ins and outs of the system and could get through the year with almost no surprises. In Israel, everyone in my midrasha was just as confused as I was with the new place, the new schedule, and the new language. So even though it was a completely different environment than anything I had ever experienced, we were all figuring it out together. Here at Stern, the system is a mystery to me and there is no even playing field. I'm new to everything; the city, classes, studying. But for three quarters of the students at YU this is all old news- their routine. And for many of the first time students, the city, or at least New York, is a familiar place.

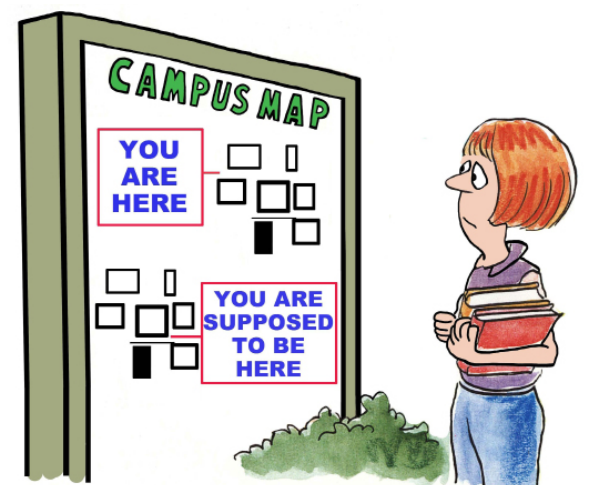
I told myself on my first day of classes that I was not going to let on that I was new here. I thought I could take this school and this city by storm and come in running full speed ahead as if I had been attending Stern College and living in New York for years. But it seemed that no matter how hard I try I am constantly confusing Beren with Wilf, 215 with 245, and Madison with Park. Sometimes, it feels as if Yeshiva University speaks its own language, and we are all part of some crazy YU immersion program. I needed a break.

I decided that I was going to be involved in Bnei Akiva while in Stern before classes even began, and the first event came at just the right time. During the second weekend of September, at Camp Stone in Sugar Grove, PA, Bnei Akiva of the U.S and Canada hosted their annual Kenes Avoda shabbaton - a weekend long leadership training program for high school students who head the Bnei Akiva chapters in their communities across the country. I had been on this shabbaton twice throughout my high school career and have been participating in different Bnei Akiva programs and summer camps since I was eight, so going into that weekend felt like coming home. Bnei Akiva Shabbatot look relatively similar anywhere you go, so being able to sing the familiar songs and feel the comforting ruach and energy of Shabbat dancing was exactly what I needed after weeks of feeling like a guest in Midtown Manhattan. I knew exactly where to go, how to act, and what to say.

But, looking back on my Bnei Akiva career, I realized that I had not always been the experienced member that I am now. My first summer in camp at Moshava I.O, a Bnei Akiva-run sleep away camp in Honesdale, PA, was full of confusing terminology and songs that all just seemed like a blur of Hebrew to me. And my freshman year of high school, when I was first able to run Shabbat afternoon programming, or Snif, for the kids in my community, was one long year of trial and error. It's no easy task to run a fun, engaging activity for fifteen to twenty fifth and sixth graders all while attempting to portray the messages and instill the values that Bnei Akiva promotes. It took time, a long time, until I was able to step into any Bnei Akiva situation and feel as if it was a mold built especially for me. This whole "adjustment" thing that everyone keeps talking about is a universal phenomenon, and what I and other first time students are going through on the YU campus is

something that has been experienced by first-timers everywhere in countless different situations.

Coming back from the shabbaton, I felt more comfortable than I had when I left for the weekend. I discovered that I knew how to walk back from the bus to Brookdale, the hours of the caf for dinner that night, and when my classes began the next day. I could feel myself molding to the life of a New York college student, becoming accustomed to the busy schedule of classes and extracurriculars, homework and time with friends. So I guess what I am trying to say is that this new adjustment, like every other one, is going to take some time. I doubt that anybody is born ready for the dramatic shift from almost-no-responsibility Israel life to one of classes and midterms and due dates. We just jump into it, and need to let our bodies adjust to the temperature of the water before we can start swimming. So to all us first-timers out there, let's just relax, take a breather, and soak in this new chapter of our lives one day at a time.



# The Disappearing Invisible Hand or The Shortcomings of Free-Market Capitalism

By Aryeh Schonbrun

I approach this topic in fear and with trepidation. I am fearful of provoking those with whom I disagree and of the chance that I may unconsciously transmit misconceptions and faulty presumptions that may lead some astray. I fear my ignorance and naïveté, my idealism and my stubbornness, but I also feel it necessary to communicate to you my thoughts regarding the state of the world, specifically as it relates to economics. I hold no academic positions, have no degrees in the fields pertaining to such a discourse, and little experience in anything economical, but no matter. In fact, as a newcomer to the frightful reality we call adulthood, I may be able to offer a unique perspective. I hope that what I write not be taken as political invective against specific groups, or governments, but rather that the following short analysis provoke a discussion about the values we hold dear, the consequences of our actions, and the purpose of it all.

I will begin with a short review of Thomas Piketty's important report on economic inequality, followed by a more general analysis of the problem at hand.

Thomas Piketty, a middle-aged French economist, published a startling book in 2013 called *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. While it may not seem too breathtaking from just the title, his work, described as “revolutionary” by Paul Krugman in the *New York Review of Books*, is an important entrance into the world of economic analysis of social inequalities. By

18th century and throughout the 19th century (aka the period known as “La Belle Époque”), the majority of the population saw a much smaller gain from such progress, as they more or less shifted from laborious agricultural jobs to working long hours for meager pay in the factories. That changed, though, toward the end of the 19th century. Marxism began to usurp some of the power of the factory owners (or owners of capital) through syndication and strikes. Higher wages, coupled with governmental regulations banning the atrocities of child labor and dangerous occupations, meant that less of the money went straight to the pockets of the capitalists, but rather was spread more universally, however thinly, to the proletariat masses.

This slow trend toward more equality took up sudden steam starting with World War I. Much property was damaged in the war, but more significantly, many of the countries built up significant debt on account of the war. As a result, in an unprecedented move (at least since the time of Napoleon), the governments began to print more money and issue more bonds, driving inflation upward. This resulted in a deflation of existing capital value (especially since much of it was in government bonds). That, combined with the shock of the Great Depression, the loss of foreign incomes (i.e. colonies), and more government intervention (taxes for social programs) and oversight, significantly reduced the inequality of wealth accumulated by the rich. In fact, the rate of inequality continued to decline until the mid-1970s, but picked up again

and world economies, and on the government itself. While he easily points out the problem, we don't find out what the ideal society might look like. He contends that some inequality will most probably exist in any society, but argues that today's situation appears to be unsustainable (especially since it is getting more stratified).

Now, in theoretical terms, I would like to introduce you to some of the ideas that may, in effect, give

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**“I HOPE IT IS CLEAR TO MOST OF US THAT INJUSTICE OF ANY SORT IS INTOLERABLE AND SHOULD BE REMEDIED.”**

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us the best understanding of what a just society may look like. With that, what better place to start than the Pentateuch!

“And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year, and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land for all its inhabitants — it shall be a Jubilee for you, and you shall return, each man to his possession, and each man to his family... And the land shall not be sold forever — for the land is Mine, for you are strangers and sojourners with Me” (Leviticus 25:10, 23).

Clearly the Torah does not allow for too much accumulation of capital. Every 50 years the Jubilee comes along and snatches up all of one's *achuzah*, or capital (whether it be human or real-estate), and returns it to its rightful owner. In fact, the purpose of this commandment is exactly to counteract any accumulation of wealth that may occur over the period between Jubilees. All shares in *Eretz Yisrael* are meant to be equal, and thus by divine edict must remain so. In addition to the Jubilee, tithes for the Kohanites and Levites (who don't own real-estate) and charity for the poor are all central to the Torah's idea of social equality. They don't preclude the immediate accumulation of wealth, but reinforce the notion that God retains possession of all land and that human claims of ownership are meaningless (“for the land is Mine”).

In a slightly different direction, some of the more famous social philosophers have advocated for equitable use of land and natural resources. New Rochelle resident Thomas Paine, famous for writing “*Common Sense*” (1776), a pamphlet promoting self-rule and democratic government that sparked the American Revolution, also printed a pamphlet entitled “*Agrarian Justice*” (1797). In this work, he provocatively states: “There could be no such thing as landed property originally. Man did not make the earth, and, though he had a natural right to occupy it, he had no right to locate as his property in perpetuity any part of it.”

In contrast to the European system of private landed property, he sees in the Native American concept of shared ownership a model for a more just society. He advocates for a tax on landed people to pay for the needs of the poor “To create a national fund, out of which there shall be paid to every person, when arrived at the age of twenty-one years, the sum of... as a compensation in part, for the loss of his or her natural inheritance, by the introduction of the system of landed property.” This is called a Universal Basic Income, a highly controversial policy that guarantees a minimum monthly allowance for all citizens. While only a few such programs actually exist today, many governments are contemplating instituting more of them (notably Finland). One example of such a program operates in Alaska, where all residents receive around \$1,200 every year (much less than Paine's sum) in dividends from the oil extracted from public lands.

*SEE FREE-MARKET CAPITALISM,  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 9*



*The computer Watson wins at Jeopardy. Computers like him threaten many jobs with obsolescence.*

delving through mountains of data gathered through painstaking research, Piketty succeeds in giving us an idea of what the world's economy looked like from as far back as before the French Revolution. He does this through analyzing records of estate/property and income taxes and any information about GDPs of individual countries (mostly the U.K., France, the U.S. and Germany), national incomes, debts, and much more. What he finds surely startles the reader: Following the development of the agricultural and industrial revolutions, the already heavily-landed aristocratic minority gained much in terms of power and wealth. In what he calls the “society of the renters” (i.e. someone who accumulates much capital and rents to the less fortunate, for more profit), the upper middle class and small minorities of such a stratified society received the bulk of the profits of the 19th century. In enlightened French style, Piketty makes use of examples taken from Balzac (*Père Goriot*) and Austen (*Pride and Prejudice*) which clearly portray some of the characters as lacking nothing, living off of public bonds (with small but steady rates of return), while the masses wither on the side. While industry and agriculture changed much in the late

and now nears the rates once observed on the eve of World War I. For the moment, most of the inequality is manifest in the extravagant salaries of the rich, but it is not inconceivable that higher incomes will eventually translate into higher accumulations of capital (e.g. real estate, financial assets, stocks, and bonds).

I hope that was detailed enough to satisfy those with an economic leaning, while not too boring for those less interested. In short, the state of today's inequality has returned to pre-World War I levels, our policy makers have apparently ignored much of the past century's warning signs and have reverted back to less satisfactory economic policies (personal/corporate tax breaks for the rich, fewer entitlements for the poor, leading to a highly segregated and stratified society). Piketty criticizes what he calls the new “*Belle Époque*” (or what Krugman calls the “*New Gilded Age*”) and advises that governments take more responsibility on economic matters. He calls for taxes on inherited wealth and more transparency when it comes to such things as inflated salaries, predatory lending, etc. He warns that increasing inequality must have destabilizing effects on the individual



## Soon By You: Too Soon to Tell?

By Shoshy Ciment

“Soon by you” is the unique kind of phrase that can inspire panic in most Jewish Orthodox young adults. It is a piercing reminder shielded in good intentions that sets the unmarried twenty-year-old into dating overdrive, desperate to find his or her “Bashert”. But now, perhaps that connotation has changed. A hit YouTube series with over 175,000 views, *Soon By You* provides a comical take on the the Jewish dating scene, specifically in the Upper West side community, nailing this phenomenon on the head.

Led by a creative team of Yeshiva University alumni, *Soon By You* follows a group of Jewish singles trying to navigate their way through the jungle of Jewish dating. And nowhere does the Jewish dating scene show its truest colors more than in New York, the watering hole for single Jewish adults. Originally intended as a short film (and Best Short Film winner at the Washington Jewish Film Festival), the first episode acknowledges everything that could go wrong on a date, from the subway breaking down, to meeting the wrong person at the restaurant, no doubt drawing from the endless annals of dating horror stories.

As the first episode unwinds, we begin to get a sense of the four lead characters, each cleverly designed as foils for one another. Sarah Feldman (Sara Scur) is a witty and introspective artist who is supposed to be set up with Ben (Nathan Shapiro), an arrogant law student. Meanwhile, one table over, a different and more exuberant Sarah (Leah Gottfried) waits for her own date, a quirky rabbinical student named David (Danny Hoffman). When this “set-up” doesn’t go as planned, it leads the characters to question if the mix-up was really meant to be.

On a visual level, the filmography is top-notch and the acting is believable. Everything, from the set design, to the hair and makeup, is professionally done. This is no amateur endeavor. Two of the producers, Leah Gottfried and Danny Hoffman, both work behind the scenes as writers and producers in addition to starring on the show. A graduate of Stern College as the first Film Studies major, Gottfried drew inspiration for *Soon By You* from the Israeli TV show *Srugim* about Dati Leumi singles in Israel and from crazy dating stories from her friends. Hoffman, a YCDS veteran and a Speech/Drama major from Yeshiva College, started his involvement with the series as an actor and then worked his way up to

a producer and writer, an aspect he enjoys immensely.

Although the series is currently only three episodes long, the creators “plan to keep writing and producing more episodes as long as people keep watching,” says Gottfried. As with any independent film endeavor, funding is the biggest struggle. Fortunately, *Soon By You* has partnered with Shabbat.com and The Navidaters, who have helped make the show happen. They also have a partnership with the Jewish Entertainment Network of LA (JENLA) who has enabled donations to the show to be tax deductible. (You can take participate in that at [JENLA.org/soonbyyou](http://JENLA.org/soonbyyou).)

Hoffman explained that the night the first episode aired on YouTube, they had no idea what to expect. “We were blown away by how quickly the numbers were climbing. We got about 5,000 hits in the first day, which took us completely by surprise.” The positive response was overwhelming. It was clear that the show had potential to grow to an audience experiencing or nostalgic for the single life.

But as much as *Soon by You* delivers in the humorous and relatable aspect, so far the series falls short when it comes to development. The plot runs slow and even appears quite thin at some points, constantly drawing on the same few facts we have about each of the characters for progression. In this stage, the characters are simply stereotypes that lack real substance, and in a world dominated by factory-produced entertainment via Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon, it is crucial that the independent filmmakers create something deep as well as entertaining. Additionally, the show currently lacks diversity. As “different” as the four main characters are, they are all clearly on the same religious level, most likely graduates of Yeshiva University themselves. While the show currently has a primarily Jewish audience, in order to be successful among a wider range of people, the creators need to come up with issues and characters that break

beyond the walls of simple “shidduch dating” and maybe even Modern Orthodoxy itself.

Fortunately, these problems are solvable. The second episode gives hope for more character and plot development with the introduction of two fresh characters, Noa (Jessica Schechter) and Z (Noam Harary). By the third (and arguably best) episode, their flirty banter threatens to steal the show. Additionally, in the third episode, the writers begin to touch on deeper issues regarding religion as it conflicts with work. If developed, topics like these could instill in the series the depth that it often lacks. These next few episodes will determine the direction that the show will take, and are therefore crucial.

Overall, *Soon By You* succeeds in bringing us one step closer to the entertainment that the Modern Orthodox world desires. “I think people are really hungry for this kind of Jewish content”, writes Hoffman, “and I’m really proud to take part in giving it to them.”



### FREE-MARKET CAPITALISM, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Other like-minded philosophers include Marx (*Das Kapital*), Charles Comte (*Traité de la propriété*), and Pierre Proudhon (“property is theft”). However one goes about it, most of us have come to accept the institution of private property with caveats. Some, many of them communists, call for the complete annihilation of private property, while some call for little regulation and truly free markets. While I do not have the space nor interest in involving myself in the philosophical confrontation such opinions entail, I may assert that for most of us private property is a given, just as long as it doesn’t get out of hand. John Locke, an advocate of the “social contract,” may have argued that unjust economics would be untenable, just as tyranny and other forms of injustice violate the contract. I hope it is clear to most of us that injustice of any sort is intolerable and should be remedied.

The question then resides in the purpose of society and its evaluation of work. To most of us, work defines us. What do you do? Vos machst du? How are you doing? If we would not do, if we would only idle by, we would surely shrivel and cease to be. We surely must always be doing something! The problem facing today’s generation, though, throws a wrench in this line of thinking. We have come a long way since the Agricultural Revolution of the 18th century, and today only 1% of all labor is devoted to agriculture/food production! It appears that God’s curse to Adam, “the land shall be cursed for you, you shall eat of it in sorrow for all the days of your life” (Genesis 3:17)

has lost its oomph. America has stockpiles of food, and most people in the developed world have never experienced a food shortage. In the past, the curse transformed into “a curse of the assembly line,” but nowadays even that is in decline. In 2014, industrial occupations (manufacturing, mining, etc.) accounted for only 12.7% (and falling) of all labor. Most other sectors have picked up the extra workers, but even the “services” sector now strains under the overabundance of job-seekers. Many college graduates are seeking low-paying jobs, jobs never considered adequate for a college grad, and are contributing to degree inflation. Nowadays you must have a degree, or else face rejection for menial tasks such as office courier or file clerk! With the advent of Artificial Intelligence, many other positions are under threat and economists are at a loss as to what the future will look like. We call the phenomenon “technological unemployment,” and it dates back to the original Luddites of the early 19th century. When industry began to automate, people feared the loss of jobs that technology would bring, but many didn’t understand the full societal implications of such a dramatic change in the economy. In “Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren” (1930), John Maynard Keynes, the renowned economist, explores the challenges that we face today. He argues that we must change our outlook in order to fully enjoy the benefits of modern technology:

“If... we look into the past—we find that the economic problem, the struggle for subsistence, always has been hitherto the primary, most pressing prob-

lem of the human race... if the economic problem is solved, mankind will be deprived of its traditional purpose. [...] Yet I think with dread of the readjustment of the habits and instincts of the ordinary man, bred into him for countless generations... Must we not expect a general “nervous breakdown”? [...] Thus for the first time since his creation man will be faced with his real, his permanent problem—how to use his freedom... how to occupy the leisure... to live wisely and agreeably and well. [...] For many ages to come the old Adam will be so strong in us that everybody will need to do some work if he is to be contented. [...] When the accumulation of wealth is no longer of high social importance, there will be great changes in the code of morals [...] We shall be able to afford to dare to assess the money-motive at its true value. The love of money... will be recognized for what it is, a somewhat disgusting morbidity.”

He concludes with a prescription: “I set us free, therefore, to return to some of the most sure and certain principles of religion and traditional virtue.”

Time is running out. The clock ticks and the “dread” pervades us with feelings of lack of purpose and meaning. Subsistence is no longer the driver of society, nor should it be. We are blessed to live in times of material abundance, but society needs purpose, and, as a nice Jew once put it: “the times, they are a-changin’.”

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“All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, Lord; they will bring glory to your name” (Psalms 86:9).

## Stories for Adults Too

By Benjamin Koslowe

Some comics are memorable for their artwork. Others are known for their witty jokes, relatable characters, adventurous stories, or deep messages. The brilliance of Calvin and Hobbes is that it not only possesses all of these elements and more, but it also manages excellence in all of these facets. The artwork is stunning, especially in the Sunday strips. The drawings and progression of plot is so good that the characters seem to move. The characters touch deep emotions, the jokes are hilarious, and the stories are fun, interesting, and compelling.

Six-year-old Calvin, the protagonist, is almost always accompanied by his stuffed tiger, Hobbes. The latter is apparently sentient, although in the strip universe this is perceived by Calvin alone. The strips, originally published daily in newspapers around the world, are four-panel black and white on weekdays, larger and full color on Sundays. They feature a small collection of characters, including Calvin's parents, his classmate/love interest/enemy, Susie Derkins, his thick-skulled school bully classmate, Moe, and his teacher, Miss Wormwood. The characters never age, and no storyline persists for more than a few weeks of strips; most stories are contained within one strip. It is easy to pick up any strip from the course of publication and jump right in.

The main draw is the personality of Calvin. While at first glance just a hyperactive, weird, misbehaving child, Calvin truly is so much more. Calvin is adventurous and full of energy: He runs through the woods along with Hobbes, explores the endless outdoors for hours on end, races through treacherous wilderness on his toboggan or wagon (depending on the season). Calvin is creative: He embarks on crazy imaginative journeys in a cardboard box, daydreams about his alternate ego Spaceman Spiff, builds provocative snowmen, plays Calvinball (with different rules every game!). Calvin is curious: He spies on Susie, hides from monsters under his bed, and ponders about the eternal mysteries of human existence and the universe. And Calvin is clever and argumentative: He sends desperate letters to Santa. He argues with his parents about watching television, eating Chocolate Frosted Sugar Bombs, bath requirements, and bedtime. He even regularly reports to his Dad on how he is faring in the latest "polls" of the children in the household (i.e. Calvin).

The heart of the strip lives in its innocence and in the unwavering friendship of a boy and his stuffed tiger. At the end of the day, Calvin is good-hearted and wants to do the right thing. He sees the world through his own spacey daydreams and imagination, but deep down he is just a regular kid with an admirable zest for life and a capacity to care for others. These qualities are ultimately what Calvin and Hobbes is all about.

I became acquainted with the funny, adorable, adventure-filled, innocent, philosophical, colorful, life-changing comic strip that is Calvin and Hobbes only last year. Enough people described the work as worthwhile, so I decided in March 2015 to methodically consume it cover to cover. With just over 3,000 strips (published in newspapers between 1985 and 1995), it is possible to finish in

**"[CALVIN] SEES THE WORLD THROUGH HIS OWN SPACEY DAYDREAMS AND IMAGINATION, BUT DEEP DOWN HE IS JUST A REGULAR KID WITH AN ADMIRABLE ZEST FOR LIFE AND A CAPACITY TO CARE FOR OTHERS."**

roughly 15 weeks by reading only 30 strips a day. After a few months of diligent routine, I had completed this wonderful literary achievement.

While all of the strips are great, the quality (in terms of story, artwork, emotion, and humor) picks up in the comics that were published after the author, Bill Waterson's, first sabbatical. These later comics are catalogued in the horizontally-shaped collection books titled *The Days Are Just Packed*, *Homicidal Psycho Jungle Cat*, *There's Treasure Everywhere*, and *It's a Magical World*. Any local library has these collections, and each collection has only a few hundred strips each. You can easily read through one of these books in a few relaxing sittings. It's a great place to start, since there is no overarching chronological story (the characters more or less stay the same throughout the span of the strips). If you fall in love with Calvin, go on to the other post-sabbatical books. By that point you'll be well on your way to a full read-through. All of the strips are printed in a two-volume set called *The Complete Calvin and Hobbes*. Alternatively, eight softcover books also cover the entirety of Calvin and Hobbes.

Surely there are many other children's stories which readers of all ages would appreciate. One such classic that comes to mind is *The Little Prince*. In Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's bestselling parable, a pilot crashes in the Sahara desert and meets a small boy who, through his stories and questions, conveys some very important life lessons. The *Little Prince* (who has a starkly different personality from Calvin's) has a quality that most people lose as they grow up: Imagination. This idea surfaces in the novella

through several different stories and metaphors.

From the beginning of the story, *The Little Prince* is about seeing deeper. It opens with the author describing how, as a child, he enjoyed drawing an elephant inside a snake. All of the adults in his life were able to see only the outer surface of the drawing, and thought that it was a illustration of a hat. But the *Little Prince* comprehends the truth, even if the latter is not provable scientifically. This is a major lesson in the story, which, along with its other morals, makes *The Little Prince* a gem from start to finish.

*The Little Prince* touches on many important messages, and is impressively profound in all of them. It is softly critical of how "grown-ups" are interested only in quantifying issues and analyzing people on a superficial level, without actually caring about what really matters. The pilot learns how children like the *Little Prince* look up in wonder at the world, rather than looking down at their newspapers or their work (translate to today: looking down at their electronic devices). The boy describes his devotion to his flower on his home planet, and how love is something that requires work and is hard to attain. The characters even deal with the difficult subject of death, and how to possibly view the latter in a positive way.

This novella is not so long. It is significantly shorter than *Calvin and Hobbes*. Even if read slowly (which it should be), *The Little Prince* for an average-paced reader should take only two or three hours to finish. The fox, perhaps the most interesting character in *The Little Prince*, shows up only near the end. If for nothing else, it is worth reading the entire story just for his famous lines (for example, "One sees clearly only with the heart"). Saint-Exupéry's subtle but pretty drawings, which are printed in almost any edition, add to the emotion and wonder of the parable.

*The Little Prince* would consider me a misguided grown-up for trying to categorize and explain why he is amazing. So I'll stop here. But I implore all to read the story and be inspired, to recapture that childlike sense of wonder, and to imagine.



## Zmanim for YU App

By Ilan Atri

We live in a world of technology. Nowadays, everything can be done on your smartphone with the tip of your finger. YU has taken part in this progressive world by bringing many new apps to your App Store or Google Play Store. You can now sign up for the inter-campus shuttle on the YU Mobile app, check YU sports scores on that app, and even check your Caf-Card balance on a third party app. But the latest app brought to the YU student body, alumni, and

**"WITH OVER 500 USERS, USERS LOVE THE APP AND CONTINUE TO USE IT TO ENHANCE THEIR TEFILLAH."**

Washington Heights residents is one that can seemingly please both the administration and the Roshei Yeshiva: Zmanim for YU.

This app lists all the minyanim on the Wilf campus. The app's simple user interface lets you quickly see the next

minyan, or view a map of all the minyan locations with their respective minyanim. The app works as well on the Apple Watch. With over 500 users, users love the app and continue to use it to enhance their tefillah. As Cheely Birn, a freshman in YC, recently stated, "I live in Rubin [Hall] so I only know the zmanim for the Rubin Shul. Whenever I need to find another minyan, the app is there for me." The information for the app comes from an API (application programming interface) by YUZmanim.com, so it is regularly updated to cater to changes or additions such as holiday zmanim, zmanim during breaks, or even slichot zmanim.

The creator of the app, Netanel Ziazoff, an MTA graduate and a current student in City University of New York, felt a lot of frustration while living on a kibbutz in Israel where the only way he could find out zmanim for a minyan was through a printed sheet. To solve that, he created an app. Once he got to New York, he found himself heading to YU for minyanim often, yet felt the same frustration he felt on the kibbutz. A couple of months later, version 1.0 was born. Netanel remarked, "after stumbling upon the YUZmanim API page, the idea clicked. I thought about how, as an MTA student, I would've loved an app that would detail all the minyanim on campus."

One question that most people who know the ins and outs of YU are posing is why the 2:30 library Mincha min-

yan is not featured in the app. The simple answer is that the data on the app is from YUZmanim.com, and since they don't report unofficial minyanim, it cannot be featured on the app. The reason this is controversial is that non-Glueck minyanim for Shacharit and Ma'ariv make the "official cut," while this alternative Mincha minyan for some reason does not. Netanel has hope for featuring this minyan in the future, but for now, he hopes that the regulars in that minyan are not offended that they are deemed unofficial.

Netanel also described how the latest update was released right before Rosh Hashanah, and it featured slichot times for Elul. Around the same time, version 3.0 was released with many new features including a map view and an updated home page.

In light of this, we can expect improvements in usage and visuals, and more zmanim as Netanel keeps on working.



## The Octopus, A Short Story

By Gavriel Guttman

Isaac Sussman leans his elbow on the cheap white tablecloth, silver fork fixed perpendicularly in front of his face. Mouth is shut tight. Nostrils contract and a salty pearl of sweat rolls slowly down his long face. Darkness is peering from the corners of the room as light like magic seeps through paper lanterns. “Do it Isaac.” Voices whispering all around and the honey of persuasion dripping like water. The thing is swaying in the windless air. A suction cup, pierced by the shiny silver spear, its fate captive to the bravery of those that now peer down at it. Raw-pink, pink and raw, this octopus has met its end, the cook endowed in the morticians white and Isaac on his way to be the grave. All he must do, say the voices, is take the earthy plunge and swallow, to be truly free.

The brochure is glossy. And the colors jump right out. Blue. Boom! Green. Boom! Yellow. Shabam! Isaac is having a hard time turning the pages. They all are stuck together. But Isaac sits: so excited but uncomfortably impatient as he looks at the brochure of his chosen place of study for the upcoming year: Yeshivat Yohsei. A wistful sigh. He tries to imagine what it’s going to be like living in Israel for a whole year. He thinks he has a pretty good idea. It’s going to be pretty awesome. One of the boys pictured in the brochure stands out. He graduated last year so was only a year above Isaac. He is smiling in the picture, his red hair perfectly brushed, newly grown side locks curled behind his ears. Isaac notices the thick, pearl white strings hanging down from the boy’s sides, then he looks at his own tzitzit. Pitiful. They are yellow and curled like a supermarket french fry. And they’re not the thick kind. Isaac bites his lip and makes a decision: he grabs the pamphlet and strides purposefully toward the foot of the stairs that lead to the second floor. “Mom!” Sarah Sussman comes stumbling down the stairs dragging an overstuffed black duffle bag, dropping it at her son’s feet.

“What is it sweetheart?”

Isaac shows his panting mother the brochure. “I need tzitzit like these. I want to fit in.”

“Sweetheart, I told you: we’re leaving to the airport in ten minutes. Not exactly the best time to talk about buying tzitzit.”

She crossed her arms and stared at him. Isaac coughed loudly into his fist.

“What it is it now, Isaac?”

“Um Mom, you’re not Tzniut right now.” He points to his mother’s curly gray hair.

“Isaac, I’m your mother. Stop being ridiculous.”

He bit his lip. “Mom, just cover your hair when we go to the airport..” A pause. Eyes lock. “Like you promised..”

“Alright. Should I bring my hijab too?”

“Mom, stop! I’m serious.”

“Alright, Isaac.” She swats at his head affectionately. “Oy, what am I going to do with you? You’re going to come back from Israel and we’re going to have a Rabbi in the house.”

It’s Passover time and the Sussman family are gathered around the dining room table. Isaac is home. He’s not happy about it.

“It’s nice to have you home.”

Mark Sussman speaks his words gently as his ever-furrowed brows swim the expanse of his forehead in detached thought. Unsavory lint is flicked casually off the front of his green corduroy vest, and his shirt collars, without stays, take strange forms, like shrubs in the wilderness. He looks like a cliché small town college professor, and that is exactly what he is. The professor looks into Isaac’s eyes now. They are filled with tears but also with anger and determination. A sigh. “Listen, Isaac. Your mother and I do very well understand that you have taken Torah study on as your passion. And as Orthodox Jews, we can only encourage you to continue your studies. However, we also believe that secular education is important too.”

Isaac snuffles. Blinks hard.

“We will not be paying for you to go back to Israel.” Mark gestures at his wife. She nods, signaling her concurrence.

It is gray. “It” is everything and everything is “it.” Wind, and then water sprinkles from the sky in retaliation, swaying and spraying by the Conductor’s thrust. Wherever he may be. Isaac looks up at the cloud. There is normally sky there. He feels nothing. Now he is sad: Sad about nothingness. He receives eyes from the guard upon entering Rubin Hall, the old brown facade not offering much internal security at all. The light in the stairs down to the caf flickers yellow and white, and the paper mache walls tickle Isaac’s palms as he submerges himself in the world down below. It’s light downstairs. Too light. What to eat? The question at life’s true core. Bird, slaughtered and cooked, jumps onto a tray. Yellow rice and something with carrots are in their appropriate cardboard squares. I guess I’m having chicken. The room is empty: it’s still too early to be social. Feet stop moving and eyes start scanning. Need someone with whom to speak. Need someone with whom to speak. He stands in place for too long. Walk, idiot. Walk. Feet move and eyes stop scanning; there’s a table filled with people who seem to be talking out of fashion. Ignited eyes of all colors, hands, nails cut or long, speaking sentences and whole paragraphs while their lips move, words filled with passion. Isaac, lit with color, takes a seat and finds out with whom he has the pleasure to eat. It’s the heretics, the irreligious and in-between, infamous in the YU social scene.

The room is warm and dimly lit. Isaac sits on a faux leather couch, which is uncomfortable, but whose sticky nuisance is irrelevant in the midst of lively conversation. There sit his best friends. Some of them are girls. Oh yeah. Life has become a smorgasbord of new things, begging to be sampled, and this is the kitchen. Leaning against the window sill in the center is Simcha Kleinman, his reptile pattern glasses perfectly centered, pontificating as usual. “God is a preposterous idea.” He says. “The ancients didn’t know better but we-” his fist punches through the air and he pauses for dramatic effect- “we must rise to the occasion.”

Simcha’s sister, Rina, rolls her head back, sending her

long blond curls twisting and bouncing. “Okay Sim. You can step off the podium now.”

Her legs cross, ankles flex. Isaac is intrigued. Grunts from the others in the room signal general agreement with Rina. She smiles in satisfaction. Isaac is spellbound.

“Hey, Isaac!”

The spell is temporarily broken. Sam Kirchner is looking all smug, her chin pointing forward as she talks.

“What’s your deal? I mean, what do you believe in?”

A flush of blood to the face. Palms clench and all breathing stops.

“What?”

Simcha steps forward now.

“Yeah, Sam. That’s a good question. What does Isaac believe in?”

“What do you mean by that?”

Simcha does an intake of air and rubs the side of his neck. “Like-like what defines you. Who are you? If you had



to describe ‘Isaac Sussman’, what would you say?”

“That’s a stupid question.” Isaac was caught off-guard.

“Why is it stupid?” Simcha was smirking now.

“Because-”

“Why is it stupid?” Sam’s sleeveless arms were crossed against her chest.

“Why is it stupid?” Rina laughs.

“I-I don’t know.” Isaac holds back tears.

“So you’re telling me that all of it just doesn’t mean anything to you?” They are sitting in the Glueck Library, on the second floor, at a large rectangular table. The books are out, computers running, and chit chat on cue.

“Um, yeah. I’m just kind of dispassionate to all of it. Detached in a way.”

Isaac doesn’t look directly at Simcha as he spoke.

“And ‘all of it’ is... religion?”

“Yeah.”

*SEE OCTOPUS, CONTINUED ON PAGE 12*

### YC CORE,

#### CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

majors.

Yet despite all of the above the Core can still achieve effective interdisciplinarity. Although YU obviously does not have the resources for a “humanities institute” – a distinctive institutional space for interdisciplinary collaboration – there are various ways YU can improve the Core’s interdisciplinarity. For example, YU can encourage professors from different fields to co-teach courses. Co-teaching can bridge the gap between two disciplines and offer courses an additional perspective. As Harvard historian Jill Lepore points out, “Co-teaching can make a subject more accessible to students. When two accomplished academics debate, they see that a subject can be approached from multiple angles.”

Similarly, YU can create interdisciplinary writing courses by encouraging professors from various departments to teach courses devoted toward the writing of their particular fields. A history professor could teach historiography, the art of historical writing. A science professor can teach students how to adapt research into articles for scientific journals. Almost every discipline requires proficiency in research and writing, and many have specific styles, methods, and conventions that

govern their literatures. Not only would such courses be interdisciplinary, but they would also bolster YU’s writing minor.

Actually, YU is developing a similar initiative called “Writing Intensive” (WI). Starting next semester, the YC Core will require students to complete one course designated as WI. According to the Core’s official webpage, WI courses will articulate the “role of writing in that discipline” as well as approaches to research and use of sources. However, the WI requirements are minimal, consisting of at least “one substantial assignment appropriate to the discipline” and “one class period addressing students’ writing.” My suggestion, on the other hand, envisions rigorous courses devoted specifically toward the writing of particular disciplines.

Finally, foreign languages could serve as another possible avenue for improvement. Although French and Spanish courses fulfill Core requirements, no such option exists for any other language. Under the old curriculum, Greek, Latin, Arabic, and Yiddish fulfilled a humanities requirement; now, under the Core, they only count as electives. Because students do not have time to take courses that do not fulfill general requirements, registration in such language courses has sig-

nificantly decreased, causing YU to shift its funding elsewhere. By preserving French and Spanish through the Core, YU effectively killed these other languages. Why not restore the study of these languages by allowing them to fulfill Core requirements?

Professors of such languages can create interdisciplinary courses focusing on issues such as literary history, cultural studies, and the art of translation. For example, YU used to offer a course called “Greek Myths & Their Influence,” an introductory survey course on Greek mythology that drew upon multiple disciplines, including folklore study, archaeology, classical literature, and contemporary adaptation. Although Prof. Rachel Mesch does teach interdisciplinary French courses – such as “France and its Others” (CUOT) and “Parisian Views” (INTC) – YU does not offer such courses for other languages.

I urge the administration to uphold the Core’s mission statement. What exists in theory must also manifest itself in practice. Given the vast amount of time, thought, and resources YU has spent on creating the Core, YU must ensure that the Core remains a worthy investment. Although the Core is not interdisciplinary, it can be.

By Samuel Gelman

When I was first applying to Yeshiva University I would always make the same joke to my parents: "Are you sure I should apply here? They don't even have a Hillel. The Jewish life there must be terrible." The Joke was funny because of its ridiculousness. Of course one of the few Jewish universities in America would have a thriving Jewish student lifestyle. How could it not?

This is a question that crosses the minds of many first year students -like myself- when they experience their first shabbat on either the Beren or Wilf campus. Except this time, it is not rhetorical. It is no secret that the Yeshiva University campus Shabbat atmosphere and lifestyle is, to put it mildly, lacking. There is barely any programming, half the university disappears with their

**"A YU HILLEL WOULD BE RESPONSIBLE FOR RUNNING PROGRAMMING THAT CREATES A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND CONNECTION ON CAMPUS. IT WOULD BE RUN BY A YOUNG COUPLE WHO SPECIALIZES IN THIS TYPE OF COMMUNITY OUTREACH."**

own plans, and the meals are dull and lifeless.

Before I continue I want to stress that I am not talking about spending shabbat in a friends' apartment in midtown or the heights. From my own experience I am well aware of how fun and entertaining those weekends can be. What I am talking about is the atmosphere on the campuses themselves.

Shabbat is a time when family and friends come together and enjoy great meals, conversation, and singing. It is a time when community takes center stage while all

## Why YU Needs a Hillel

our other distractions that separate us during the week are put aside. This is the problem with Yeshiva University Shabbats. They lack a feeling of community and togetherness. Instead of the the campuses coming together everyone just does whatever they want, creating a void on the campus itself.

There are many reasons for this problem but the main one, in my opinion, is the fact that there is a significant percentage of students that attend YU that are from the New York/New Jersey area. On a usual YU Shabbat many of these students will go home, leaving the campus feeling empty and lifeless. Now, because half the school is gone, many other students will decide that they don't want to stay either. If no one is there, why should they be? They will find places to eat around their respective campus or go to another universities for the weekend. This leaves a very small group of students at YU which in turn creates a weak Shabbat atmosphere. Furthermore, because there is no central organization in charge of the shabbat, the people staying in are left feeling discombobulated and uncared for.

I know that SOY and the Housing and Student Life departments are doing there best to try and enhance the Shabbat atmosphere here at YU and I when I talk to other students I hear that it is definitely better than it was a few years ago. However, YU has had this problem for decades now and I believe it is time to bring in some outside help that specializes in this field. In other words, YU needs a Hillel.

A YU Hillel would be responsible for running programming that creates a sense of community and connection on campus. It would be run by a young couple who specializes in this type of community outreach. They must open-minded and be able to connect with students from all backgrounds. Not everyone knows the rabbi of the week for YU Shabbats and the YU rabbis don't have time to meet and connect with everyone. Furthermore, they are usually only there for one shabbat every few months. This is not a healthy way to foster a relationship between a student and rabbi. This couples' sole job would be to meet people and form relationships, creating a consistent leading figure for Shabbat.

Next comes programming. A parsha shiur, and board games are not going to give people that feeling of community. The Hillel couple

would be in charge of creating programming that is not only interesting, but also allows people to branch out and meet new people. Besides for Shabbat meals, this could include panel discussions with special guests, a lively and informal tisch run by the students, or simply just a place where people can relax and talk. If, however, you think these programs are terrible do not fret! The Hillel should also have a student board that is responsible for creating programming with the couple so people like me don't come in with our terrible ideas.

The Hillel is about creating a sense of community on the campuses for Shabbat. This means that all Yeshiva University students should be invited to attend a Hillel shabbat on Wilf campus, including Stern students. You cannot create a community of Yeshiva University students when half of the school is not invited. There are those who may say that this may create a certain atmosphere on the campus that the Yeshiva disapproves of. However, to those people I would say that by not inviting them you are depriving many people of a fun and meaningful shabbat and that you are creating an atmosphere that does not foster a sense of community, a central aspect of shabbat. Yeshiva University does not just belong to you but to everyone that goes here. Students should not have flee to midtown or other universities to experience a lively and community-oriented Shabbat. They should be able to do it on their own campus.

Of course, this will not stop people from going home, visiting friends, or going to other universities and nor should it. No one should be expected or wants to stay on campus for every Shabbat. However, for those that do decide to stay, a Hillel could offer what they and the YU Shabbat atmosphere is lacking: a sense of belonging and community.



OCTOPUS,

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Simcha leans back. The chair turns slightly on its wheels from the weight. His locks his fingers behind his head, ruffling the meticulously combed straw blond hair and letting out a deep, long sigh. "I know how we are to going to find out if this is true - that your religion is devoid of meaning to you. Isaac, as your friend, it's my duty to tell you that the journey that is religious thought is one that must be embarked on at an early stage in life. Otherwise, you could end up clueless, empty and alone, with your social security money on the kitchen table. You don't want that, do you?"

Listen, we'll do this tonight. I'll take care of everything, just meet me outside the dorms at 8."

The night is cold, but they make the dark, frosty trip by foot. They reach the restaurant, it's dimly lit sign flickering as they entered. The room is dark. Isaac's ears are buzzing and his vision blurry. Hands and voices guide him to an old, plush chair, in front of which a full plate awaits. A pair of reptile glasses are telling him how he needs to do this.

"No more false constructs!" Simcha yells, pounding his fist on the table. Momentary silence. A Hitler joke is made. Laughter. To the right, dumplings float peacefully in broth.

A vision: Aunt Sarah's famous kreplach soup that always could ignite the internal bonfire. Wooden chopsticks are perched between curled fingers. Wood like that of the sukkah that he helped build for Succot every year. A stab of cool air sneaks up on Isaac's neck. It travels down his shirt collar and into his spine, chilled waves spreading through his body. The room is cold. A little boy, his smile deep and permanent, sits on his father's lap and strokes the man's stringy brown beard. A face. Mark Sussman is floating in the air. He watches, expression blank, eyes staring directly at him. Isaac looks away and down at the creature dangling on his fork. Do I believe?

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## Go On, Try to Buy Something

By Yosef Friedlander

Every student of Yeshiva University knows about the infamous YU Marketplace. A Facebook group composed of over 4,000 members from the YU community, YU Marketplace was designed for students of YU to have a simple and efficient way to sell and buy objects. Well, at least it may have started off that way. Now it appears to have blossomed into something much more, not only having posts pertaining to useful transactions, but expanding out to cover information on the YU campuses, required transportation, and a slightly ridiculous surplus of a variety of memes. Yes, YU Marketplace has reached full bloom, but the following question strives to be perceived through the suffocating assemblage of memes and ignored school text books: what kind of flower did YU Marketplace bud into? The YU Marketplace seems like a gift dropped from heaven, at least during the first few weeks of the school year. You need that accounting book that you were too lazy to buy over the summer by tomorrow? No problem; YU Marketplace has got your back! A quick, simple post on the Marketplace, and you have dozens of people trying to sell you their books from the previous semester. The first-time-on-campus students aren't the only ones happy with these types of transactions; what's a better way for returning students to make some much needed cash than on students in desperate need of their supplies?

"Starting at Yeshiva University this year, YU Marketplace was super helpful to me for finding out about cool events and discovering helpful tips about the YU world." These are the words of first year student Rivkie Reiter, known to her friends as Riv, when asked about YU Marketplace. The Marketplace certainly seems to help assimilate new students into the ways of Yeshiva University, furnishing useful tidbits of information pertaining to YU supplied by the one and only Jacob Herenstein, or by giving a means of acquiring textbooks for that class tomorrow. There are also those consistent posts of "unwanted food, library 5th floor," that you can count on if you ever get too desperate. Oh yeah, and by giving you the option of buying that moldy, shredded sofa chair you have always desired for a mere \$750.

Rivkie's first words summed up what you would expect to hear from a first year student describing a Facebook group designed to alleviate a small portion of stress from the average college student's life. But, after a pause, she de-

scribed how "coming into the YU Marketplace this year was weird. It feels kind of like a zoo, and not just because of the Harambe (Y'know, the gorilla shot down in the Cincinnati zoo) memes. There's a lot of stuff you have to sift through, like eight exhibits on clown fish or fourteen posts about mattresses, and the information centers are really hard to find." Here she paused and wondered aloud why the ten-dollar barber costs fifteen dollars. Resuming, she went on

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to say, "but there's a lot of cool stuff once you know how to find it. Just make sure you REALLY like gorillas."

Well said, Riv.

It seems that every time someone actually is looking for an object or piece of information, it is never to be found in the convoluted mess of the Marketplace. And here arises one of the more prominent aspects of YU Marketplaces disorder: the memes. Not just any memes, but the good ol' cheesy Jewish ones. Shout out to the ever so popular Why Open Orthodoxy Is Not Orthodox, by David Rosenthal, a book which nobody seems to have read yet but seems to have become the brunt of all of YU's creative witticisms. By witticisms, I mean repeated variations of the same joke, which is more irritating for its lack of originality than anything else. And one must not forget Harambe, who by now should just start his own religion. Judging by the fanatical number of memes about the dead gorilla, the majority of YU Marketplace will be worshipping his shrine in no time.

Any possible advantage YU Marketplace gives is pretty much limited to the beginning of the year until a mere few weeks in, when supplies are necessary. School goes into full swing in the blink of an eye, and that is when YU Marketplace arguably begins to lose the small amount of shine and luster it had in the first place.

Students who have been on campus for multiple years, exposed to the constant barrage of unheeded spam, ap-

pear to be just about fed up with YU Marketplace. Just ask Matan Horenstein, head resident adviser of the Wilf Campus, who is in his final year of Yeshiva University. What did he have to say about YU Marketplace? Simply, "I think the YU Marketplace is truly no longer a marketplace. It's a free-for-all ranting and meme-posting outlet for YU and the Washington Heights community. Sure, it can be amusing at times, but it's mostly annoying. I rarely go on it to buy things anymore because it's full of spam. I think some students should create a new marketplace and regulate it so students can actually sell things."

The memes and arguments sporadically provide a distraction from the daily stresses that come with the college life, but the vast majority of time they are just irritating. Forget the memes for a second; most of the posts on YU Marketplace seldom pertain to the average person in the slightest! The only reason it's not worth disabling the notifications in the first place is because of the occasional sliver of useful information that infrequently happens to get posted.

So a new Marketplace? Hmm. With rules to regulate the spam, so students can actually use the group?! Sounds like an actual idea brewing over here...

There is at least a portion of the Marketplace that is undeniably helpful, albeit it doesn't really fit into the scheme YU Marketplace was designed for. Transportation requests become secondary only to the memes in frequency near vacation times, flooding the Marketplace. These posts are usually answered fairly quickly, which is great for those in need. During the school year itself, lost objects are habitually found, and, if the owner is unknown, a simple post to YU Marketplace will either grab the attention of the possessor or a friend who knows him. Indisputably helpful, these posts. But again, it can get annoying unless you happen to be in need of a ride or have dropped your ID card somewhere.

It is apparent that YU Marketplace has bloomed into a rose, thorns and all. At times it can be helpful, easing away situations that would normally cause a hassle and turn hairs prematurely grey. More often than not, though, it is the thorny segment of the Marketplace that pricks the fingers. Is Yeshiva University's Marketplace an overall helpful Facebook group? That is purely a matter of opinion. So go on, buy away! Or at least attempt to...

## Zionism in Einstein and its Environs

By David Mehl

In September of last year, a university (with longstanding connections to Israel) transferred control of a medical school (named for a renowned scientist who was publicly pro-Israel) to a medical center (which carries the name of a philanthropist who was one of the earliest supporters of Jewish settlement in Israel).

In other words, the Albert Einstein College of Medicine is one place where you wouldn't expect celebrating Israel to be a taboo activity.

At the beginning of each year at Einstein, second-year students organize an event they call Around the World, in which multiple apartments host simultaneous parties, each in the style of a different world culture. Partygoers go from one apartment to the next, and the event is, and always has been, completely apolitical. This year, as in previous years, one room's theme was scheduled to be 'Israel.'

Last week, however, with the party a few days away, several students lodged a protest. They complained that it was simply too offensive to have parties with themes like 'Hawaii' and 'African Jungle.' The organizers acquiesced, and the room titles were changed to 'Island Paradise' and 'Jungle,' respectively, to accommodate the aggrieved students.

Then the same students objected to the apartment labeled Israel, and the organizers again agreed, and demanded that the student who was preparing the Israel room change its theme to something less offensive or be barred from hosting a party as a part of the event. The student declined the suggestions, and was accordingly excluded from the event. (Because of the student's part-Syrian background, one of the

suggested alternatives was Syria – a country which has seen hundreds of thousands of deaths from civil war in recent years is somehow less objectionable as a party theme than is the state of Israel.)

Later, because excluding only one country was

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seen as unfair, all countries were replaced with non-national themes like 'Atlantis' and 'Under the Sea.' Many students, however, remain upset. They object to Israel's exclusion, and they don't want even apolitical expressions of Israeli cultural pride to become taboo under the ever-widening umbrella of allegedly offensive speech.

In many ways, this is an event with little practical bearing on the wider questions of Israeli affairs. This is certainly the opinion of several in the wider pro-Israel activist community, who eschew most cultural fronts of Israel's public relations wars for the minu-

tiae of political fights. Yet if the unlikely election of 2016 is teaching us anything – and it should, for it has upended much of what everyone thought they knew about politics – it should remind us of to just what degree politics can become a battlefield of a cultural war. The considerable extent to which 'political incorrectness' has been a part of Trump's appeal is not because Trump has proposed or would pass any law on the matter, but because the fact of his success is seen as a rebuke to the forces that would censor him and others. Cultural issues are more easily understood, more deeply felt, and more quickly acted upon than questions of policy, and are therefore able to gain an audience and an enthusiasm that can overwhelm armies of politicians and consultants. Friends of Israel who – unlike the pro-Israel students at Einstein – abandon the cultural battlefields are helping to build a cultural wave that may turn political. If bags of Bamba and decorations in blue and white are established as an offense, what hope for acceptance does the political argument have?



## Helping the Homeless: An Affair of City and State

By Becky Waldman and Yitzchak Fried

Every morning while walking to school, I encounter a homeless man named Anthony. Anthony sits and holds a sign that reads, "homeless". Many people sympathize with Anthony and give him a few cents or a dollar, but most, after giving him a moment's eye contact, ignore his pleas. Unfortunately, Anthony is not alone. As Matt Flegenheimer wrote in his article for the NYT, "Mayor de Blasio's Budget Commits \$100 Million to Combat Homelessness in New York": "Homelessness in New York City has reached its highest levels since the Great Depression, with shelter populations in December exceeding 59,000 people." Over one third of the homeless people in shelters - about 23,000 - are children.

I'm here to write about homelessness in NYC, because the issue can no longer be ignored. It is important that we move beyond the dangerous stereotype that homelessness is the fault of the homeless. This is simply not true; many factors cause people to become homeless, including mental illness, unemployment, tragic life occurrences, and drug addiction. We must further realize that homelessness in New York City affects more than the homeless. If a New Yorker is not homeless himself, he has certainly shared a sidewalk with a homeless person or knows of a person who is homeless. With all its ugliness, homelessness thus creeps into our public spaces, shaping the contours of city life.

To decrease the amount of homeless people in the city, the government should step in with more initiatives. Initiatives that could be run to help the homeless include providing job assistance, making housing and shelters more accessible, and providing the homeless with mental health treatment. A key question, however, is what role the state government should play in all of this. While many people believe it the responsibility of the state government to house the homeless of New York City, others disagree, and put more of the budget burden on the city government. This dispute creates an endless shifting of responsibility - with the New York state government calling on the city to spend more on the homeless, and the city government unwilling to do so until they receive more state funding.

Some of the blame for the city's inaction goes unequivocally to the city. Ritchie Torres, chairman of the City Council's public housing committee, asserted that "the city is choosing to do less than what it can do." But New York state is equally at fault; without more state funding, there is a limited amount that the city can do even if it exerts its best efforts. It is already true that the New York state government takes substantial measures to deal with homelessness. For

example, the New York state policy of resettling 5,000 people annually in cheap affordable homes has done much to counter the explosive growth of homelessness. Nonetheless, the state's present efforts are insufficient to address the city's evident crisis. It has become clear that \$100 million is an insignificant portion of the New York state budget to assign to address the issue. But, although aware of the problem, the NYC government is unwilling to set aside its own money for more housing units because of its reluctance to spend more of its own budget. The lack of housing units leads to extensive waiting lists for homeless people to be housed - and more people on the streets.

To my mind, the fact that the state should take responsibility for the homeless crisis is obvious. In

**"WHILE MANY PEOPLE BELIEVE IT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO HOUSE THE HOMELESS OF NEW YORK CITY, OTHERS DISAGREE, AND PUT MORE OF THE BUDGET BURDEN ON THE CITY GOVERNMENT. THIS CREATES AN ENDLESS SHIFTING OF RESPONSIBILITY."**

part this is because, as mentioned, helping the homeless isn't only about the homeless. Homelessness degrades the quality of our society, not just because it means the visible presence of human suffering, but because homelessness is linked to crime. The frustration of being homeless provokes some people to engage in illegal activities, which can put the lives of non-homeless New Yorkers at risk. Studies conducted by psychologists link crime rates in a city to the amount of homeless people present there; for example, a neighborhood like the Bronx, which has a large homeless population, has a high crime rate. The intangible effects of homelessness and crime further degrade the quality of society, because citizens perceive areas that harbor many homeless people as insecure. Furthermore, vices such as drug dealing and drug and alcohol addiction are common among the homeless. All of this means that homelessness is a public safety issue that falls squarely within the mandate of the state government. The state government should therefore see to it that New Yorkers don't have to suffer the social consequences of homelessness,

including insecurity in the street, and subjection to begging and harassment. But, while Congress passed the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to address the issue of homelessness at the federal level, the state government of New York has yet to establish specific legislation to curb the problem.

The cost of helping the homeless has led some to protest even the present efforts of the state government. Some argue that homelessness is due to laziness and that the government should only assist homeless children, not adults. But, as mentioned, this argument isn't tenable. Most of the homeless people in New York suffer from a plethora of problems. Often, the reasons for homelessness start in childhood, including such things as having moved homes frequently as a child or having a history of physical or sexual abuse. These experiences have profound effects on people, and can lead to feelings of isolation and insecurity. Furthermore, the Coalition for the Homeless explained that the majority of people are homeless because of their inability to engage in any form of employment. This inability can be due to a number of factors, including health problems, physical handicap, and a lack of the skills needed to engage in productive work.

I've tried to demonstrate that helping the homeless is a legal duty of the state government, which needs to be dealt with immediately. By providing more homeless people with shelter, the government will curb the soaring numbers of the homeless and will prevent the vice associated with homelessness. We all live in New York. It's where we go to school and spend most of our time. Do we really want homelessness to be a permanent feature of NYC, a morbid icon alongside the Empire State building and Central Park? Do we want homelessness to be part of the identity of NYC? If not, it's time we did something about helping the homeless.



## Israel: Land of Milk, Honey, and the Accessible Abortion

By Kira Paley

In this election cycle, as in many others of recent years, an issue at the forefront was abortion; that is, when it should be legal, whether or not the government should fund Planned Parenthood, etc. The legalization of abortion has been the subject of two Supreme Court cases, and although it has become a widely accepted practice in this country, it remains a controversial issue for American politicians and citizens.

Since abortion is a human rights issue, and is something that happens in every society, it would be plausible that its legal status would be a hot topic in most Westernized countries. In Israel, though, abortion as a political issue is something that we rarely hear about; why is it not of larger interest there, especially since many of its laws are dictated by Halacha?

Since 1977, Israel's official policy on abortion has been as follows. If a woman wishes to have an abortion, she appears before a termination committee: a group of three individuals consisting of two physicians and one social worker. Of the three committee members, one

must be a woman. The committee then either grants or denies the woman access to a legal abortion, using four criteria: the woman's age, whether the fetus was conceived under circumstances of rape or incest, if the fetus has known defects, and whether or not the woman's health or life is in danger.

Though this process seems harsh, 98% of women who seek abortions are granted access to them. Women whose cases are ostensibly unjustified by the four criteria can claim that having a child would put them into an unhealthy mental state and thereby fit into the fourth criterion. Abortion committees, despite their seemingly totalitarian nature, are therefore essentially just rubber stamps, there to grant legal abortion access to any woman and only in place as a formality.

In America, this process would be deemed undemocratic and unfair, which it definitely has the potential to be. In Israel, though, the existence of this process through which access to abortion is obtained is the very reason why abortion is not an issue that is up for constant public debate. The committee process satisfies both sides of the spectrum; the Ultra-Orthodox, who believe women should not be able to have abortions as



they please, are satisfied because the committees technically serve to only grant abortion access to women who need it. On the opposite side of the spectrum, citizens who are more liberal should technically be satisfied, because, as a result of the leniency of the committees, nearly all women who want abortions are allowed to legally have them.

*SEE ACCESSIBLE ABORTION,  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 16*

## Thank You Pre-Med

By Michael Shavolian

Since my first week at Yeshiva University, I have silently observed the progress of the pre-med friends I have made. I have spent time with them in never-ending labs, in class and at the ever so mandatory meetings called by the Pre-Health Advising Office and have had the chance to form meaningful friendships. But, considering the fact that I have spent the majority of my time in pre-med classes or at pre-med events, I find it surprising that more of my friend's are not pre-med.

I have a simple explanation. Like other students, I made many of my friends during my first year on campus. From then until now, a large portion of the students I befriended in lecture-size science classes quibbled with pre-med before choosing other paths. Hence, my friendship with many former pre-meds.

Take, for example, Jonathan whom I met at a Medical Ethics Society event. We shared lunch on occasion in the dining hall but last I heard of him he had decided to apply to computer science boot camps. Alex, whom I met in an accounting class, indefinitely deferred his application to medical school after working on Wall Street for his gap-semester. Josh, whom I met in General Chemistry, had a turn of heart and chose to enter his father's jewelry business...perhaps

because he realized that after taking so many summer classes at Lehman, he was probably damned as a worthless candidate. Adar, who lived next door to me for a year, settled on hospital administration after switching his major three times.

It's an unexpected fact when you observe the immense dedication of your friends in General Chemistry or Biology...but, yes: not every pre-med ends up med. So many people, so many ways... it would be a mistake for anyone to dismiss the pre-med track as simply a means of entering medical school. I am still a student at a liberal arts college, an undergraduate at a university, and a seeker of meaning. If you can go through pre-ed without appreciating the pre-med experience then something is amiss.

One of my pre-med friends recently advocated the creation of a Medical Humanities minor in The Commentator. I argue that there already exists a pre-medical humanities experience, one which begs student to not just find the meaning within volunteer shifts or hospital internships, but which encourages students to find the meaning within their pre-medical lives: to satirize it, to expound its difficulties, to laugh at its challenges, and to discuss its shortcomings.

If someone had asked me what I expected of pre-med three years ago, I would have responded: hard work, hard work, and some more hard work... and

friends who would stick with me when times got rough. But quite unexpectedly pre-med has been a lot more than that. Yes, it has made me friends. But it has also molded me into a more mature and self-aware individual-- and I don't mean this in the mushy, corny type of way. I mean it when I say, it is easy for me to find good things about pre-med, things that some retrospection makes me feel thankful for... pre-med lishma (for its own sake), I would call it... (others might call me insane but that's besides the point).

Thank you pre-med for beating me down and challenging me to rise back up and to stay above the (illusory) competition. Thank you for compelling me to get involved in extracurricular activities that I ended up loving for their own sakes. Thank you for making me more determined than sleepless nights spent, not studying, but insomniated because of the protein names spinning in my head. Thank you for teaching me all about CAM cell signaling and how to cure the jitters you suffer when you drink eight cups of coffee. (The answer: drink more coffee). Thank you for being a sure way to predict that any uninitiated interlocutor will reply with a gasp immediately after becoming aware that I am pre-med... without even asking for my name as if he had just learned of my identity as an alien. Thank you for teaching me to be a nearly consummate juggler of work and social life-I don't think I can get it wrong from here forth. Thank you for teaching me the value of dedication and commitment but, simultaneously, that it is OK if hours upon hours of studying sometimes yield a mediocre grade.

Thank you for making me feel directed with all those courses I checked off from the four-year class schedule I created as a freshman... for teaching me that my college experience, or life for that matter, can, in fact, not be reduced to a checklist. I guess somethings take time to learn. But really, for actually not being as bad as I thought you would be...here's to pre-med. Thank you for allowing me to study the wonders of science. Thank you for making me bigger than my test scores-those little almost meaningless digits- all 28 of them (yes, I counted) that claim to measure my knowledge. Thank you pre-med for ultimately making me bigger...than just pre-med.



## Education: A Zero Sum Game

By Brian Snow

My first class in Yeshiva University started off about exactly the way you would expect it too. The Professor came into class, sat down, and spent a very tedious class period going through the whole syllabus cover to cover. Most of it was the standard information regarding the attendance policy and how many tests/paper we would have to complete in this class. However there was one thing in particular that caught my attention. When the professor reached the section in the syllabus discussing the class grading policy the professor mentioned that there would likely be around a certain number of A's, a certain number of B's and a certain number of C's. In other words my fellow classmates and I were going to be graded on a curve in reference to each other.

Now you might be thinking that this is no big deal. In fact many people would argue that it makes sense to grade on a curve. Not only does a curve create a certain competitive element which pushes students to do their very best, but it recognizes the reality that some students understand course material better than others. Don't those students deserve to be rewarded for being at the top of the class? Additionally many people would argue that in order for students to be trained for the competitive "real" world they need to start being trained now, while in college, learning how to deal with competitive situations.

Notwithstanding these positive elements, there is a tremendous downside that comes along with a curve. One of the biggest challenges that I had

coming in to YU was adjusting to the cutthroat atmosphere that existed in some of my classes-- like this one--where the students were graded on a curve. Everybody in the class knew that only a certain amount of people would get an A, so whenever I heard that somebody else in the class did well on an essay there was always at least a small part of me which was un-

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RIGHTS," OR "THAT PERSON IS  
TRYING TO KILL BABIES"**

happy with their success. Their success meant my potential failure. This can have a potential ripple effect, leading to students not sharing notes, not assisting each other with essays, and can even possibly create animosity between fellow classmates.

The good news is that there is another model. In many classes that I have taken in Yeshiva University, the students are actually not graded on a curve. Rather each student gets the grade that they earn and

deserve based on their level of mastery of the course materials. In these classes, I have found that I rarely have trouble borrowing the notes of another student if I need them. When the students are not rated against each other, they are much more open to assisting each other and to collaborating together on projects.

Both education and "real" life do not need to be a zero sum game. Rather than focusing on preparing students for the competitive world out there, we should turn our attention to educating the student body on the value of collaboration and working together so that when they actually go out into the "real" world they will not only be focused on getting ahead by themselves but they will actually be open to working together with other people in order to make significant contributions when possible.



## Finding the Middle Ground

By Etai Shuchatowitz

I swear to god, if I have to hear one more conversation that begins with “Did you hear what Donald Trump said today,” I’m going to lose it. It’s not because what Donald Trump said today wasn’t stupid. It’s not because what Donald Trump said today was stupid. It’s because I did hear what Donald Trump said today. I heard it because I read the same news sources as everybody else - the ones that are all reporting on “What Donald Trump said today” - which makes it almost impossible to have not heard what Donald Trump said today. By asking me this question, what we’ve done is we’ve stopped having a meaningful discussion and we’ve started having a twenty minute, self-indulgent agreement fest. This “self-indulgent agreement fest” is both infuriating and also indicative of the most common problem I see facing us as a generation, at the moment.

Listen, obviously people disagree, and the country is very polarized right now. That’s not a new or revolutionary idea. But it seems like, amid all of this polarization, people are clumping together, pointing to the other side and just yelling. And amid all of that yelling and screaming, nobody’s having a conversation anymore. To the liberals you’re either a liberal social-justice extraordinaire or a wretched conservative evil villain. Whereas the conservatives think that you’re either a rational, down-to-earth conservative, or you’re a liberal ignoramus ruining this country. Everybody has adopted the mantra of you’re either with us or against us. Putting aside the statistical likelihood that one side has gotten every issue 100% right and the other 100% wrong (hint: it’s very low), I think this issue of polarity is a huge one that needs to be addressed, not from an academic, fact-based perspective. Rather, it needs to be addressed from a human angle where I wildly conjecture why things are the way that they are, based on nothing but my own youthful arrogance.

I have no hopes to change the world (though I wouldn’t say no if it happened), or even to change your mind (again, wouldn’t say no if it happened). I only hope that you’ll read this and, for a second, you might take a breath, stop posting annoying political commentary on Facebook, and humanize the other side. If only just for a moment.



With that being said, I’ll lead by example and talk about myself for a little bit, even if it’s a little embarrassing and hard to talk about.

I’m uncomfortable with a lot of things. I get very uneasy with change, and things that seem strange to me. I get uncomfortable in tense social settings, around dogs, in the company of babies, or when I’m

given public responsibility. To give a personal example, I never quite know how to behave when somebody gives me their baby, expecting me to interact with him or her. I know I’m not supposed to talk to the baby like he or she is an adult. And, with that off the table, all bets are off. In other words, babies scare me.

But here’s the thing about feeling uncomfortable: it, like all feelings, is not a choice. It’s this thing that lives inside of me, that pops up every now and then, dictating many aspects of my life. Furthermore, it’s

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not something I enjoy. In fact, I basically live my life by the mantra of avoid as much that makes you uncomfortable as possible.

Now here’s where I make a controversial statement (especially for my Northeastern liberal tendencies), that, if you’ll bear with me, I hope will seem less absurd. Here we go. Deep breath. And:

I’m uncomfortable with the transgender movement.

I want to be tolerant and accepting - and think I am, on an intellectual and practical level. But, emotionally and personally I’m just not there yet. As much as it pains me to say it, there’s nothing I can do about this feeling right now. As I said before, feelings are not intentional -- they’re deeply ingrained. The idea of the transgender movement is too new to me. It’s too foreign to me. I don’t understand it, and because I don’t understand it, it, like babies or dogs, makes me uncomfortable at a gut level.

That’s not to say that anybody should be treated any differently for making a personal choice. The fact of the matter is that there are people who feel transgender whether I like it or not. So now I have a choice before me: Either I ostracize a group as “other” and subject them to my hatred because they make me uncomfortable, or I just learn to live with things that make me uncomfortable. I’d rather choose the latter, and, while I’m not there yet, I’m trying my best.

But, here’s the part that I think a lot of people who yell and scream fail to take into account: I don’t like hearing that my being uncomfortable with something is evil. It sucks to hear that your feelings, things over which you have very little conscious control, are wrong or immoral. It really sucks when somebody throws words like “oppression” or “privilege” around when all you’re trying to do is do your best.

And so, people build up this reactionary identity. They see people screaming at them, calling them “evil”, and they say, “Well, I’m not evil just because I feel uncomfortable with something, so they must be wrong. They must be entirely wrong. Let me build up all of the reasons why they must be wrong and yell it back at them.” One side starts yelling, the other side

gets defensive and yells back, and everybody ends up on this merry-go-round of shouting in which nothing gets done.

Similarly, a person who feels uncomfortable with social progressions shouldn’t yell at people to change simply because he or she is uncomfortable. Somebody who feels out of place for being gay or transgender shouldn’t be told off because you feel uncomfortable, for the exact same reason that you shouldn’t. They shouldn’t be told that their feelings are wrong, just because you don’t feel them.

It’s been my experience that, with a few notable exceptions (and when there are exceptions they are most definitely notable), everybody’s just trying to do their best. People want to make the best life for themselves and those around them, and we just can’t seem to agree on how that is. Every person comes from a different background, and everybody has ideas that they hold sacrosanct no matter how bizarre they might seem from the outside. Some people are brought up with very old ideas, and when they’re confronted by something new and different, it feels weird and uncomfortable. Others are of a sort who break off from old ideas and can’t wait for the world to change, becoming uncomfortable with these older ideas. But, at the end of the day, everybody’s just trying their best. Unfortunately, sometimes, because people are different, people are gonna get hurt along the way.

But, the response is not to yell and scream until the other side submits. That’s just going to cause the people you disagree with to double down on their own ideology and build a fortress that’s harder to crumble. The only way to make anything happen is to sit down, calm down, remove your ego for one second and find some middle ground with the person in front of you. You need to find some humanity in another person, to see where they’re coming from, so that it stops being “This person’s trying to take away my reproductive rights,” or “That person is trying to kill babies” and becomes a conversation, with two engaged, thoughtful, flawed people. Anything else is self-indulgent intellectual bullying that’s doing more harm than good.

It’s hard. It’s really hard to sit there silently while somebody publicly challenges ideas that you hold very dear to your heart. In fact, it’s nearly impossible. But maybe if we can just see each other as flawed human beings, all just taking it one day at a time, we can get, capital S, “Somewhere”.

A very real and practical idea might be that if we all open every conversation by mentioning a flaw that we’re working on - something we don’t like about our own selves. It’ll help equalize the field. If I start every argument by pointing out that I’m a flawed person just trying his best, it might help us all have better and more engaging conversations. This might be silly optimism, but that’s all I have right now.

It’s my belief, (and I’ll chock this up again to my arrogant, youthful optimism), that, as people, we’re more similar than we are different. We all feel anger and jealousy and lust and rage and all these emotions that make us human. So, conversation and discussion shouldn’t be reduced to name-calling and shouting. So please, do me a favor and stop yelling about how evil “the other” opinion is. Stop taking to Facebook to proclaim in hyperbolic terms why only stupid people believe something that crazy. And, for the love of god, please stop saying “Did you hear what Donald Trump said today”.

### ACCESSIBLE ABORTION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Since both sides are somewhat satisfied by the abortion process, the right by the letter of the law and the left by its spirit, there is not much political debate surrounding the issue. Perhaps if the far right were more aware of the leniency of the abortion committees, there would be more public discourse on the matter. When the legislation regarding these committees was established, however, members of the far right, especially Haredim, regarded this as a “moral victory” because the state was

preventing women from getting abortions.

The issue, though, is not so black and white; while it might be easy for a woman to go through an abortion committee and be granted access to a legal abortion, many women are discouraged by the mere existence of the committees, and choose to have illegal abortions. Women might decide to go this route if they are afraid of being denied abortion access by a committee, or simply because they do not want to deal with the bureaucratic process that would delay the abortion. This is extremely unfortunate, as illegal abortions are often unsafe, and can put a woman’s health in great danger.

At the end of the day, since the majority of Israel’s citizens are satisfied with the way the government deals with abortions, the process is most likely not going to change. The topic is not a big political issue, and it is unlikely to become one soon because of Israel’s more pressing political issues. While this is understandable, it is nonetheless dangerous, because Israeli women are putting themselves in danger to have illegal abortions due to the intimidating committee approval process. Abortion is perhaps not the biggest issue facing Israel today, but it is most definitely not something that should be swept under the rug.



## The Apple Revolution is Over

By Zach Sterman

A long time ago Apple led a revolution. Steve Jobs inspired a movement and fueled Apple's success with his vision of a company that was a rebellion against the ordinary; a bastion of innovation where people were implored to 'Think Different.' That revolution is now dead.

This is not to say that the company is falling apart. There is no question that Apple has achieved unprecedented success over the last 40-or-so years. Apple has now topped Forbes' ranking of the world's most valuable brands every year since the list's outset in 2010. Just a few months ago CEO Tim Cook declared, "Fiscal 2015 was Apple's most successful year ever, with revenue growing 28% to nearly \$234 billion." However, amidst rising competition, 2016 has revealed uncharacteristic signs of mortality for the previously untouchable tech giant. Just this past month it was reported that Apple had posted its first annual revenue decline in 15 years. This is not to say Apple is doomed, but it is to say that perhaps something has changed.

Reactions to this report lay blame to a couple of different factors. Some point to rising competition from companies such as Samsung (though they are currently working through problems of their own), while others point to stagnated innovation of products. Some claim economic factors such as an ostensibly tapped out smartphone market in China are at play as well.

Yet perhaps something exists beneath the surface of these different challenges that is contributing to what may be the beginning of Apple's decline. Perhaps there is something more fundamental – something at the very root of Apple's DNA – that has made Apple vulnerable. I would like to suggest that Apple's marketing has lost its way. The powerful image Jobs so effectively cultivated in his time at Apple – the revolution I refer to in the title of this piece – has decayed and lost momentum, and the ill effects may be as significant as any of rising competition, changing markets, and the products themselves.

Attributing blame to Apple's branding and marketing actually seems quite intuitive. After all, for every article I read that complains about Apple's supposedly stagnated innovation, I find a response article that says Apple hasn't changed and people should stop whining. People are seeing Apple in completely different ways. While some seem to see Apple as holding its ground, others see it as descending, which suggests inefficiency in the way the company is presenting itself.

What I have noticed is that it tends to be techies who staunchly defend Apple and basic consumers – such as myself – who find themselves disappointed. I do not know whether it is the techies or the basic consumers that are truly correct – perhaps there is truth to both. I am also unsure whether this recent decline in revenue is a flash in the pan or the beginning of a downward trend for Apple. However, what seems clear is that negative sentiment towards Apple is increasing and the company is struggling to maintain its previous rate of success in convincing consumers its products' superiority. It lacks a unifying message.

Understanding these issues, let's talk about Apple's marketing of old. Remember, it was powerful branding and exceptional marketing that enabled Apple's rise in the first place. In the words of former Apple CEO John Sculley, "People talk about technology, but Apple was a marketing company. It was the marketing company of the decade."

Apple's advertisements were not random or isolated.

They were remarkably consistent, augmenting each other to establish a consistent brand image that carried a message. It was more than just product promotion. Apple appealed to the rabble-rousing nature of a young generation and focused its attention on the tech revolution going on around them. It seduced the wide-eyed youth who pine to be a part of something bigger than themselves. To consumers Apple became not a company, but a movement; or, as many would call it, a "cult." It framed rebellion as

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the noble catalyst to change and innovation. Apple provided consumers with a cause that would inspire them, and would allow them to channel and express that inspiration through its products. It wasn't just about owning the latest tech. It was about owning an Apple product.

One of the keys to its success was that Apple did not advertise by explaining why it was superior to its competitors. Instead it focused on storytelling. In Jobs' own words, "Marketing is about values... We need to bring it back. The way to do that is not to talk about speeds and feats. It's not to talk about MIPS and megahertz. It's not to talk about why we are better than Windows... Apple is about something more than that. Apple, at the core - its core value - is that we believe people with passion can change the world for the better."

Apple's first landmark success in establishing these values came in the form of a Super Bowl ad in 1984. The ad depicted an Orwellian, gray dystopia, which represented boring computer companies, and a heroine – the Macintosh – who tears down the walls of conformity around her. The ad ends with the words, "On January 24th, Apple Computer will introduce Macintosh. And you'll see why 1984 won't be like '1984.'" The ad was historically successful and laid the foundation for Apple's brand image.

Jobs left the company shortly thereafter, but returned in 1997 with the desire to return Apple's marketing to where it had left off in 1984. Almost immediately, Apple launched a campaign with the tagline "Think Different" through a commercial – made by the same agency as "1984" – known as "Crazy Ones." The commercial shows images of great innovators and leaders, such as Einstein and Gandhi, as a narrator begins "Here's to the crazy ones..." The ad later says, "While some may see them as the 'crazy ones,' we see genius." The narration ends with the line "The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do," followed by the Apple logo atop the words "Think Different."

Apple maintained and continued to build this message of innovation and non-conformity throughout its success

in the 2000's. This was just as true of subsequent ad campaigns – such as the famous iPod silhouette (2004) and Mac vs. PC (2006) commercials – as it was of Jobs' physical representation of the company. Jobs popularized the keynote – a presentation of new, upcoming products to a media audience – and was the iconic face of Apple. He became known for his signature casual attire – jeans and a turtleneck shirt – when he represented his company's brand on stage. His style and behavior was congruent with the image he was creating for his company. Under Jobs' lead Apple was a master of storytelling and created a brand image that was cool, innovative, and exciting, and this was an extension of his personality. Jobs' true savvy was in his creative flare, and not in his tech or business acumen.

His successor, Tim Cook, is quite different. The Wall Street Journal once described Cook as, "...a seasoned businessman and arguably a better manager than Jobs. He was organized, prepared and more realistic about the burdens of running a company of Apple's size. But no one could beat Jobs at being Jobs – especially Cook, his polar opposite." Replacing Jobs with Cook has in many ways deflated the exciting image Jobs had cultivated. In the words of Ann-Christine Diaz of Advertising Age, "Apple has been trying to find its voice in advertising and marketing since the passing of founder Steve Jobs in 2012."

In the same 2014 article Diaz goes on to say that Cook has since shaken up Apple's marketing methods. Rather than going to external ad agencies, "amid criticisms that it has failed to innovate, Apple is increasingly taking marketing into its own hands. It's madly building an internal agency that it's telling recruits will eventually number 1,000..." Further, Diaz cites an email uncovered from Apple Senior-VP Global Marketing Phil Schiller in which Schiller admits that Samsung's advertising was on a roll, while Apple's had stagnated.

To be fair to Cook, this shakeup within Apple's marketing may be part of a natural progression in the lifecycle of any company. Niche branding – such as Apple had done under Jobs – becomes increasingly difficult as a company grows and goes from being an outsider to the standard. In a way the brand of 'rebels' had a built in expiration. Yet the ability to differentiate not just products, but also its values and its voice – that is how Apple spoke to its consumers.

Today marketing of Apple's innovations seem to appeal to the tech junkie more than they do the casual consumer. Under Cook's leadership Apple seems to increasingly speak the language of MIPS and megahertz – the language Jobs passionately rejected in 1997 – rather than the stirring, universal language that made the brand so unique. Recently Apple's keynotes tend to emphasize improved modems and pixels, rather than passion and flare as they did under Jobs. If there is a problem, it is perhaps less in the products themselves and more in the loss of Apple's unique identity – its foremost differentiating factor.

When Steve Jobs returned to a struggling Apple in 1997, he recognized the need to revitalize its message. At that time Jobs noted that Apple needed to "get back to the basics." He said, "Even a great brand needs investment and caring if it is going to retain its relevance and vitality, and the Apple brand has clearly suffered from neglect in this area in the last number of years." Jobs' words seem prescient as history repeats. Once again, in his absence, Apple's brand has lost its way; only this time he can't be the one to reset its course.



Think different

# Trump's Taxes and America's Precarious Community

By Yitzchak Fried

America, it is said, is the land of individualism. Politically, our individualism can be seen in what we hold to be one of our dearest rights: the right of everyone to do whatever they like, so long as it doesn't infringe on others' ability to do the same. In other words, America's individualism is the right to be left alone.

This wouldn't be strange, if not for the fact that Americans tend to allow the value of individualism to cloud a clear expression of other values. For an example, look at our legal thinking. Consider the case of *Roe v. Wade*. Abortion rights advocates hold that abortions are necessary for some pretty basic reasons: to protect a woman's ability to control the fate of her body and her ability to prevent herself from suffering the psychological consequences and financial stress of an unwanted child – in short, from having the entire trajectory of her life changed by an unwanted pregnancy. These seem like pretty fundamental concerns of human existence. It's amazing then, that the right to abortion is explained in our jurisprudence as a right to "privacy" – basically, the right to be let alone. Either we have a problem with vocabulary, or the basic goods of human life, in America's imagination, reduce to the right to be left alone.

The political value of being let alone is held across party lines. Conservative proponents of limited government and limited taxation are animated by the same drive for individual freedom – they just express it in commercial instead of social rights. The right of the individual to make as much money as he wants, without government interference, has the same emotional resonance as declaring the right to abortion under a right to privacy. The message is: we don't want the government interfering in our lives, other than what's strictly necessary to insure that we can live as privately as possible.

To consider one last example: the American brand of individualism also seems responsible for our political culture. Americans have a fervent distrust of government. According to a Pew poll from November 2015, "just 19% [of Americans] say they can trust the government always or most of the time, among the lowest levels in the past half-century," and "[o]nly 20% would describe government programs as being well-run." Ironically though, this distrust of our government is coupled with a reluctance to engage in politics in a way that might actually make government more effective. Our voter turnout for the 2012 election

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was an estimated 53.6%, far behind almost every other developed democracy. If the government is a representative of public life, we seem to find it inherently offensive, because it draws us away from our private spheres of existence.

America's inwardness is given eloquent expression by Thoreau. He too expressed skepticism about the importance of political life. In *Civil Disobedience*, Thoreau writes this about the political process (he's talking about slavery, but it's clear that for him it's applicable to any political issue):

"It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradication of any, even the most enormous, wrong...As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good

place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad."

Thoreau felt that political life was an existential burden. Man's purpose in life is to "live it, be it good or bad"; spend too much time on politics and "[your] life will be gone." To me, he is the American individual par excellence. His disgust with government policy is matched by his passionate rejection of any reason to be involved in the political process.

Remarkably, even Thoreau's civil disobedience isn't really about a desire to create social change – as it would later be for Dr. Martin Luther King. It's rather rooted in the individual's need not to compromise his own conscience. As Thoreau writes, "Must the citizen ever for a moment, or in the least degree, resign his conscience to the legislator? Why then has every man a conscience? I think that we should be men first and subjects afterward." In other words, because we are "men first", we have a right to disobey to preserve our integrity. Injustice in society may wind on, but man's duty is only "to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support." For the most part then, (he does make a brief reference to individual protest acting as "counter friction" to the "machine" of government), Thoreau's staunch morality is rooted in individualism and divorced from politics.

Where does this individualism come from? One might say that Americans are simply narcissists. But there's something to Thoreau's worldview. I too think that people come into the world, primarily, "to live in it, be it good or bad." I don't think that everyone ever born is yoked with being a moral crusader. And if we follow this inward line of thought, there seems something oppressive about the government limiting me in the name of others, taking my income, telling me that I must buy healthcare or can't buy guns. From the perspective of American individualism, these impositions seem little more than that – impositions. Nonetheless, one can't avoid feeling that Thoreau comes up short. What's missing from Thoreau's perspective is any sense of community, and any sense that the government is a vehicle of communal responsibility. I'm with Thoreau that we should be "men before subjects," but in what sense, at all, are we subjects? Forget dodging taxes to support an immoral war, as Thoreau did; why should we ever pay our taxes? Donald Trump raised this question emphatically in the first Presidential debate. According to Trump, as a business owner, not paying your income taxes isn't immoral. It's smart.

The only way to balance Thoreau's point – or Trump's – is to recover an argument for why we should care. And I've already said the answer: it's community. I'm not a psychologist, but I'd venture that, unlike Thoreau, we'd find it lonely to live by ourselves by Walden pond. And so, we supplement Thoreau's individualism with real ties of obligation and concern. But as one might expect of a nation steeped in individualism, community is a tricky subject in America. It means different things to different people. And if community is the key to how we balance our individual with our political life, our different approaches to community will have drastic implications for national politics.

I think that, currently, there are two models of community at play in America: a conservative model and a liberal model. For conservatives, community is based on shared social realities, such as traditional family roles and shared religion and culture. These social realities are tied to particular group identities, which in turn are rooted in particular group histories. Liberals, however, claim human identity per se as the basis of community, placing common human nature as our most fundamental source of solidarity. This community lacks the immediate historical ties that bind conservative communities; it must reach further back, to a shared biological past and a common human narrative. Its rituals don't take place in churches or schools, but on internet channels like Upworthy and Humans of New York.

These two models of community lead to very different attitudes toward government. The conservative community is particular to individual affiliations. It therefore exists below the framework of government,

independent of it and not accountable to it. The liberal, however, sees community at work within the framework of government. If community is based on shared human identity, than it naturally crosses ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic lines, and manifests in political assembly. According to this view, the government itself is a form of communal action.

The conservative and liberal models of community are so different that their proponents often completely misunderstand each other. For many liberals, conservatives' desire to preserve traditional community structures (like heterosexual marriage or gendered



bathrooms) is simply a vicious attempt to oppress minorities. Liberals often miss the point that that conservatives are afraid of the damage directed at their sense of communal life. On the other hand, conservatives often feel that liberals' socially progressive policies completely ignore the value of community. They claim that liberals destroy our sense of community by eroding the traditional fabric that links society together. What conservatives don't realize, however, is that liberals also value community. They just disagree about the basis on which community should be founded.

The short of it is that nobody has a monopoly on the value of community. We all believe that the American ideology of individualism should be limited by a sense of a communal responsibility. The question is, by responsibility toward which community. Or better – by responsibility to a community founded on what?

Conservatives and liberals each advocate for the policies that preserve the communities they hold sacred. For example, for the conservative, there is no inherent injustice in income inequality. After all, there are rich communities and poor communities; if I'm rich, the poor are beyond my immediate community, and so beyond immediate concern. For the liberal, however, income inequality demands action, because it betrays the obligations of our national community. In this view, taxation is not simply an imposition by government authority; it is a communal demarcation of how one must spend their money if they are to earn it our national – that is, communal – economy. Thus, the fiscal liberal is offended by the fiscal conservative's small-government policies, shocked at his opponent's lack of "communal values". But at the same time, the social conservative sees the latest Supreme Court decision as a symptom of the disintegration of society. To his vision of society, it is.

It's too early to say which of these models of community will win out. But while it far from dominates our political landscape, the language of a national community has been creeping into our jurisprudence for quite some time. Not in the much reviled *Roe v. Wade*; that decision, based as it is on the "right to privacy," fits nicely within the conservative framework that divorces government from community. The decision that I'm thinking of is *Brown v. Board of Ed.*, the case that struck down "separate but equal." In that case, the Supreme Court appealed to the intangible effects of segregation, which made separate but equal "inherently unequal." In order to explain why these intangible effects should matter to the American public, Chief Justice Warren referred to the fact that all Americans belong to a national community. "To sepa-

*SEE TRUMP'S TAXES,  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 19*

## Government Meddling in the Economy is Wrong for America, Mrs. Clinton

By Joey Salvin and The YU College Republican Board

This debate cycle is truly frustrating for any conservative hoping to pull the lever for the lesser of the two evils available to them. Throughout these last months the Democratic nominee, stained by corruption, contradiction and seemingly endless scandals, was made to look like the more "presidential" candidate relative to Mr. Trump. What is frustrating is the lingering feeling that if conservatives had a more refined candidate who understood the issues better, Clinton wouldn't stand a chance.

Her debacles would be exposed the way they were by the moderator Chris Wallace in the last debate. After denying her support for open borders, Wallace quoted her past speech given to a Brazilian bank and recently exposed by WikiLeaks where she said: "My dream is a hemispheric common market with open trade and open borders". He then asked her to explain the disparity, and she said that during the speech, she was referring to energy trade being open, not our American borders. Her response is misleading and factually inaccurate given the context of the speech where a reference to energy trade wouldn't make sense. Trump should have pressed the issue and then spoken on the various gaffes brought to attention by WikiLeaks. Instead, due to his lack of discipline or knowledge, he allowed her to pivot to the topic of Russia and then, for no reason whatsoever, continued to defend Vladimir Putin, giving Clinton the luxury of escaping with another egregious lie only recognized by those Americans who follow the issues closely. It is rare that a Republican gets a platform of more than 65 million people at once to make the case for conservative ideas and this is just a glimpse into the broader campaigns. It would have been nice to have a candidate capable of making that case.

Conservatives, at the end of the day, strive for the best possible future for the American people. We want strong economic growth, quality education, secure borders, reliable allies, healthy families, and a general well-being for all Americans. And the truth is, there are time-tested principles and positions that have historically been successful in achieving those goals and, likewise, positions that fail to bring about success. Democrats and Republicans differ greatly on the role of government in an economy, one of the biggest concerns for the American people in this election, and this is prominently displayed in both candidates' policies. In a society, the economy flourishes best when the government is limited only to fostering the best possible platform for voluntary exchange. It is imperative for the American people to elect a candidate who understands this, and unfortunately, Mrs. Clinton does not.

It is important to remember that voluntary exchange in a free market is the system most capable of producing economic growth. The idea rests on the principle that free market competition forces competing individuals to produce a superior product at a lower cost which maximizes efficiency. Voluntary exchanges generally leave both parties better off. Essentially forced altruism, companies compete to produce a better product for our society. There is no alternative system even close to providing that type of liberty, freedom, and economic mobility for all people like that of a free market, where people can become well off perusing their passions and interests while benefitting those around them.

### TRUMP'S TAXES, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

rate [black schoolchildren]," he wrote, "from others of similar age and qualifications generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community (my emphasis) that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." I don't know if Justice Warren was aware of the revolutionary character of his thinking, but those words no doubt left many Southerners puzzled. "What community, Justice Warren?" To a conservative view of community, in which the government is ever external to communal bonds, Warren's argument must have seemed nonsensical.

Its interesting to note that at least some Opinion writers have taken up the mantra of national community. In recent months, NYT columnist David Brooks has made the "American community" his personal

Government economic intervention therefore must be limited to those actions which best encourage individuals to trade their skills and goods. Examples of appropriate government involvement include laws that protect individual rights, property rights, contracts, and which regulate for defaults in the market. Given this framework, the general population (including the poorest individuals) enjoy an abundance of opportunity for worthwhile employment and the ability to easily contribute to others.

Yet it has become increasingly popular to make the mistake that government can also offer what the free market does offer and that the government should be a player and not a referee. There is a belief that the wealthy are somehow undeserving of their gains and must be forced to subsidize government redistribution. However, the wealthy are the engine of a booming economy because they create jobs and invest their earnings that, when successful, produce gains across all spectrums of society. The government is notoriously bad at smart investing, taking money from investors and throwing it at bad investments thereby choking any hope of economic growth. For example, part of the Obama stimulus package or (ARRA) included a \$1,831,768,487 package to Baltimore which funded programs in education, housing, job training, transportation and more. The entire program was utterly wasteful and did nothing to break the steady decline of Baltimore's economy. In short, we have a system which taxes work and subsidizes failure and thus will only lead to more failure.

It is no coincidence that the Obama administration's progressive, redistributive policies have been coupled with the slowest rate of growth since 1949. During the two years of the Obama-Pelosi era, before republicans took control of the house and senate, America was saddled with Obama's stimulus, Obamacare, and Dodd Frank. In other words, we received a stimulus plan that wasted nearly one trillion dollars, a healthcare system now collapsing under its own weight, and a law which, according to the Wall Street Journal, has "crushed small banks, restricted access to credit, and planted the seeds of financial instability." Obama is an idealist and a thought leader for principled government involvement that simply does not work.

Hillary Clinton understands that there is unrest in America but her plan is to double down on these types of policies. During her campaign, she's used buzz-words and taglines, such as, "the rich must pay their fair share," and insists that her plan is a "bottom up" plan and not a "top down" plan. This sounds good in speeches to her supporters (unlike those released by WikiLeaks to banks) and is received with cheers. However, her plan to double down on these redistributive principles offers a similar path toward stagnant growth, wasteful and unproductive government involvement and harsh business regulations.

Her economic plan is to implement a 4% tax increase on individuals earning upwards of \$5 million a year, increase the top bracket to 45%, increase the estate tax, and decrease the charitable deduction rate to 28%, as well as enforce an alternative tax of 30% for those earning over \$1 million per year. These are all ways of taking money away from people who make successful investments and funneling it into those programs which her self-appointed government officials deem to be worthy (such as Baltimore). This is the antithesis of a policy for economic growth and opportunity. Hillary Clinton promises to close tax loopholes, however her complicated tax plan is exactly the policy favoring special interest groups who have the

crusade. His April piece, "How Covenants Make Us," claims that America's traditional social fabric, based as it is on racial, cultural and religious homogeneity, is on its way out. "The question," Brooks says, "is how to how to reweave the social fabric in the face of" this reality. He writes, in terms not dissimilar to the liberal approach to politics, that the new social fabric must lie in a sense of community that crosses ethnic, racial, and economic divides. To Brooks, this sense of community is the real meaning behind the word "patriotism." As he says:

"Senator Cory Booker nicely defined patriotism by contrasting it with mere tolerance. Tolerance, he said, means, 'I'm going to stomach your right to be different, but if you disappear off the face of the earth I'm no worse off.' Patriotism, on the other hand, means 'love of country, which necessitates love of each other...

power to lobby for loopholes, leaving less powerful corporations in a difficult position and corrupting the markets efficiency by creating pits and valleys in the tax code. We also must ask if she would oppose the type of cronyism that made her and her husband \$125 million and indeed why her Foundation gave certain foreign countries access to her as Secretary of State. Any tax plan which doesn't directly promote voluntary trading within a free market must be looked at with suspicion. In general, the more involved the government in an economy, the more corrupt the government will become.

And then there is Donald Trump. The outspoken busi-

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**"A CLINTON ADMINISTRATION BEARS SIGNIFICANT RISKS TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. WITH THE TYPE CRONY CAPITALISM AND "CALLING ON FAVORS" ROUTINE THAT SHE CONTINUES TO DEMONSTRATE"**

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nessman has a plan to reduce taxes by a high margin, putting the top bracket at 25% for ordinary income, reducing the capital gains tax significantly at all bracket, substantially lowering the corporate tax, and other modifications along those lines. One of Trump's stated and most positive reforms is on corporate taxes. This sneaky tax largely translates into either higher prices or lower wages. This is basically a hidden tax on middle-income wage earners and consumers, passed along by the company receiving the tax. Dropping the corporate tax would effectively create wealth for those Americans who need it most. Importantly, the government's loss of income would not be as significant as its loss in taking on trillions of dollars of additional debt like the current administration. Furthermore, high corporate taxes are basically an invitation for corporations to lobby for loopholes which skew the market and lead to inefficiency. It is taught in economics 101 that tax and regulatory policies which don't contribute to the chief purposes of government should be eliminated whenever possible because they can only lead to inefficiency, a burden ultimately unloaded on the American people. Money is significantly more productive when invested in the market by people directly accountable for gains or losses as opposed to our government which has others' money on the line.

In exploring one issue of the 2016 Election, mainly taxes and economic regulation, a Clinton administration bears significant risks to the American people. With the type crony capitalism and "calling on favors" routine that she continues to demonstrate, the inefficiencies of big government as a tool for unfair regulations and taxes will harm those worst off in society. The Nobel laureate Milton Friedman, the greatest proponent of the free market of this century said that "a society that puts equality before freedom will get neither. A society that puts freedom before equality will get a high degree of both." The American government needs reform and refinement. The American people deserve better.

[it] recognizes that you have worth and dignity and [that] I need you. You are part of my whole, part of the promise of this country."

Tolerance is the counterpart to American individualism; in order to live my private life, I must be willing to accommodate your right to do the same. But as Brooks notes, tolerance does not breed obligation. It gives me no reason to pay taxes. It takes community - "patriotism" - to do that. As election day draws near, America seems to be seriously considering its bases of community. It will be interesting to see what the people decide.

*This article was written in association with the YU Political Science Journal. Submissions to the journal can be sent to psjournal.yu@gmail.com.*

## The Career Center: Far More Than Just The Accounting Center

By Etan (Alex) Neiman

There are many secrets contained within the walls of Yeshiva University. These can range from the best teachers to take to how the Café manages to be so expensive to the latest happenings on the twelfth floor of Belfer. However, there is one department in our university which is dutifully working on telling its secret. All they need is for the students to listen. The invaluable Career Center is far more than just the “Accounting Center” or “Finance Center”, as some proclaim it to be. Rather, the secret is that their opportunities and resources stretch well beyond those industries, including many industries which may be of interest to a Y.C. student. In an effort to let the secret out, I recently spoke with the Career Center’s Executive Director Marc Goldman, Director of Employer and Alumni Relations Susan Bauer, and Director of Counseling and Programming Christopher Thunberg

**Etan Neiman:** Can you please describe what ca-

**"WE ESTIMATE THAT THE FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING OPPORTUNITIES ACCOUNT FOR ONLY 12% TO 15% OF THOSE STUDENTS HAVE ACCESS TO THROUGH OUR OFFICE."**

reer opportunities, other than those found in the accounting and finance industries, students can find at the Career Center? What YU majors do those opportunities tend to relate to?

**Career Center:** It’s important to note at the outset that one’s major doesn’t necessarily dictate one’s career opportunities; while some highly technical fields (such as Accounting or Engineering) have strict pre-requirements for entry, many employers are simply seeking talented candidates from all majors. That said, we have thousands of job and internship opportunities that come through our office in dozens of fields and specializations; in contrast to what might be the general perception of our office, a large number of opportunities in Social Services, Technology, Healthcare, Marketing, Education, Jewish Community, Fashion and more are posted through our on-line

job board, YU CareerLink. In fact, we estimate that the finance and accounting opportunities account for only 12% to 15% of those that students have access to through our office.

**EN:** What job fairs and other general resources for these opportunities are offered by the Career Center?

**CC:** The primary fair for these opportunities is our Spring Career Fair, which is open to all industries and draws employers from a wide cross-section of fields. Typically, about 50 employers attend, making it the Career Center’s largest fair. In addition, we host dozens of speaker panels, presentations, networking events, and opportunities for students to learn from and connect with employers and alumni in a broad range of fields. Specifically, some tentative upcoming events and panels include a Real Estate Forum on December 1, Technology Employer Panel on December 6, Non-Profit Fair on December 7, and Marketing Networking Event in February. To support students interested in computer science and tech related fields, we recently hosted a Google Information Session on November 2 and Bloomberg Tech Talk on November 3.

As far as general career resources, we have a database of YU alumni and employer contacts called YU InfoLink, which enables students to seek out professionals in target fields for advice and guidance in their career paths after meeting with a Career Center counselor. We also provide access to informational databases and libraries (such as the Vault Campus Online, Uniworld Online, and Wall Street Oasis) that offer robust career and industry guides which can be very helpful in understanding the career opportunities available to YU students. These can all be accessed through our webpage and YU CareerLink.

**EN:** Are there On-Campus Recruiting (OCR) opportunities in fields other than accounting and finance, or is it primarily focused on those industries?

**CC:** While OCR may be one of the more visible forms of employer engagement at the Career Center, it is not the one through which the majority of students ultimately obtain their jobs and internships. OCR Interviewing is a very specific form of employer engagement, and one that is not practiced by all industries, such as firms which hire on an as-needed basis. However, those many firms which choose to meet students through attending our previously discussed career fairs or networking events are really exercising

other forms of recruiting on campus. Moreover, we emphasize to students the importance of reviewing and applying for the hundreds of opportunities available on YU CareerLink at any one time. On our end, we are continually building our network of employers and engaging them, so they have opportunities to connect with and ultimately hire YU students.

**EN:** Are there requirements to participate in the resources the Career Center offers for the non-accounting and finance fields, similar to the accounting and finance requirements?

**CC:** There are some basic requirements; for instance, we require students who wish to attend any of our career fairs to come in business attire and present a resume in order to gain admittance. Beyond that, for our panels, networking events, and speaker programs, we mainly ask that students come to the session in a timely manner and RSVP when that is indicated as a requirement. On a job-specific basis, some employers require GPA minimums, but the Career Center does not have grade requirements of its own for students to participate in the various forms of recruiting.

**EN:** Why do you feel that there is a perception among YU students that the Career Center is tailored only for accounting and finance students?

**CC:** It is likely that the “high visibility” nature of the employer activities for those fields leads to a perception that “that’s all the center does”. To help continue to expand the Career Center’s variety of offerings, we are administering a survey in mid-November to gauge student interest in all areas of industry and fields of study. The results of the study will enable the Career Center to develop student-driven opportunities other than those which typically align with a certain major.

To close, we strongly encourage students to look closely at our semester calendar and program of activities to see the diversity of fields that students can connect with and always encourage students to come in and meet with our staff to come up with their own tailored career plan!



## The Changing Face of Equity Research

By Adam Kramer

One of Wall Street’s oldest and most prestigious industries is set to undergo a major transformation over the next few years, but what this means for the research industry and its clients is unclear. Wall Street analysts conduct research on equities, credit, the macroeconomy, among other areas, often specializing in one specific sector or subsector. For example, within a major research firm’s equities division, there will be multiple senior analysts covering technology stocks, with one senior analyst specializing in software companies, another in hardware companies, and another in consumer technology. These “sell-side” research analysts publish research and access to other investment ideas to clients on the “buy-side”. The buy-side is comprised of hedge funds, asset managers, and other institutional investors, who pay for the research and access to the analysts, since they value the research as well as the relationships that the analysts have with the management of the companies in the industry that they cover.

In analysts’ reports, they will discuss industry trends, company trends, and report on companies’ financials. They’ll also assign a rating to stocks, calling them either a buy, hold, or sell depending on whether they think their clients on the buy-side should invest in these companies or avoid them. Most major Wall Street banks, as well as many independent research shops, have sell-side research divisions.

Traditionally, the buy-side hasn’t actually paid for

research itself, but instead pays commissions and fees to banks to use their services, including buying and selling new shares of stock via the bank. Analysts’ research has been financed by the commissions and fees, albeit in a very indirect way. As a result, it has been extremely difficult to quantify analysts’ success in forming relationships with clients on the buy-side, as well as with their stock ratings, since they’re not getting paid directly on their successes in these two areas. For example, an analyst who has a 90% success rate with his buy rating—meaning companies that he assigns a buy rating to go up 90% of the time—won’t make more money than an analyst who only has a 30% success rating, since they’re being paid indirectly and not being paid based on how successful their ratings are.

Where things might change is with the European Union’s Markets in Financial Instruments Directive (MiFID) regulations, specifically MiFID II. These regulations, which are set to take effect in January 2018, will mandate that the buy-side pay specific commissions for research that will be independent of other fees and commissions they pay to banks for other services. This new payment structure should fix the aforementioned difficulties with quantifying analysts’ success in forming relationships with the buy-side, and with getting ratings calls correct.

However, problems with the new model have started to emerge, including one issue raised by Jonathan Hurewitz, the COO of UBS’s investment management division. The issue he raises is that today, analysts

publish their research by sending out their reports to all their clients. Since all their clients pay the same fee—in essence no fee because the buy-side doesn’t pay directly for research—they all receive the research at the same time. With the new payment mode, clients will pay different commissions or subscription amounts, and will be given access based on how much they pay. Where this really becomes a problem is that sometimes, analysts’ comments will actually change the price of a stock. For example, when an extremely influential and successful analyst at a major bank changes his rating on a stock, or raises his price target, it shows that he believes the stock price will rise. When the buy-side acts on this new information and purchases the stock, the increase in demand will actually cause the stock price to rise. In cases where the analyst is influential and does have the power to move the stock, since clients who get this information first will evidently have the opportunity to purchase the stock at a lower price, how do analysts choose which clients get information first? Is it fair that clients who pay more will get the opportunity to find out this information first and therefore have the opportunity to purchase the stock at the lower price?

Sell-side research analysts play a pivotal role as the liaisons between the buy-side firms that purchase stock in publicly traded companies and the management of the publicly traded companies themselves. As the industry’s payment plans change, it’ll be fascinating to see what the effect is—if any—on research as a thriving industry on Wall Street.

## The Case Everyone Should Be Following

By Mendel Harlig

Do you believe that the government should stay out of the financial sector? Or, do you maintain that government has the ability to meddle with affairs if it's for the public good, and perhaps should even control more of the private markets? Whatever your perspective is on the role of government, one should be fascinated with the current court cases that are taking place between the government and members of the private sector regarding Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae. When people purchase a house, they often rely on a mortgage due to a lack of funds. The bank that originates the mortgage usually does not retain the mortgage. Most of the mortgages that the banks initiate are bought by one of the government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs), Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, or Ginnie Mae. This provides the banks with the necessary capital to lend further. Additionally, the banks don't have to be exposed to the risk of homeowners possibly defaulting on the loan because the GSEs own it. The GSEs securitize the loan as a mortgage backed security (MBS), where if the borrower defaults on the loan, the GSEs will incur the financial burden, and they sell it as an MBS on the secondary mortgage market as a bond at a premium.

The history of the GSEs begins in 1938 with the establishment of Fannie Mae by the federal government in order to make homeownership more affordable and increase the percentage of homeowners, by giving money to finance mortgages. In 1954, Fannie Mae became a mixed ownership corporation with the federal government maintaining its preferred stock and the private sector owning the common stock. In 1968, Fannie Mae was broken up into two corporations: Ginnie Mae and Fannie Mae. Ginnie Mae is owned by the federal government and thus has the explicit backing of the federal government in form of a guarantee that the federal government will pay if borrowers default on their loan. Fannie Mae was completely released into the private sector. Fannie Mae always had the implicit backing of the government because the government would burden it to increase its loan portfolio to mortgages programs that are created by the federal government – usually for

people who wouldn't meet the standards of acquiring a mortgage from a regular bank. In 1970, Freddie Mac was created in order to compete with Fannie Mae in the secondary mortgage market.

In 1992, President George Bush signed the housing development act which required that GSEs, including Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae, and Ginnie Mae, help low and average income people attain a mortgage by ensuring the financing of affordable housing loans that are regulated by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The HUD allows a low down payment, and lessens the monthly payment of the loan by regulating the interest rate and increasing the time of the loan to thirty years. Therefore, if there were a homeowner that couldn't attain a ten-year mortgage because his loan to income ratio—how much the monthly payment is relative to the person's monthly income—was too high, in many instances he would have an acceptable loan to income ratio over a thirty-year mortgage.

In 1999, the Clinton Administration encouraged Fannie Mae to increase its mortgages to people of low and average income by increasing lending in distressed cities. Additionally, banks pressured Fannie Mae to issue mortgages at lower credit requirements and higher interest—also known as subprime mortgages—in order to increase the number of loans the banks can distribute. Private lenders would issue risky loans because they knew that Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae would bear the majority of the responsibility if they don't pay. As subprime mortgages increased, many lenders defaulted on their loans causing housing prices to go down. Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae owned five trillion dollars of debt and guaranteed half the loans in the mortgage market. It was rumored that Fannie Mae would go bankrupt which would cause a global financial crisis because their bonds were owned by many citizens in the United States and countries throughout the world. The government decided to give 187.5 billion dollars of taxpayer money to bail out Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, and put them in conservatorship—the government would maintain control of them for a period of time. The government assumed control of nearly eighty percent of the stock and gave itself a special preferred stock that made



Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae pay 10 percent interest on the bailout money they received. All dividends from the preferred stock and common stock that were owned by private shareholders were suspended.

In 2012, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae became profitable again, together making 8 billion profit in the second quarter. However, instead of accepting 10 percent of this profit as an interest payment, and distributing the rest of the profit as a dividend to stockholders, the government conducted a federal takeover of all the profits of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, claiming that it changed the terms in order to wind down Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae so it wouldn't have to burden taxpayers in the future if another crisis occurs.

Private stockholders decided to sue the federal government for violating the fifth amendment: "nor shall private property be taken without just compensation." The plaintiffs argue that in 2008, Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae were put in conservatorship, which gave the government control of the companies for a temporary period of time after which they'd be released back into the private sector. Yet, in the case of Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae the government has not released them back into the private sector but in effect has done the opposite—they've taken ownership of the companies. Therefore, stockholders that own a share of the company will never receive dividends, neither from the profits they earned in 2012 nor from future profits. Additionally, since the government claims that it wants to eventually shut-down down the companies, the stocks will essentially be worth nothing.

*SEE THE CASE,  
CONTINUED ON PAGE 22*



**Y**eshiva University thanks the more than 300 students who volunteered on both campuses to make our inaugural YU Day of Giving such a success. Thanks to you, the **I AM YU Campaign** raised more than \$6 million from 2,703 donors in just 24 hours!

Contributed funds will support scholarships, student life, career development, community programming and more.

***We could not have done it without you!***

## What-er (Water) you doing?

By Binyamin Zirman

Thousands have lived without love, but no one can survive without water. Water is such an essential part of our world (around 70-75 percent of the world is water), our bodies (roughly 70 percent of an adult's body is made up of water), and our lives (a person can live about a month without food, but only about a week without water). Yet we are so careless with our water, especially in the United States. Approximately 400 billion gallons of water are used in the United States per day; in a year, the average American residence uses over 100,000 gallons. Mundane activities such as taking a bath or a five-minute shower use 70 gallons and 20 gallons respectively. Did you know that the average faucet releases 2 gallons of water per minute or that it takes 5 liters to wash a cup? I'm not accusing you or pointing a finger—I am also careless about how I waste my water. But this is all about to change, thanks to a new startup company called BrighTap.

The company was founded by Konstantin Berezin, Ariel Drach, and Alex Sudak in February 2015. Berezin is the CEO of the company and has past experience in both the hi-tech and consumer electronics industries as well as having a special interest in green products. From 2013-2015, he was the CEO of TMPA Recycling, a not for profit electronic recycling company, and has previous jobs in sales and marketing. Drach went to college at IED Madrid and serves as the company's CTO. Sudak graduated from Shenkar College of Engineering and Design, in Ramat Gan, Israel, and serves as the company's COO, focusing on Tech and Production. Both Drach and Sudak have previous experience in product design. In addition to the 3 co-founders, they brought Yuval Klein on board to serve in an advisory role and sit on their board. Klein is the founder and CEO of Valiber, a device and app that measure how sweet things are. The company is based in Jerusalem and was incubated in the European Commission's Internet of Things accelerator.

BrighTap raised one hundred thousand dollars in its seed round back in September 2014. The company's main two investors are SVOD Europe and the Vertical Engine Program. BrighTap has the team and technology in place to make a real impact on the world, and their potential is starting to be recognized.

The BrighTap team realized that a fresh-water crisis exists not only in Israel, but all over the world. Households and organizations face it in California, Flint Michigan, and Singapore. The common questions are: Is this water safe to drink and to use? How many liters are needed to wash a cup? To take a shower? The target is to increase awareness of water consumption and water quality for households and organizations. BrighTap's solution is a smart water meter that can track your water usage and water quality. Knowledge is power and with this powerful new technology you will know your water: how much you're using, how much you're spending, and its quality score. Their Internet of Things (an everyday object that has network connectivity allowing it to send and receive data) meter can be a separate device attached to any standard water tap, hose, or pipe and it transforms them into a smart device. In addition, the BrighTap meter can be an Original Equipment Manufacturer (a part or subsystem that is used in another company's end product) to any device including a tab, refrigerator, or water bar. The meter works through the combination of BrighTap's proprietary analytic algorithm and turbine technology that measures water flow with impressive accuracy. The average deviation in its measurements is plus or minus 4%. The purpose of BrighTap is to provide real time data about the water quality and help users reduce their water bills. Some of the data and statistics that BrighTap can monitor are water quality index, liters/gallons used, temperature, costs, etc. The data can be tracked on the company's app or other data services in addition to the screen on the meter itself. The ultimate goal of BrighTap is to increase water consumption and water quality awareness all over the world.

Back in November 2015, the company won a

\$50,000 first-place prize in the Unilever Innovation Foundry "Ideas for Life" competition in London. Following this up in March 2016 they won the first Google Startup Exchange organized by Numa, a French accelerator program. Even more impressive, BrighTap was handpicked as one of six Israeli companies by the US State Department and White House to take part in the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Summit at Stanford University in California on June 22nd through 24th. Hosted by President Barack Obama, GES attracted more than 1,000 global delegates. Each of the world's six regions was represented by 100 entrepreneurs chosen from about 5,000 applications from more than 150 countries. BrighTap reached the top five in the summit's World Positive competition, but their Israeli peer, Solstice Initiative, won the competition. Regardless, the momentum is



clearly building for BrighTap, as they get more and more recognition and publicity for their product.

BrighTap launched a Indiegogo pre-campaign during the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Summit. A successful campaign will facilitate final product development. Indiegogo will be BrighTap's partner in a pre-launch campaign to help generate buzz and an audience. After raising funds and growing their community through crowd funding, they will have a marketplace to sustain their momentum and make early sales with possibilities to make connections with manufacturing and logistics experts.

Taking a deeper look at the BrighTap meter, there are so many benefits and great features. BrighTap is a new concept of monitoring water resources. One of

SEE WHAT-ER,  
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## Sy Syms Welcomes Noted Conservative Economist on Cusp of Election

By Avishai (Jacob) Cohen

On Wednesday, November 2, Sy Syms welcomed Dr. Kevin Hassett, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington, a leading policy think-tank. Hassett's impressive credentials include advising the presidential campaigns of President George W. Bush, Senator John McCain, and Governor Mitt Romney. He also taught economics at Columbia University and was a senior economist for the Fed's Board of Governors. In addition to frequent media appearances, Hassett has also published several books. The lecture was co-sponsored by a strong lineup of clubs, consisting of the YU AEI Executive Council, YU College Republicans, Business Leadership Club, Economics Society, Finance Club, Investment Club, and Political Science Society. Around 70 students from the Wilf and Beren campuses filled Belfer 430, where Dr. Hassett delivered a short lecture and then led a question and answer session.

Hassett's primary topic was the impact of the 2016 presidential race - which he described as a "bonanza of uncertainty"—on the market and business. The focus was on the uncertainty of the election's outcomes and its effects on how people will transact. Hassett

advised how businesspeople can best plan for the future without knowing who may win an election and how that victory will impact their business's fortunes both from a tax and regulatory planning perspective.

At various points, Hassett discussed how the platforms of the two major candidates would affect business, offering harsh critique for both candidates. He characterized Clinton's platform as a negative for growth and not very economically literate. On the other side, Hassett argued that Trump's opposition to free trade is "profoundly harmful" to the economy, and that no one seems to know what Trump would actually do if elected, possibly including Trump himself. On the minimum wage, Hassett said that raising it is "economically stupid" but pointed out that it's politically impossible to oppose raising it. Hassett believes there are better ways to help the poor, such as expanding the earned income tax credit.

Addressing his own participation in the race given his past campaign advisory roles, Hassett reported that he sat out this election cycle due to events in his personal life. Analyzing the race's general tone, he noted the uptick in name calling by the candidates, media, and even among academics, relaying an anecdote about his son coming across a blog post call-

ing himself the "spawn of Satan." He suggested that a possible remedy for this vulgar language was for academic name callers to be barred from academic and professional conferences. Finally, Hassett discussed the accuracy of polls and his stance that Trump may have a path to victory because many supporters do not want to admit to a pollster that they plan to vote for Trump. He compared Trump's journey to Reagan's presidential bid, where many wrote off Reagan's candidacy, but Reagan wound up sweeping most of the country.



THE CASE,

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ing at some point. All the investors that bought up Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae at a discount—when its stock was low and it was getting bailed out by the government—with the belief that the companies would eventually become profitable causing the stock's value to go up exponentially, have been snubbed.

The plaintiffs have won the first step of the battle with Judge Margaret Sweeney ruling the release of

government documents regarding the sudden seizure of Freddie Mac's and Fannie Mae's profits. The government is now attempting to appeal the decision. Some people claim the government's behavior with Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae manifests the corruption of the federal government—namely that the government is keeping all the companies' profits while not paying dividends to the private owners of twenty percent of the stock that is privately owned, despite the fact that the government has already been com-

pensated for the money they were owed from the bailout. Others maintain that Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae should be terminated because they were one of the many culprits of the financial crisis, and the mortgage market should be conducted in the private market. Regardless, everyone should be following this story as it develops. The outcome of this case will establish vast legal precedent for whether the government can confiscate private property with impunity.

# Snapchat: The Supposed \$25 Billion Dollar Company

By Ezra Berman

Roughly five years ago, the social media industry was about to undergo an industry-altering change, a change that many Yeshiva University students would view as for the better. In September of 2011, Evan Spiegel and Bobby Murphy became famous for creating Snapchat, a revolutionary social media app which allows users to send a disappearing image. Spiegel became inspired after he heard countless stories of people scouring Facebook and untagging themselves from photos or even photoshopping pictures, fearing their world would crumble if anyone found out they had a pimple on the 38th day of 9th grade. He knew there had to be a solution. Along with his partner, he built the Snapchat app in order to, as he put it, avoid conforming to “unrealistic notions of beauty or perfection but rather creating a space to be funny, honest or whatever else you might feel like at the moment you take and share a Snap.” This article addresses Snapchat’s rise from startup to flirting with being a \$25 billion dollar company.

## How Has Snapchat Grown Over the Years?

In an age of permanence and regret, Snapchat carved their niche by creating a way to prevent that permanence. The app allows its users to send pictures and videos to their friends, which they have done using platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp, only with this service, the images disappear ten seconds after they are opened by the recipient. Riding this signature feature, Snapchat has become a social media giant, accumulating over 200 million monthly active users. This figure trails only Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp and Twitter.

Like these social media trailblazers, Snapchat has had to figure out how to convert these users into rev-

enue. By utilizing a clever approach of location based advertisements, Snapchat has seen their revenue rise from \$50 million in 2015 to an expected revenue between \$250 and 350 million in 2016. They believe they will become a \$1 billion company by 2017 and only grow from there.

## The Initial Public Offering (I.P.O.)

An I.P.O. is the first sale of stock by a private company to the public on the stock exchange. It allows the company to raise funding by issuing equity to shareholders. Over the last several years, the I.P.O. market has seen several industry giants decide to test the public market, and Snapchat appears as though it will be the next one that decides to do so. If Snapchat gets their target I.P.O. valuation of upwards of \$25 billion, it would make them the biggest company to go public in the U.S. since Alibaba cleared a smooth \$167.6 billion I.P.O. in 2014.

## Snap Pricing

Snap Inc.'s IPO could value the company at \$25 billion or more, making it one of the largest companies to debut in the U.S. since 2008.

PRICING DATE	COMPANY	MARKET VALUE, IN BILLIONS
Sept. 2014	Alibaba	\$167.6
May 2012	Facebook	\$81.2
Oct. 2009	Banco Santander Brasil	\$50.4
Nov. 2010	GM	\$49.5
March 2008	Visa	\$42.5
May 2014	JD.com	\$26.0
March 2017*	Snap Inc.	\$25.0
Feb. 2011	Kinder Morgan	\$21.2
Dec. 2013	Hilton Worldwide	\$19.7
July 2014	Synchrony Financial	\$19.1

\*As early as Source: Dealogic

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

## Is Snapchat Worth \$25 Billion?

Just this past May, Snapchat received a valuation of roughly \$18 billion, leaving some investors skeptical of the expected \$7 billion jump in just a few short months. Granted, the previously discussed user data leaves little room for debate that Snapchat is an extraordinarily popular app which has exhibited tremendous growth since its founding; however, there is plenty of room to be skeptical about a \$25 billion valuation.

Their projected revenue growth to a billion dollar company over the coming years appears to be a stretch at best. As shown in the first chart, 71% of Snapchat’s current revenue comes from video advertisements within the the application, while 21% comes from location based ads. If Snapchat expects to hit \$1 billion by 2017, they would be well served to find other ways to earn significant revenue. Of additional concern to their revenue growth plan is the company’s user demographics. Currently, 45% of their users are made up of people aged 18 to 24, while the 55 and older demographic accounts for a mere 7% of their users. In comparison to some of other big social media players, this 55 and older range produces 25% of Facebook’s users, 20% of Twitter’s users and 16% of Instagram’s users. This could leave them susceptible to a high rate of customer attrition (users leaving the app), as younger demographics can switch their likes and dislikes in somewhat of a spontaneous manner.

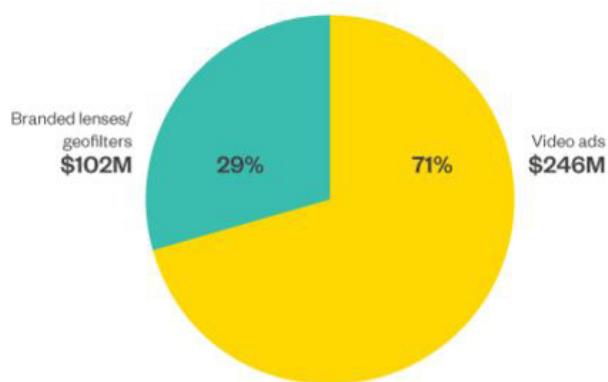
Addressing the \$25 billion valuation directly, one recent precedent would seem to imply this figure is out of whack, while another recent precedent may support the valuation. In 2014, Facebook famously

**"IF SNAPCHAT GETS THEIR TARGET I.P.O. VALUATION OF UPWARDS OF \$25 BILLION, IT WOULD MAKE THEM THE BIGGEST COMPANY TO GO PUBLIC IN THE U.S. SINCE ALIBABA CLEARED A SMOOTH \$167.6 BILLION I.P.O. IN 2014."**

## Say Cheese

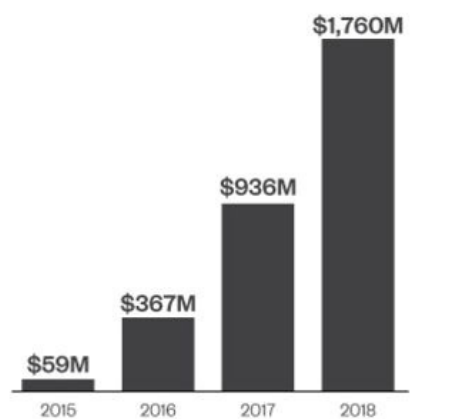
Snapchat’s revenue, which is composed almost entirely of video ads and sponsored content, is expected to rise more than fourfold by 2018

U.S. AD REVENUE SOURCES IN 2016



Source: eMarketer

ESTIMATED GLOBAL REVENUE 2015-2018



BloombergGadfly

acquired WhatsApp for \$22 billion; in other words, Facebook paid \$55 for each of their 400 million users. Applying this formula to Snapchat’s roughly 200 million users lends a value of about \$11 billion. On the flipside, when Alibaba went public on September 19, 2014, their revenue was \$2.7 billion, which is close to 7.5 times greater than Snapchat’s expected 2016 revenue. Taking the multiple of 7.5 and \$25 billion leaves Snapchat’s desired I.P.O. right in line with Alibaba’s \$167.67 billion I.P.O. Ultimately, time will tell just how valuable Snapchat is or isn't.

## WHAT-ER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

the best features is you can always know if your water is safe to drink with a water quality score rating the water on a scale of 1 to 5 stars. In addition, it increases awareness of

water consumption for a greener planet with both a timer measuring the time your water is running and a real time measurement of exactly how much water you are using. The meter also provides the exact temperature of the water and a simple color system which protects children from burning themselves. All of these features can be viewed in a simple and clear manner on the meter itself. Customers will be able to lower their water bills through monitoring and adjusting their home’s water usage.

The design of this brilliant meter is also groundbreaking. It is extremely easy to install, as a customer

simply attaches it to the end of their tap or shower head without any tools. It can be fully operational in seconds! Also, it doesn’t rust as it is housed in non-slip rubber which makes it last for years. The meter itself is very compact at only 1 cubed inch in size, and is the smallest, most elegant water monitor out there. Lastly, and most impressively, it is self-powered by the water that passes through it so you will never need to charge or replace any batteries.

In conjunction with the meter there will be an app that will available to all mobile devices. The app’s features include your personal water usage and quality statistics which will keep track of the changes you make in water consumption. Another feature is having helpful tips about water conservation and best practices available on the app as well as who to contact regarding water quality. On top of this, the customer will get increased awareness and comparative knowledge of water usage by knowing the consump-

tion of their friends, neighborhood, city, etc. The app will also inform you of any leaks so that they can be addressed immediately. If you’re proud of how you stack up to your neighbors, you can share your ratings on social media.

Water is nothing to take for granted and there are serious droughts and shortages around the world. The statistics about water consumption are eye-opening. To start, BrighTap’s ideal customers will be those who are interested in water quality. Their house may be a “smart house,” they may live in California or a different region plagued by drought, or simply care deeply about the environment. But I really think this product should become a staple in all households across America, Israel, and the rest of the world. We need to start taking our water seriously and BrighTap’s innovation gives us the tools to do so.

LET THE GAMES BEGIN!

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