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

By Avi Strauss

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

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

When parsing these numbers more carefully, a few interesting things emerge. Amongst the female students polled (24.7% of the total respondents), Trump’s numbers actually increase to 44.7% despite claims that Trump has a history of negative or sexist attitudes towards women. Clinton’s numbers are also higher among females, jumping to 35.5%. Only 15 of the 76 female respondents opted out of the binary choice between the major party candidates, although most of those who opted out (⅔) remain undecided (none chose Gary Johnson).

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

SEE POLL, CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Hillary Clinton Supporters Confidence

Donald Trump Supporters Confidence

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

By Doron Levine

As our country is seething with excitement about its upcoming presidential election, our university is similarly anticipating a change in leadership at its highest level. As reported previously by The Commentator, Chairman of the Board and selection committee member Moshael Straus announced via email on September 13 that the selection committee has voted to advance the candidacy of Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman and “it is anticipated his nomination will be forwarded to the full Board of Trustees” for a confirmation vote.

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

Rabbi Berman also served as the assistant rabbi of The Jewish Center of Manhattan’s Upper West Side and then succeeded Rabbi Dr. J.J. Schacter as its lead rabbi in 1987. He then attended Yeshiva University, graduating magna cum laude in 1991, and was ordained by RIETS where he studied in the Caroline and Joseph Gruss Kollel Elyon. He also holds a masters degree in Jewish Philosophy from YU’s Bernard Revel Graduate School. After receiving his rabbinic ordination, Rabbi Berman taught Talmud in the Stone Beit Midrash Program, joining YU’s rabbinic staff at the same time that Rabbis Jeremy Wieder and Elchanan Adler were hired to teach in the Mazer Yeshiva Program.

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

SEE BERMAN, CONTINUED ON PAGE 5
Editorial

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

By Doron Levine

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

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

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

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

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

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

Of course, pursuing controversy for controversy’s sake is no virtue. But the strategy of appeasing everyone by having no substantive biases is foolish. Ideas are inherently controversial; most things worth thinking about are worth disagreeing with, and if you have said nothing that can be argued with then you probably have said nothing at all. So instead of hurling accusations of bias back and forth, we are probably better off locating the crux of the issue and then consulting our basic beliefs in order to make an informed decision rather than endlessly debating who took whose state ment with their progressive perspective. Not content with publishing their opinions in their own names and recruiting similar-minded writers, they actively worked to exclude opinions held by students whose beliefs they had no respect for. Personally, I wrote two articles which they repeatedly rebuffed because they disagreed with my message; they only eventually capitulated because I wouldn’t back down. But I realize now that what appeared to me as ideology ingrained in our university’s newspaper was as short lived as the tenure of the editors who enforced it. The paper is defined entirely by the students who get involved.

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

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

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

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

The Commentator is the official student newspaper of Yeshiva University.

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

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

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

500 W 185th Street
New York, NY 10033
yucommentator.org
1 New Securitas Uniforms  
We can always count on our great guards to start off the new year in style.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Plaza Coming Soon to Wilf

By Noam Fiefel

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

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

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

The redesigned plaza will embrace a myriad of new features that will enhance its atmosphere, such as ornamental street lighting, movable seating fixtures, decorative paving band, and new planted spaces. The refreshed plaza will be home to different types of perennials, native grass and shrubs, trees and ferns. “"We’re adding a considerable amount of green space," said Michael Michalek of Mathews Nielsen Landscapes, one of the project’s architects.

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

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

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

Stern sophomore Sammi Plotsker echoed the same anticipation.

“I always love coming up to the Heights,” said Plotsker. “But now I’m even more excited to head uptown knowing that I can meet with friends and do homework at this beautiful new spot.”

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

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

By Elliot Heller

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

Despite these uncertain times, Dean Karen Bacon, who oversees the sciences at YU, is confident in the department’s ability to bounce back. “At the end of the day, we’ve been a school for a long time. Each respected and talented faculty member that leaves has an impact. But change is in the nature of life.”

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

Asked specifically about the impact of the retirement of Dr. Feit, who had chaired the Biology department since 1985, Dean Bacon said “Dr. Feit has left his impact been part in the Biology department, is now listed and taught as a Sociology course. Nevertheless, this change might also be an opportunity for the university to offer some interesting new Biology courses. There is already a new course in Psychopharmacology being offered this semester. In addition, Dean Bacon noted that there has been a recent push towards interdisciplinary courses together with the Chemistry department “since so much of modern science is interdisciplinary.”

Another impact that the summer upheaval had on the department is the loss of several independent research laboratories which had been run on campus. Dr. Peter had run a laboratory on campus in which select students could potentially be mentored to enhance their research skills as well as build some scientific credentials. Following the announcement of his departure, many students have voiced complaints about the current lack of research opportunities being offered at YU. As one student pointed out, “the issue of minimal independent research opportunities for students in YU existed before Dr. Peter left. His absence aggravates the problem even further.”

Dean Bacon acknowledged this, and said that the department is still working on a solution to the problem. She did point out that new Adjunct Professors Radhashree Maitra and Toni Schwarz operate research labs at other universities, in which YU students may enroll.

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

**Wilf ‘Welcome Back’ Tradition Revived by Student Council Presidents**

By Eric Shalmon

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

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

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

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

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

In the middle of the movie, though, the blowup screen collapsed, seemingly having lost air. It took a minute or so to re-inflate but even with this slight disruption the whole event went over well with the student body. One student expressed his satisfaction, stating, “It’s a really great idea to have movies here [in Tenzer Gardens].” Another student commented, “they should do this more often. It’s a great way to start the year and to get guys together.”

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

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

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

**POLL, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE**

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

Overall, it seems students lack confidence in any of the candidates, with only 25% of respondents saying that they are “very confident” with their candidate’s ability to be president. Of those polled, 65% said they were only “somewhat confident” or “not confident” in their choice’s ability to serve as commander-in-chief.

However, there was a significant disparity in confidence levels when breaking down the results by candidate. Of those who support Hillary Clinton, who touts her years of experience in Washington, 29% said they were “not confident” in her ability to be president, while 39% Trump supports said the same of their candidate.
BERMAN, CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

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

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

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

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

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

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

Even the leader of the selection committee repeatedly refused to comment on the status of the search. Through the executive search firm Korn Ferry, YU hired Stephen Joel Trachtenberg, the former President of George Washington University, to head the presidential search. This decision was itself controversial—many faculty members and students questioned the Board’s decision to enlist an outside headhunter with little familiarity with YU and its unique culture and needs. But the process of the search process is prompting many to question the decision to involve Trachtenberg in the first place. Rabbi Berman is deeply connected to YU, having studied in four of its affiliate schools and having served on its faculty; presumably no consulting firm was necessary or even useful in identifying him as a candidate. Regardless, Trachtenberg refused to disclose any details of the process, let alone what he brought to the table. Wishing to provide students and faculty with some familiarity with the person who is leading the search for their next leader, The Commentator reached out to Trachtenberg but was repeatedly rebuffed.

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

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

But despite President Joel’s cheerful prognosis, the experts are less optimistic. Just this past February, Moody’s Investors Service affirmed YU’s B3 rating which reflects a negative financial outlook and, according to Moody’s, “incorporates ongoing expectations of deep operating deficits over the next few years, despite the transfer of financial responsibility for its medical school to Montefiore Health System.” YU administrators recognize that the university’s next president will need to dedicate significant time and effort to fundraising and financial rebuilding.

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

In terms of YU’s ideals and values, many are confident that Rabbi Berman would be an effective representative of YU to the larger community and would be dedicated to the university’s distinctive mission. Rabbi Blau, RIETS’s Senior Mashiah Ruchani, said, “Ari is a wonderful choice. He represents everyone the yeshiva stands for and will certainly play the role of the spokesman of modern orthodox that YU represents. The rebeheim are very happy.” Does Rabbi Berman have sufficient experience with management and fundraising? He currently serves as the Rosh ha-Merkaz li-Moreshet Yehudit, the head of the Jewish Heritage Center, of Hechal Shlomo in Jerusalem, a relatively small organization located next to Jerusalem’s Great Synagogue which houses a museum and a 500-seat auditorium. Chairman Straus referred to Rabbi Berman as Hechal Shlomo’s CEO, but it is not clear to what degree his role at Hechal Shlomo involves administration, financial management, or fundraising. And does he have a strong administrative record at a major institution? According to Provost Botman, who is perhaps the most knowledgeable of these two institutions overlap and what sort of administrative duties he performs on a day-to-day basis which would prepare him to preside over a research university with four campuses, fifteen affiliated schools, over four thousand staff members, and more than six thousand students.

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

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

Moshael Straus, Chairman of the Board of Trustees

WWW.YUCOMMENTATOR.ORG
Golan, Yeshiva University  Make Amends in New Omni Dollars Agreement

By Noam Beltran

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

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

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

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

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

This statement seems almost prophetic when considering one minor change in Golan’s pricing. In a move that was deemed “necessary” by Golan management, the restaurant raised the prices of selections on their “secret” menu—orders not on the menu, but commonly selected by students. Most notable is the amending of the $6 Sesame/Zady’s to a $7.

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

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

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

A new understanding addresses all the points of conflict between YU and Golan from last winter. As the Commentator reported at the time, Yeshiva felt Golan breached the Omni Dollars agreement by charging sales tax to students for items which were not covered by their Omni allowance. In the new deal, Golan Heights will continue to accept the Caf Card, and may be making a slightly bigger dent in your wallet.

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

By Joshua Blicker

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

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

Rabbi Menachem Penner, the Max and Marion Kauf Graduate School of Psychology, the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary has created a program that allows semicha students who plan on practicing rabbinics to take courses toward a certificate of completion that focuses on mental health counseling. Rabbi Menachem Penner, the Max and Marion Kauf Graduate School of Psychology. The institute aims to combine RIETS semicha with the professional mental health counseling skills needed to effectively provide their congregants with spiritual and emotional guidance.

The new understanding addresses all the points of conflict between YU and Golan from last winter. As the Commentator reported at the time, Yeshiva felt Golan breached the Omni Dollars agreement by charging sales tax to students for items which were not covered by their Omni allowance. According to Golan owner Benjy Iszak, the original understanding was that YU was entitled to 15% of up to $50 spent at his restaurant per student per semester. After the $50 were used up, students would have to pay with actual cash, and Golan would receive 100% of the revenue from their orders. “YU never told me anything about students being able to unload their Caf Cards when they run out of Omni funds,” Golan owner Benjy Iszak said at the time. Mr. Iszak said the leap from the original $50 Omni allowance to $250 last semester was never discussed with him and cause him an unfair financial loss, which he tried recovering by charging students a “tax” on Omni Dollars purchases.

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

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

“[THESE PROGRAMS WILL] HELP RIETS GRADUATES BETTER ASSIST THEIR COMMUNITIES AND UNDERSTAND THEMSELVES.”
- PRESIDENT RICHARD JOEL
Students Assist in Baton Rouge Flood Cleanup on YU Service Learning Mission

By Zev Behar

The first thing we noticed stepping out of the car was the smell. It washed over us like a cold shower, causing us to shiver and wretch in the street. Piles of garbage sat in front of every house, a lifetime of possessions, tossed to the wind like an old piece of furniture you want to get rid of on YU Marketplace. Albums, clothing, furniture; nothing could be saved. One student on the trip said what we were all thinking; “Every time I see walls I think about the 5 feet of water that most houses had in Baton Rouge and it is something you can’t forget when you see that much mold and that much destruction.” Unfortunately, this was nothing that we hadn’t already been dealing with for the past 5 days. The only difference was the smell. Dorothy, the leader of the Nechama group that was giving us supplies, rushed over to inform us that we would not be allowed in this house without masks and gloves. Of course masks and gloves had always been “required,” but for some of the tamer houses they were not fully necessary. This house, our last of the relief mission, was by far the worst. Walking towards it, it was clear that this was going to be different. There was almost nothing sitting in the front yard which meant that this house had been untouched since the flood three weeks earlier. What that meant was that we would be entering a house made of mold, full of dilapidated furniture, warped floors, and a refrigerator that will haunt our memories for years to come.

The worst item we had to remove from any of the houses we had worked on the entire trip was the refrigerator from this one. Full of food that would have been expired before the flood even happened, this fridge had been sealed shut by the water and left to fester and mold until it became a box of mold, sludge, water, and our own personal hell. The smell that came from this fridge was like nothing I had ever conceived and it permeated throughout the entire house, clogging our nostrils and lingering in the air like a bad dust storm. It took nearly all of us to remove that fridge and it did not help that the floor had been warped completely out of shape, making it that much harder to wheel it out of the house. After nearly ten minutes of struggling to move this fridge about ten feet, we finally managed to throw it to the curb and then take a deep breath of the air we once dreaded breathing, but now seemed like a gift of fresh air.

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

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

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

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

Flourishing Night Seder Program Nears 200 Participants

By Eitan Lipsky

If you walked by the Jacob and Dreizel Glueck Center for Jewish Study between the hours of 8:00-10:15 pm over the past two weeks, you might have wondered why you were unable to hear yourself think. The answer, of course, is due to the overwhelming success of the Night Seder program, which has been producing an audible buzz that very closely resembles the (now world-famous due to the recent 900 video the Yeshiva posted on Facebook) Torah buzz of mornings in the Beit Midrash.

The need for a change in how Night Seder was going to be run was realized two years ago, when Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen, Rabbi Yitzchak Radner, and Rabbi Robbie Schrier, respectively, which students have the option to attend. Each class is very popular and focuses on a slightly different aspect of this theme.

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

It’s still not too late to sign up to be paired with a night Seder chavrusa and to complete the Kiddushin Challenge.
In an information session for interested students, YU announced on September 14 that it would be organizing a 24-hour blitz campaign to raise $5 million to be added to the annual fund.

The Yeshiva University Day of Giving, which will be hosted by the crowdfunding platform Charidy, was born to the annual fund. “The theme for our fundraiser is help people understand that YU touches the lives of so many in the Jewish community. Fundraising allows for YU to continue having an impact for many years to come.”

According to the Office of Annual Giving, the school currently has close to 8,000 donors who contribute to either the annual fund or the endowment fund. Fiscal year 2016 saw close to $50 million raised with around $76.5 million going to the annual fund. “A big chunk [of the annual fund] were in gifts of $25,000 and under,” Director of Annual Giving, Andrea Hale said.

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

According to the annual fund, the school year 2016 saw close to $50 million raised with around $76.5 million going to the annual fund. “A big chunk [of the annual fund] were in gifts of $25,000 and under,” Director of Annual Giving, Andrea Hale said.

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

UTS Initiative Brings the Issue of Laptops to the Table

By Eitan Lipsky

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

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

After much hype from the administration in anticipation of the event, the discussion got off to a rocky start. The unusually large and disengaged crowd was surprised to learn that Rabbi Penner, a major endorser of this event, was attending a simcha (celebration) and thus not available. Ms. Hale and Mr. Secter hope the slogan resonates with creating the fundraising slogan. After some deliberation the slogan and hashtag, “I Am YU” was decided upon. Ms. Hale and Mr. Secter hope the slogan resonates with those connected to YU as an association with the core values of YU.

Nevertheless, the program continued as planned. Rabbi Joshua Blas, a RIETS Mashgiach, stepped in for Rabbi Penner and provided a message to the students to open the program about the need to sit and weigh their objectives of our use of technology decisions before making them. With this, he introduced the program, explaining that this was intended to engage the minds of students and allow them to each make the right decision for them about whether or not to use laptops in the class and shiur rooms.

Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Jeremy Wieder began the conversation by highlighting his philosophy on the issue, specifically mentioning the “no laptops” rule for his classes. While noting that laptops do have positive uses, he stressed that using a laptop in class does more harm than it does good. He spoke about the distraction that is caused by having a laptop in class and how it prevents us from using our time, which is the most sacred thing that we have, in a proper way. He also spoke about the lack of Derech Eretz towards teachers that students display when they sit through classes doing other things on their computers instead of listening and engaging in the lecture.

Dr. David Pelcovitz, professor and the Gwendolyn and Joseph Straus Chair in Psychology and Jewish Education at the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration, spoke next, providing concrete statistics demonstrating the negative impact multitasking has on focus and ability to retain information that is taught in a classroom lecture. He emphasized that not only does a student who uses a laptop for other things during class significantly inhibit his ability to focus, he or she also negatively impacts the focus of those around him.

Mr. Secter concluded by expressing concern over the state of humanity in the technological era, and its shift away from deep thinking. This is in direct contrast, he said, with the way we are expected to be learning in Yeshiva, whereby we work hard and analyze information. He explained to the students that as the generations become more influenced by technology, they will lose the attention span required to comprehend our decisions prior to acting. He emphasized the students present by telling them that they still have this ability, and should therefore embrace it.

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

By Eitan Lipsky

Dr. Gabriel Cwilich announced on September 7 that he will be stepping down as the Director of the Jay and Jeannie Schottenstein Honors Program, disclosing this unexpected leadership change to a crowd of around forty students gathered for the first weekly Honors luncheon of the year. Dr. Cwilich, who teaches physics in Yeshiva College and has been at the helm of the program’s helm since 2009, said that his tenure as director will end when he begins a sabbatical this coming January. He also named Dr. Shalom Holtz as his successor for the next three years. Dr. Holtz, an Assyriologist and Bible scholar from Teaneck, NJ, is Associate Professor of Bible and already serves as the chair of the Robert M. Beren Department of Jewish Studies. It remains unclear how long Dr. Cwilich’s sabbatical from YU will be, and whether or not he plans to eventually reclaim his position as director.

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

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

By Commentator Staff

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

Rankings for large colleges in the United States are based on many data categories that are meant to reflect each school’s “student body, its faculty and its financial resources, along with outcome measures that signal how well the institution educates students.” Another important input, which may seem out of place for a community-specific school like YU, is the rankings of high school counselor ratings. According to U.S. News, “guidance counselors from a nationwide sampling of public high schools in the U.S. News Best High Schools rankings that were gold, silver or bronze medalists, as well as from the largest private independent schools nationwide” were asked to rate universities on a scale of 1 to 5 or to mark “don’t know” if they are unfamiliar with a particular college. The average of the results from the last three years of surveys rendered the high school counselor reputation score that was used in this ranking.

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

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

Club Fair Invites New Students to Robust Campus Life

By Abba Szydlo

On September 7th 2016, Yeshiva University held its annual club fair on the Wilf Campus, in Heights Lounge. The fair is always a time of excitement for Yeshiva students, because it allows students to begin to expand their horizons. The club fair is a place where students can seek out clubs that inspire and interest them. As Evan Jaffe, a SYM ‘17 student, said, “The club fair is one of my favorite times of the year. It motivates me to seek out my passions and follow them.”

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

When looked at through multiple vantage points, the club fair provides different meaning to everyone. More than anyone, the club fair effects first semester students. Tyler Hod (SYM ‘19) said, “I had no idea what to anticipate as I made my way to the club fair. I had heard from older friends what the fair was like, but I do not think it did justice. The fair was eye-opening for me, I am currently a part of two clubs that I would not have not have been otherwise.”

The club fair is also a time to network. Since students with different backgrounds attend the fair, there is plenty of outreach to be done. Making connections and forming relationships is a secondary benefit of the club fair.

For some students though, the fair can prove to be overwhelming. Joshua Morrow (SYM ‘17) claimed, “This is my third year going to the fair, and it still amazes me. Students swarm the Heights Lounge, yelling and screaming trying to find the clubs that interest them. Sometimes it can prove to be somewhat of a jungle.” Other students tend to get bothered by the clubs. Jamie Cappel (YC ‘18) “Why do they all ask for my email address when they send every person a T-Stud anyway? It gets annoying when I receive over one hundred emails a day about stuff [that] I didn’t ask to hear about.”

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

By Chaviva Freedman

From Fantastic to The Fantasticks

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

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

Without putting much thought into it, Sam dragged his feet over to Zach’s bed, slid off his slip pers and laid down on the lumpy university mattress. He started up at the moldy foam-tile ceiling, recognizing the distinct scent of Zach’s deodorant on the linens. Sleep, goddammit, Sleep. Nothing. Sam’s eyes were bloodshot, and he didn’t even have to look in the mirror to know. Sleep, goddammit, sleep. The words repeated over and over in Sam’s head like a mantra. He closed his eyes and tilted his head in the air every time he reached the word sleep, the bed shaking from his movement. Sleep, goddammit, sleep. Sam felt a tear wedge its way out from his closed right eyes and roll slowly down his cheek, eventually making its way into his mouth. He tasted the tear’s saltiness and then a downpour was released onto his face, each tear squeezing its way out from a squeezed-shut eyelid, on its own path down Sam’s rosy cheeks. Some rolled onto his pajama top, others onto Zach’s neatly folded linen, and the rest into Sam’s mouth, where the salty taste remained as he wept.

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

Sam felt as if a giant weight had been taken off of his shoulders, but, Now what? Easing his feet back into the cotton slippers, Sam lifted himself off of the bed and shuffled toward the door. The old metal hinges let out a loud squeak upon their use, the sound echoing down the hallway and bouncing off the poorly paint ed cinderblock walls. Sam glanced in each direction, his room was smack in the middle of the long hall, and saw no one. A large cockroach crept slowly along the hall’s width to Sam’s left and a florescent bulb flickered its dying bursts in the direction of the elevator. Sam leaned back against the wall and allowed his body to be dragged down by gravity, finally resting his rear end on the cold linoleum floor. Another sigh. Sam could see the sun beginning to peek over the horizon from the fire escape window down the hall. I might as well lie in bed. It’s better than sitting out here. Sam stood up, walked down the hallway and stamped down hard on the cockroach, feeling its body submit to the pressure of his slippers, and then headed back to the room to sleep. Sam woke to his alarm blaring and blinking the time 7:00 AM, in red analog numbers. Zach had returned and was sitting up in bed, looking, for once, as if he too had gotten little sleep.

“How was the party?”

“Dude, it was insane. You should’ve been there.” Zach rubbed his eyes.

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

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

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

By Dr. Stu Halpern

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

In his latest full-length work on the Abrahamic narratives, newly translated from the original Hebrew (where it was titled Avraham: Sippuro Shel Masa), Grossman brings his trademark mix of original analysis of texts, combined with a vast knowledge of both traditional and academic literature on the topic, including literary analysis and knowledge of the ancient Near East. Even more impressively, in an extended discussion in the opening chapters of the book, Grossman treats his readers to brilliant insights into the stories of Abraham. Some examples include his noting, in Abraham’s discussion with Melchizedek following the battle between the four kings and the five kings, that there is the ambiguity of who is giving whom the tithe in the verse “and he gave him a tenth of everything” (Genesis 14:20), and that “it doesn’t really matter who gave to whom; the two characters are inseparable and equal. Perhaps the two meet in the Valley of Shaveh (‘en c’et’) for this reason” (p. 151). In his discussion of the Berit bein HaBetarim, the “covenant of the pieces,” he, citing previous scholars, notes that the origin of the word “berit” might come from the Akkadian birit (‘between’), which connotes the mutual commitment between two parties, a particularly apt word for a ceremony in which God’s fire passes between the pieces of the animals that Abraham had slaughtered.

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

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

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

Melchizedek following the battle between the four kings and the five kings, there is the ambiguity of who is giving whom the tithe in the verse “and he gave him a tenth of everything” (Genesis 14:20), and that “it doesn’t really matter who gave to whom; the two characters are inseparable and equal. Perhaps the two meet in the Valley of Shaveh (‘en c’et’) for this reason” (p. 151). In his discussion of the Berit bein HaBetarim, the “covenant of the pieces,” he, citing previous scholars,
**Book Review: Wonder by R.J. Palacio**

By Amanda Kornblum

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

August begins school for the first time as a fifth grader. He goes to visit the school and meets the principal before school starts. The principal hand-picks three students in August’s class to take him on a grand tour of the building. One of the chosen kids, Julian, makes fun of Auggie on the tour because of how his face looks. August courageously declares to go to school, despite the rude remarks dealt to him on the tour before school even went into session.

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

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

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

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

This novel teaches us to be compassionate, to be kind, to give people a chance, to believe in one’s inner goodness, to view situations in a positive light, to laugh, and to be the best people we can be.

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**Why I’m Not Obsessed with Hamilton**

By Shoshy Ciment

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

Welcome to the era of Hamilton: An American Musical.

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

It’s no wonder that almost everyone who has heard of the musical is diagnosable with “Hamilton fever.” All it takes is a few seconds of a song, a catchy line, and a proverbial shout with the name of a vaguely familiar historical player (Lafayette), and you’re hooked.

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

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

I am no stranger to Lin-Manuel Miranda.

Let me paint a picture for you. It was the generation of Britney Spears and auto-tune. Enter me, a young, theatre-obsessed teen trying to find herself amidst the pop, techno-remixed noise that characterized her generation. I first heard about Lin-Manuel Miranda while listening to what I usually listened to in the car: the Broadway Station on Sirius XM radio. Out of the blue, a song from his first Tony award-winning musical, In the Heights, came on, and changed my idea of what a musical could be.

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WWW.YUCOMMENTATOR.ORG
By Benjamin Koslowe

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

Less obviously, consistent authorship and official publication (whether for books or movies) do not ensure canonicity. This enters the realm of influential fan bases in fiction. The Star Wars prequels were so disfavored by the population of fans to the point that debates rage on today as to their placement in the same cinematic universe as the originals. While fans in this case might grip the idea that the absence of limiting of the author in this way does have its merits. The author may not blatantly contradict previous works in the universe. On a subtler level, the rules of the franchise must remain the same. A character’s personality may not drastically change for no reason. And the quality of the story must remain of a similar caliber (this last point is controversial, but widely considered a fundamental component). And once the fiction is established, it maintains a life force of its own independent of its creator. While the author or filmmaker may extend the universe with further content, much as the same else when it comes to theories and interpretations of the stories. J.K. Rowling’s proclamation in 2007 that “Dumbledore is gay” is accurate only insofar as it is based on a good reading of the text. Which brings us to the ostensibly eighth Harry Potter installment released this summer. At first glance, the new Harry Potter and the Cursed Child (made for the stage but printed as a special rehearsal edition script), plain and simple, is a canonical eighth story. This is a logical inference, considering the suggestive internet headlines, familiar midnight premieres, and I developed it together,” so it is not obvious that the author may not blatantly contradict previous works in the universe. Or that the recurring characters in fact stay true to form. A “fictional universe.” The “real stuff” as opposed to “fan fiction.” While it is difficult to determine an objective standard for canonicity, the most basic element is usually assumed to be a consistent author (or producer/director) authorship. Some fans suspected impure authorship due to enigmatic lines such as “based on an original new story by J.K. Rowling, John Tiffany, & Jack Thorne” in the programme. Yet Rowling assuring that “the story of Cursed Child should be considered canon... John Tiffany (the director) and I developed it together,” it is so obvious that it is profane or apocryphal. Indeed, there was widespread hype throughout America this past summer leading up to its release, almost on par with the excitement for Deathly Hallows in 2007 (nine years ago!). Fans were going to go see this story a chance.

Cursed Child jumps right into action where Deathly Hallows left off, at King’s Cross 19 years after the defeat of Voldemort. The play’s action advances forward from this point in time (sort of), developing next-generation protagonists Albus Severus Potter and Scorpius Malfoy. Fawcetts like Harry, Ron, Hermione, and Draco are around as well. The first of four acts portray Albus’s unexpected sorting into Slytherin and his strained relationship with his father Harry, social remoteness in Hog- warts, and an attempt to steal a time-turner from Minister for Magic Hermione Granger-Weasley with the help of Polyjuice Potion so as to go back in time and stop Cedric Diggory from being killed. That’s right, Polyjuice Potion and time-turners to save Ced- ric Diggory. Why? Reasons, presumably. Something about Albus fixing the mistakes of his father whom he just doesn’t trust. Makes sense? Well, kind of. The dialogue of Cursed Child feels very choppy at times, and the plot is as preposterous as a Trolley Witch firing pastry grenades at children to stop them from escaping a train (for example). There simply isn’t good writing. The drama escalates quickly and erratically, forcing the reader to regularly question how the charac- ters’ positions in the narrative are about from that which preceded narratively. The original books have depth, emotion, tough dilemmas, and complex relationships, all while being accessible to children. By comparison, the new plot is unexciting and predict- able.

None of this inherently disqualifies the play from canonical consideration. But what about a Ron who is now a bum with his wife and two kids. Or a Harry who tells his son that he wishes he hadn’t been born and who blackmails Headmis- tress McGonagall to spy on his students for his ben- efit? This is a new world (or crossover). Is it enough to sense that tingle of unfamiliarity. Ron didn’t used to be a bumbling moron, and Harry wasn’t particularly a conniv- ing jerk.

Still insisting that this is an estab- lished eighth story? Beginning in Act Two and developing for the rest of the play, Albus and Scorpius mess with the time-turner to travel back to the events of Book Four, before Cedric was killed, and to alter the events of the Triwizard Tournament. Make Cedric lose the tournament. Cedric never portkeyes to Voldemort. Voldemort never kills Cedric. Simple enough. Unfortunately for these whispers and rumors, the plot creates alternate timelines with some dire outcomes. Only with the help of the witty and brave old gang can Albus and Scorpius hope to save the Harry Potter universe, as they (and we) have come to know it, by the end of Act Four (along the way, expect many not-so-subtle references to the old books).

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

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

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

If these contradictions aren’t blatant enough; if the recurring characters in fact stay true to form enough; if the authorship of the play is in fact Rowling enough; if it is good enough; then perhaps Cursed Child can happen exist in the revered Harry Potter universe. Die-hard enthusiasts and even those who simply grew up on the books will read the play re- peatedly because, well, it’s Cursed Child. If there’s no saving grace, it’s what seem to be cool stage effects that probably are pretty neat in a live performance. Hey, even ter- rible fan fiction can have some admirable features.

Will Cursed Child grow mainstream with age, or will it wither and be forgotten like some gratuitous footnote on what was a proper epilogue (Scrubs season 9, anyone?)? I have my own hunch, but ulti- mately only time and fans can tell.
The Real Contributions of Olympic Athletes

By Joey Chesir

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

Initially, Ryan Lochte claimed to have been mugged, along with several of his swimming teammates by individuals brandishing fake police badges and carrying prop weapons. He was also clouded with questions as to whether he would face any punishment for what he did. The Brazilian authorities, not the public, were aware of the crime in question because of it. However, many accusations should not impact his actions within other areas of his life including his moral character or relationships. Therefore, the media and public should focus on his accomplishments alone, because he is as a person is not what has brought him into the public eye to begin with. Any time the legal, ethical, or even emotional issues of a well-known athlete are emphasized as much as the accomplishments that made him or her well-known to begin with, those who scrutinize are essentially saying that those issues become more important when they surround an athlete, as opposed to an ordinary person. This is simply a false notion. Furthermore, it is unfair to give so much attention to one athlete’s legal issues while taking away attention from the achievements of other law-abiding athletes, who should be given the spotlight for actually contributing something positive. Athletes, like anyone else, should receive recognition for their contributions to their fields, but that does not mean that their actions outside those fields should be analyzed with the same intensity.

When we appreciate the vast number of positive benefits of the Olympics, in addition to the performances of Olympic athletes, Lochte’s incident seems like an afterthought. It certainly goes without saying that the Rio Olympics featured a wide variety of athletes accomplishing remarkable feats within an expansive number of sports. The Olympics is important for athletes in general for a number of additional reasons. Firstly, the Olympics served as a truly international athletic contest, where athletes often competed against rivals from countries they previously would have little exposure to. Additionally, the Olympic games, in both the summer and winter, consist of many sports that the average sports fan may not have exposure to. If not for this year’s Summer Olympics, sports fans around the world would not be able to observe the exploits of gymnastics phenom Simone Biles, or watch Phelps’ age-defying dominance of swimming. Both Phelps (who has compiled an unprecedented twenty-three Olympic medals in his lifetime) and Biles won several gold medals, and have unquestionably reached the pinnacle of their respective sports, which the casual viewer is only aware of because of the Olympics. Several Olympic sports such as track and field, swimming, volleyball, and gymnastics, do not have yearlong competitions similar to annual seasons in professional sports leagues, like the NBA or the NFL.

For athletes who participate in these sports, the Olympics often represents the highest level of performance in which they can compete. The Olympics, which only takes place every four years, is one of the only chances athletes like these may have at winning at the highest level of competition, and making contributions to the sports that they have devoted themselves to. This is in stark contrast to professional basketball or football players, who always have another chance to return to winning form the next season if they disappoint. For this reason, it is particularly important to recognize the achievements of Olympic athletes, for whom the Olympics is their greatest opportunity to succeed in their sports, and who use the games as an arena in which to perform incredible athletic feats. Athletes, including Ryan Lochte, are notable for their sporting achievements, not any positive or negative areas of their personal lives. To focus on Lochte’s legal mishaps while devoting less attention to the incredible performances of athletes at the Olympics is detrimental to the vast majority of athletes at the Olympics. The Olympic Games represents the highest level of performance for a multitude of sports, many of which may have been previously unfamiliar for fans, and may prove to be instrumental in increasing attention toward those sports for future participants and viewers. The performances of Biles, Bolt, Phelps, and many other athletes were certainly the hallmark of the Rio Olympics, more deserving than the legal mishaps of any one athlete in particular.

“THE PERFORMANCES OF BILES, BOLT, PHELPS, AND MANY OTHER ATHLETES WERE CERTAINLY THE HALLMARK OF THE RIO OLYMPICS, MORE DESERVING THAN THE LEGAL MISHAPS OF ANY ONE ATHLETE IN PARTICULAR”
By Hillel Field

This past winter, my friend Jonathan Sidlow asked me to take part in the recently published books What Was Once A Dream, which documents his service as a Lone Soldier in the IDF as a Paratrooper. Sidlow delivers the brutally honest truth with a combination of vulnerable detail that culminates in the crushing intensity of his depiction of the 2014 war in Gaza. We recently sat down to catch up since his book’s release last month.

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

H: What’s more rigorous, Tzanachim or Pre-med at YU?
J: (Laughs) They’re different disciplines, but I’ll go with Tzanachim nonetheless. Professor Feit gave me a run for my money during my first year on campus and I wasn’t ready for it.

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

I went to Yesodei Hatorah, and quickly underwent epiphanies and humbling in rapid succession. With any question I had, there wouldn’t be some quick, go-to answer that I wouldn’t find intellectually satisfying. The rabbein built the program to force students to boil down the music and this music assembly was a crucible, my beliefs were concretized. When things got tough, I would ask myself the same thing every Lone Soldier asks themselves: “Why are you doing this?” To regain perspective I would always open my weathered book to answer that question. I would open the book and feel adrenaline rushes while writing certain events. I would feel adrenaline dump akin to flight-or-fight response. No matter how many of those adrenaline rushes occurred, I always felt like a fish pulled out of water. My service left me primed for writing. I wrote my book as a factual document to counteract the negative attention espoused by various media organizations against Israel. There is truth, exaggeration, and falsehood, and I think it’s important to dispel the falsehood as much as possible. I’m also writing to show the reader that we, as soldiers, do not want conflict, and do not enjoy having to guard our communities and relinquish our freedom in order to ensure the survival of our people. I don’t want to be a Lone Soldier for anyone interested in the program. I wrote the book I wish I could have read before I began my service.

Going back to what you said about the army being a spiritual benefit experience, in what way? I had a service in the IDF that I wouldn’t find intellectually satisfying. In short, I didn’t feel respected as a religious Jew, and appreciate the tremendous process that has been made since the IDF’s more secular beginnings.

H: What motivated you to begin this project of writing your experience down in the first place?
J: There are three reasons. The first is offering an in-depth explanation of the IDF. I was in the army and felt like a fish pulled out of water. My service left me primed for writing. I wrote my book as a factual document to counteract the negative attention espoused by various media organizations against Israel. There is truth, exaggeration, and falsehood, and I think it’s important to dispel the falsehood as much as possible. I’m also writing to show the reader that we, as soldiers, do not want conflict, and do not enjoy having to guard our communities and relinquish our freedom in order to ensure the survival of our people. I don’t want to be a Lone Soldier for anyone interested in the program. I wrote the book I wish I could have read before I began my service.

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Lastly, when I came back from Israel after my service, it was almost immediately after Tsuk Elian (Operation Protective Edge), and three days before starting the semester at YU. The transition was rough. There was a residual numbness that I still find difficult in college. I was a fish out of water. I felt like a fish pulled out of water. My service left me primed for writing. I wrote my book as a factual document to counteract the negative attention espoused by various media organizations against Israel. There is truth, exaggeration, and falsehood, and I think it’s important to dispel the falsehood as much as possible. I’m also writing to show the reader that we, as soldiers, do not want conflict, and do not enjoy having to guard our communities and relinquish our freedom in order to ensure the survival of our people. I don’t want to be a Lone Soldier for anyone interested in the program. I wrote the book I wish I could have read before I began my service.

H: What was your experience like in the IDF?
J: Yes, in many ways What Was Once A Dream is about how I became religious. At Yesodei, my rabbein supported Israel and Tzahal, but were worried that despite the progress I had made spiritually, since I’m not the most outwardly ‘frum’ person given my dres and diction, that Tzahal would best what I had learned out of me. To the contrary, I found my service in the IDF to be very enriching spiritually. In the crucible, my beliefs were concretized. When things got tough, I would ask myself the same thing every Lone Soldier asks themselves: “Why are you doing this?” To regain perspective I would always open my weathered book to answer that question. I would open the book and feel adrenaline rushes while writing certain events. I would feel adrenaline dump akin to flight-or-fight response. Noticing this, my parents suggested I see a PTSD specialist, who recommended that I start writing about my experience.

Initially, I wrote about my experience in Gaza, and felt adrenaline rushes while writing certain events. Various epiphanies occurred in rapid succession, like realizing that the sound of a foot crunching broken glass on the ground, and my train of thought would be totally interrupted. I’d feel an adrenaline dump akin to flight-or-fight response. Noticing this, my parents suggested I see a PTSD specialist, who recommended that I start writing about my experience.

I started writing with the trauma of the northern border fight. I felt those adrenaline rushes while writing. I felt like a fish pulled out of water. My service left me primed for writing. I wrote my book as a factual document to counteract the negative attention espoused by various media organizations against Israel. There is truth, exaggeration, and falsehood, and I think it’s important to dispel the falsehood as much as possible. I’m also writing to show the reader that we, as soldiers, do not want conflict, and do not enjoy having to guard our communities and relinquish our freedom in order to ensure the survival of our people. I don’t want to be a Lone Soldier for anyone interested in the program. I wrote the book I wish I could have read before I began my service.

H: What was the one thing you felt you were in a non-stifling environment to point out the truth in the Jewish educational system you experienced growing up?
J: Yesodei Hatorah catered to the goal oriented and internalized, and my year in Yeshiva was the first time in my life in which I made a conscious effort to have those adjectives apply to me. I don’t feel comfortable pointing fingers, so I’ll say that while there is always potential for improvement, I accept partial responsibility, and admit that I may have been too arrogant and cynical in my youth to be able to glean that which was being offered by the private school system.

H: So it sounds like becoming religious was more of a personal journey for you?
J: Yes, in many ways What Was Once A Dream is about how I became religious. At Yesodei, my rabbein supported Israel and Tzahal, but were worried that despite the progress I had made spiritually, since I’m not the most outwardly ‘frum’ person given my dres and diction, that Tzahal would best what I had learned out of me. To the contrary, I found my service in the IDF to be very enriching spiritually. In the crucible, my beliefs were concretized. When things got tough, I would ask myself the same thing every Lone Soldier asks themselves: “Why are you doing this?” To regain perspective I would always open my weathered book to answer that question. I would open the book and feel adrenaline rushes while writing. I felt like a fish pulled out of water. My service left me primed for writing. I wrote my book as a factual document to counteract the negative attention espoused by various media organizations against Israel. There is truth, exaggeration, and falsehood, and I think it’s important to dispel the falsehood as much as possible. I’m also writing to show the reader that we, as soldiers, do not want conflict, and do not enjoy having to guard our communities and relinquish our freedom in order to ensure the survival of our people. I don’t want to be a Lone Soldier for anyone interested in the program. I wrote the book I wish I could have read before I began my service.

H: What was the one big change that happened at Yeshiva was gaining the humility to understand that the Halakhic system wasn’t vapid or arbitrary. But there was also a halakhic decision is not the litmus test for whether it is always potential for improvement, I accept partial responsibility, and admit that I may have been too arrogant and cynical in my youth to be able to glean that which was being offered by the private school system.

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Changes Come to YU’s Career Center

By Ezra Berman

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

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

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

The other major overhaul which took place over the summer relates to the Career Center’s signature job site, YU CareerLink. When students log on to YU CareerLink, they will notice an updated design. The user interface has been modified to a slicker version that is easier to navigate. Goldman believes, “The developer’s intent was to make a page that is more akin to today’s social media profile pages, so students would be more accustomed to the look and feel.” It’s of paramount importance that students feel comfortable using YU CareerLink, as it provides them with tremendous job searching opportunities among other resources. The Career Center is confident that students will find the new user interface to be a helpful improvement.

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

The upper YU administration is beyond pleased with these changes and improvements to the Career Center. When reached for comment, Associate Dean of Sy Syms Michael Strauss, who oversees the Career Center, was sure to recognize Goldman and his team for having “done it, even during the past several months with smaller staff and not being tempted to settle; they were patient and went through many interviews to find the right people to fill the few open positions in the Career Center.” In addition to these exciting changes, students should be on the lookout for further helpful advancements to come. A couple of weeks ago at the “Career Fair and Interview Prep Night,” Goldman announced that the Career Center hopes to have the entire orientation online by next year, thus completely eliminating the need for students to attend a lengthy in-person session. Additionally, Goldman looks forward to “collaborating with student clubs and hearing from students about their ideas.” In fact, the Career Center “will soon be implementing an online survey of all students regarding their career interests and experiences.” The hope is that this communication will foster further changes of benefit to the students.

ONCE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

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

H: What did your grandfather have to say about the events described in the book?
J: Correct. My adoptive family in Israel suggested I keep a journal. I started to keep a journal while I bled my soul, into a book. I took two writing courses in YU with Professor Schwabe, who unkindly edited a small section of the book and gave me a B (laughs). That’s the full extent of my formal writing education. I owe the cohesion of this project to the editors.

Hi: Did you write any original content before this book?
J: I dabbed in high school, but that’s about it. I’m currently working on a compendium of short stories.

H: So it sounds like you had no intention of writing a book until you were discharged a month and change ago. You could say this book is a present to them in a way. It gave me initial feedback on the book said they felt like I was not being honest and that I was not being honest.
J: I was hesitant at first, but I felt that I’d be cheating the reader if I didn’t write about times when I hit a wall inside myself. A lot of the ‘test readers’ who gave me feedback on the book said they felt like I was ‘naked’; that I revealed a lot about myself, including my failures. I wrote about times where I felt pride, and also about times where I failed myself and my friends. I find it important to do away with the façade that soldiers possess superhuman strength and are made of steel. We are too human and have weaknesses.

H: I’m sure people will appreciate that honesty.
J: I find it important to do away with the façade that soldiers possess superhuman strength and are made of steel. We are too human and have weaknesses.

H: Did you write anything specifically about your role in the IDF?
J: Obviously YU is a very Zionist campus, but you do think there are some aspects of Zionism that could use increased attention in our community?
J: I appreciate that YU takes active measures to encourage Ahavat Ha’Aretz. Such measures are necessary to counteract complacency, which can corrode one’s bond with the far away speck of land which is the seat of our legacy.

H: What did your grandfather have to say about the events described in the book?
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J: I appreciate that YU takes active measures to encourage Ahavat Ha’Aretz. Such measures are necessary to counteract complacency, which can corrode one’s bond with the far away speck of land which is the seat of our legacy.

H: How did the day-to-day process of writing this book generally go about?
J: The rough draft took about seven months to finish. It’s a writing process that I bled my soul into, into a book. I took two writing courses in YU with Professor Schwabe, who unkindly edited a small section of the book and gave me a B (laughs). That’s the full extent of my formal writing education. I owe the cohesion of this project to the editors.
A Guide to Political Incorrectness, and Why Trump Doesn’t Get It

By Zach Sterman

For someone who touts himself as the king of “politic

ical incorrectness,” Donald Trump seems to know very little about what that term actually means. In fact, it is evident that Trump does not entirely com

prehend what political incorrectness is or why it is used. He does not accurately distinguish between political incorrectness – a legi

mate tool used to counter political correctness that whitewashes real issues – and his personal use of rude and insulting speech.

But first, some background. The PC movement – notorious for its presence on college campuses – aims to create a safe and comfortable political atmosphere for all students. Trump, on the other hand, is an opinion or ideology that makes you uncomfortable if you don’t have to hear it. Many colleges have instituted intellectual “safe spaces” and “trigger warnings,” as well as disal

lowed controversial speakers, in order to protect stu

dents from unwelcome opinions. To be sure, PC does not stop at the gates of college campuses. Rather, these campuses are but a microcosm of an ideology ubiquitous across the country, particularly in the po

litical arena.

While the sentiment of protecting students or citi

zens from discomfort is well intended, many see its methods as alarming and even intimidating. Trump’s so-called politically incorrect association of

the American people.

The ramifications of our failure to distinguish be

tween political incorrectness and Trumpian political incorrectness. True political incorrectness counters PC by presenting for public consumption the very positions, opinions, and legitimate political arguments that cause the discomfort political correctness seeks to avoid.

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A popular example of this is found in the ongoing
debate regarding how to address the threat of radical Islamic terrorism. President Obama has famously refused to adopt the language of “radical Islamic” terror be

cause he believes it miscasts the issue as one of wider

Islam, whereas President Obama himself sees radical

Islam as being part of a sub or fringe group that ought to be considered an entirely separate entity. The po

litical incorrect movement views this as an attempt to

normalize the political correctness negatively impact

ing the decisions and trajectory of our nation and its policy. Senator Ted Cruz has responded to the President’s position saying, “Political correctness is killing people, because it prevents the Obama admin

istration from focusing on the communications and attitudes different than one’s own. In its more ex

treme fashion, it is incivility, indecency or vulgarity. These are the true alternatives to political correctness. These are the traits that Trump tacitly touts when he criticizes political correctness.” While Trump’s cul

pability does not fully absolve the ignorance of Han

nah’s statement, Trump is ultimately responsible for

dissimulations of any and all merits of political incorrectness, such as we see here. The failure of Republicans to recognize the difference between Trumpian and true political incorrectness, and to reject the former, has resulted in the knee-jerk reaction of many Dem

ocrats to lump the two together. These mispercep

tions have diluted political incorrectness and thereby robbed the American people of their most powerful tool with which to counter the PC movement.

To be clear, these consequences are not a win for the left and a loss for the right. Rather, one thing both sides agree on is that the development of PC culture has gone too far. According to the Wash

ington Post, in a Fairleigh Dickinson University poll

conducted last October, “68 percent agreed with the proposition that ‘a big problem this country has is being politically correct.’” In fact, the piece goes on, “It was a sentiment felt strongly across the political spectrum, by 62 percent of Democrats, 68 percent of independent voters, and 70 percent of Republicans.”

The PC movement is seen as a pressing issue through the entire country and on both sides of the aisle. The ramifications of our failure to distinguish be

tween political incorrectness and Trumpian political incorrectness are to the detriment not of one party, but of the American people.
Political Journalism in the Orthodox World

By Yitzchak Fried

In the last edition of this paper, former Editor-in-Chief Yechiel Schwab reflected on the role of journalism in so- ciety. He observed that ‘Defenders of Conversation and Great Writing’, insightfully points out that not all jour- nalism is meant to be political. At its core, journalism, like all writing, is a means of communication. Its great achieve- ment lies in the fostering of clear, open, conversation – whether or not that results in, or even anticipates, political action.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is interesting to consider what purpose such articles serve. As a form of communal discussion, they seem some- thing like the grumbling that takes place in the back of the community feel, they don’t change the fact that normative practice is not in the hands of the laity. Ulti- mately, the discussion raised by such articles seems little more than speculative debate about the legitimacy of how those who can decide religious law can decide it. Perhaps we are right then, in the case of social issues relating to religious law, to treat “being informed” as a form of moral-cultural enrich- ment. There seems to be little role for the community, here. Indeed, it is understandable if religious officials view religious social policy as an encroachment of the laity into an arena in which they have no business.

I do not mean to suggest that there is necessarily an antag- onism between religious teaching and the laity. That depends on the community’s internal attitude toward authority – and the extent to which that internal attitude diverges from the practice of authority in Orthodox society. Down this line of thinking, I believe we can find a more serious function of our “apolitical” communal discussions of religious law and social policy. Not every authority figure is antagonistic. Authority rooted in knowledge and experience can provide those who accept it with the guidance they need to meet their own goals.

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

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**Opinions**

**Changing Your Perception of the History Major**

By Yisroel Ben-Porat

As a history major, I often am asked, “What are you going to do with that?” This question reflects a dismissive attitude toward the study of history. Although such a view is understandable – as scholar Peter Stearns points out, “Historians do not perform heart transplants, improve highway design, or arrest criminals” – history is nevertheless an essential field of study, both from a secular and religious perspective. In 1998, Stearns published an influential article entitled “Why Study History?” for the American Historical Association. He argued that history is essential for understanding the present. How so? Stearns suggests that if one wishes to analyze contemporary society, one cannot rely exclusively on current data. History provides information unavailable in the present. For example, how can one evaluate war during times of peace, without using historical materials? Without historical data, how can one analyze national elections, which are extremely difficult to replicate in experiments? Additionally, Stearns argues that history sheds light on contemporary issues, because the past causes the present: “Any time we try to know why something happened – whether a shift in political party dominance in the American Congress, a major change in the teenage suicide rate, or a war in the Balkans or the Middle East – we have to look for factors that took shape earlier.”

Using history to understand the present isn’t only important for academics. History has many real life applications, especially in the realm of politics. Consider Harvard University’s Applied History Project, directed by Graham Allison and Niall Ferguson. The project’s manifesto urges the next American president to establish “a White House Council of Historical Advisers,” citing Thucydides’ observation that “events of future history will be of the same nature – or nearly so – as the history of the past, so long as men are men.” Allison and Ferguson suggest several assignments that the president could delegate to such a council. For example, the president could ask his “applied historians” to identify historical precedents for the ISIS phenomenon. Applied historians could assist the president in his affairs with foreign nations, by determining how a president could delegate to such a council. For example, last semester, Professor Jeffrey Freedman taught “The History of Emotions,” introducing students to an emerging field in historical studies, with fascinating methodological innovations. For example, consider the following questions: what constitutes an emotional social construction – varying across cultures and eras – or are they universal in nature? How can one historicize emotions, and what sources can a historian use for such study? In the answer to these questions lies insights into the astonishing variety of the human condition.

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

**The Summer Olympic Scandal**

By Maayan Moss

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

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

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

Boos ring in his ears as he stands there, hand extend

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

We begin outside of Rio, on one of the most common social media networks of today’s day and age, Facebook. As many know, Facebook has an Olympics page on which people are given the opportunity to use their favorite Olympic team’s flag as their profile picture. This year, however, the compendium of available flags on the Facebook page suspiciously lacked that of the Israeli delegation. Fans of the team did not have the option of using their nation’s flag in their profile picture. Despite the reassurance by Facebook moderators of “technical issues” and the later addition of the flag to the lineup, a bitter taste permeates my mouth as I wonder at these interesting “technical issue” no other country seemed to have. The Olympic games continued on a roll before the games even began, on none other than the opening night. As the Israeli team attempted to board their designated bus they were abruptly stopped by their Lebanese opponents. The bus, loaded with two coeds, was a highway design with a large camaraderie but the spirit of the night was ruined as the head of the Lebanese delegation ordered the bus driver to close the door on the Israeli team. When that command failed, he physically blocked their entry, standing in the doorway, looking down at his understandable astonished competitors. The Israeli team was graciously granted a different vehicle and made their way to the ceremony separately. Aside from a minor revolt and by the IOC to head of the Lebanese delegation, Nakoula, and a warning that his behavior would not be tolerated, no action was taken in recrimination for this extreme offense which could have easily escalated to violence.

As the games began, no fewer than two additional fronts could be noted. During the Judo matches of this year’s fierce competition, two separate Judokas publicly spurned Israeli competitors, refusing to acknowledge them. The first instance occurred on Sunday, when Sau- di Judoka, Joud Fahmy, withdrew from her first round of fighting stating that Halakha prevents her from competing. Israeli Judoka Gili Cohen. The Saudi Olympic delegation denied these claims, however, attributing her sudden withdrawal to injury. This injury was questioned by none other than Fah- my’s Olympic coach Nito. The second instance was when Egyptian Judoka, El-Shababi, refused to shake the hand of his Israeli opponent and victor, Or Sasson. El-Shababi was rebuked by the IOC and subsequently sent home. He later released a statement stating “...for personal reasons, I can’t ask me to shake the hand of anyone from this state (Israel), especially in front of the whole world.”

This unfortunate chain of events simply serves to reinforce and care with which Halakha invests the project matter, the human being, is sacred. Rabbi Shalom DovBer Schneidman (1876–1941) emphasized that “events of future history will be of the same nature – or nearly so – as the history of the past, so long as men are men.” Allison and Ferguson suggest several assignments that the president could delegate to such a council. For example, the president could ask his “applied historians” to identify historical precedents for the ISIS phenomenon. Applied historians could assist the president in his affairs with foreign nations, by determining how a president could delegate to such a council. For example, last semester, Professor Jeffrey Freedman taught “The History of Emotions,” introducing students to an emerging field in historical studies, with fascinating methodological innovations. For example, consider the following questions: what constitutes an emotional social construction – varying across cultures and eras – or are they universal in nature? How can one historicize emotions, and what sources can a historian use for such study? In the answer to these questions lies insights into the astonishing variety of the human condition.

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**WWW.YUCOMMENTATOR.ORG**
"Oh, I know who the last Jewish prophet was. Wait -- do tell me, I’m gonna get this -- Malachi! Am I right?" My friend continued as if he would never stop. We honestly had no clue whether or not this friendly Christian security guard was correct. But he came across as knowledgeable, and he had answered his own question pretty confidently. So we assumed he was correct and nodded our heads.

After the conversation came to a close, we did a Google search and discovered that the security guard was correct. Startled, we began to question ourselves, "how is it that we know so little about these prophets?" Through our Jewish education, we had learned a few books of Tanakh. But Malachi? We barely recognized the name. Was that our fault? We didn’t think so.

For some reason our community just didn’t prioritize familiarity with it.

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

When reading Neviim Acharonim is to the individual, there are many educational benefits that are particular to the study of Neviim Acharonim. I’d like to consider a few here.

Focus on the Societal, National and Global

The study of Biblical narrative primarily focuses on individual characters. One can analyze the character of Yehoshua as he develops as a leader or delve into the wayward wife. Sefer Hoshea – a text portraying the tribulations of God the Arameans from Kir. (Amos 9:7)

The study of Biblical narrative primarily focuses on the study of Biblical narrative primarily focuses on individual characters. One can analyze the character of Yehoshua as he develops as a leader or delve into the wayward wife. Sefer Hoshea – a text portraying the tribulations of God’s love for His people as they are punished and the destruction of the kingdom of Yonah as flies from his divine mission. One can identify ethical role models such as Ruth and denounce depraved characters like Izzevel. Deep study can raise crucial questions pertaining to our own personal religious and ethical lives. However, in its focus on the individual, Biblical narrative leaves aside other important questions.

Prophectic speeches, on the other hand, rarely focus on any one person. The prophets address societies, nations and even humanity as a whole. They force the reader to deal with important issues that expand far beyond the personal that they are addressing. When one reads Yeshaya’s condemnation of Jeru-salem’s upper class, “How dare you crush My people, and grind the faces of the poor.” (Yeshaya 3:15), one is forced to confront the role of Judaism as it relates to the societal level. Isaiah was addressing an issue far greater than any one person’s moral adherence and religious observance. Thus, he forces the reader to consider a new set of questions: Is abuse of the poor still a problem in our society? Who are the downtrodden in our communities today? How can I help develop a solution?

The propositions described in Neviim Acharonim include grand messianic visions: “In the days to come, the Many of the daily tefillot we say consist of different lines from Neviim Acharonim. Understanding the Biblical context of these lines can deepen our appreciation of the words we say. This pattern is evident in the reciting of “Eretzich li lolam…”, “I will betroth you to me forever…” could be a routine utterance with little meaning. The experience is completely transformed, however, once we recognize the maxim of Sefer Hoshea – a text portraying the tribulations of God as he struggles with his people as a husband would a wayward wife.

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

There are many staples of the Jewish lexicon that people toss around without regard for their original Biblical context. Where did the term mashichah come from? What is mashichah? Is it a person? Maybe an era? If it is a person, is our perception of him affected when we realize that Koresh the King of Persia was identified as Yeshaya? “In that day, Israel shall be a third partner with Egypt and Assyria as a blessing on the earth: for the Lord of Hosts will bless them saying, “Blessed be you people Egypt, My handwork Assyria, and my very own Israel.” (Yeshaya 19:24-25) Does God’s care for our other nations modify our understanding of his unique relationship with Israel?

Focus on the Societal, National and Global

When reading Sefer Yechezkel and hearing the prophet address the Babylonian exiles, a particularly relevant question arises: What is the contribution of the diaspora to the future of Judaism? When reading Sefer Yechezkel, is it possible to ask an am hanivchar? Is it possible to ask an am hanivchar? Is the reader required of it? Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk modestly with your God.” (Michah 6:8-9)

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

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

A Powerful Lens into Jewish History

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

What Neviim Acharonim lacks in scope it makes up for in depth – both in the level of detail it provides as well as in the genuine human emotion it packs into those details.

Explicit Moral Value Statements

One of the most valuable moments learning Neviim Acharonim is to the study of Biblical narrative is to the study of Biblical narrative is that the texts themselves are often morally ambiguous. The message of any given story cannot easily be determined. What did sin did the Dor Haflaga commit when they built Migdal Bavel? The answer is not clear. Perhaps they were wag- ing war against God, perhaps they were trying to keep a bunch of blacksmiths out of a lucrative business. The ultimate moral notion of unifying in one location and one ideology. The true answer may even be “none of the above.” Which system of morality is being depicted in the story of Akedah? Yitzchak had been devoted to this question. Ultimately, the text leaves us in the dark. After reading the book of Shmuel one can’t even come to a conclusion as to whether the institution of a monarchy is ideal or not.

The result of these frequent ambiguities is that we are often left wondering about the message. Instead of learning morality from the Bible, we project our own preconceived values onto it. We are not confronted with any explicit moral value statements that cause us to for- mulate, sharpen and even rethink our own priorities and outlook.

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

Some of the most valuable moments learning Neviim Acharonim come when one is confronted with two conflicting values and must calculate how they are to be prioritized in his or her own moral outlook. It is clear throughout Tanakh that proper ritual service is of great importance. And yet we read several appeals like the future implications of Torah study, and the importance of sincere and heartfelt prayer.

Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams…? He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk modestly with your God.” (Michah 6:8-9)

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

Reconciling conflicting values is not the only challenge readers face. The Jewish society portrayed in the First Temple era differs starkly from our own in many ways. Torah study, in the traditional sense, is not a central priority for our society. The true answer may even be “none of the above.” The societies that surround the prophets are painted vividly and heavily resemble our own. A reader sees society operating on all of its different levels. There are conflicts between different political factions, social strata and geographic regions of Israel. Political decisions are debated, social trends are criticized and ritual practices are questioned.

The prophets are presented not by a distant narrator, but by one of the society’s active players. Events are not being related objectively; they are laced with human emotions. Does our best understanding of the Holocaust conflict with the mass destruction of those events? The societies that surround the prophets are not clear. Perhaps they were wag- ing war against God, perhaps they were trying to keep a bunch of blacksmiths out of a lucrative business. The ultimate moral notion of unifying in one location and one ideology. The true answer may even be “none of the above.” Which system of morality is being depicted in the story of Akedah? Yitzchak had been devoted to this question. Ultimately, the text leaves us in the dark. After reading the book of Shmuel one can’t even come to a conclusion as to whether the institution of a monarchy is ideal or not.

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

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

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Would the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams…? He has told you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk modestly with your God.” (Michah 6:8-9)
By Michael Shavolian

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

By Molly Meisels

On the outside, Colin Kaepernick and Donald Trump seem to have nothing in common. Kaepernick is an African-American quarterback for the San Francisco 49ers and Donald Trump is a white, rich man worth $3.9 billion dollars. Kaepernick believes that ‘black lives matter’ and Trump can hardly get one of these letters. The experience could not have been more cliché -- melding the latest academic find with murder. “I had questions and rebellion. Americans thrive off their ability to protest their own government. If this is the case, why do 55% of Americans oppose Kaepernick’s decision to sit during the national anthem? Why are 55% of Americans acting as if Kaepernick’s silent protest is spitting on our flag and everything this nation stands for? And why are many of them refusing to treat Donald Trump’s inflammatory comments and actions with the same scrutiny? Donald Trump’s entire presidential campaign is built on the foundations of ‘Make America Great Again’. This slogan has been adopted by millions of Americans and to acknowledge it is a call to the意志 of the America. They see Trump as their savior; their moral leader. Trump and Kaepernick aren’t really that different. They are two men with seemingly similar values, protecting a government they seem to despise. Both of them are displaying harsh disapprovals of our democracy. They both want to ‘Make America Great Again’. What is this the case? Is it Trump’s billionnaire status, inflammatory comments, and prejudice opinions juxtaposed to Kaepernick’s reserved, egalitarian sentiments? Or is it something more?
The Olympics Preaches Internationalism but Thrives on Nationalism

By Samuel Gelman

In these last Olympic Games, Rio was able to do something quite remarkable. For the first time in the history of the Olympics, a Refugee Team participated in the games. Ten athletes from four war torn countries - The Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Syria - were chosen to represent the 65.4 million displaced people of the world. Watching the team walk out during the opening ceremony was an amazing moment, a true representation of what the Olympic spirit should be.

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

Before I continue I want to stress that I am not talking about patriotism. Patriotism is being proud of your country and what it stands for. It is based on values and beliefs. It is believing that your country is one of the greatest, but that every other nation can be great as well. Nationalism, on the other hand is believing that one’s country is better than the others. It is based on a nationalistic spirit - nationalistic pride, character, economic standing, and world power. The two are not mutually exclusive, but it is more than enough to inject a strain of humility on the Olympic stage. As soon as there is a feeling of pride, there is a symbol of its absence. Hitler even had the Hindenburg fly across the Olympic stadium displaying the Nazi symbol. How did this happen? How did a symbol of peace and internationalism turn into a stage for nationalist displays and agendas? Think about your fifth grade dodgeball matches. Everything is fine and dandy until that jerk Kyle yells “you throw like a girl” in front of all your friends. Suddenly the friendly match has become a fight about gender. I say should because no matter how many of these types of moments we have, the Olympics can be boiled down to the one thing that they claim to transcend: nationalism.

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Yeshiva University
Understanding Accounting and Finance Job Recruitment

By Etan (Alex) Neiman

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

Step 1: Take care of those pesky OCR (on-campus recruiting) requirements. Before one can unlock access to an internship or full-time position through YU’s OCR program, there are five core requirements he or she must fulfill. The first was to attend the “Career Fair and Interview Prep Night” which took place on September 1st. If this was missed, it is recommended to contact the Career Center immediately. Care should be taken to do this in a timely manner as the approval process can take a few days. The third requirement is to complete the online “OCR Orientation and Quiz”. This can be found on the Career Center website and replaces the in-person seminar students had to attend in previous years. The fourth requirement is simply to sign a Fall 2016 OCR Contract. This can as well be found on the Career Center’s website. The fifth and final requirement is to conduct a mock interview. Only if a student had a mock interview in the spring of 2016 is he exempt from this requirement. Note that one can still apply to OCR job postings before completing their mock interview; however, the mock interview must be conducted prior to any on-campus interview.

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

Step 3: Apply to firms. Now that all the formalities are in the past, it is time to get down to business and apply to the desired firms. Students can apply to firms via YU CareerLink. Care should be taken to do this in a timely manner as the approval process can take a few days. The third requirement is to complete the online “OCR Orientation and Quiz”. This can be found on the Career Center website and replaces the in-person seminar students had to attend in previous years. The fourth requirement is simply to sign a Fall 2016 OCR Contract. This can as well be found on the Career Center’s website. The fifth and final requirement is to conduct a mock interview. Only if a student had a mock interview in the spring of 2016 is he exempt from this requirement. Note that one can still apply to OCR job postings before completing their mock interview; however, the mock interview must be conducted prior to any on-campus interview.

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

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

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

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I Sense You’re Not Getting Enough Sleep

By Binyamin Zirman

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

A company that is actively trying to fix this issue of sleep deprivation is EarlySense. EarlySense was founded in 2004 and is based in Ramat Gan, Israel, with U.S. headquarters in Waltham, Massachusetts. The CEO of the company is Avner Halperin, and Tim O’Malley is the president. The company is currently developing a consumer-facing product, called myEarlySense, geared toward sleep and wellness monitoring at private homes—a technology that could undoubtedly help the aforementioned sleep deprived college students. With this technology, users place a sensor under their mattress, which collects information on heart rate, respiration, and sleep stages and movement, and then wirelessly transmits the data to a smartphone app. myEarlySense can also be paired with home automation systems, which will give users a whole host of capabilities to take advantage of. For example, if myEarlySense senses that a user is struggling to enter a deep sleep because they are too cold or there is too much light in the room they’re sleeping in, myEarlySense can control home automation systems like Nest to raise the temperature, turn off lights in neighboring rooms, or pull down the shades in the room. This functionality is related to the IoT or Internet of Things, which has gained popularity and received attention in the news recently. In short, IoT is when various electronic devices speak with each other.

This isn’t EarlySense’s first product though. EarlySense has actually served enterprises for many years now, with their products that identify early signs of patient deterioration and motion in hospitals, elderly care facilities and homes. Their flagship product is EverOn, a contact-free early detection technology that measures, records, displays, and alerts heart and respiration rates, as well as bed entries and exits, patient motion, and quality of sleep—all from under the mattress. EarlySense’s system empowers the medical staff in unmonitored wards to detect patients’ deterioration by following and analyzing patients’ vital signs and motion. This enables the nursing staff to improve clinical outcomes by being able to intervene before the hospital’s general wards and in ICUs while also decreasing unfortunate events like falls.

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

In January of this year, CEO Halperin emphasized to MobiHealthNews that they “see a huge value in our technology in the home consumer space or digital health space. This technology that was invented and proven in... the hospitals and home care institutions; now we’ve proven that that same capability can be brought into the home.”

None of this year, the company actually announced a new funding round of $25m dollars, which will be used specifically for these consumer products.

EarlySense occupies a unique place in their market. One of their early competitors, Apieron, focused on similar technology to EarlySense, but primarily in the asthma market. While their initial product sounded promising, they never received FDA approval and have since gone out of business. This lends hope to the idea that perhaps EarlySense can really establish itself as a force in this area. Another one of EarlySense’s competitors is Micronics Microfluidics. In another promising sign for EarlySense, Sony Corporation purchased Micronics in 2011 for an undisclosed sum, showing that their might be some lucrative M&A potential for EarlySense if they choose to go that route. Part of what makes EarlySense so unique is that their products and research can affect users in a vast number of areas. Their products can obviously be used in hospitals and wellness centers, but can also change the lives of millions of consumers in their homes, in nonmedical settings. It can improve their sleep, and consequently their productivity and physical and mental health. To see that EarlySense is life changing is by no means an understatement.
Analyzing Who is Behind Trump and Hillary

By Avishai (Jacob) Cohen

Unless you have been living under a rock, you have probably been inundated with story after story about the Clinton Foundation, Trump University, and everything else in between. Was Trump University a scam? Is the Clinton Foundation a sham? Some want to know what Hillary knew and when she knew it. Others wonder what Trump knew and when he knew it. Many just want to know who cares. The records of those who surround them and serve as their surrogates are just as important. These women and men advise them, speak for them, are their closest confidants and will likely remain in power, formally or informally, if their candidate is elected.

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

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

On a different note, Jared placed a bid to acquire the Los Angeles Dodgers in 2012 but ultimately came up short.

In an interesting bit of irony, New Jersey governor Chris Christie, a 2016 presidential contender turned Trump campaign surrogate and top advisor, put Jared’s father, Charles Kushner, in prison for two years. This was in Christie’s former role as U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New Jersey, the prosecutor responsible for the crimes of witness tampering and campaign finance violations. In addition to this criminal penalty, Charles, who has an honorary doctorate from YU, is behind bars for life. A Law & Order episode was even based on this ordeal.

Jared’s wife Ivanka, Donald’s daughter and close advisor, has had an interesting career of her own. Her primary job working for her father is as an executive of the Trump Organization, but she also has her own fashion line, published a book and has another book in the works. Ivanka’s fashion line is carried at high end retailers such as Nordstrom and grosses over $100 million per year. Ivanka wore a dress from her line during her speech at the GOP convention. After gaining the moniker an “everyday woman” image despite her privileged upbringing and lifestyle, Ivanka has come under fire for not paying the internships employed by her personal brand, manufacturing the clothes bearing her name in China, and not offering paid maternity leave to the women who work for her fashion collection. Her)

THESE WOMEN AND MEN ADVISE THEM, SPEAK FOR THEM, ARE THEIR CLOSEST CONFIDANTS AND WILL LIKELY REMAIN IN POWER, FORMAL OR INFORMALLY, IF THEIR CANDIDATE IS ELECTED."

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

The Trump campaign has cycled through three campaign managers, virtually unheard of for a presidential campaign. Trump’s latest Manager, Steve Bannon, left as the chairman of the conservative news outlet Breitbart News to take the Trump campaign reins. Bloomberg Businessweek did a cover story on Bannon last year and named him the “most dangerous political operative in America.” Bannon’s resume includes a stint at Goldman Sachs before leaving to start his own firm called Bannon & Co., which he later sold to French bank Societe Generale. Also present on Bannon’s resume is a multi-year tenure at Goldman, Mnuchin made an estimated $10 million, before his later role as CEO of OneWest. Dune Capital. Mnuchin controversially has close business ties to far-left megadonor George Soros, having served as CEO at a hedge fund backed by Soros. On a similar note, Mnuchin worked at Goldman Sachs before leaving to start his own firm called Bannon & Co., which controls Sears. Finally, he became CEO of failed lender IndyMac, reinventing the firm as OneWest. Mnuchin then served as co-founder of credit manager Relativity Media, bankrolling the production of hits Ava, The Lego Movie.

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

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

Switching gears to those behind Hillary, one of Hillary’s top surrogates is her daughter Chelsea. Chelsea boasts an impressive educational resume, including Washington’s elite Sidwell Friends School, Stanford, Columbia and Oxford. There is perhaps no better example than Chelsea of the power family ties can play in making a business career. Post-Stanford, with (at this point) just a bachelor’s degree to her name, Chelsea joined elite consultancy McKinsey & Co., where she made as much as colleagues with MBAs despite arguably having less experience. She also spent a few years at NBC News, making over $26,000 per minute on air despite having no prior journalism experience. Chelsea enjoyed a stint at natural gas giant Cheniere Capital, a major backer of Hillary and the Clinton Foundation. Her speaking fee has gone as high as $65,000, despite a business career which would not seem to be in line with her degree. The real question is if one wants to be successful in business, or she should consider changing their last name to

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The Ins and Outs of Index Investing

By Evan Axelson

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

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

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

Index funds were invented back in the 1970’s to provide investors with an option to invest in mutual funds that don’t rely on a mutual fund manager’s stock-picking skills or expertise. Managers’ performances were and still are benchmarked to certain stock indexes, usually the S&P 500. As these managers traded their benchmarks, often due to the higher fees paid to the manager of the fund, the popularity of index funds surged. This lower cost option provided investors with an option to invest in mutual funds. This isn’t to say no one is able to pick stocks consistently and beat the benchmarks. However, for the average investor, the time-conscious decision is to allocate most savings into an index fund or ETF.

Although an ETF can track a benchmark just like an index fund, the S&P 500 is just one of the many benchmarks ETFs track. As of 2015, there were 4,396 ETFs globally. ETFs are differentiated by many characteristics. There are ETFs that track baskets of commodities, fixed-income (bonds), currencies, and more. Stock ETFs track different sized companies, from large-caps, to mid-caps, to small caps. There are even ETFs that utilize investing strategies formerly reserved for hedge funds, such as the ProShares Merger ETF, which tracks a group of companies involved in possible merger deals.

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

Two of the most important investing principles are to be conscious of one’s future financial goals and to understand oneself in order to gauge how much risk he or she is willing to take on.

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

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

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Clinton or Trump for that matter. Chelsea is married to Marc Mezvinsky, the son of divorced Jewish former members of Congress. While Mezvinsky does not have as noted a role in the Clinton campaign as Jared does in the Trump campaign, he is certain in the thick of things. Mezvinsky’s father, Ed, spent 5 years in prison for bank fraud, mail fraud, and wire fraud. Following with the theme of many top Trump surrogates, Marc worked at Goldman Sachs for several years before co-founding hedge fund Eaglevale Partners. Eaglevale opened a fund focused on Greece which Marc pitched and managed, but it shuttered after it lost over 90% of investor money. The Eaglevale main fund is believed to manage over $300 million. Goldman Sachs CEO and Clinton donor Lloyd Blankfein is a major investor in the fund.

Analyzing the business backgrounds of Hillary’s team, or “Hillaryland”, as it has become known, is a quick exercise. The reason being that the bulk of those around her have spent their careers strictly in politics, usually with one of the Clintons. Almost none of her top aides or surrogates have much of a private sector business record to speak of. Hillary herself has spent a few years as a private sector lawyer, but has been in nonprofit or political work almost her entire adult life. Hillary is close to a wide range of campaign and Foundation donors, but most do not speak on her behalf. Her Campaign Chairman, referenced above, co-founded a lobbying firm but has not had a formal role there in years. Others, such as Campaign Manager Robby Mook and Vice Chairwoman Huma Abedin, have never had significant professional private sector employment.

Joel Benenson, Hillary’s chief strategist, runs a consulting firm that has private sector clients ranging from Uber to Intel to Walgreens, but Benenson has almost no public profile. Advisors and surrogates matter, more so than perhaps one might imagine. Analysis and critique of their records is important, and there is certainly plenty to evaluate in this campaign.
Never. Stop. Commentating.

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