

# Town Hall #9

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December 10, 2019

# Visiting Students: *Welcome!*

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- JayJay Blauner
- Sivan Elkiss
- Gideon Fishman
- Camille Liza Goldin
- Avigayil Kaplan
- Gabriella Mussry
- Mai Sultan
- Nili Torbati

# Meme of the Week:

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**Apple music listeners when**



**Spotify listeners post thier  
2019 wrapped results**

# Mensch of the week: *EITAN JALALI!!!*

—  
“I saw him picking up  
the toilet paper that  
was all over the  
bathroom...

Someone else threw  
it everywhere, don't  
worry.”



# Homelessness & Civic Responsibility

## *Initial Questions:*

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- What is our responsibility to LA's homeless population?
- What is the best way to help / support the homeless?

## *Giving Money:*

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- When you see a homeless person and decide not to give them money, why don't you?
- Do you feel bad after the fact? Why or why not?

# LA's homeless: *The Data*

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<i>Location:</i>	<i>Sheltered:</i>	<i>Unsheltered:</i>	<i>Total:</i>	<i>Percent Change:</i>
LA County	14,722	44,214	58,936	+12%
City of LA	8,944	27,221	36,165	+16%

- The LA homeless population in 2019, by the location, if they are sheltered or unsheltered, and the percent change, which is just how much the population grew from last year (2018).

*Data Source: 2019 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count - Total Point In Time Data Summary*



# LA's homeless: *The Responsibility*

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- Whose responsibility is it to solve the issue of homelessness in LA?
  - The government's or private charities/individuals?
- How do our responsibilities as citizens relate to each other?
  - Do we have an inherent responsibility, without judgement, (no matter the circumstances) to help our fellow citizens?

# Housing: *Is it a right?*

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- Is housing a right?
  - What are the repercussions or implications of housing being a right?
- Should the streets be ours?
  - If our taxes pay for infrastructure, do we own them?
  - Should homeless people be able to treat the streets as if they own them?
    - What are the implications of such an attitude?

# *As a Few:*

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- **If all the homeless people were Jews, would you have responded to the previous questions differently?**
  - Think about in Israel where the majority population is Jewish, or the Lower East Side in the 1920s where the poor were typically Jewish.
- **Should we feel differently?**
  - Is that a bad or a good thing?
  - What does this imply about how we view our relationships to society?

# *Whose responsibility is it?*

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- Amazon avoided a tax in San Francisco which would have benefited homeless people, CEO Jeff Bezos spends billions on homelessness philanthropy.
- **Do we have an obligation to support each other as a society? If so, to what extent does this support apply to the homeless community?**
- **Is homelessness a collective responsibility with taxes managed by the government, or private one done by citizen-run charities?**
  - What are the costs of leaving an issue like this to private philanthropy, or to the publicly funded government?
  - ***What does that say about our civic responsibility?***

# *Different Standards:*

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- In terms of homeless youth and those with mental illness who cannot help themselves, do we have more of a responsibility to help them and provide them with extra support?
- Should the government help all homeless people equally?
- **For example:** Should a homeless person who has tried repeatedly to find work and contribute to society be treated the same as someone who is potentially taking advantage of the welfare system?
  - What is the most productive way to handle this situation, considering both of these people ultimately do not have a home?

# DAVID

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- *Initial Question:* What do you think is our responsibility to LA's homeless population?
  - What is the best way to help/support the homeless.
- Is this the responsibility of the state, or a local— citizen— responsibility?
  - Are you better off donating to the government or city than giving to a specific charity?
- Do we hold different standards of responsibility for those who have mental illness and those who don't?
- *Controversial:* Is being homeless their fault? Why should our hard earned money go to helping those who made poor life decisions?

# *The Numbers:*

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- “According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, in 2019, approximately 50,000 to 60,000 persons may be found homeless on any given night in Los Angeles County, more than 44,000 of them on the streets. Youth, from minors through age 24, make up 8,915 of the county's homeless population (8,072 in 2018).”
  - (Source: <http://www.laalmanac.com/social/so14.php>)
- 25 % of the homeless population in Los Angeles County suffers from serious mental illness.

# KATE

- To what extent does our obligation to help others extend?
  - As Americans?
  - As Jews?
- How do we reconcile this potential obligation to help a vulnerable population with certain conflicting interests? For example:
  - A resident of a neighborhood might not want homeless people loitering in their area, but the homeless person does not have a home to go to
- Should someone who wants to be homeless be allowed to be homeless?
- Should the government help all homeless people equally? For example: should a homeless person who has tried repeatedly to find work and contribute to society be treated the same as someone who is potentially taking advantage of the welfare system? What is the most productive way to handle this situation, considering both of these people ultimately do not have a home?



# JACK

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- Is it better to give them money or to donate to organizations who could help?
- Should we give them a “fish” or “teach them to fish”?
- Is it even our business how they spend the money?
- Will this improve the situation or only make us *feel* better?

# BENJAMIN

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If there are not enough beds in homeless shelters for the homeless community should it be illegal to sleep on a sidewalk?

Do we have a moral responsibility to move these people into homeless shelters/affordable housing even if they refuse due to mental health?

Should the government make it illegal for homeless people to sleep on sidewalks to force them to confront the issues to go find a shelter and get their life back together?

MAYA



# ANYA

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Should Jewish organizations that only help Jews, such as Tomchei Shabbat and hospital Shabbat kits, exist?

Does this paint us as a selfish nation?

Shouldn't we have the greater poor and sick community in mind, when we start organizations such as these ones?

MAIA



# SIVAN

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- “According to the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, in 2019, approximately 50,000 to 60,000 persons may be found homeless on any given night in Los Angeles County, more than 44,000 of them on the streets. Youth, from minors through age 24, make up 8,915 of the county's homeless population (8,072 in 2018).” (Source: <http://www.laalmanac.com/social/so14.php>)
- 25 % of the homeless population in Los Angeles County suffers from serious mental illness.
- Initial Question: When you see a homeless person and decide not to give them money, why don't you? Do you feel bad after the fact?
- At what point does the government have a responsibility to step in?
- Is our civic duty just to obey the law or do we also have a responsibility to care for others?

# ELLIE

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- Should the government create/protect affordable housing to stop homelessness before it starts?
  - Is it the government's job to seek out a vulnerable population and help them, or must they do something first to merit help
- To what extent is mental health the cause of homelessness?
  - If it is a significant cause, should we be approaching the solution differently?

# ADINA

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- Do we have an obligation to support each other as a society? If so, to what extent does this support apply to the homeless community?
- If we chose to only donate to organizations rather than having to pay taxes, how can we ensure everyone will donate? How can we ensure the organizations will provide ample outreach?
- In terms of homeless youth and those with mental illness who cannot help themselves, do we have more of a responsibility to help them and provide them with extra support?
  - Should we provide equitable services or should we treat every homeless person the same?



ZOE

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