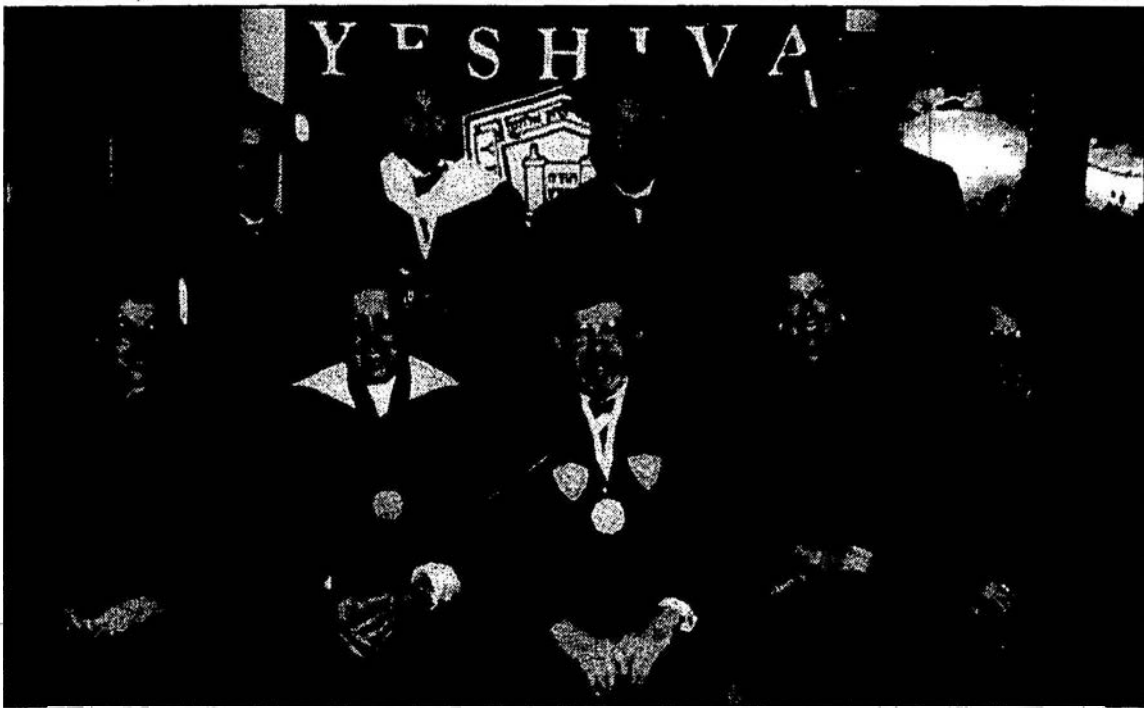


Yeshiva University Commentator

December 20, 1996 / 9 Tevet 5757 Official Undergraduate Newspaper of Yeshiva College Volume LXI No. 6

ESPN

To Cover Macs Basketball.
Story on Page 16



President Norman Lamm seated with New Jersey Governor Christine Todd-Whitman and five other honorees receiving honorary Doctorates of Humane Letters.

Whitman Lauds University's Mission at Annual Chanukah Dinner

BY ARNON STORFER

Following in a seventy year tradition, Yeshiva University held its annual Chanuka convocation and dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in Manhattan on December 8. The gala five hundred dollar-a-plate affair brought together more than six hundred of the University's financial supporters from across the United States for an evening to rejoice over the festival of lights as well as the progress of the institution held so near to their hearts.

Though honoring all benefactors of Yeshiva University, it presented the highest honor it can bestow, the degree of Doctor

of Humane Letters, to six honorees: Director of the Atchley Pavillion Department of Radiology at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center Dr. Monique C. Katz, Managing Director of Eisner and Lublin LLP Hirschell E. Levine, Yeshiva benefactor Mrs. Hyman Muss, Chairman Emeritus of Associated Metals and Minerals Corporation and Manager of The Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation of James C. Slaughter, Republic National Bank chief Walter H. Weiner, and New Jersey's Governor the Honorable Christine Todd Whitman. These special individuals were recognized for their extraordinary achievements, distinguished leadership, and abiding service.

Following the ceremony, Governor Whitman addressed the dinner attendees. The Governor thanked YU for honoring her and lauded the uniqueness of Yeshiva University's mission to fuse the two thousand years of Judaism with the advent of modernity within each of its students. "Too often we tend to look, nowadays particularly, at religious observance and worldly pursuits as an either or proposition—that somehow you have to choose one and forget the other. That is simply not true... Yeshiva University answers the challenge of our time, the challenge of integrating religious learning with worldly pursuits in weaving

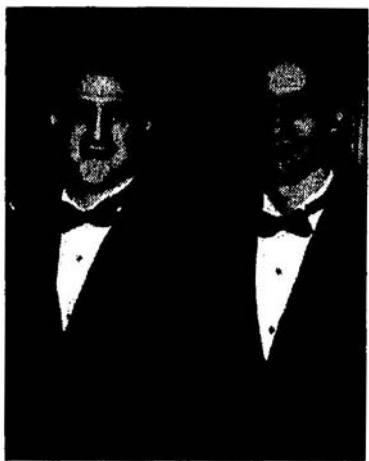
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Feldman, Storfer Elected Commentator Editors-in-Chief

BY DAVID SWIDLER

In a unanimous decision, the Governing Board of *The Commentator* has selected Joshua Feldman and Arnon Storfer Editors-in-Chief of the second half of Volume LXI. This is the fourth time in five years that two people will share the mantle of leadership of *The Commentator*. They take over from Nick Muzin, who is stepping down in order to devote his time to *Semikah* studies.

Feldman, of Toronto, Ontario and Storfer, of Minneapolis, Minnesota have a combined four years of experience working for the paper in every area, from writing and editing to layout and technical expertise. Feldman, an alumnus of the Community He-



Joshua Feldman & Arnon Storfer

brew Academy of Toronto and Yeshivat HaKotel in Israel, began working for the paper in October 1994, where he made his mark by taking the paper onto the Internet. A year later he was given the task of overseeing

the layout of the paper, a function he has elevated to an art form, and for which he was awarded Best Layout Spread of 1996 at the paper's dinner in May. This year, as Managing Editor, Feldman tried his hand at reporting as well, authoring the highly controversial "scoop" on the shakeup in the Dean's Office, a story which continues to reverberate throughout the corridors of Yeshiva College.

"Sometimes you have to take a hard line," explained Feldman, whose father is a RIETS *musmach*. "As newspaper editors who are also members of the Yeshiva community, we walk a fine line between keeping journalistic integrity, and not hurting our friends and colleagues. It is bal-

continued on page 7

YURG To Be Remodeled Name, Structure Will Change

BY ARNON STORFER

Conceding that the Yeshiva University Research Group had veered from its initial mission, Yeshiva College Dean Norman Adler, last Wednesday, told *The Commentator* that YURG, as it currently stands, will be dissolved.

"You're right... and I'm educable," the Dean said referring to several students who raised concerns that the so called research group was entering the jurisdiction of academic societies who have been University mainstays for decades, and that students were being paid for sitting on the Group. "I think it should be a semi official student organization, except not run exclusively by the student council," added Dean Adler.

Questions arose regarding the legitimacy of the so called 'Research Group' after *The Commentator* learned that one YURG member was receiving payment for his activities.

Understanding that within

the increasingly competitive graduate school market research is becoming an integral factor in the total package presented to graduate schools of all disciplines, Dr. Adler initiated the group "to develop expertise in students in research." The Research Group was to allow a forum for students to discuss their research with fellow students and university professors. Dean Adler's first group of students were Roth Scholars, pre-med students that had been selected to conduct research at Yeshiva University's Albert Einstein College of Medicine during their summer recess. The Dean assisted by matching these students to research opportunities at AECOM during the school year.

During the school year, members of the dubbed "Yeshiva University Research Group" met on a regular basis over a *gratis* lunch in the Dean's office to discuss their research progress and discoveries.

continued on page 6

MTA Faculty Frustrated

University Officials Blamed For
Disregarding Physical Plant

BY ARI GRUEN

With student enrollment and faculty morale falling at the Marsha Stern Talmudic Academy, many faculty members at YU's high school are blaming the University administrators who run MTA of being too removed from the high school to know what the school needs to compete with other Yeshiva day schools.

"In order to have a school of excellence, there has to be a more enlightened understanding of what it means to be in competition," explained one faculty member. "And when parents come in and look at facilities that in some cases look fifty or sixty years old, the astute parents will send their kids elsewhere."

Apparently, many parents have done exactly that. Over the past three years, enrollment at MTA has dropped by over ten percent. Many faculty members notice a qualitative drop, as well. "Academically," said one senior member of the high school faculty, "the students have gotten progressively worse."

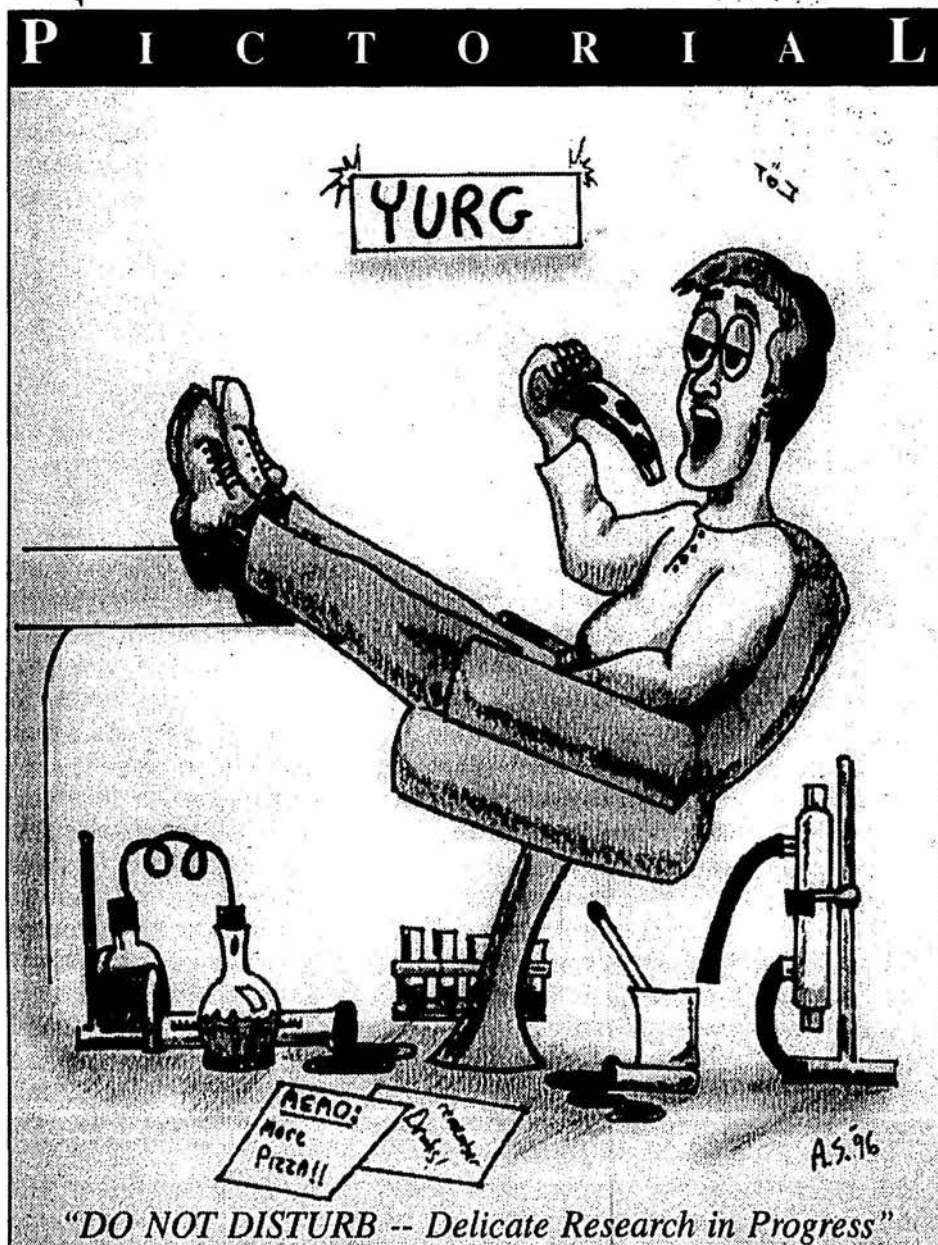
Another faculty member accused the University of being very shortsighted in its management of the high school. "You save a penny

there and a dollar there, and you lose twenty kids in enrollment."

Avigdor Butler, an Advanced Placement Biology teacher at MTA, points to the disregard exhibited by the college in terms of facility improvement requests. All high school requests must go through the University Office of Supporting Services, which also handles all University requests for facility enhancement. Due to the multitude of requests, their speed of execution is at best slow, while many of the high school's requests seem to be ignored.

As an example, Butler mentions a request for an extra phone line made by one of the three faculty offices on the fourth floor of MTA. Currently, a single phone line serves approximately ten faculty members. The initial request for the installation of an additional phone line was made during February of 1996. After repeated follow-up requests, no action has yet been taken. In reaction, Butler exclaimed, "It's ridiculous that over the summer the University can totally revamp the computers and phones for the University, but cannot install one phone line in the high school."

Butler believes unresolved phone *continued on page 6*





MESSAGE FROM THE YCSC PRESIDENT

JASON BUSKIN

The reminders are everywhere: year-book pictures, ads, graduation notices. And, while it is not time to say good-bye, bid farewell, and reflect fondly on the days gone by, it is hard to believe we are almost at the halfway point of my senior year.

I must confess it has snuck up on me, the thought that my final year at YU is half way complete, along with my term as YCSC President. The experience thus far has been an interesting one! Fun? Without a doubt! Challenging? Certainly! Difficult? At times! Rewarding? Absolutely!

As I look back on this semester, I take pride in our successes, the recent Chanukah Concert was a tremendous achievement for the student body of Yeshiva University. A number of students dedicated thankless hours to making this year's concert the best ever and indeed the finished product was something to behold.

This semester has been one of accomplishment, and I hope the students can take pride in our achievements, from the toll free security number (1-888-YU-SAFETY) to the new Rubin television, the campus has seen some wonderful additions. Programs and events from the Book Exchange to Chicago City Limits, student council has tried to provide inter-

esting and exciting innovations for Yeshiva College students.

Despite the successes, it is a bitter-sweet feeling to know that the year is nearly half over. There is much more student council will accomplish. More improvements will come to fruition, changes both big and small. More programs, events and activities are headed your way. Whether it is more off campus activities or making movie night a weekly occurrence we are striving to improve.

The fall semester has been a busy one, and a special one. Personally, it has been a chance to work towards change for the student body, and to add a little bit more to the lives of students on campus. As I look back on the past few months I hope that I have been able to accomplish much. It is these experiences I will take with me when I leave. I will no doubt remember the days and nights spent creating and innovating sometimes even pleading as much as I will remember the time I spent at YU with friends, hanging out, watching ball-games and sometimes just pondering life spent between 184th and 186th streets. I will remember my times spent on student council, and I will reflect on these days much as I do the other experiences I have had during my tenure at YU.

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Classes held: Wednesday, January 22, 1997 - Wednesday, May 21, 1997
Registration: Monday, January 20, 1997 and Tuesday, January 21, 1997

(WEEKDAY CLASSES MEET FOR ONE 100 MINUTE SESSION PER WEEK)

(SUNDAY CLASSES MEET FOR ONE 110 MINUTE SESSION PER WEEK)

SUNDAY	9:30 a.m.	JEWISH SPECIAL EDUCATION Rabbi Eliezer Vilinsky
	11:30 a.m.	TEACHING BIBLE: PROPHETS Rabbi Nachum Mischel
MONDAY	6:00 p.m.	MORAL DEVELOPMENT Dr. Yitzchak S. Mandel
	7:30 p.m.	SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: PROBLEMS AND PRACTICES I Rabbi Chaim Feinstrom, Ed.D.
TUESDAY	6:00 p.m.	COGNITIVE PROCESSES AND METHODS IN JEWISH EDUCATION Dr. Aharon H. Fried
	7:30 p.m.	TEACHING BIBLE: PENTATEUCH Dr. David Blach
WEDNESDAY	6:00 p.m.	SEMINAR IN CONTEMPORARY JEWISH EDUCATION Dr. Alvin I. Schiff
	7:30 p.m.	WORKSHOP IN INFORMAL JEWISH EDUCATION Prof. Parulrah Schram
THURSDAY	6:00 p.m.	TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST Dr. Robert M. Shapiro
	7:30 p.m.	HISTORY OF JEWISH EDUCATION Dr. Zevulun S. Lieberman

For further information on admission to the program contact:

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Yeshiva College



Campus News

Aaron Heller Memorial Shiur Given by Rabbi Mordechai Cohen

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

Nearly 50 students gathered in the Rubin Shul to hear Rabbi Mordechai Cohen speak at the Aaron Heller Memorial Shiur on Monday, November 25, at 9:15 P.M. Aaron Heller z"l was a student at YU at the time of his death in Rubin Hall in 1994.

Rabbi Yosef Blau began the program by memorializing Heller, calling the nature of the program and its focus on Torah "appropriate" to the memory of someone who died at too young an age merely to be memorialized by listing his accomplishments. Mrs. Klausner, Aaron's mother, then thanked the crowd for caring enough to take time out of their schedules to attend.

Rabbi Cohen began by recalling the night of Aaron Heller's passing, saying he, too, "lived though" the experience because he was living on campus at the time. He then began his shiur, on the topic

of "Kedusha, Prishut, V'Achdut: The tension Between Separation and Unity in Striving for Holiness." He focused on the two extreme alternate views of kedusha seen in Rashi and Ramban on Parshat Kedoshim, who maintain that the word is to be defined as being "separate" from this world, and that is evident in the kedusha that we say in Chazarat HaSha"tz, typified by the phrase "VeKarah Zeh El Zeh," that the angels sanctify God in unison.

He emphasized the importance of our not becoming so caught up in our private "separatist" strivings for holiness as to exclude our fellow Jews, who are really supposed to be our partners in the worship of Hashem. He cited examples he has seen of people falling prey to this mistake, to demonstrate how absurd their actions seem in hindsight. Rabbi Cohen made regular reference to Aaron Heller and commented that the level of ahavat yisrael he was praising in the shiur was also a basic character trait of Aaron's.

Of Sound Mind and Body Sports Psychologist Speaks about College Athletes

BY CARL HOCHHAUSER

When the Phillies or Sixers need a psychologist, they turn to Philadelphia's Dr. Joel Fish. So does the US Women's Soccer Team. Thus, it came as no surprise when Yeshiva University Athletic Director Steve Young chose to invite him to address varsity athletes from both campuses on Tuesday night, November 19. Fish's ties to YU run deep; from his days at Clark University with Young, to his uncle's career on the Macs.

Dr. Fish started out by addressing the challenges facing a student athlete. He must be motivated, confident, competitive, and adept at juggling the many facets of their schedule. A competitive nature can manifest itself in a variety of ways—in sports, in the classroom, among family members, among friends, and with oneself. As at most schools with high standards in both academics and athletics, Yeshiva athletes are most competitive in the latter category. As his impromptu survey bore out, the push to succeed is usually driven by a desire to satisfy oneself.

As Fish noted, success used to be determined by "how you played." Now, society is much more cutthroat, and the more commonly asked question is "did you win?" He related the story of an Olympic swimmer with whom he had worked. The man set goals that were extremely high. When his race was over and he had won the gold, he was still

upset because he had not broken the world record. He thought he was a failure and lapsed into a depression. Clearly this man misperceived reality. A "star" should not be defined by his statistics. Rather, Fish has four criteria by which one should measure his success: Self-confidence, Temper-management, Attitude, and Respect.

Dr. Fish spends the majority of his time working with private individuals and professional sports teams. Nevertheless, he predicts that within a few years, nearly all NCAA Division I schools will have their own sports psychologist. Student athletes traditionally have trouble juggling their workload along with their different responsibilities. In addition, college sports can often become too competitive. A student athlete needs to know when to put on his "game face," and when to change his demeanor and walk away. According to Fish, just because an athlete doesn't sulk for weeks after a tough loss, doesn't mean he didn't give it his all. It just means that he has the proper attitude and a good outlook and perspective on life. As University of North Carolina basketball coach Dean Smith once said, "If you make every game a life and death proposition you're going to have problems. For one thing, you'll be dead a lot."

In addition to his lecture, Dr. Fish made himself available to the students after the lecture for personal attention.

STUDENT CRITIQUE

Inherit The Wind

BY DANIEL ANZISKA

Inherit The Wind, one of the rare plays that both captures brilliant theatrics with an important underlying theme, is currently playing in Schottenstein Hall (until 12/19). Under the tutelage of famed Yeshiva University director / Speech professor Anthony Beukas, the play is staged in a creative if not imaginative way. From the pulled-out stage (I felt like I was going to dinner theater) to the hustling thespians (who, with their haste movement never stopped sweating), Beukas has produced a classy version of the play that is both humorous and dramatic, in the right places. This handsome production, with its charming sets and authentic clothing, is easy on the eyes. Additionally, a lively, talented cast is allowed to perform with abandon and succeeds wonderfully with little song montages such as "We're Marching to Zion." However, Beukas does not get carried away with gimmicks and allows the real star, the writing of the play, to dazzle its audience.

Loosely based on the famous Scopes Trial (1925, Tennessee), *Inherit The Wind* develops into a debate concerning the relationship between science and G-d, or more aptly, secular versus religion. In a carnival environment, two aging giants argued out the original "case of the century." Both sides are well presented by the talented leads, the well-padded Allan Schwartz (playing Matthew Harrison Brady, a three time presidential nominee) and the equally girthful Noah Streit (Henry Drummond, a talented orator of a lawyer). Since most of the play is carried by its two leads, Schwartz and Streit are under a tremendous amount of pressure to perform, and perform they do. They have a great rapport with one another, feeling each other out for faults and vices while sharing an underlying respect.

Alan Schwartz, a veteran of YCDS, captures the populist twinge of Brady, never falling into the trap of taking himself too seriously. Schwartz, clearly an intelligent actor, is able to bring Brady's also-ran frustrations to the surface. Brady is a tired man who, after inspiring millions with his gospel-like speeches, is eventually unhinged by the fallibility of his own words. Schwartz, whose Southern accent and well-timed off-hand remarks enhance the Brady character, brings empathy to the Gingrichian politician / playing him as an aging oaf who sees his last chance for redemption in a courthouse in Hillsboro.

Noah Streit, in the showboat role of

Drummond is no less successful. His booming voice, imposing size, and flip-pant personality help create a fiery lawyer who was the Daniel Webster of his day. By leaning his hand on everyone's shoulder, Drummond shows the audience that he is a take charge man, ready to battle fundamentalists in the name of America. Streit's impassioned performance brings to my mind an eloquent crusader, fighting his battles with meaningful and rational arguments. Sure, his Drummond seems to be too good, to possess an almost inhuman capacity to argue, but, coming from Y.U., I have met his type tenfold.

While the two leads formidably hold the play together, without several solid performances, the dramatic tension would never have held. Role acting, while usually being ignored, is essential in building up the legwork of many plays and films. That is especially true in this production. Forming a solid supporting cast, Phil Bak stands out, realistically portraying the self-loathing and confused Richard Brown. Additionally, David Swidler's (Rev. Brown) grotesque spiritual is a powerful piece of acting, leading the audience to feel the menace of a religious 'revival' gone bad. Also, Aharon Rabinowitz's (Hornbeck) hilarious portrayal of a jaded reporter oozing with sarcasm is right on target. He lends a voice to an outside world otherwise trapped as spectators.

Based on its subject matter alone, *Inherit The Wind*, is a controversial, but, well chosen play. Its questions about freedom of thought and the relationship between the secular and religious world are especially pertinent in Yeshiva University, an institution that claims to be of both dominions. Questions about the Bible and tradition coping in the modern world are complex and far-reaching. By trying to maintain a balance between the two worlds, one is often confused and discouraged by seeming contradictions. Yet, by openly expressing these (apparent) contradictions in public, they can be discussed and dealt with, not ignored and locked away in the mind.

As presented by Beukas, this YCDS production remains true to its source and is a smart, traditional interpretation of the play. While an updated staging of the play (which worked so well with the recent *Richard III* and *Romeo and Juliet* films) probably would have given it more of a sense of urgency, that is only an aside. See the play and it will be the perfect starting point for an impassioned discussion or, at least cause you to think.

Students Urged to Complete Satisfaction Survey

BY MATITHYOHU BALAS

Last week students were asked to fill out a student satisfaction inventory formulated by the Noel-Levitz Company. The student survey was administered from the Office of Student Services, headed by Dean of Students Efreim Nulman.

According to the Office of Student Services, the survey's purpose is to help the YU administration acquire a quantitative understanding of student opinions about the university. Dr. Nulman urged students to take twenty minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Though the surveys are not new to YU, some students questioned their purpose. Daniel Robbins, a YC Sophomore, commented that "maybe YU should conduct a survey of the questions in the survey. There were so many similar questions that will be answered so differently, that they [YU] won't know where to start. The questions did not adequately address the demands of the student body." Dean Nulman claimed that the survey nevertheless reveals the uniqueness of YU when compared to other colleges and universities.

Another Sophomore, Eliyahu Lifschitz, was somewhat skeptical about the effectiveness of the survey. He suggested that "instead of spending money on a confusing survey that does not directly deal with the problems in our school, YU should use the money to help solve the problems that are already known, such as improving the cafeteria food and its prices, and sponsoring and improving

student events."

Dr. Nulman, however, said that the cost of the survey and its analysis by the company is minimal. Moreover, the money comes from the budget of the Office of Student Services, and "student activity money is not and ought not to be used for university activities." The Dean went further to say that the surveys have produced data that have led to tangible results including Freshmen Orientation, academic registration, dormitory check-in, and the general orientation schedule.

The Office of Student Services is currently working on a parent survey which will be conducted over the telephone. The survey will contact approximately two hundred parents of YU students randomly, collect data, and evaluate YU based on the information they acquire.

For the first time Student Services is also conducting a survey at Stern College. In addition to the Noel-Levitz survey, they will conduct an in-house study. From these surveys, they will not only be able to compare Stern to other colleges and universities, but also to compare the effectiveness of the surveys in relation to each other.

Dr. Nulman hopes that students will complete the survey because he and his colleagues "do care very deeply about what they [the students] think about how we are doing our job... Some areas of the status quo can help them improve YU... President Lamm invested wholeheartedly in what we're doing." He believes that the survey will result in improvements throughout the University.

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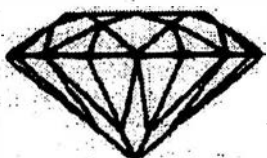
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YU's Professor Serels Knighted by Spain

BY ARI GRUEN

In its second public relations coup of the semester, YU is now not only a "first tier" University, but is the only University which can boast of employing a professor with the title "Don Rabbi". On December 4, Rabbi Dr. M. Mitchell Serels received Spain's Order of Civil Merit, Spain's knighthood, thus earning the title "Don," the Spanish equivalent of Sir. Dr. Serels is believed to be the first Rabbi ever to receive the honor.

Dr. Serels, a history professor at YU who serves as Director of Yeshiva University's Sephardic Studies and Communities Programs and as Associate Director of the University's Jacob E. Safra Institute of Sephardic Studies, is a world-renowned historian and leader of international efforts to study and preserve Sephardic culture. The Order, conferred at a private New York City ceremony on December 4 at the direction of King Juan Carlos I, recognizes "outstanding services or efforts in work of a civil nature."

The knighthood presentation was made by Ambassador Manuel Allendesalazar, Consul General of Spain in New York, in a brief ceremony at his residence. Allendesalazar praised Serels' work on behalf of Sephardic Jews and cited his persistent efforts to improve relations between Spain and the Jewish community. Dr. Serels was present when King Juan Carlos made his historic visit to the Madrid synagogue in 1992, exactly 500 years after King Ferdinand issued the expulsion decree of the Spanish Inquisition of 1492.

Dr. Serels received his Bachelors degree at YU, received Rabbinical ordination at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, and holds a PhD in history from New York University. He has been teaching at YU for twenty-four



Don Rabbi Dr. Mitchell Serels

years. In addition, Dr. Serels has been translating and studying Hebrew texts that predate 1492 and until 1987 remained hidden in the bindings of municipal record books in Gerona, Spain. His most recent work took him to West Africa's Cape Verde Islands earlier this year. At the invitation of the government, he researched the history of seventeen Jewish graves and interviewed islanders believed to be the descendants of Moroccan Jews.

Dr. Serels is the author of *A History of the Jews of Tangier in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, and is co-editor of *Sephardim and the Holocaust*, published earlier this year and believed to be the first book focusing on how the Holocaust ravaged the Sephardic populations of such countries as Yugoslavia, Iraq, Holland, Albania, and Tunisia.

Every year, Dr. Serels organizes the annual Semana Sephard Cultural Festivals, a series of events co-sponsored by the government of Spain and held in synagogues throughout North America.

Rav Tendler Speaks About Darwinism After YCDS Play

BY DAVID SWIDLER

After the Sunday matinee of the Dramatics Society's presentation of *Inherit the Wind*, MYP Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Moshe Tendler gave a lecture on the supposed conflict between Biblical Creationism and Evolutionist thought, a major issue raised by the play.

Rabbi Tendler outlined the historic stages of evolutionist ideas, from Darwin's *Origin of Species* of 1839 to today's predominant view among scientists that no known natural mechanism can account for the development of different species, effectively an admission that there is no viable theory.

He also showed how the issue keeps arising in our own day, as some state legislatures and school boards have discussed modifying the way evolution is taught in schools.

In Jewish thought, Rabbi Tendler asserted, there is plenty of room for the notion that millions, even billions, of years passed before man as we know him appeared. The Jewish calendar measures time from the creation of Adam, not from Genesis 1:1. The Church, however, upon encountering evolutionism in the mid-nineteenth century, insisted that it is incompatible with the Bible's account of Creation.

Compounding this was the prevailing

assumption among many rabbis that this is indeed the case. Rabbi Tendler showed, however, that a number of prominent Torah scholars were in fact of the opinion that this world existed for eons before the advent of the human race. He cited a lecture given by the early-nineteenth-century commentator on the *Mishna*, the Tiferes Yisroel, that this world is the last in a series of four. God used the same medium, this Earth, for each world, and hence the fossil records that extend back millions of years.

The great irony of Darwin's thesis, noted Rabbi Tendler, was that every single thing that vaunted researchers said was wrong-but he introduced to the scientific community the idea that all living things have structural and chemical similarities, a notion that has allowed medical science to progress by leaps and bounds. This is nowhere more evident than in the use of laboratory animals to facilitate the development of treatments for diseases affecting humans.

In response to the lecture, one YC senior said, "I like the fact that YCDS can integrate into its production the Torah perspective on the idea set forth in the plays. Rabbi Tendler's presentation helped me to gauge better how we should view otherwise seemingly dangerous issues through the lens of Torah."

Community Leaders Visit From Salonika, Greece

BY DAVID SWIDLER

The Jacob E. Safra Institute of Sephardic Studies sponsored a visit to the University by Messrs. Andreas Sefiha, the Chairman, and H. Kouno, the President of the Jewish Community Council of Thessaloniki, or Salonika, Greece, during club hour on Thursday, November 21.

Speaking on the historical background of the Salonika Jews, Mr. Sefiha, told of the communities' establishment during the time of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C.E. He noted a major turning point in the history of the city and of its Jewish community when the Spanish Edict of Expulsion went into effect in the summer of 1492 and twenty thousand Jews soon settled in Salonika, which had previously been home to approximately five hundred Jews.

Mr. Sefiha spoke of Salonika as a haven for Jews throughout Europe. So many Jews settled there through the years that by modern times, nearly two-thirds of the city was Jewish, and the city shut down for *shabbat* and holidays.

A vibrant and sophisticated community, Salonika included institutions for psychiatric patients and the elderly, many schools, and a famous Rabbinic seminary from which emanated some very influential responsa, particularly regarding such contentious issues as inheritance, told the emissary.

The Holocaust took its toll on Salonika. With a prewar Jewish population bordering on 52,000, only 1,950 returned. Many of the survivors did not want to start new families, and today, after decades of the passing of survivors and emigration, the Jewish population stands at about 1,150.

Two synagogues still function, as do a home for the aged, an elementary school, and a community center with educational facilities. A newly-arrived young Rabbi from Israel named Yitzhak Dayan now leads the community.

Following Mr. Sefiha's talk, students inquired about familial connections to the city. One inquired about available documentation of the residents from many years ago. Mr. Sefiha said that archives were discovered and are currently the subject of analysis by a team at Tel Aviv University. Local archives do exist, but are of limited scope. A second student wanted to know how close the Salonika community was with that of the nearby island of Rhodes. Mr. Sefiha noted that as a cultural and publishing center, Salonika shared much with the sur-

rounding Jewish communities, including many traditions. Many of the Balkan Jewish communities were of very similar origin.

In terms of those traditions, Mr. Sefiha fielded a question regarding the preservation of Sephardic traditions. Unfortunately, he lamented, his generation is the last to speak Ladino. It has proved difficult to preserve, but revival efforts are underway, including summer courses. The Spanish ambassador has expressed interest in saving what his country considers a unique dialect of Spanish, as about ninety-five percent of Ladino derives from that language.

Regarding one of the darker episodes in Salonika's history, Mr. Sefiha addressed the issue of Salonika's rabbi collaborating with the Germans during the second World War. Rabbi Koretz was kidnapped by the Germans and held somewhere in the Reich for six months before he was returned to Greece. He was among the last Jews to be deported, and became the commandant of a privileged concentration camp. Koretz, said Sefiha, was apparently unable to put the community's vital interests ahead of his own survival, and declined to inform his constituents of the true nature of Nazi goals. Consequently, Salonika lost more Jews in the Holocaust than any other Greek community.

In terms of its more recent history, the city, as a whole, suffered during the civil war, after WWII, between the Nationalists and Communists, that lasted through 1949. The Nationalists prevailed, and ever since, the government has been tolerant of its Jewish nationals. Even the socialist party, elected to power in 1981, remained conservative and open-minded. The government plans a monument by next year to the 50,000 who perished during the Holocaust.

Currently, intermarriage and assimilation are problems that Salonika struggles to overcome. The activism that Mr. Sefiha, Mr. Kouno, and the Jewish Community Council as a whole seek from their constituents will, they hope, stem the tide of intermingling. Plans are afoot to "twin" Salonika with a community in Israel, and to implement fellowship-type programs to encourage Salonika's Jewish youth to study in Israel.

Though most of the attendees who came to hear Mr. Sefiha and Mr. Kouno had family connections in mind, several students attended out of intellectual curiosity alone. "It was fascinating," said YC sophomore Noah Streit. "I went because it sounded interesting, and it really was."

YURG To Be Reconstructed

continued from page one

As word spread about the opportunities pre-med students were receiving at AECOM, students majoring in other disciplines pressed to have the group include them as well. YURG welcomed the interest and openly invited others including one student who shared his research on linguistics. However, with its doors wide open and its free lunches, students interested in activities other than research became members of the group, thus, leaving YURG, as it was originally planned, to live a half life similar to that of an unstable isotope. The group rapidly metamorphosed into a discussion on academic activities outside the classroom including speakers and various presentations.

YCSC President Jason Buskin was worried about the purpose of YURG. "I agree that the programs that YURG is sponsoring and putting together are both beneficial and important to the student body, but you had institutionalized academic societies and YURG trying to accomplish the same thing. The problem, though, was that the societies had no official avenue with which to communicate with professors of their respective societal disciplines, and the University administration. The academic societies should play an integral role in creating these co-curricular programs. It isn't happening."

In addition to the concerns vented by the YCSC President, other student leaders are frustrated that YURG has been able to forward initiatives through the Office of the Dean with its readily available funds, circumventing the budgeting process of YCSC. Further, allowing co-curricular activities such as graduate school nights to be run through the Dean's Office, provides for skepticism as to whether or not the academic nights will become a mainstay which could

happen if it was undertaken by society presidents, rather than just suggestions struggling to come to fruition every year.

YCDS President Allan Schwartz said, "instead of creating yet another bureaucratic road block to getting anything accomplished, they should open a channel to get things done immediately. There are enough societies broadening the horizons, YURG is just not needed."

Already agreed is that no student will receive payment for his activities on YURG, and the current proposal being worked on would allow for an appropriately titled committee to serve in the capacity that YURG has been, bridging the gap between the extra and the curricular. Academic societies, however, would be working with the Dean's office. In addition, a second committee would be established to deal with academic issues that have arisen through YURG discussions thus far, in a sense a student life committee for academic issues.

Although these initiatives were brought to a YURG meeting on December 16, it encountered resistance from current YURG members, who feared losing their positions. They expressed concern that with the revamped YURG, composed of club and society presidents, underclassmen, who generally have no opportunity to serve as president, would lose the direct input and involvement that YURG currently offers.

Proponents of the plan, are certain that the various academic societies involved will openly welcome anyone eager to become a productive member of their society and assist in creation and planning of activities.

Additional meetings are currently being planned to reorganize the former Yeshiva University Research Group.

Ten Months Later; Still No Phone Line

continued from page one

line issue is a symptom of a much larger disease. He sees "a lack of respect and general disregard of Yeshiva University High School employees."

Other faculty members complain of aging facilities which the high school cannot replace due to lack of funds from the University. MTA's science laboratory is home to a refrigerator which is at least thirty years old and which must be manually defrosted.

Another common complaint among faculty members is a perceived lack of support by the University for the academic development of the high school's students. "They [the University] should be encouraging and funding college-level courses within the high school itself, not just accepting a few kids as part of early admissions," said one faculty member.

Contrary to many of his faculty members, the principal of MTA, Rabbi Taubes, believes that the occasional problems that do come up in the relationship between YU and MTA are greatly overshadowed by the benefits of the relationship. He admits that due to the size of the University, "there is a bureaucracy that you have to go through

which can be a little frustrating."

However, Rabbi Taubes points to the positive involvement of the Dean of Student's Office with the high school dormitory, in terms of arranging counseling for students and granting them access to University facilities, and the fact that many MTA seniors can take college classes and *shiurim*, as only two of many positive facets of the University's interaction with the high school.

In addition, Rabbi Taubes explained that the recent drop in student enrollment is due more to MTA's increased selectivity than to lack of interest on the part of students. "In the past, MTA had a reputation that if you can't get in to other schools, don't worry, MTA will take you. Therefore, we have been more selective. We want to make sure we accept kids who can be successful here."

Elliot Gibber, Chairman of the MTA Board agrees with Rabbi Taubes' positive assessment of the relationship between YU and the high school. He said, "We have not had one with the University that was not taken care of in the best interests of both the University and the high school."

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Melech Monoker, Proprietor

New Organization Formed to Push Orthodoxy to Center

BY ARI KAHN

The American public has shifted to the right over the past few years, demonstrated by the popularity of Rush Limbaugh, Newt Gingrich, and other conservative pundits. Even President Clinton, who found himself in Moscow during the Vietnam War, has taken up the banner of many right-wing causes, but has Orthodox Jewry followed this trend? Yes, say the organizers of a new group called Edah, and they have come together in an attempt to reverse it. Edah is an acronym for Ethics, Devotion, Ahavat Yisroel, and Halacha. The group was created late last year, in May, after conversations amongst prominent proponents of Modern Orthodoxy. They fear a growing sense of marginalization by those on the right wing of Orthodoxy and plan to reenergize what they call the Modern, or centrist, Orthodox community by creating a body of Rabbis and Torah scholars to provide spiritual and educational leadership. Edah receives its funding in the form of a matching grant from the Steinhart Foundation. Its current director, Rabbi Saul Berman, a YC alumnus, teaches Judaic Studies at Stern College for Women. He explained that the members of the group first started planning projects for Edah this past summer and said that one of the key projects focuses on eight smicha students in RIETS. The students are participating in a training seminar held once a week at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale. The fellowship program, called MeORoT, is designed to expose them to topics such as "the limits of rabbinic authority, the merits of activism and outreach, and views on pluralism." Every Tuesday they hear a presentation from someone at the forefront of Modern Orthodox thought. Other topics to be covered by the seminar include this week's subject, Da'as Torah, along with Torah Umaddah, and the attitude toward Chumrah. MeORoT, is an attempt to clarify and solidify the beliefs of Modern Orthodoxy in the minds of future rabbis. "We believe

that there is a significance to the *Medina*... we believe that it is vital to sustain openness toward Conservative and Reform Jews..." are just two of the many ideas the program is designed to get across. Rabbi Berman wants people to understand that "This [Modern Orthodoxy] is *Emess*, this is not a compromise position." The Rabbi says this in the face of critics on the right who see Modern Orthodoxy as "a vain effort to embrace Western values like pluralism and feminism as well as religious Zionism." A letter distributed to spark interest in the fellowship stated "The curriculum of MeORoT is focused on the ideological issues which distinguish Modern Orthodoxy. While sharing its most fundamental ideological and halakhic commitments with all Orthodox Jews, Modern Orthodoxy offers a vision of Torah Judaism which, while fully grounded in the *mesoret* (tradition), manifests a significant emphasis on openness to the modern world." The MeORoT program which was arranged with RIETS through Rabbi Robert Hirt and Rabbi David Israel in YU's Office of Communal Services, is also being sent around the country. Ten Rabbis are sent video tapes of each session after every week and once a month convene for a telephone conference at which the presentations are reviewed and questions are discussed.

Rabbi Berman and Rabbi Avi Weiss, an Edah board-member who teaches Judaic Studies at Stern, serve as mentors for the program.

The Jewish Week reported that "virtually every member of Edah, including businessman Jack Bendheim and Michael Jesselson, are committed supporters, alumni and/or parents of students attending Yeshiva University." *The Jewish Week* story cited this as an implicit criticism of Yeshiva University "which has reflected Orthodoxy's move to the right." Rabbi Berman is quick to point out that the neither said nor implied that statement. In fact he told *The Commentator* that he disagrees: "While I attended Yeshiva in



Rabbi Saul Berman addressing a group of YC and SCW students

the '50s and '60s... R' [J.B.] Soloveitchik was the exception [in that he alone of the Roshei Yeshiva espoused Torah Umaddah]. Today many Roshei Yeshiva have B.A.s, M.A.s and even Ph.D.s. Everyone has a sense of what a secular education is and what a general education can provide."

Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler, a Rosh Yeshiva in MYP, will be lecturing at MeORoT on February 11, 1997 on the topic of "The Use of New Knowledge in P'sak." Edah is also working with NCSY on a program starting in the Spring '97 semester on four college campuses: Boston University, Queens College, University of Pennsylvania, and University of Maryland in Baltimore. The program was created because "hundreds of graduates of Modern Orthodox Yeshiva High Schools go off to general University campuses every year. Many more go off to Israel for a year or more of study and then return to such campuses. In most instances, there is little, if any, presence on the campus of voices of Modern Orthodoxy and religious Zionism. Even where such voices are present, there tends to be no direct address to the issues of conflict between the intellectual commitments of Torah and those of the academic disciplines which students are absorbing in their studies. Nor is there, generally, any direct attempt to confront the divergence between the entire value system of Torah and that of the University campus from the perspective of Modern Orthodox teachings - which presume not the total

rejection of secular culture, but a wise discerning of the elements which need to be rejected and those which can be integrated into the Orthodox world view." Coordinators at each campus try to bring Modern Orthodox discourse to the students through lectures and presentations.

Among the other projects being developed by Edah are a public policy forum to determine the alternative public policy positions available to the Modern Orthodox community, a think tank, and local Beis Medrash programs where RIETS students will visit metropolitan area synagogues to give presentations and learn with the congregants.

At the grass-roots level, Edah is setting up study circles trying to concentrate on "Spirituality in Productivity." Rabbi Berman wrote an article on this subject for the latest issue of *Sh'ma Magazine*. He laments the fact that Talmud Torah and *efilla* are the only areas in which we feel there is spirituality. He feels that another major way to achieve spirituality is through human productivity. He compares the way the Torah surrounded the activity of farming with *mitzvot* to the potential that still exists for many of us today to incorporate *mitzvot* into the way a job is performed. "How can we take these actions and infuse them with *mitzvot* by how we do them, by how we relate to others, by how we set goals, etc." Rabbi Berman hopes that Edah "has a significant impact on the overall direction of the Jewish Community."



**Yeshiva College
Student Council**



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19 Thursday	Holocaust Club Meeting	Club Hour
22 Sunday	Macs v. St. Josephs	5PM MSAC

January

7-19	INTERSESSION	HAVE A NICE VACATION
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Feldman, Storfer Named Editors-in-Chief

continued from page one

ancing these two principles which I believe will be the most challenging - and rewarding - aspect of being Editor."

Storfer made a quick rise to the top of the *Commentator* kingdom. A graduate of Ida Crown Jewish Academy in Chicago, he began working for the paper last fall, and was promoted to Associate News Editor after only one semester. In the spring, he was appointed Executive Editor by the outgoing Governing Board. As a news reporter, he detailed security breaches on the YU Internet system, an assignment which required him to assume an Internet alias for his investigation. He also wrote a lengthy analysis of Dean Norman Adler's first hundred days in office.

"*The Commentator* plays a unique role within the YU community. Those associ-

ated with Yeshiva University feel as if this institution is an extension of their own family. *The Commentator* plays a tremendous role in sustaining that special relationship. Josh and I are looking forward to taking our place among the distinguished ranks of *Commentator* Editors-in-Chief, and to adding our own personal touches to this great tradition."

"I don't think we could have chosen anyone more qualified than Arnon and Josh," commented outgoing Editor-in-Chief Nick Muzin, who will continue to be involved in the paper. "Together, they are experts in virtually every area of publishing. I am confident that they will continue to make *The Commentator* one of the most exciting and influential college newspapers in the country."

Greetings From London

My Semester Abroad at the London School of Economics

Dear Fellow Students,

I write now from the computer room of the London School of Economics. It feels a little strange to send this letter to YU. Just a year ago, actually, last semester, I was in Yeshiva University, attending classes with the friends I miss now, studying in the library, taking the van to Stern, hanging out in the Morg television lounge. Those memories are somewhat distant for me. Five thousand miles away, to be quite precise. I don't watch much television anymore, when I do, it is a British show that I see. Seinfeld is out. Mr. Bean has taken his place. The library here is a bit larger than the one on Amsterdam Avenue. Finding the stairs to the third floor, though, is every bit as difficult. There are no vans to Stern in London. Instead, tall red buses can lead me to any one of the Jew filled Hillel houses. And I have new friends I study with at the London School of Economics. They include those few that wear *kipot* in the open, girls whom I would have to recognize from the Jewish Society meeting to know they are Jewish, and the greater number of Gentiles that I have come to know. Such is the life of a YU boy studying in England.

Twelve months ago, it was hard for me to imagine being anywhere outside of YU. Indeed, I was prepared to come back for my senior year, begin my job search, work with the yearbook and finish my YU education like anyone else. This would have been the conventional way to earn my degree. I wanted to do something different. I wanted to try something new for a term, somewhere abroad.

When I began to notice the posters on

the walls of the Furst and Belfer Halls which advertised study programs in Europe, I became curious. Ever since I was little, I wanted to travel to Europe. I loved the way British people spoke. The French spoke beautifully too. I decided then to find a way to get to Europe. I wanted to be on this adventurous continent. The choice of country didn't matter in my mind. It is funny when I think about it now, I almost went to Spain. Common sense, however, led me to England.

Last December, I talked to whoever I could find that knew anything about Europe. I spent days in the library studying maps of London. I found a very understanding and encouraging person in SSSB Dean Nierenberg. He agreed to let my classes in London count for credit at Yeshiva University. To me this meant that I could learn in Europe without losing time at YU. Those who told me studying in Europe was a crazy thing to do could not change my mind. I wanted this. When the letter stating I was accepted to study at the London School of Economics arrived, it was final; I was going to London.

The first thing that struck me as interesting when my feet touched the ground in London was that all the cars drove on the "wrong" side of the road. I've been nearly hit six times since I came to London in late August. You would think that getting used to this oppositeness is simple. Fat chance! I regularly head to the driver's side of the vehicle when entering the car of a friend. My mind is unchangeably ingrained with America's convention of the driver sitting on the left side of the car. London's double decker red buses

were fun to ride during my first two weeks here. I recall always running to the upper deck to sit near the front. Nowadays when I ride a bus, I can't be bothered to climb the stairs.

Studying in London School of Economics is a great. The three thousand women here aside, the LSE is not so different than YU. I find that people I know at YU study harder than the people I see here. You might not think YU's cafeteria food is so bad when you see what is served in our cafeterias. And it's not much more expensive. Most of the University (5,500 students study here) is from outside of England. This has created strong diversity within the student body, one of my favorite things about the LSE.

The courses here are not as tough as those in Yeshiva University. The professors, though, tend to be famous. Some of them are authors on what they teach. If you want to *learn* here, you do it on your own time. Unlike Yeshiva University, the LSE does not cater to our spiritual development. The truth is, the London School of Economics is more like YU than it is different. Being away from New York, I see now that YU is not as bad as I thought. Perhaps I will talk more about British University life in a future letter. I want to tell you now about something which should interest you more: Jewish life in London.

I have found that Jews in this city are remarkably close. They come from so many different cities; Manchester, Leeds, Brighton, Paris, Vienna, Tel Aviv...and places I haven't heard of. Somehow, they all come together.

A Jewish Society exists in every major university campus in London. At the London School of Economics, we have bagels and cream cheese, and a speaker if we're lucky, when we meet on Thursdays. The JSOC meeting is where I met most of my Jewish friends. A number of Hillel houses around town plan events, *shiurim*, parties, and *Shabbatonim*. This *Shabbos*, I will be in Cambridge with two hundred young Jews. Last Tuesday, I found myself meet-

ing Jews on a Hillel sponsored pub crawl. Pubs are immensely popular in this country. In fact, it is the way to wind down after work, on any night of the week.

Recently, I saw Miss Saigon. People here are mad about the theater. Come to think of it, I'm mad about the theater. I am subconsciously becoming Britishized. Sometimes, I catch myself talking to a Briton in an English accent. I realize this when I notice they don't understand what I'm saying. The English can tell I'm American from two hundred yards away. If they are slow in understanding this, I give myself away the minute I open my mouth. Often, I am asked what University I go to at home. Usually, I say that I study in Y.U. The reaction is almost automatic. "NYU?" is what they counter with. If I am in a good mood, I explain that I study at Yeshiva University. They nod, and say "Oh right", as if they know what that is. Once in a while though, I meet someone enlightened. They hear the word "yeshiva" - become excited - and ask me "Do you know Shlomo?"

There is no shortage of stories to tell about my experience in London. I have been set up for *Shabbat* by people I have met on the tube, or train as it is called back home. When I asked to buy suspenders at Mark's and Spencer's, the Macy's or Saks of England, the saleswoman stared me down to the floor (I was told later that suspenders in this country are a lady's garter wear).

If there is one thing I want you to come away from this letter with, it is that London is here for if you want it. This means that if you are adventurous, think you can tough it out on your own, and want to meet people in Europe, you can be here next year. The process is not so difficult. I will be in YU in January to finish studying for my degree. I'd love to share any information you might be interested in regarding my experiences here. You can Email me at raviv@yu1.yu.edu. Good luck on finals!

Editor's Note: The author of this letter is Eyal J. Raviv, a YC student. He will be returning to YU following winter recess.

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Course to be taught by two internationally renowned experts, Drs. Devra Lee Davis and Richard D. Morgenstern, Gottesman Distinguished Visiting Professors. A former Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Dr. Morgenstern has taught at the Graduate Programs of Johns Hopkins and American Universities. Former Scholar in Residence at the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and Presidential Appointee, Dr. Davis has appeared on Prime Time Live, Live with Connie Chung and will be on 60 Minutes this December 29.

CHECK IT OUT !!!

New Jersey Tough on Hate Crimes

continued from page one

ing them into the fabric of our lives."

Continuing with the theme of synthesizing of worldliness and religion, Governor Whitman noted her recent trip to Israel as the leader of a trade mission from her state. New Jersey's Governor said she would not forget, "standing in the Golan Heights and looking across into Syria, a hostile power perched right in Israel's backyard." Seeing the topographical relationship of the Golan Heights to Syria deepened the Governor's understanding of "the difficulties of Israel maintaining safe and secure borders and reinforced her "commitment to the fact that Jerusalem must remain undivided as the capital of the Jewish homeland."

Recounting her experience of praying at the Western Wall, the Governor reflected on her thoughts of the miracle that is that State of Israel and how, just three years after the Holocaust, the Jewish people received freedom in their own land. The Governor lamented the destruction of one third of the Jewish people during the worst calamity in human history when she spoke about her visit to Yad Va'Shem in Jerusalem. "Incredibly as it

seems, there are some people today who believe, that today in 1996, that fifty years of hearing about the Holocaust is enough, and that we don't need to talk about it anymore." Governor Whitman unwaveringly denounced such claims, and assured those in attendance that New Jersey was leading the way in practicing zero tolerance on crimes of hate, prosecuting them to the full extent of the law. In addition, the Governor proudly mentioned that she was able to write legislation requiring Holocaust education in all New Jersey public schools into law, the first State in the US to do so.

Governor Whitman closed her remarks with what became the theme of the evening. "Tonight," she began, "I celebrate Chanuka at Yeshiva University. A light of hope, tradition, knowledge and wisdom, in an otherwise turbulent world." As the convocation concluded and the Chanuka festivities began, the light of hope and of the future of the students of Yeshiva University was showcased through a multimedia presentation during the dinner, The Belz School of Music Choir, and the various student representatives in attendance.

Student Notebook

Costa Rica With Just A Backpack and Pocket Change

BY MATHEW LEADER

Forget about going home. When you are old, fat and bald, you will regret not going off somewhere cool for winter break while you were young. My roommate Daniel and I had been firm believers in this principle since the first massive snowfall last year. So what if we hadn't seen our families since Succot? We needed to go somewhere warm, and if they really loved us, our parents would understand. In fact, we decided not only to go thaw out, but to make this an Official College Life Experience. Short of being eaten by big-game cats or contracting dengue fever, we were committed to the adventure of a lifetime, and what better way to get it than the official Bohemian travel plan; backpacking across...somewhere.

Thailand or Peru were our first choices (since we had both served a few years in Washington Heights and were comfortable with the idea of fetid, dangerous jungles and primitive tribal living), but for assorted reasons, neither worked out. This does not mean y'all should not go; I wanted to, but my parents had read *Shining Path: The World's Most Dangerous Guerrilla Movement*, and seen things on *60 Minutes* about Asian human organ-theft rings or something.

Finally, flipping through brochures and comparing ticket prices, we came upon the chic, cheap-yet-relatively-safe-student-holiday-location-of-the-year: Costa Rica. Dubbed "Nature At It's Sexiest" by the *Let's Go* guide-

book, "the tiny jewel of Central America" had all things snifty: cloud forests, perfect beaches, exploding volcanoes, raging rivers, friendly natives called *Ticos*, and lots of fellow college travelers. It sounded so good that we immediately forked over the cash for two not-so-direct NY to LA to Guatemala City to San Jose airline tickets. With all the money saved on airfare we decided to splurge on food and accommodations, so we bought thirty Tradition Noodle Soups, a first-class genuine nylon tent, two neat sleeping bags, invested in the *Let's Go* book, and we were ready to go.

Even though we knew the famous Burns motto "Be Prepared!", we cavalierly stepped out of the airport in San Jose without a word of Spanish to our credit, and no set plans for our two weeks other than avoiding all hotels the Guide noted for their "relatively few tourist deaths". We noticed who looked like they were having the most fun in the airport however, and these were the numerous well-tanned surfers, carrying huge boards in special surfboard bags and not much else. Since we wanted to be well-tanned too, we jumped on their bus and rode off to what would turn out to be Puerto Viejo, apparently a world-renowned surfing nirvana on the Caribbean coast.

This was to be our first experience on the luxurious national bus system of Costa Rica. As we got on, official bus-guys (must be, since they took our money) handed small brown bags to the numerous little children, all of which were used on the three-hour trip



Daniel Brody and Mathew Leader deep in the Tropical Rain Forests of Costa Rica

through the mountainous, rainy jungle, over roads and bridges not one inch wider than the bus itself. Riding the buses seems to be the national blood sport of Central America, with itinerant plantain salesmen, farmers, grandmothers, bags, kids, produce and animals all vying for air and seat space in the *autobus*. Between rounds of motion-sickness, the natives genially snack on fried plantain chips and chuckle at the soft white *Norteamericanos* who often become alarmed at the steep angle of descent the buses take down muddy mountainsides, livestock shooting down the center aisle

and back again. Ha ha! Funny gringos!

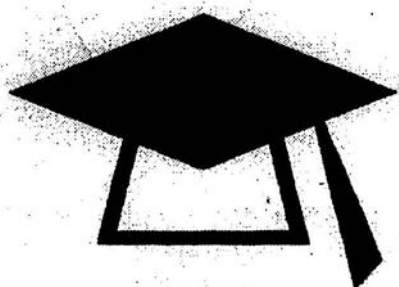
Anyway, we finally got to the village, a rustic spot where two dirt roads (as if there was another kind) crossed next to a white sand beach, sun a' shining and waves a' crashing. We wanted to camp on the beach in our tent, but one of the surf gods said that the Caribbean was the Bad Side of the Isthmus. Thus, we again followed the surfers' lead and joined in the fervent search for a decent *cabina*, little rooms with beds and sometimes a bathroom, where you can spend the night and leave your stuff to be

continued on page 12

COMMENCEMENT 1997

THURSDAY, MAY 22, 11:00 AM

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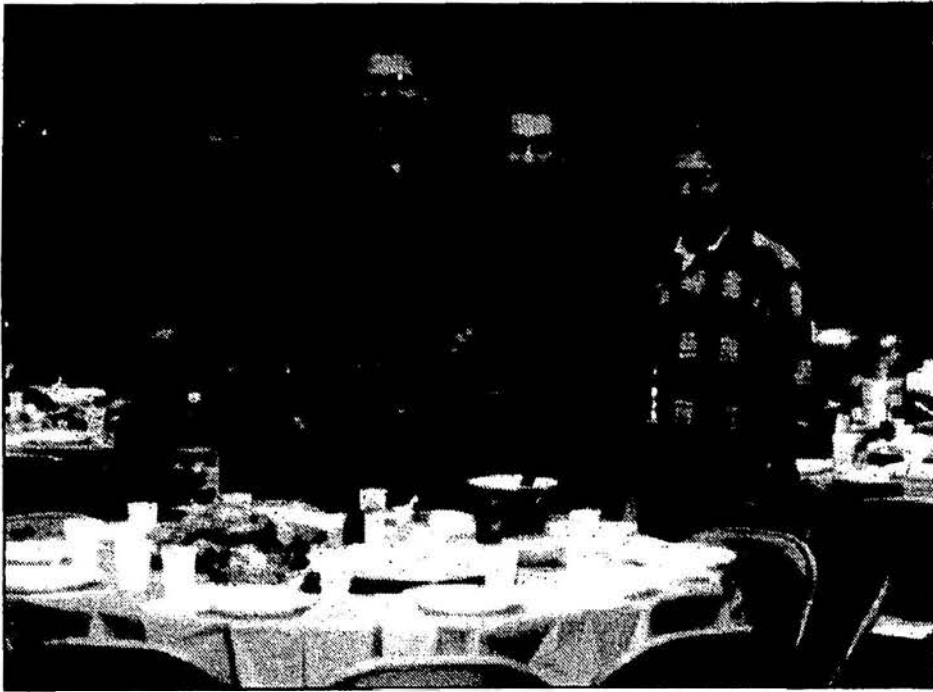
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IBC Student Council at their first annual IBC Chanukah Luncheon.
l. to r. Nachum Lamm-VP, Gary Strong-Secretary, Bryan Ashenberg-President,
Jonathan Sicklick-Treasurer.

IBC Sponsors Chanukah Luncheon

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

During Chanukah, Yeshiva University students create a multitude of events through which to express their joy for the holiday. This year, a new event was inaugurated, as the Isaac Breuer College held its first annual Chanukah luncheon on Monday, December 9.

IBC President Bryan Ashenberg said, "The luncheon was created so that students and rabbeim could come together in a non-classroom, informal setting, and in the process learn more about one another."

Almost one-hundred students came to the event. While bagels, latkes, and donuts were served, the students enjoyed words of Torah from Rabbi Rabinowitz, who teaches in IBC. He called the students of IBC and of YU the future leaders of Orthodox Judaism, and urged them to live up to their potential. IBC president, Bryan Ashenberg, addressed the students and mentioned that the IBC student councils' goal is to work with the rabbeim to sponsor activities for the benefit of the student body.

For many of the students, the highlight of the event was the IBC Chanukah present, a glass mug which was given out to the entire IBC student body. Students also received the first issue of the *Insider*, a new IBC newsletter.

Ashenberg explained, "The IBC Stu-

dent Council, is interested in creating innovative programs for IBC students such as the newsletter and the Chanukah luncheon. We hope these programs will be continued and improved upon in future years."

While only one-hundred out of an expected two-hundred people showed up to the luncheon, according to most students, was a success. Andrew Goldberg, a SSSB sophomore, said, "The speakers were great and the small environment was vintage IBC. It felt good to have a warm Chanukah feeling amidst upcoming finals and papers."

IBC/JSS Chanukah Breakfast

IBC and JSS co-sponsored a Chanukah breakfast on Wednesday, December 11. Over forty students attended the breakfast which was preceded by the Rosh Chodesh davening. The keynote speaker at the event was Rabbi Blech. He discussed how the miracles of Chanukah and Purim are hidden, contrary to the miracles of Pesach and Shavuot.

The spirit of Chanukah permeated the YU campus and with the help of IBC, the holiday was celebrated in a successful manner. As Isaac Galena, a YC sophomore said, "No other school celebrates Chanukah like YU. The *chagigot* were great and I felt like I was part of a community."

participated in the festivities, which included free soda and donuts to help fuel continued dancing.

Among the rabbis in attendance were Av Beis Din of Tel Aviv Rabbi Avraham Sherman, Masgiach Ruhani of RIETS Rabbi Yosef Blau, Max and Marion Grill Dean of RIETS Rabbi Zevulun Charlap, and MYP Roshei Yeshiva Rabbi Reuven Parness and Rabbi Meir Goldwicht. Rosh Kollel Rabbi Herschel Schachter provided a boost to the celebration's intensity at the end.

Neiss was pleased with the turnout and ambiance. "There was a great atmosphere, especially for Chanukah, considering that Purim is normally the big *chagiga* here," he said. "The guys were having a good time."

SOY Chanukah Chagiga Features Neshoma Orchestra

BY DAVID SWIDLER

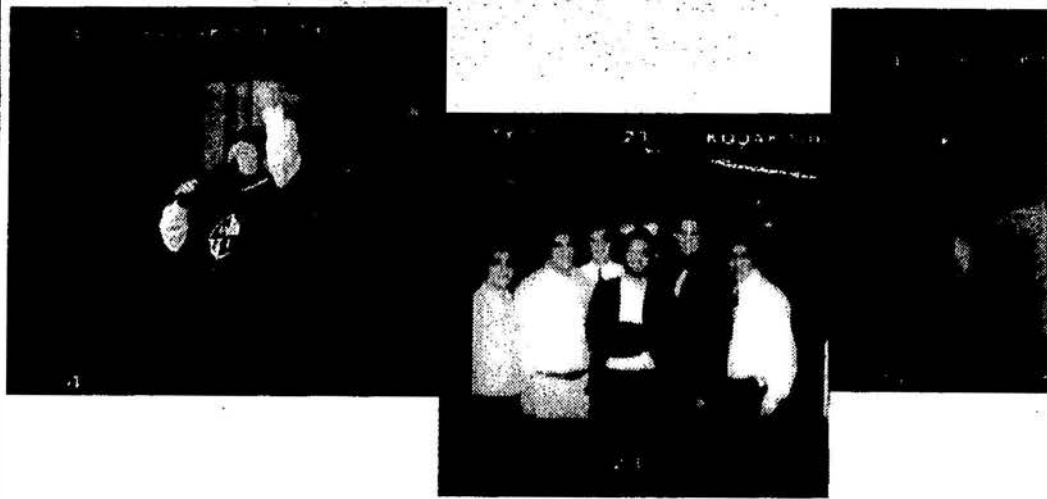
This year's SOY sponsored Chanukah Chagiga brought Neshoma Orchestras to Yeshiva University. On Tuesday, December 10, hundreds of students gathered in the Main Beis Midrash first for Torah, then for music, dancing, and refreshments.

The evening began with a *shiur* by MYP Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Yonasan Sachs on Chanukah, in which he discussed some of the hashkafic issues surrounding the holiday. After *ma'ariv*, the six-piece band commenced its medley of Jewish dance music.

SOY President Jonathan Neiss estimated that about four hundred students

CHAN

AT YESHIVA



Dedi Heads Rock Lam YC/SCW Annual C

BY ERIC LONDON

The Chanuka Concert 5757 rolled through Lamm Auditorium on December 5, tearing up everything in its path.

As Master of Ceremonies, YCSC President Jason Buskin appeared before the hungry crowd of 1200, he could feel the electricity in the air.

Buskin kicked off the musical extravaganza with one of YU's own ensembles, headed by upcoming performer and songwriter, Shmuel Bodenheimer. Singers Aaron Blumenthal, Eli Berger and Yitzi Shapiro completed the cast. The song, "Hinei Matov," was inspired by a call for peace and *achdut* among the Brothers of Israel. When asked how he got the idea for the composition Shmuel replied: "I was inspired by the March bus bombings in Israel. In a sense, the song seeks a culmination of peace between the Jewish sects who were arguing amongst each other at the time... By the way, did I mention I'm coming out with a tape?" Following the original performance, an emotional crowd climaxed with a standing ovation for their fellow collegians.

As YU's own exited the stage, Buskin, decked out in a pristinely pressed tuxedo made of the finest fibers money can buy, ushered in rising Jewish music performer, Mendy Wald. Wald upped the tempo with a few songs from his new album.

Feeling the love, but demanding more, the crowd yearned for Wald's hallmark "Sameach" and overpowered the cheering to let him know. It was not long before the entertainer acknowledged his fans and belted out "Sameach." Spontaneously, the crowd sang along while pouring out into the aisles clapping and dancing.

Enjoying their first rush of adrenaline, the crowd settled down as M.C. Buskin thanked his Council's efforts in making this the best Jewish music concert ever and noted Neshoma Orchestra's accompaniment, the YU Band, Mendy Wald, Avraham Fried, and even the added accouterments- the Dougie's and refreshment stands positioned in the lobby.

Following the thank you's, a faint, yet recognizable voice to even the most uninitiated in Jewish music, began to fill the auditorium with melody. Students instantly whipped into a frenzy as they craved for a glimpse of the international superstar known around the world as Dedi. The star exhilarated the crowd with his thundering entrance. Guys and gals poured into the aisles once again, and though Burns security guard Captains Morales, Kharwin, and the rest of the ranks did a wonderful job, they were unable to suppress this mass of humanity's excitement. The room was rocking and the feet were stomping and it was only until after the concert, that it became

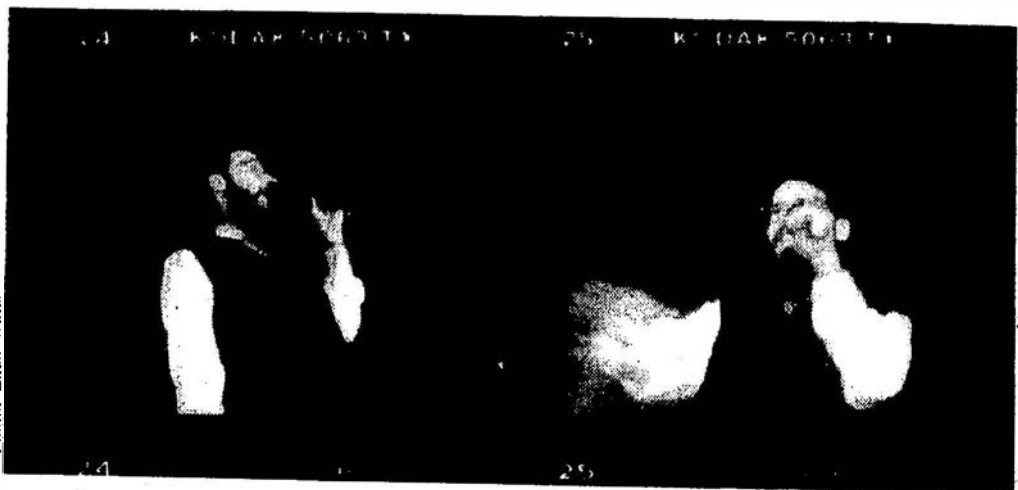


Photo: Eitan Walks



Report Auditorium At Chanukah Concert

apparent that much of the noise was actually chairs breaking off their hinges.

Dedi finished his show and left the stage only to return to thank the concert organizers for making the event the best concert he's ever been to. He then proceeded with an encore. Just plain giddy that Dedi had returned, YU students-turned-maniacs returned to their frenzy in the walkways.

It was finally time for the meat and potatoes of the evening. Avraham Fried took to the stage caused a second rush of pure adrenaline to pulse through the veins of all in attendance. Feeling at home, a brave few tested their skill and body surfed in the aisles. By this point in the concert, nerve damage ensued for many from the concert's sheer loudness. One person noted, "My ears were numb after the concert...I felt like I was stuck in that humming motorcycle helmet commercial for two days." Avraham Fried's repertoire included the songs: "Yerushalayim," "Shem Shami," and the whopper "Sisu Vi Simcha." The concert closed with Avraham Fried, Mendy Wald and the Neshoma Orchestra.

When asked if he went to the concert, YC Senior Yossi Lewis replied, "I didn't go, but I went to the meat market afterwards," surely referring to the Dougie's stand in the Main Building's lobby. Others weren't able to participate in the fun

because they were studying for finals. YC Junior Ari Schuster explained, "I was studying for a chemistry test at the time, but 'I heard 'Bodey' practice and he was wonderful." YC Senior Daniel Lowe said: "(The concert was) A real Woodstock II...it was out of control!"

M.C. Buskin, not to be confused with a performer in the early 1990's, declared the concert, "a tremendous success," noting that "credit should be extended to students who volunteered their time before the concert as well as helping packing up the equipment after it ended."

All of the performers loved the concert, and raved how everyone at Yeshiva gets involved the way we do.

Dedi later earmarked a donation to YU in the amount of \$500.

Both YCSC and SCWSC extended their great thanks to YCSC Vice President Natanel Lebowitz, who toiled day after day to make the concert the successful celebration it became.

SSSB President Bennett Schachter may have summed up the concert the best: "The effort that went into this concert made it the best concert I've been to in all three years I've been here. The 'not so surprise' guest was great, and overall the concert was unbelievable! You could really feel the student ruach in the audience- everyone had a blast!"



MYP Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Mordechai Willig delivers a joint YC/SCW shiur on Chanukah.

Rabbi Willig Delivers Joint Lecture on Chanukah

BY EPHRAIM SHAPIRO

On the fifth night of Chanukah, MYP Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Mordechai Willig gave a joint SOY/TAC-sponsored shiur to a crowd that packed the Weissberg Commons in Belfer Hall. Since this is the first semester in several years that Rabbi Willig is not teaching at Stern College, the chosen topic of discussion was the obligation of women with respect to the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles.

Rabbi Willig dealt with a complicated mix of citations from the *Talmud*, *Halachic* commentators and enigmatic phraseology of each regarding the nature of women's lighting. He concluded that a woman's requirement stems not from an obligation to light *per se*, but that she must at least see Chanukah candles burning in her household, and if she is the only one capable of effecting that, then she should do so.

The shiur ended with insights into some of the concepts invoked during the lecture. American Jews are exposed to many influences from the outside American society. In college, they are introduced to many schools of thought which may not agree with a concept such as that of a woman

belonging to her husband. Why not say that a man belongs to the house of his wife? One must, concluded Rabbi Willig, recognize the fact that many radical changes have taken place due to the influences of the world's societies. Many of these changes have been incorporated willingly and some, unwillingly, into Jewish Law. The symbolism of the Chanukah candles tells us where to draw the line. We put the Menorah, which represents the Torah, by the doorway of the house, and the Torah tells us what we allow inside and what we should keep out.

That, however, in and of itself is a difficult decision to make and should be done by a competent authority. That, Rabbi Willig said, is the meaning of Chanukah. The holiday of the *Mesorah*, the oral Tradition. Chanukah was not even mentioned in the *Mishna*, to teach us the eternal lesson that we must always have an oral tradition. Rabbi Willig quoted Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, who said that the laws of the gentiles can be read from a book. A person can master physics by reading a book. Talmud, though, doesn't work the same way; there must be an oral tradition from a Rabbi to his student. That oral link in the chain is irreplaceable.

Pre-Chanukah Chagiga for Russian Immigrants A Success

BY GARY STRONG

For Washington Heights' Jewish Russian émigrés, the celebration of Chanukah 5757 started a night early as area residents joined students from Yeshiva University in a Chanukah *chagiga* on December 4.

Seth Grossman, Treasurer of the Philanthropy Society, who along with the student councils of the various Jewish Studies programs sponsored the event, said, "This [*chagiga*] showed the Russian people with less of a background how to light a menorah and learn about Chanukah, and just as importantly, we showed them how much fun *mitzvot* could be."

Over two-hundred people attended the festivities. The *chagiga* included singing, dancing, *latkes* and donuts, and a raffle for a dirt bike. One Russian man explained that this was the first time he lit the menorah and enjoyed the happiness of the moment. A young Russian boy added that until now he had only heard stories about the joy of Chanukah.

Those in attendance were privileged to hear Vice President of Academic Affairs William Schwartz, deliver a *dvar Torah* in Yiddish and then translate it into English. He quoted the Gemara which asks why a menorah placed too high is not acceptable, and answered that a menorah placed too high does not fulfill the requirement of *persumainissa* - a publicizing of the miracle of Chanukah. Dr. Schwartz commended the students of YU and Stern for going out of their way to publicize Chanukah, and mentioned that the outreach of those involved with the Philanthropy Society will have a lasting effect on those lives they touch in the community.

Faced with the overwhelming enthusiasm and happiness of the Russians at the event, many of the Yeshiva and Stern College students at the *chagiga* expressed the feeling that we, as students of YU, have much to be thankful for. Grossman remarked, "Too many of us at YU take for granted how lucky we are that we are in a Jewish environment."



The Jewel of Central America

continued from page 12

ransacked while you go out for the day. The quality ranges significantly with price, in terms of sheet cleanliness, running water, toilet paper, etc. However, for our first try we did well, managing to find some cabins that were spotlessly maintained by a dour, silent German guy (Costa Rica seems to be a preferred locale for men on the run), for about \$10 a night.

We spent our first two days leisurely exploring the area with a stray dog that we picked up (they are everywhere, like the cats in Jerusalem), eating coconuts we found on the beach, and trying to learn how to surf from watching our new friends. Personally, I found surfing to be harder than amateur brain surgery, even though I did manage to stand up for about three seconds once, before being destroyed by a wave much, much larger than myself. The key thing is really the lingo (dude, you should have seen me ride the barrel on that betty, the tail cut both ways and I jimmied right over the top) which we worked on faking from day one. Besides the beach, and some very cool jungle islands and shipwrecks right offshore, we just slept in the sun and practiced our burgeoning Spanish (*dos cervezas Senor! Adonde esta el baño?*) at night.

The current went out on Friday, as did all the surfers. We bused back to San Jose, again on Queasy Tico bus lines, and called a friend of Daniel's family there to bum a place for Shabbat. He graciously agreed to have us, and we managed to arrive at his fortified mansion right before shul started. Shabbat was a great experience, good food and company, and an informative speech by the rabbi about "el nino Moses" and the "pueblo Israel". It was tough to leave the great hospitality and three live-in maids on Saturday night, but there was much more to see and do.

Our next stop chosen from *Let's Go* (yes, they are paying me for this article) was Fortuna, which was, what else, about a three-hour bus ride to the north. Fortuna seems to be nothing special until you get out of the bus, look up the main road, and notice a very large and steaming mountain alarmingly close to the edge of town. This is *Volcan Arenal*, the biggest, baddest volcano south of Mt. Saint Helens. The locals have obviously never heard of Pompeii, because that low cloud over the town is really *smoke*, and that constant low rumbling is not thunder, but rather continuous eruptions from the open pit of hell that is located just on the other side of the mountain. If you are rich and demented, you can stay at a place for about \$150 a night, called the Inferno Lodge or something, where you get a room perched on the opposite mountain, directly facing the lava flow. What fun. We stayed at some less precariously-situated cabins, which we shared with some very defensive French Canadians ("So wat eef we are Franch! Why dat matter! Does not meen we are *stupide!*") and a large pet toucan.

We did go to see the eruptions that night, with the flaming rivers of lava, ground-shaking, etc. and it was a certifiable Can't Miss Experience. Unlike the beach, however, there's not much you can *do* with a volcano after a while except run away. Conveniently, then, while the volcano is the main attraction of the area, it has creat-

ed other neat things to experience, like the local river which runs through town at a warmish 100 degrees Fahrenheit. A trip to swim in the non-boiling end of the river that night was included in the cabins rental, and afterwards we went to the local cantina for mango slushies with the people we met there.

In the morning, we took their advice and rented horses and a guide to go see a nearby waterfall. Juan, "The Guide," was not a happy man, telling us that "real horsemen don't talk" while they ride, but our horses were so near death that we wondered aloud whether real horsemen feed their horses or not. He was not amused, and offered to wait at the top of the ravine with the thoroughbreds while we hiked down to see the falls.

This was the "nature at it's...most Costa Rican" part. We were sure that the waterfall could be no cooler than the jungle itself, with the lush foliage, huge trees and vines, monkeys and birds screaming when the volcano went off, etc. How wrong we were. When we finally got down to the deep rocky pool where the water crashed down, we just stood there, each involved in our own personal Indiana Jones fantasy. It's a place where you expect to hear the harps playing, and a deep voice saying "Miller. It doesn't get any better than this." We would easily have spent all day swimming and hangin' in the jungle, but Juan had made it clear that we only had an hour before he went back to the glue factory with our steeds. On our way back, we got the ubiquitous Israeli trekkers to take our picture (*'allo, yeled! Kama oleh ha-susim?*), and lied about our time in the *Tzanchanim*.

In the afternoon, we went with the intelligent Canadians and some of our other fellow cabiners to some local caves that had an underground river rushing through them, and a little mangroves scene carved out of the limestone. It was very cool, and this is actually the part of the whole trip that I remember most clearly, because I got a strange tropical rash from the rental galoshes that is still with me today. We had a great time, but after two days of hard work we had seen most of the Fortuna sights, so it was time to move on.

Since we had been well within our budget for the trip, we felt that we could splurge a little. So, when we got back to San Jose, we went to a hotel in town and made arrangements to blow \$60 on a luxury whitewater rafting trip that we had seen advertised. I must have had too much cash left over, because I wisely decided to change money with some scruffy gentlemen in an alley that night. The \$100 that I kissed away was worth it for the mirth it brought to everyone who heard the story, especially the local constabulary.

The trip was scheduled for the next morning, so we spent the day wandering around San Jose trying to find the kosher bakery that our shabbat host had mentioned. We actually did find it, but only after walking for miles, and already stuffing ourselves with the snack of the street, which is green mango slices sold in a little bag with salt and lemon juice for about a buck. Sounds gross, but try it once and you're hooked. To make up for the financial excesses of the day, we got a room in a downtown hotel that *Let's Go* described as



Slurping down some cold ones at the local cantina

"basic". No kidding. My favorite touch was the space-conserving move of actually placing the toilet *inside* the shower, so that no time was wasted in the morning. We were tempted to burn the *Let's Go* book, but we needed it as evidence to prosecute the company when we got home.

In the morning, the trip down the river was worth every penny. We were bused out (three hours) to the Rio Paquare, which is smack in the middle of the rainforest, picking up other passengers along the way. I never saw the movie, but we were told that this river was the location for the rafting scene in *Congo*, and it definitely looked the part. Nothing but jungle all around, little waterfalls coming off the cliffs, toucans flying overhead, monkeys in the trees, etc. We stopped for lunch at a Robinson Crusoe-camp place that the company owned on the side of the river, where the non-Jews, eating their roast beef sandwiches and fresh omelettes, gazed longingly at our Tradition soups. At the end of the trip, you can buy pictures of your boat going over huge rapids, with all the passengers screaming in delight. Needless to say, we plunked down our \$15 each, and still have faith that the pictures will arrive soon.

Next, we wanted to go to the Cloud Forest National Park, right next to the Nicaraguan border, to see the famous sea turtles lay their eggs. However, it seems to be an unreliable event, in that we met a woman who had been in Costa Rica for *three months* waiting to see it happen (must have a lotta time on her hands), so instead we went across the country to the black sands of the Pacific side for more beach time.

The big vacation spot on the Pacific is Jaco, a very cute town where people surf all day and go to *el discoteque* all night. Since we came before the weekend, we managed to get a couple of primo spots at the surf hangout south of the border, Chuck's Rooms and Boards (get it?), right next to the only Mexican fast-food joint in town, *Jaco Bell* (how 'bout now?). Chuck is sort of King Slacker of Central America, presiding over a group of guys who all left presumably real lives in the US or Europe to surf *ad infinitum* in tropical paradise. The plan is that they work for a few hours a day to make enough money to go wherever the waves are breaking, and then come back when they are broke. In fact, Chuck was not present when we arrived, being flush enough to go on a surfin' safari to Nicaragua for the week, but his Tico wife and pet parrot were there, and very nice. We rented some lumber (a big board for the uncoordinated) and a room with an English soccer hoodlum, understandably bitter over slicing the tendons in his ankle after one day's

waves.

We surfed for the morning at the somewhat dingy local beach, with slightly more successful results, and then rented bikes to ride around the bay, up the mountains, and down to the most pristine and beautiful black beach in the world. Even though our bikes broke, we got incredible sunburns, and we had no food for the day, a good time was had by all. That night we took our soups over to a nice restaurant in town, where we watched part of a Lakers game in Spanish. Next morning was Friday, and we called up our host again for Shabbat, and although he was not going to be home for the weekend, he again graciously agreed to have us. It was just Daniel and I and the servants for the day, and what fun we had as Senors of the hacienda. El Senor Rabbi noatshul recognized us, and we shmoozed with the whole *chevrah* at *seuda shlishit*.

After Shabbat, we decided to try and find the kosher falafel place and catch a movie at a nearby mall. We went to this place that looked like it was straight out of Beverly Hills; big beautiful houses, Gucci and Tiffany stores, etc., and except for the mini-manger scene in the lobby of the theater (these things were everywhere), we felt very much at home. "Babe" (El Porquito Valiente) was sold out, and we never found the restaurant, but we did manage to get some real Quaker Granola bars in one of the pseudo 7-11's. That night we found a youth hostel across town, and made friends with interesting people, like the guy from North Carolina who had just finished walking the Appalachian Trail alone for 6 months. We also saw the Turtle Girl again, but we hid.

Our final event was a trip to another volcano, Poas, one, which is right outside of San Jose, and actually the most popular park in the country. On the bus, I sat next to Yoav, who just got out of a command unit in Israel and was now the bodyguard for a big Senor in town. The volcano itself was very different from Arenal; you can walk up a concrete path right to the crater and look in, and see the little boiling sulfur lake in the middle. Right next door is the no-doubt-world-famous Costa Rican Coffee Museum, which gave out free samples to all the caffeine junkies in the area. They had never heard of iced tea when I asked.

On our last day, Daniel and I meandered around the city looking for authentic gifts for our loved ones. We bought some great llama products in the open market, crammed them in the space that our soups once occupied, and flew home. To be honest, we are still reaping the benefits of our trip with every subtly-dropped mention of Costa Rica that we can slide into conversation. And my rash barely itches.

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Editorials OPINION

Traditional Jewish Liberalism

It is a widely held two-part political truism which I never really lucidly pondered until hearing Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.; simultaneously one of the most openly Jewish members of Congress and the most openly gay) articulate it so intelligently some months ago: Jews are more liberal than their fellow Americans, and this liberalism is derived not from the residue of a persecution complex, but from traditional, religious Jewish "values." When I asked the honorable Mr. Frank how he could proudly make such an assertion and in the same speech decry the rise of the Christian right which dares to allow its public policy to be informed by Christian religious values, he (to my mind, at least) spewed forth some of that typically evasive and platitudinous politeness which they must inculcate into every Congressional newcomer at freshman orientation.

Democratic-voting Jewish liberalism, as manifested in the defining issues (support for the welfare state, overweening concern for oppressed minorities, freedom of speech, and a general permissiveness in sexual morality), is so taken for granted in Washington as to allow one of Clinton's liaisons to the American Jewish community, Jay Footlick, to confidently inform a group of Orthodox Union interns last summer that (roughly reconstructed): "No matter what we (the Clinton campaign cadre) do, no matter how hard we fall on our face as far as Israel is concerned, we're still guaranteed at least 80% of

the Jewish vote come November." This despite the fact that the President's platform was by no means particularly liberal.

But the truism, subjected to scrutiny, reveals itself in both its claims to be largely false; and here I borrow liberally (well, in a sense) from the ideas of Charles Liebman and Steven Cohen. For were it true that Jewish liberalism derives from traditional religious Jewish values, we would expect that liberalism to most prominently assert itself, if anywhere, in issues of social justice, where it appears at first glance to be buttressed by the greatest weight of Biblical and Talmudic evidence, and not in those areas, such as homosexuality, where it appears to fly in the face of Leviticus. In fact, a survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center revealed the reverse inconsistency within Jewish liberalism. When compared not with other Americans in general, but with other Americans of comparable socio-economic levels, 26% more Jews than non-Jews believe that gay sex is not wrong, 24% more Jews approve of abortions for any reason, and 21% more approve of legalizing marijuana. However, when polled on issues of welfare, of reducing economic disparities between classes, of government aid to blacks and of freedom of expression, Jews were not at all significantly more liberal than their neighbors.

More forcefully, were it true that Jew-

BENJAMIN
BALINT
COLUMNIST

ish liberalism stems from traditional religious Jewish values, we would expect that those closest to the Jewish tradition, those most intimately familiar with its texts, those most fully conversant with the intricacies of its laws, to be the most liberal, as we would expect those most estranged from traditional Judaism to be the least liberal. *Rashei yeshiva* should, on this theory, be at the vanguard of Birkenstock wearing, ACLU subscribing, flabby-brained left-wing sentimentalists who use the word "tolerance" *ad nauseam*, while intermarried Jews should generally be Newt-loving, gun-toting cold-hearted capitalists who spend free weekends crusading for family values. Quite unimaginable.

Some will surely reply (in typically Reform fashion) that we can extract and universalize core Jewish values without worrying too much over the nitty-gritty of specific laws; that we can speak of a "spirit" of Judaism which emerges from, but ultimately transcends, the minutiae of the *mitzvot*, and which thus acquires existence independent of these *mitzvot*.

This argument too, however, is deeply spurious. First, it ignores the fact that the essence of *halacha* is decidedly illiberal in its attempt to govern the private conduct of every individual, that the Torah severely condemns any sexual laxity and calls homosexuality, for example, an abomination, and that *chazal*

tend to be more ethnocentric than unrestrainedly universalistic (see last year's Silverman-Duker debate). Second, when selecting an exegete of Jewish tradition - a political *posek*, as it were - who will determine what form a political ethic independent of *halacha* will take, I would rather choose a *talmid chacham* who possesses a demonstrated mastery of *halacha's* details than choose a Barney Frank who is largely ignorant of its pronouncements. In other words, those Jewish liberals who claim to derive their ideology from traditional Judaism, who presume to speak in the name of Jewish values, are more often than not totally innocent of any real knowledge of precisely the Jewish tradition they pretend to interpret. Third, even assuming that we overlook the illiberal elements of our religion and that we accept a Frankist interpretation of it, it still seems far from clear that the value of *tzedaka* necessarily entails a welfare system, or that the value of free speech necessitates a protection of pornography, or, for that matter, that the value of according equal treatment to others necessarily implies affirmative action.

Barney Frank taught me not only that liberalism is a weak support for any meaningful Jewish identity, but also that the theoretical translation and practical implementation of religious ideals into public policy almost always defies the simplistic thought of those blinded by an agenda - be they on the Christian right or the Jewish left.

The Politics of *Bitachon*: National Security and Personal Faith

BY ARYEH TUCHMAN

Until recently I was a firm believer in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. I was glad when he won, and I rejoiced, soon after the elections, as he swept through the U.S. in what I perceived to be an extraordinarily successful visit. Netanyahu's tough-guy rhetoric refreshed me and gave me *chizuk*-strength; it calmed the perpetual nervousness I had felt during the previous government's term, when concession followed concession and the number of Jewish terror victims mounted steadily.

Now I am nervous again. I am nervous because of the cooling of relations between Israel and its Arab allies, such as Jordan and Egypt, that has occurred under Netanyahu. I am nervous because of reports that Netanyahu's sup-

port continues to wane even within his own party. I wonder how long Netanyahu can defy international and domestic pressures to concede, and whether his current balancing act is anything more than a bumbling scramble across an impossible tightrope. And while there have been no bus bombings during his administration, Jews continue to die in terrorist attacks and Palestinian Authority led gunfights.

Most of all, however, I am nervous because I now realize that in the months before the election and the weeks that followed it, I placed more trust in a man than I did in G-d. Netanyahu would stop the terrorists, he would improve the economy, he would secure Israel's future, and Peres wouldn't; subconsciously, many of us assumed that G-d had very little to do with it. Once Net-

anyahu was elected, we relaxed because we thought we had regained control of our nation's destiny; we forgot that G-d's plan will be carried out no matter who holds the office.

This is one of the dangers of democracy: by empowering us, it seduces us into thinking that we alone set the future's course, that by electing the right leader and by making our views known to him we can decide history and solve the world's problems. But King Solomon said that "The heart of a king," or a Prime Minister, or a President, "is in Hashem's hands - He turns it wherever He wishes" (Mishley 21:1).

I am not suggesting that we cease our political activism, that we give up the illusion of power that democracy grants us. *Chazal* tell us that we

may not trust in miracles; G-d demands that we roll up our sleeves and use the tools that He provides us with to try to accomplish our goals. Let us write letters, then, attend rallies, and vote in elections; let each Jew use every useful means to choose governments and to influence them to sympathize with his views. But in politics, as in our personal lives, we must remember amidst our physical efforts that G-d alone will determine any issue's ultimate outcome.

I am still glad that Netanyahu won the elections. Between his vision of peace and Peres's, I would still opt for his. But I am no longer a firm believer in Netanyahu; the events of the past months have reminded me to place my faith a little higher up in the chain of command.

LETTERS

To the Editor

YUFA: What Really Happened

To the Editor:

In "Twenty Years of Memories" (21 Nov. 1996), either President Lamm or the reporter, Ari Kahn, states that the YU faculty union in the 1970s "took their fight all the way up to the [US] Supreme Court." That assertion is, to put it mildly, incorrect.

When the faculty union first sought recognition from the administration, its leaders were repeatedly told that the administration and the trustees would fight "all the way to the Supreme Court." The latter kept their vows.

The National Labor Relations Board entered the story by certifying the Yeshiva University Faculty Association in the wake of formal hearings which established the need for a union and in the wake of a NLRB-held election which established the overwhelming desire of the faculty (by a landslide vote of nearly two to one) for a union. At this point a sensitive administration would have sat

down, as did many others, and negotiated with its own aggressive faculty.

Instead, the YU administration chose to challenge the faculty union and the law by going to the US Court of Appeals. When the ruling of that court went in favor of the administration, the NLRB—a federal agency acting now, thanks to the YU administration, on behalf of unionized faculties all across the nation—appealed to the US Supreme Court. The consequent 5-4 decision by the Supreme Court upholding the Appeals court decision has made the phrase "Yeshiva Decision" or even the name "Yeshiva" a term of opprobrium in the academic world.

The YU faculty, in short, had neither the resources, nor the legal standing, nor the desire to go anywhere near the Supreme Court.

Dr. Manfred Weidhorn
Guterman Professor of English
Former Co-founder & Vice President of YUFA

Butt Out

To the Editor:

Today, I watched a yeshiva-boy committing suicide...slowly. His friend helped by offering him a light. Are cigarettes kosher? I wonder. I was alarmed to see young boys smoking in Mea-Shearim and equally concerned to witness the trend here in Toronto. I know they're smoking in places far beyond my travel range.

Why am I astounded by this? Let me explain. Grape products are subject to restriction because they were once (and still maybe) used in a voda-zara (idol-worship or paganism). Tobacco was and still is used in religious rites in some cultures as well. So, why does tobacco not have the same restrictions as wine?

I'm sorry to say, I know the answer: Some

rebbees are hooked on the weed. They can't give it up. And not only that - their students see them smoking, and as the song goes, "Un, az derebbet anst, tanzen alleh chassidim" - or, if it's okay by the rebbe it's okay by me. My case is, of course, augmented by the fact that the R' bono-Shel-Olam would not at all be amused to see us willfully harming our bodies by pulling toxic smoke into our lungs and then exhaling it into the air to poison others. I challenge any smoking rebbe to justify his use of tobacco, especially in the presence of young impressionable students.

Better still, I invite the Rabbonim to declare the use of tobacco "traif" so we can get on with our lives - in good health!

Sarah Hartt-Snowbell
Toronto, Canada

Monday Morning Quarterback

To the Editor:

I'm writing this letter to voice my sentiments regarding the Editor-in-Chief's message that appeared in the last issue of *The Commentator*. Mr. Muzin stated that no Student Council or Yeshiva organization arranged any commemoration or memorial for the late Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin. Mr. Muzin wanted to know why nothing was done. The fact: an event was considered, but due to tight scheduling, school-work, and the Holiday Events Committee busy preparing the Chanuka Concert, the event never came to fruition.

Personally, I agree with Mr. Muzin and I think an event should have commemorated the late Prime Minister's yahrtzeit; however, this is not the reason I'm writing this letter - I want to know why Mr. Muzin didn't approach anyone on the Council about whether the event would be run or who was running it, instead of complaining after the fact? Each week YCSC posts upcoming events in the calendar in hopes that students will optimize upon the lectures and events provided by

YCSC as well as other University organizations. Additionally, all Student Council board members are listed in *The Guide*, and if Mr. Muzin really wanted something done, he could have walked down the hall or picked up the phone. While admittedly, the program never materialized, if Mr. Muzin intended to benefit the student body and felt he represented the consensus of student opinion as Editor-in-Chief of their newspaper - Mr. Muzin should've addressed the need for a memorial in an earlier column instead of merely playing Monday morning quarterback.

My intention is not to berate the Editor for taking a cheap shot at YCSC and its branches. Rather, it's to encourage all students to take a proactive stance in their school, participate in its events, and feel free to offer suggestions to its Council members for improvements and events they would like to see them run on or off campus.

Eric London
YC '98
Secretary, YCSC

How Badly Do You Want It?

To the Editor:

The job a student gets after graduation depends on the talent and motivation of the student, the quality of the education the school provides, the efforts of the Placement Office and luck. As your editorialists point out (Financial Woes, November 12, 1996, p. 2) until now the Placement Office has received most of the complaints about the difficulty of getting jobs in finance. So it is a step in the right direction that the same article blames the faculty as well. Since it is unproductive to complain about luck, there is only one area left to examine.

In my opinion, the Placement Office does a spectacular job already, so any improvement will have to come from efforts of faculty and students. The faculty can help by tailoring courses to job requirements (without going to the extreme of vocational training), getting personal recognition that reflects favorably on the school, encouraging companies to recruit on campus and working with students to polish their financial and job-hunting skills.

Students have every right to demand these things both through *The Commentator* and in person. I encourage any finance major who feels unsupported by the faculty to see me. But students should also be aware that the faculty's first goal will be providing a firm fundamental understanding that broadens and deepens the mind, job skills come second.

Students can help by succeeding in financial jobs and thus paving the way for younger students. I feel I have the right to demand of my students that they put in enough effort that they will be a credit to the school. Since finance jobs pay better than any other job category, financial jobs are very competitive.

Any student who wants one should be prepared to work hard for it. I promise that any student who puts in the work will have the full support of the faculty.

But finance is a basic skill in business and life. Not every finance major should

aspire to a job in finance any more than every English major should be a writer. And for many financial jobs, a degree in a field such as Mathematics is valued as much as a degree in finance.

Our top students get excellent financial jobs, often through interviews arranged by faculty members. But the traditional career path in finance; whether you graduate from Harvard, Yeshiva or grade school; is to get some work experience in a related field, then an MBA. There are few financial jobs open to people right out of college; after all would you invest in a mutual fund run by a 21-year-old recent graduate? Even if they did get an A- in Portfolio Management?

The few financial jobs available go to top students with connections or perseverance or luck. I do not believe that any undergraduate school gets many recruiters for these jobs.

No one should be discouraged from trying for these jobs, they are attainable. But no one should sit back and wait for one to be offered to them from an on-campus interview. Tell your friends, relatives, professors and the Placement Office that you want one. Send off lots of resumes. Demand good courses and work hard in them. Look for summer internships, unpaid if you can afford it. Get experience and publications in the investment club investment challenge, the Exchange or other activities.

The reward for all this work will be a satisfying financial job. If enough students do it, then in 10 years *The Commentator* can run an editorial complaining about the disruption caused by the mobs of investment bank recruiters hanging around outside Belfer classrooms.

Incidentally, I notice *The Commentator* has three business positions but no finance positions. Perhaps you could do your part and appoint an associate editor for finance.

Dr. Aaron Brown
Professor of Finance
SSSB

Get With The Program

To the Editor:

Picture four grown adults in a room, running from one piece of machinery to the next, making adjustments, correcting hook-ups, jumping to fix connections, replace fuses, and turning on and off little glowing green lights. What does this remind you of - a futuristic lab gone awry? The Bronx Zoo for Humans, perhaps?

The way I see it, this could be a vivid description of whoever is in charge of the Yeshiva University internet server. I am sure that I am not alone in my complaint that YU has by far the worst internet server of any university, let alone any university in the much heralded "top 50 in the nation group."

How are we supposed to keep up in the age of communication when we feel lucky just to know we connected to the server?

Who out there doesn't know the frustrating feeling after writing a two-page E-mail just to see that one cruel word, *disconnected* on the bottom of the page?

It seems that the only winner of this whole internet ordeal is NYNEX, who charges on a per call basis. The administration will tell you in glowing terms that our internet server charges are the lowest around - who can beat 25 bucks for 4 months of use? But our phone bill tells a different story. It's time for the administration to install a proper, Windows based server. Even if we had to pay \$10 a month it would be significantly lower than any independent service provider, and perhaps then students won't have to cross their fingers every time they try to hook up to YU1.

Jonathan Levy
YC '98

Macs Off To 7-1 Start

BY RON MARKOVITZ AND
STEVEN ZOMBEK

The '96-'97 Macs have jumped out to a 7-1 record, threatening to rewrite the record books of a best 8-1 start, and currently boast a five game winning streak.

The team has already had its share of great highlights as well as low points, but as Coach Johnny Halpert put it, what makes this group of players so special is "their willingness to come together, put their egos in check," and it's resulted into "great physical and mental toughness."

Some of the more astonishing statistics that have contributed to the team's success have been:

• Forevery 23 field goals made, there has been 16 assists, showing great team play efficiency.

• The Macs are out-rebounding their opponents 41-27 per game, are scoring 9 points more, and are holding other teams to a mere 35% from the field (28% from downtown).

• Stellar play from Joel Jacobson, Alon Zaibert, Alex Shakhmurov, and Yehuda Halpert - Joel is averaging a double-double (16.8 points and 11 rebounds per game), Alon is having an all-around solid year (13.1 ppg, 42% 3-pointers, 86% from the line, 4 assists and steals/game), Alex has a huge presence inside (10.1 ppg, 7 rpg), and Yehuda is setting the pace of the offense well (6 assists per game and 2nd in steals on the team).

Though it's easy to point out those who are the team leaders in statistics, it has been a team effort, not to mention great play off the bench by Neil Bronstein, Brian Wein, Ira Landsman, and Marc Nadritch.

Assistant Coach Evan Goldstein, already recognized by the Stern tennis team as one of their many reasons for their success, has received kudos for his motivational skills, tough practiced drills, and heart-to-hearts he has with each player. Coach Halpert has found Evan to be "excellent, outstanding, and very helpful. He's a great assistant coach and I'm sure he'll be a great head coach someday."

Game Summaries

YU-82, Mass. Coll. Of Pharmacy-61

The Macs a.k.a. Road Warriors started their season up in Beantown on a high note. Joel Jacobson scored 30 points on 12/15 and had 15 rebounds. Alon Zaibert had 17, hit all of his three threes (try saying that three times fast), and no-looked his way to 7 assists. Neil Bronstein started his third year in style with 14 points.

YU-53, Emerson College-48

Zaibert and Shakhmurov get 'props' for taking advantage of the smaller Emerson players. Alon had 18 points; on 6 for 9 shooting, hit 3 out of 4 three-pointers, and had a whopping 8 steals. Alex ruled the paint by pulling down 8 boards to go along with his 13 points to help YU go 2-0 for the season and 2-0 in Boston. Yehuda Halpert was bitten in the leg by an Emerson player in one of the strangest scenes in college basketball history. We're glad to announce that the rabies tests proved negative.

NJIT-69, YU-54

After beating their first opponent by 100 points one year before they become a Division II team, NJIT was probably thinking they could beat anyone. It's also been a while since YU has beaten them. Jacob-

son had his second double-double, 18 points and 10 rebounds, Marc Nadritch played phenomenally with 14 points and 4 steals, and Alon continued his great passing with 7 assists. The Macs look forward to a re-match on their home court on Feb. 3.

YU-67, CCNY-53

After their first loss of the season, the Macs opened their 8-game home schedule against CCNY. This game marked the return of Brian Wein who hurt his wrist on a blown dunk attempt during a pre-season scrimmage. Led by Junior sensation Alon "Oak" Zaibert (14 points, 4 blocks), YU got off to an 8-0 lead, holding CCNY scoreless for the first 7 minutes with a tight man-to-man defense. The Macs would never look back, as they led for the entire 40 minutes. After some poor shot selection and sloppy ball handling, CCNY trailed 17-14. The Macs then found their rhythm en route to a 29-20 half-time lead.

In the second half, the Macs came out in their new look "Amoeba Defense." Patented after the Georgetown Hoyas, this 1-2-2 trap created havoc for CCNY, as they committed several turnovers. This helped the Macs lead by as many as 28 points and propelled the Macs to 3-1. The high scorer for the game was Alex "Shak" Shakhmurov, who had 18 points, 10 rebounds and 2 swats. Wein finished with 15 in only minutes. Halpert also had 7 assists.

YU-58, Bard-36

The Macs beat a very weak Bard team handily to improve their record to 4-1.

Jacobson had his third double-double with 13 points and 12 rebounds. Nadritch had 12 points and 6 boards, and Wein cashed in with 9 points.

YU-59, Baruch-58

At Xavier High School in Lower Manhattan, the team played a game for the ages. They were down 8 points at half-time to Baruch, and they looked sluggish in the first half. Then the Macs defense stepped it up tremendously. However, the story was the way Alon Zaibert carried the team to victory. He hit five three-pointers in a row to give the Macs the lead. He also hit 2 free-throws in a 1-and-1 situation down by 1 at 22 seconds. When Baruch missed their shot to win, the bench emptied onto the floor surrounding Zaibert. Coach Halpert referred to the team's great character and heart in the post-game meeting as the team improved to 5-1.

YU-67, SUNY Maritime-50

The Macs came back from a 2-point deficit to romp their rivals SUNY Maritime by 17 to improve to 6-1. They held Duke McCabe, who scored at will against YU last year, to 2 points. Joel Jacobson had his fourth double-double of the season with 27 points and 16 rebounds. Alon Zaibert had 14 points and 5 steals, Nadritch had 9 points, and Halpert and Wein both had 7 points.

YU-64, Polytechnic-58

The Macs were up by 13 at half-time and expected to coast. Poly came all the way back to cut it to 2 with under 3 minutes to play. A key play after that was the lay-up that Alex Shakhmurov hit after a beautiful pass from Joel Jacobson, who was driving hard to the hoop. Joel finished with his fifth double-double with 16 points and 12 rebounds, and Alon Zaibert had 13. Neil Bronstein played a great game on both sides of the court and finished with 10 points.

YESHIVA SPORTS

ESPN To Cover Macs

BY RON MARKOVITZ

It appears that the Yeshiva University Macs basketball team is creating more than offense these days- just check out the December 9th issue of *The New York Observer* and keep your eyes out for *New York Newsday* as they have expressed interest in a piece as well. If interest in these publications hasn't caused you to take that YU spirit out of the closet and wear it with pride, maybe four letters will have you scrambling to find it; ESPN.

No double take needed, the #1 cable sports network in the land is getting set to hit the Heights to interview Macabee coaches and players and capture some film of the campus. They will record the Macs' late afternoon game Sunday, December 22, against St. Joseph's (Brooklyn) at 5:00 pm.

Though the game will not be televised in its entirety, or get time on the ever popular

"SportsCenter," it will be broadcast on "College Basketball Today," January 9.

This is not the first time that the basketball team will be on national TV. Last year, CBS brought in a camera crew to the Max Stern Athletic Center to tape a story on a player on Baruch College, who the Macs were playing. The piece was aired during half-time of another college basketball game. Two years ago, Vic Ziegel, a sports editor for the *New York Daily News*, covered the Macs game against NJIT at Madison Square Garden which concentrated on Coach Halpert's coaching style. The Macs are currently 7-1 and are playing tonight at Mt. St. Vincent at 8 P.M. It is an important game against a rival who is undefeated. When ESPN arrives here Sunday, YU hopes that it will have a packed house for the St. Joseph's game, and that the end result will be some positive media attention which this year's team so richly deserves.

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