

# COMMENTATOR

November 3, 1998 14 Chesvan 5759

The Official Undergraduate Newspaper of Yeshiva College

Volume LXIII Issue 4

## In This Issue:

### FEATURES



**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW  
WITH CHUCK SCHUMER  
ELECTION '98 COVERAGE**

- Page 15

### CAMPUS NEWS

**Conference on  
Modern Judaism**

- Page 14



**Student Services  
Sponsors World Series  
"Dougies" Party**

- Page 20

**Careers in  
Finance Night**

- Page 17

### EDITORIALS

- Page 2

### COLUMNS

- Page 3

### OPINIONS

- Page 4

### STUDENT SOAPBOX

- Page 5

### LETTERS

- Page 7

### ARTS & CULTURE

- Page 10

### CAMPUS BULLETIN BOARD

- Page 16

### SPORTS

- Page 19

## YESHIVA, PEPSI, AND SNAPPLE, LEAD HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORT

BY CHANAN HOSCHANDER

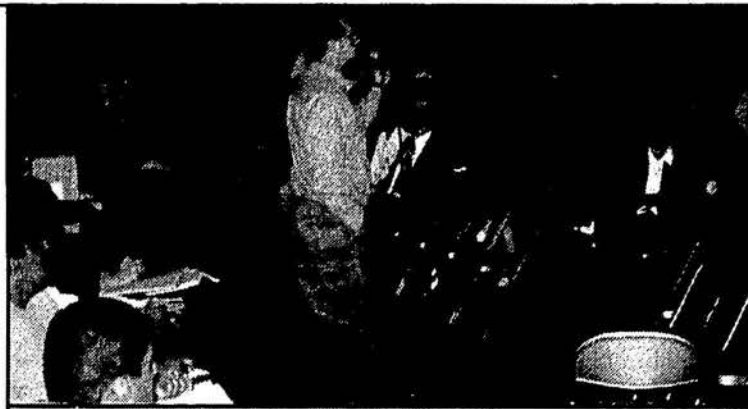
As soon as Hurricane Georges departed the Dominican Republic on September 24, Yeshiva University joined in the effort to mobilize aid for the hurricane-stricken country. Canned food and bottled water supplied by the University were on the first U.S. relief flight to depart for the small Caribbean nation following the storm.

Hurricane Georges, a mammoth tempest with sustained winds of 120 mph pummeled the Dominican Republic on September 23. The nation, which shares an island with Haiti, was ill prepared to deal with the consequences of the storm that was initially forecast as likely to skirt its northern coast. Residents and government officials were taken by surprise when the storm defied predictions and headed straight for Santo Domingo, the capital. The lack of preparedness made the damage and damage extensive. Following the onslaught of the deadly winds and rain, electric power was knocked out and food availability became limited. However, the most immediate problem to face the stunned nation was the scarcity of fresh water.

Washington Heights, the home of YU's Uptown Campus, is host to one of the largest Dominican communities outside of the Tropics. The University, conscious of its neighbors, was swift to respond to a statewide call for aid by Governor George Pataki and the New York State Emergency Management Offices. After becoming aware of the relief effort, YU administration officials contacted Washington Heights Assemblyman Adriano Espaillat, who, along with Councilman Guillermo Linares, was involved in the coordination of the NYS relief effort within the Dominican Republic. The University initially offered financial assistance, but was informed that packaged food and bottled water would be of greater utility in the immediate aftermath of the storm.

YU organized an effort to supply 55 cases of tuna, 35 cases of assorted dry goods, and along with the Brooklyn Bottling Company, 150 cases of water. A National Guard C130 carried the University's donations along with those of the Snapple Beverage Company and PepsiCo. The three institutions were acknowledged by the Assemblyman's office as the vanguard in the NYS relief effort.

A University press release shed



1199 Vice-President Juan Vasquez advising union members on YU's final offer

## University Employees Reach Contract Agreement

BY ALEX TRAIMAN

Contract negotiations between the union employees and management of Yeshiva University came to a close Wednesday afternoon, October 21, as the union membership voted resoundingly to accept the contract offer placed on the table by the University. The vote, which took place at approximately 3PM in Belfer Hall, ended negotiations that started in mid-September and averted any threat of a work stoppage or strike.

The union members agreed on a new collective bargaining agreement that raises their base pay by a total of ten percent over the lifetime of the agreement. The contract also includes provisions regarding many of the employees' benefits including vacation time, sick leave, and pensions.

The employees are represent-

light on the eagerness to offer assistance displayed by the YU administration. Jeffrey Rosengarten, YU Director of Supporting Services, explained, "The University is directly affected by this tragedy. Many of our staff and neighbors have immediate family in the Dominican Republic and we felt compelled to help quickly. We're here, we're ready, and we'll do anything we can."

District Administrator Hector Santana spoke on behalf of Assemblyman Espaillat who was already on site in the Dominican Republic. Santana described the assemblyman as "particularly moved" by the fact that the University took the initiative and came to him to make a contribution, even though it was not specifically solicited. Santana added that, "Yeshiva has always worked very closely with this office on a variety of different issues."

In a statement released by the assemblyman's office, Espaillat emphasized, "YU's efforts to assist in the aftermath of Hurricane Georges are greatly appreciated by the community."

ed by Local 1199 of the National Health and Human Service Employees Union, and have been working in good faith without a contract since the first of October. According to Berta Silva, the union representative assigned to YU, there are approximately 400 members divided between the Uptown, Midtown

continued on page 16

## News Analysis IN SEARCH OF THE "JEWISH VOTE"

BY YEHUDA BURNS

On Tuesday, November 3, the Jewish voters of New York State will face a difficult decision. Incumbent Republican, Alfonse D'Amato will face the Democratic challenger, Chuck Schumer, in what has become a full blown battle for a seat in the United States Senate. D'Amato, who has held his seat in the Senate for the past eighteen years, has long been known as an ally of the Jewish community. On the other hand Schumer, a Jew from Brooklyn, holds many of the same friends D'Amato has relied on.

continued on page 15

## COMMENTATOR Staffer Fired From YCDS For Expressing Opinion

BY AARON KLEIN

YC/MYP Sophomore Mordechai Levovitz was recently dismissed from the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society (YCDS) due to a conflict that arose following the publication of his column entitled "This Policy is a Drag" in the last issue of *The Commentator*. This article expressed his opinion that it is *halakhically* permissible for male actors in YCDS to cross-dress while playing female characters. He cited several rabbinic authorities in support of his position.

Levovitz, who was a member of the dramatics society when he wrote the article, asserts that he was expressing his personal views in the column and did not intend to represent YCDS in an official manner.

Officials at YCDS claim that Levovitz was dismissed because he refused to write a retraction stating that his article was not the shared opinion of the dramatics society. Levovitz disagrees with this statement and says that he agreed to write a retraction. He stated, "I felt it was my duty to write a disclaimer explaining that it was my opinion only."

Levovitz explains that he didn't write the retraction because YCDS demanded that he include several elements that are "unfair for me to have to write." He says YCDS asked him to publish a direct apology to Dr. Anthony Beukas, the faculty advisor of YCDS, and that he was further

asked to admit that he misrepresented the facts, that his article was poorly researched and that he tried to speak on behalf of Dr. Beukas and YCDS. He says, "I wanted to write a retraction which stated that the article was merely my opinion, but I am not going to be forced to publish lies...I don't want the retraction to damage my article."

Officials at YCDS explain that another reason Levovitz has been dismissed is because he did not consult them before writing an article that directly involved the dramatics society.

Levovitz responded by saying, "I didn't first speak to YCDS because that has nothing to do with my article. It is a *halakhic* opinion." Levovitz states that he attempted to offer a compromise, but YCDS President Aaron Zerykier refused to change the requested format of the retraction. He further contends that "Zerykier said I either decide to do it immediately or I am kicked out of YCDS...he gave me no time to even think about it." Zerykier refused repeated requests for comment on the issue.

YCDS is the only dramatic Society or club at Yeshiva University. Levovitz, who is banned from rejoining YCDS at any time, said, "I can't express the hurt I am feeling that I have to spend the next four years in a college with no dramatic experience, simply because I refused to state that my opinions are wrong."

## Beukas Dismisses Levovitz Permanently

# YESHIVA UNIVERSITY COMMENTATOR

500 West 185th Street, New York, NY 10033,

E-Mail: commie@yucommentator.com.

Telephone: (212) 740-2155, Fax: (212) 928-8637.

An independently operated student publication funded by the Yeshiva College Student Council and published on a bi-weekly basis during the academic year. The views expressed in the columns herein are those of the writers alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *The Commentator*, the student body, the faculty, or the administration of Yeshiva University. We do not necessarily endorse any of the products or services advertised in these pages. Copyright 1998, *The Commentator*. One issue free, \$1.00 for each additional issue.

**ADAM MOSES**  
Editor-In-Chief

**MORDECHAI FISHMAN**  
Editor-In-Chief

**AKIVA HERZFELD**  
Executive Editor

**CHANAN HOSCHANDER**  
News Editor

**YEHUDA BURNS**  
Features Editor

**ALEX TRAIMAN**  
Layout Editor

**YOSEF LEVINE**  
Managing Editor

**YISHAI FLEISHER**  
Arts & Culture Editor

**BEN SANDLER**  
Computer Operations

**JOSH YUTER**  
Computer Operations

## ASSOCIATE EDITORS

**Arts & Culture**

Mordechai Levovitz

**Business**

Aziel Aspir

**News**

Aaron Klein  
Jesse Mendelson  
David Mirsky

**Photography**

Hadar Weiss

**Research**

Ephraim Shapiro  
Chaim Woolf

**THE COMMENTATOR ONLINE: [HTTP://WWW.YUCOMMENTATOR.COM](http://www.yucommentator.com)**



Associated  
Collegiate  
Press



American  
Jewish Press  
Association



## MESSAGE FROM THE YCSC PRESIDENT DROR BARBER

Dear Fellow Students,

I hope that you enjoyed your vacation and are slowly getting back into things.

It has been a very interesting couple of weeks with all of our events going off without a hitch. Firstly, I would like to thank Student Services for their wonderful Dougie's party. We all enjoyed the food and saw a wonderful game. Furthermore I would like to congratulate all of the newly elected freshman and sophomore student representatives on their victory.

As many of you may know, this month was a time of victory for two very important parties in our local community. One was the union local 1199, who with their tough negotiations and peaceful activism managed to secure a new contract from the University. The second, was our very own New York Yankees, who after a spectacular season iced the cake with a four game sweep of San Diego. However with so much victory and good will all around us we must not lose sight of greater issues that affect our Jewish Community. As recently as this Friday, President Clinton emerged from his peace talks victorious in the knowledge that he had secured a tentative peace between the Palestinians and the Israeli's in the West Bank. However, we must look at what the Israeli's actually gained in these concessions and who was really victorious. Are we really secure in the knowledge that Israel is now a safe place to live? Or is it just another empty handshake by Yassir Arafat? Only time will tell, and it is not for us to prejudge.

However it seems that everyone but the Israeli's walked away from the table with a smile on their faces. Arafat now has 13% more land than he had before while Clinton enjoyed a long vacation from the Washington chopping block. However, the Israeli's are left hanging with continuing questions of safety and security. It seems to me that the only true victory we can achieve is through our *tefillot* to Hashem. He is the only one who can truly protect us and secure our victory.

May we join together in our *tefillot*, for safety, security and peace in Israel. Let us hope that someday in the near future we will be truly victorious and "*Bayom hahu yih-eye Hashem Echad ushmo Echad.*"

Dror Barber  
YCSC President  
740-5109 Mo222

## Ghetto Electioneering And Civic Responsibility

Much candidate attention has been devoted to courting the "Jewish vote" in the upcoming November 3rd New York state Senatorial election. Whether such a factionally directed approach to electioneering is useful for the political health of our republic is open to question. We, as Rousseau, believe it is not. In our view, public efforts by politicians to exploit ethnically charged points of contention, or other wedge issues, for political advantage are deleterious to attempts to approach a popular consensus on more weighty matters that affect the whole of the American populace.

To be certain, we must not fail to assert a concerted interest in matters of concern to our community, but an election that devolves into posturing for Jewish votes as if we were myopic, ghetto-dwelling political neophytes without a view to the broader interests of our polity is repellant. "Friends of the Jewish community," to our thinking, do not humiliate us with public spectacles of pandering that gratuitously politicize, indeed trivialize, that which we hold dear.

With that said, we strenuously encourage all students to vote in the November 3rd election. Voting is not simply a privilege, but an essential civic responsibility from which we, as citizens of this country, must not shy away.

For Yeshiva students this year, voting, as has become an unfortunate custom, will be a test of wills. As they have for the past number of years, University administrators have scheduled classes for November 3rd, requiring students to choose between attending classes and fulfilling a core civic duty. It is unclear whether University administrators chose to slate classes for election day out of utter indifference to the world beyond these two blocks of Amsterdam Avenue or as a result of simple ineptitude. It is, however, clear that students must defy this bit of University silliness by departing campus to cast votes on November 3rd.

It is yet not too late for the University to correct its blunder. We urge the University to cancel classes on November 3rd and provide students with shuttle service to and from regional polling stations.

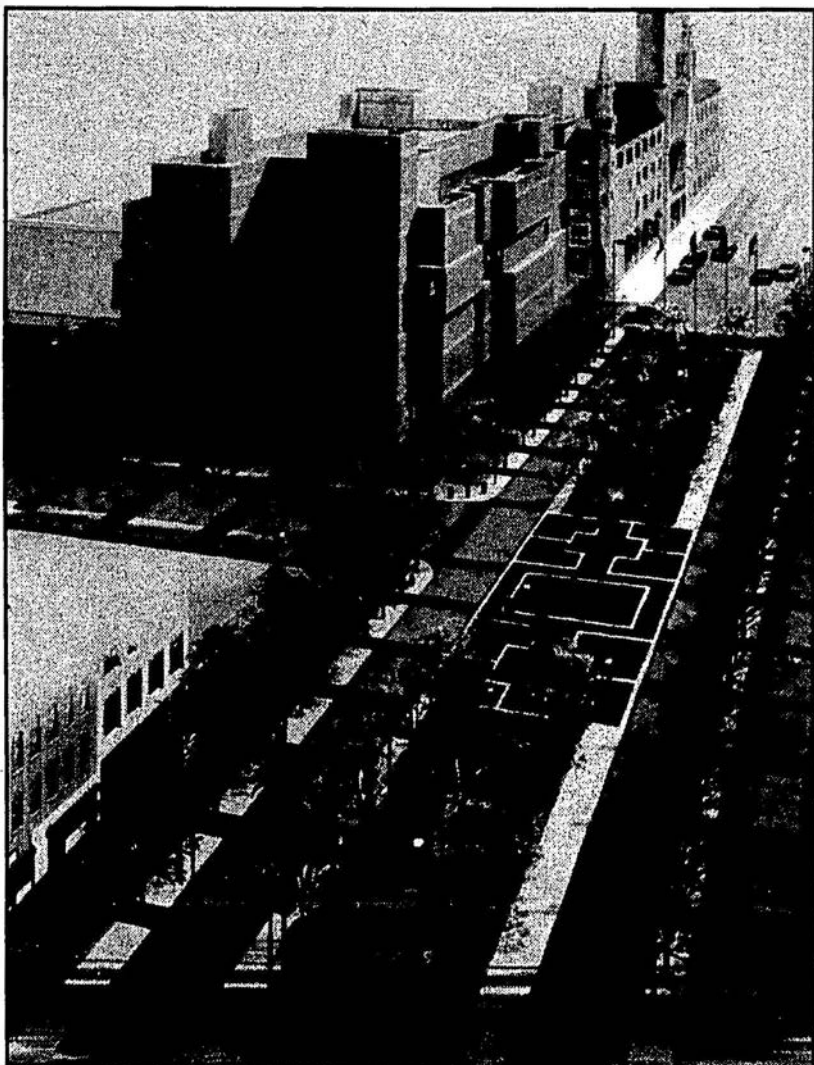
## Willing To Share, But Not A Thoroughfare

The hours between 8AM and 11PM are supposed to be part of a sacred and peaceful time at the Uptown Campus of Yeshiva University. During these hours Amsterdam Avenue is legally transformed from a bustling urban artery in the midst of Washington Heights, to the center of what might otherwise be a very real and vibrant college campus. Unfortunately, this transformation is nothing more than a legal myth. The reason is patently obvious: the University and local authorities refuse to allow a change to be implemented.

Amsterdam Avenue is supposed to be closed to through traffic from 8AM to 11PM between 183rd and 186th streets. Traffic signs announcing the closure line adjacent streets, and the University's own directions to those traveling to the campus advise of the Amsterdam's invisible barricade. However, Amsterdam continues to be used as a thoroughfare for the school and the community alike.

In the last month, two Yeshiva University students have been struck by vehicles while attempting to cross Amsterdam Avenue at the corner of 185th Street, further proving the need for the street's closure. Long ago, plans were drawn up by YU to have the street physically sealed off to motor vehicle traffic. But the blueprints remained exactly that due to neighborhood opposition.

It is time for the University to take the appropriate steps to protect the physical safety of its student body. Efforts must be undertaken to close Amsterdam Avenue. It is a comfort to know that Security checks ID cards to ensure student safety inside University buildings, but it is all meaningless if students are unable to simply cross Amsterdam without undue concern.





# EDITORIALS

## Decency Is Not Optional

Negotiations between labor and management are over. The threat of a strike has passed and the employees of Yeshiva University are expected to lay dormant for three years until the next round of the contract dance begins anew.

As a Jewish university, and an Orthodox one at that, YU is expected to strive for the highest moral standards in all respects. That includes employee relations. There is no Biblical injunction that requires one to deny workers with basic human decency. Yet the administration's attitude towards the very employees that keep this school running sometimes resembles that of a taskmaster holding the whip. Horror stories abound – a security guard fired for chewing gum; a popular and helpful assistant hounded from her position by insensitive prying into her personal life; a worker abused for requesting leave to search for his family lost in hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico. And all that occurred in the past month.

Morality cannot be measured in economic terms; nickels and dimes are not the barometer for ethical behavior. The University must not employ tightfisted tactics and callous, insensitive and soulless posturing when dealing with its employees.

## Kohelet: A Model of Religious Humanism

BY DR. MOSES PAVA

### D'var Torah

*Kohelet* is a religious book. As the rabbis carefully noted (*Shabbat* 30b), it begins with words of Torah and it ends with words of Torah. "Fear G-d and keep his commandments; for this is the whole of man." (12:13)

*Kohelet* is also a human-centered book. The religious humanism at its core is the central paradox of the work. Such an obvious paradox no doubt convinced some of the rabbis that the best thing to do would be to hide the book and remove it from the canon. At the same time, the theme of religious humanism is also the source of its great power and meaning. Religious humanism is a difficult concept to grasp, and perhaps even a dangerous one. Nevertheless, *Kohelet* remains in the canon, and even forms an important part of our *Sukkot* liturgy. But what is religious humanism? A careful look at *Kohelet* will help clarify.

#### The Human Perspective

In the very first chapter, *Kohelet* declares "I gave my heart to seek and search out wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven." (1:13) *Kohelet* is written from the perspective of the first person ("I said," "I sought," "I made," "I got," "I counsel," "I applied my heart to know, etc.) The assumption is that such a perspective makes sense and is ultimately an important perspective to take. Even while *Kohelet* explicitly states "Vanity of vanities, all is vanities" (1:2), the very form of the book contradicts this pessimism and underscore *Kohelet's* belief that human pronouncements, human emotions, human reasoning, and human needs matter, even in the Divine scheme of things. Why else write a book? Thus, the literary form of the book is not simply a device to pull the reader in, but is essential to the book's ultimate humanistic message.

#### The Legitimacy of Human Joy

Human pleasures and joys are not something to be overcome as the religious fundamentalists (even in our own day) would have it, but joy and responsibility reinforce one another. "Go your way, eat your bread with joy and drink your wine with a merry heart, for G-d accepts your works...Live joyfully with the wife whom you love...for that is your portion in this life..." (9:7-9) G-d and man are not at war with one another, but G-d desires man to strive to be his human best.

#### To Play is Human

*Kohelet* celebrates a kind of playfulness, even against its mature melancholy background. At the very end of his book, *Kohelet* reminds the reader that "of making books

there is no end." Of course, *Kohelet*, better than anyone, is well aware that he himself has just completed yet another book. *Kohelet's* is a kind of religious humanism that can simultaneously embrace both a feeling of despair (and helplessness) and a sense of humor (and human purpose). *Kohelet* is not an emotionless robot, a machine, but he is a man moved by what he sees and feels around him. Ambiguity is not ignored, but embraced, pondered, and even joked about. Be righteous, but "be not too righteous" (7:16). Be wise, but "be not too wise" (7:16).

#### To Grow and Experiment is Human

*Kohelet* is a real human being in the sense that he experiments with life and grows as a result. Human meaning is something we seek, not something we own once and for all. He teaches that "wisdom is better than folly" (2:13). Such a conclusion is not the result of a theoretical inquiry undertaken in the beit midrash, but follows from his own youthful experiments. While declaring "that which is crooked can not be made straight" (1:15), his own life's lessons and his own metamorphosis demonstrate otherwise.

#### The Conclusion of the Matter

Sensitive readers are uneasy when they finish *Kohelet*. One senses that something is missing here. There is no bottom-line which neatly summarizes his teachings. It is not like one of Aesop's fables, where the moral of the story is clearly articulated once and for all. It is as if the book itself was never completed.

Perhaps, we are more like *Kohelet* than we know. Life, even a Torah life, does not come with pre-packaged meanings. Meanings are the end product of human interpretation.

Religious humanism boldly suggests, "that is within man's power to renew himself, to be reborn and to redirect the course of his life...Man must rely upon himself; no one can help him. He is his own creator and innovator. He is his own redeemer; he is his own messiah who has come to redeem himself from the darkness of his exile to the light of his personal redemption."

At least this was the vision of Rav Joseph Soloveitchik in his path-breaking book, *Al Hateshuva*.

The Rav's message and the religious humanism embedded in *Kohelet* are undoubtedly elitist. The real question that we face today is not whether or not to hide the book of *Kohelet*, but do we choose to water down (or "ArtScroll") the message and remove the difficulties or do we choose to continue the quest where *Kohelet* has left off? Religious fundamentalists have their answer. *Kohelet* had a different one, "It is good that you take hold of this, but not withdraw from that" (7:18).



## FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF MORDECHAI FISHMAN

This is a story about two people named Jeff and Paula and their adventures. It is also a story about two divergent cultures randomly meeting in the middle of a backwood night and the lessons one fool learned therein.

See, going home for the *Sukkot* break was insanely relaxing. While my friends at other institutions of higher learning were deep in the midst of their studies, sweating over theorems and poring over texts, the good Lord, in his infinite wisdom and kindness (and helped out by the blockheads who arranged this year's class schedule) saw fit to grant to the student body of YU nearly a month's vacation. An entire month free from the turmoil and angst that tend to mar the average school day; an entire month devoid of frustrating bureaucrats and mindless red tape; an entire month without once hearing the words "Jefferey Socol." Needless to say, I enjoyed every minute of it.

Spending time with old friends and family is precious; spending time outdoors in nature is simply priceless. I took every chance I could get to roll outside and reacclimate myself with the fresh air of L.A., enjoying the beaches and canyons someone living in Washington Heights tends to forget exist. (Yes folks, there are people who think bodegas are places in Spain where sherry is made and have never seen an apartment building belch clouds of thick black smoke.) But I wanted more, so with my roommate Noah I threw a tent and a couple of sleeping bags in a van and drove up to John Muir's playground, Yosemite National Park.

Mere adjectives utterly fail in describing the breathtaking glory and sheer magnificent beauty of Yosemite. Viewing the craggy heights towering above verdant meadows, the glacial domes and thundering waterfalls, one is left with an impression of jaw-dropping awe that even the legendary photographs of Ansel Adams cannot adequately portray. From a spiritual standpoint, Yosemite is about as far as it is humanly possible to get away from Amsterdam Avenue.

And there we met Jeff and Paula. Two backpackers that had hiked down to the valley floor, they were standing on the side of the road trying to catch a hitch back up to the top of the park where they had left their truck two days earlier. In a moment of sudden empathy, we swerved over to the side of the road and offered them a lift. Turns out they had been standing in the frosty air attempting to catch a ride for a good while, and were on the point of resigning themselves to spending the night outdoors in the cold. Their gratitude was immediately apparent and heartfelt, and in no time we were making crazy conversation and swapping stories as we rolled through the moonlit night.

They looked like they were in their late thirties, and their well worn equipment and sun-beaten faces testified to the fact that they obviously spent large amounts of time outdoors. Both worked as registered nurses, which allowed them to work for four days and take the next four off. Paula was originally from Italy and had floated over to the States a couple of years back. She came to California, saw the natural splendor, the great skiing and rock climbing, and never left.

Jeff was a character straight out of a documentary on the Sixties. A homegrown California boy, he had attended college at Chico State, located in Humboldt County. Chico is well known as the most laid-back school in what is essentially a laid-back state, and Humboldt is to marijuana what Burgundy is to fine wines. And what rigorous academic discipline had he pursued in college? Jeff

majoring in, (and I kid you not), Recreation. He took arduous courses such as Surfing 101, The Psychology of Fun, Game Playing Theory, and my personal favorite, Wine Appreciation. ("Hey man, that was a hard course, 'cause we had to learn all this scientific stuff about grapes and alcohol. Dude, I barely passed.") He worked for three years after graduation in Yosemite waiting on tables for rich tourists in order to fund his rock climbing obsession, and had explored every nook of the park. He needed to get back to his home in Tahoe – not because he had to go to work, but rather because he was the guitarist in a band scheduled to play a "homebrew wedding," where all invited guests bring five gallons of their hand-made beer to enliven the proceedings. Was he going to get paid for his efforts? "Nah," he said, "it's just like playing someone else's living room."

Eventually, after a couple of loony hours that included running out of gas and getting lost, we got them back to their truck. We shared a couple of beers, they left us some of their provisions, and then they went on their merry way.

Later on, I sat and mentally compared Jeff and Paula to the average YU student, and the differences were glaringly stark. These travelers enjoyed themselves to the fullest; their carefree attitudes and sheer joy at being alive manifested itself in everything they did, from casually lighting a cigarette and swigging a beer to discussing the intricacies of obscure Eastern philosophy. They did not allow their careers to dictate their lives; on the contrary, their lives dictated their careers. Money for them was not an all-powerful idol to be obsessively worshiped and pursued, it was only a means to an end – a necessary evil needed to realize their aspirations and dreams and allow them to live the lifestyle they chose. They did not live to work; they worked to live.

How refreshingly different this was from the oft-times crushing cultural pressures levied upon our generation of Jewish kids. The never-ending mantras of career goals and financial security get incessantly hammered into our collective consciousness, leaving precious little room for personal satisfaction and almost no space to dream. People scurry about this campus looking like death. They worry about what the future holds; worry if they are going to get into grad school; worry if they will make enough money to earn the respect and adulation of their peers. They obsess over their marriage prospects until the quest for a mate consumes all else. (The fact that our culture tacitly condones pressuring young adults, especially young women, to marry early without regard for the emotional and psychological ramifications that may arise, is a blot on our religious heritage as Jews and anyone who contributes to such pressure deserves to be shot.) At times, students in YU resemble mindless hamsters running on a wheel, never for a moment stopping to enjoy who and what they are.

We all need a little Jeff and Paula in our lives. I do not advocate their lifestyle for all, nor do I think the Academic Standards Committee will approve of recreational classes anytime soon. (It's a thought though – they could call it *Kiddush Wine Appreciation* and give us Jewish Studies credit.) But I think we sometimes need to stop for a moment and remember what it is all about – why we are here, and what we wish to accomplish with the multitude of gifts God has given us. To have fun is no sin. Taking time out for laughter and enjoyment can only brighten our existence, and ultimately, lead us to more fulfilling lives as individuals and as Jews.

# FORUM

## OPINION

### GRIPE TO GUS

BY ALEX TRAIMAN

LAYOUT EDITOR

As I enter my second year here at Yeshiva University, people have begun to notice that I work for *The Commentator*. To me personally, this means giving up one night of sleep every two weeks to put together a colossal product for the student body. I am, however, learning that there may be more to my position than I had originally calculated. Recently, a bunch of my fellow students have been approaching me with their observations on life, and more importantly, on the school, with the expectation that I can do something to positively express their astute findings.

As I started to become a collection agency for students' thoughts, I began to think to myself: "Am I a voice for the people? I don't believe that this was in my job description. I am not a voted member of student council; I am merely the layout editor for the school's sometimes bi-weekly newspaper. Surely there is another voice that the people should go to." As I came to this realization, I began to refer my friends, new and old, to the appropriate members of the student council, the appropriate club members, and the appropriate administration members to hound mercilessly and make their opinions known. I also encouraged my peers to send letters to the editor in an attempt to effectively say their piece. It seemed to be an efficient plan, but for some unexplainable reason, it simply has not been that incredibly effective.

So I went back into a state of rumination, and then suddenly it hit me (like my roommate when I don't wake up to my own blasting alarm in the morning). "Maybe I can be a little more than a referral service for the students. After all, I have not been taking any sort of percentage on my referrals, (to this moment I am not sure why), so as long as I am working for free, maybe I should attempt to be slightly more productive."

Now, I still understand that I am not an elected student representative; I have not worked my way up to an editorship of this paper; and I am not even a president of one of the school's numerous (some may say too numerous) clubs, but maybe I can do something. And its

effectiveness is totally up to you, my fellow students.

So here is my idea: I am going to sit outside. Yes, outside. I will not sit there permanently like some (see dictionary under 'facilities management'), but I will occasionally sit in the newly and constantly refurbished pedestrian mall.

"How will this help?" you ask. That's a very good question. Well, I am not quite sure that it will. I intend to sit outside in the afternoons (unless it rains-as it is beginning to get a wee bit nippy for my blood) with a poster that says: GRIPE TO GUS. (My friends call me Gus, and now you can too.) While I am sitting outside, it will be as if I am conducting open office hours. Here you can talk to me (Gus) and sound off about the good or bad aspects of the school, hopefully with some sort of hypothesis on how to properly thank those who have done well, or aid those that might be in need a good suggestion.

I know that this may totally flop, as many sociological experiments do. This is a good possibility, but hopefully I can get a couple of valid observations a week. My intent is to write about them here in *The Commentator*. All this will be in an attempt to help your voice become an active one on this campus. Whether you are already an active voice, you would like to become an active voice, or simply want to remain another student in the crowd; I want to hear from you. Come sit and talk with me in our lovely, but frequently underused (at least by us) pedestrian mall. If you would like, you can try to set me up with the beautiful, smart and witty girl of your choice, or you can even bring me food or money like the others that take to sitting outside on a regular basis.

Let me help you get your voice across. I will do all that I possibly can to aid you. I will use your names, or allow you to remain anonymous, or simply dismiss your observation altogether. Hopefully, I can even spawn some responses to your thoughts by guest columnists. If not, you can see that I am bored and will do almost anything for a little attention. Yes, it is an experiment, but in any event, it should be a great deal of fun. I look forward to speaking with as many of you as possible. Who knows, it may be a little risky, but it just might work!

### Jews, Lies, and Videotape

Throughout history, the Jewish people have been viewed as the living embodiment of ethical and religious triumph. Since antiquity, Judaism has been cast as a distinct and captivating system of ethics. The moral direction of the Jewish people has influenced innumerable works of literature and philosophy, and as such, the Jewish people have long been identified as the moral compass of humanity.

We are, after all, the "chosen people" designated by G-d to serve as a beacon to the nations of the world. But chosenness does not imply that the Jewish people are inherently better than, or superior to other peoples. Rather, the election of Israel bestows upon the Jewish people a relentless and burdensome responsibility towards the inhabitants of this earth. In other words, we were chosen to bear the ethical burden of humanity. We were commanded by G-d to maintain a moral and religious presence in this world—at all cost—and to disseminate that perspective with passion and fortitude. This is the *raison d'être* of the Jewish people. It is Judaism's mandate.

But this understanding of chosenness is lost to a large number Jews. Far too many Jews harbor pronounced feelings of superiority and deep rooted contempt for the *goyim*. Whether these attitudes are the result of general ignorance or a reaction to centuries of anti-Semitism is unclear. Nevertheless, such attitudes are unfortunate.

There is, however, a way in which the concept of chosenness is presently being misconstrued. This misunderstanding is both subtle and unassuming and is therefore all the more dangerous. Interestingly, it is not the result of anti-Semitism and years of separation. Rather, this misunderstanding is a direct outgrowth of America's multiculturalist climate and is a decidedly modern movement. In fact, it was brought to light during the current Clinton/Lewinsky scandal.

Last month, the House Judiciary Committee decided to release President Clinton's grand jury testimony to the public. The day that the tape was scheduled to be released happened to coincide with Rosh Hashanah. Realizing this, a number of Washington-area rabbis telephoned every member of the committee and requested that the tape be released after the holiday, but not one committee member bothered to respond.

The reasoning behind this campaign was expressed by one of the rabbis in a *New York Times* article: "Releasing it on Rosh Hashanah is such a mean spirited thing to do. The officials who are doing this ought to say 'Wait a minute, there's a whole community within our nation that is celebrating its solemn, solemn day of the New Year. This is not the time. We'll

wait two days.' Of course we don't expect the Government to close up. But at the same time when we are dealing with the specifics of our nation, and what touches the hearts and souls of so many people, it's not appropriate. If tomorrow were Christmas, you certainly wouldn't see this happening."

This rabbi's comments are revealing. To begin with, he called the tape "the specifics of our nation" and something that "touches the hearts and souls of so many people." Such a characterization is as laughable as it is sad. The tape was an obvious attempt to embarrass the President. There was absolutely no need to release four hours of lurid and licentious testimony for the viewing pleasure of America's children. The failure of this rabbi to address the immorality of the decision to release the tape, irrespective of the time, is deeply disturbing. If the tape is improper for Rosh Hashanah, it is also improper for every other day of the year!

But notice what this rabbi further did. He postured the Jewish people as a victimized minority. He argued that this

tape should not be released on Rosh Hashanah simply because it would offend the Jewish people. His argument was offered from a self-imposed position of weakness. Instead of actively advocating the tapes removal from the public sphere on its own terms, this rabbi cowered before the House Judiciary committee and asked for a delay. His sole desire was not to influence the ethical standards of Congress, but rather that the American government temporarily cater to Judaism's refined moral sensibilities. But his argument wasn't even shrouded in moral terminology. Rather, it was formulated in the amoral and transparent jargon of multiculturalist America. In other words, the Jewish people have no unique ethical message to promulgate. We're the chosen people, or in other words, an ethnic minority that the government should avoid offending.

Contrast the passivity of this rabbi with the active approach of Senator Joseph Lieberman, a old friend of President Clinton, and known on Capitol Hill for his ethical standards and religious convictions. Following the President's *mea culpa*, Sen. Lieberman was the first Democrat to break party lines and reproach the President for his prurient behavior. His speech on the Senate floor was hailed as masterful and the President respectfully accepted Sen. Lieberman's rebuke. Sen. Lieberman's decision to excoriate the President must have been difficult. Nevertheless, the Senator opted to engage the scandal, not as a member of a powerless minority, but rather from the moral high ground. Such is the task of a member of the chosen people.

**Josh Abraham**  
Columnist

**GRIPE TO GUS**

**IN PERSON OR**

**VIA EMAIL AT:**

**GUS@YUCOMMENTATOR.COM**



## BLINDED BY THE 'HOOD

BY YISHAI FLEISHER

Do you ever get the feeling you're in a ghetto? A small segregated minority living as a stranger in a strange land? Through no fault of its own, YU's uptown campus has ended up being a Jewish ghetto in the midst of a society who's values it neither shares nor accepts. This unquestionably is a sad state of affairs. However, it seems to me that this unfortunate situation is advantageous to some. Without noticing it, our surroundings have allowed people to tap into a powerful psychological phenomenon known as the ghetto mentality. Yes, you have heard it all before: Jews are always persecuted, Jews are always hated, and therefore they must shy away from the ways of their evil neighbors, they must envelop themselves in the protective bubble of Torah. The Western, consumerist, sex, sports, drug, and rock & roll culture, is the enemy. We are engulfed by *pritzut* and we must do our utmost to steer clear of any interaction. The people who cite this rhetoric need only to point to the window of a classroom in Furst Hall and proclaim "There is nothing good out there!"

To hear some rabbis speak you would think that our current epoch is similar to that of medieval Poland or early twentieth-century Russia. "Everyone is against us." This phenomenon I would like to call the neo-ghetto mentality.

Sure, there are advantages to this kind of thinking. In a time like this, the ostrich (bury your head in the sand) mentality would protect the Jewish community from Western culture by taking a defensive posture in the face of its relentless pursuit for the possession of our souls. We would unify under a single banner and proclaim our solidarity.

But where is the solidarity? Last time I looked, YU was as factionalized as ever — an entire entity split along sectarian lines: Yeshiva College vs. Syms, JSS vs. IBC vs. BMP, religious community vs. non-religious community, even black-hat vs. *kippa sruga*. Worst of all is MYP, which at times resembles a chicken with twenty-nine heads running in every which way. With twenty-nine Roshei Yeshiva and no clear hierarchy, MYP is internally factionalized and loses much of its leadership potential.

Now take the subway and head downtown and soon you will inevitably run into some kippa-wearing peers. Creative, intelligent, and successful *frum* Jews living amongst the *goyim*! With Jewish accapella groups and women's Torah study institutes! 'How can this exist' you ask me. 'I thought they were all assimilating' you'll tell me. The answer, my friends, lies in the fact that we are living in the Babylon of the Talmud, in the Golden Age of Spain, yes, yes, we live in AMERICA and not in Poland. And it is high time we begin to realize it. One day soon, we will wake up, smell the java, and it will dawn on us that our neo-ghetto mentality has left us lagging behind our downtown peers. It has left us barren in comparison with the creative renaissance that the rest of Judaism seems to be experiencing. The YU community should realize that the bleak reality that surrounds us here is limited to this geographic area, and we should take that into account when we develop our world view.

Lest I be accused of being a typically negative, derisive, and mean-spirited writer, here are some constructive, pro-active, happy-go-lucky ideas that will facilitate our exodus from the dark ages:

- Doesn't the Gush Yeshiva send out Dvar Torah e-mails throughout the world? Can you not get *Parashat Shavua* on a multitude of web sites? Isn't it amazing then, that YU with its plethora of techies and Torah schol-

ars, has been delinquent in this matter? Man, we should have RealAudio shiurim available to every Israeli who suddenly gets an urge for *Yiddishkyte* when he's in Kathmandu. Our Torah should be broadcast to the four corners of the world, and our name should be reestablished as a leader for *Klal Am Yisrael*.

- Next. We don't vote. I took a completely unscientific and unofficial poll. I walked around the library and asked people if they voted. AAAHHHHH!!!!!! Hardly anyone votes. What happened to the legendary Jewish coalition? I thought Jews were intrinsically politically active. Yet when I worked this summer at AIPAC, there was only one other religious guy there. I was shocked. Voting is not only an issue of *Hakarat Hatov*, but rather simply watching out for your own good. So lets get voting.

- YU should hold a yearly conference on Jewish issues. Jewish students and educators from around the country should be invited to discuss a variety of issues such as the State of Israel, our generation and the Holocaust, and Jewish sexuality in our time. Included would be workshops and world famous speakers coming together for a real symposium of modern Jewish thought. A forum and intellectual outlet for timely issues, all right here.

- Have you ever noticed that there's a river around here, and did you know that not so long ago the park behind Rubin and Morg was a breath-taking site? We can make it all happen again, with only a bit of effort. Oh, I know how you love to jog around and around on the indoor gym track, but think how nice it would be to take a jog in the fresh air or enjoy a river vista on a *Shabbat* afternoon. All it takes is a bit of organization and ingenuity.

- This brings me to the next point. Community work. When was the last time you communicated with a local? A "have a nice day?" A nod? Lets have a community marathon around the neighborhood. Teachers and bodega owners, rabbis and local priests, Haim and Julio, clad in sweat pants. We'll call it some cliché name like "RUN FOR PEACE" or "UNITY THROUGH SWEAT." We will teach them about kosher, they'll teach us the salsa, and it will be a grand ole time, and a true *kiddush Hashem*.

- We Jews use tragedy as a form of social get together. When something really bad happens, we get this feeling in the pit of our stomachs, and suddenly brotherly love oozes forth and overtakes us with an empathy and closeness to each other that we lack the rest of the time. Now I have an idea: lets take away the tragedy component of this equation for a moment, and instead lets put in simcha. Let's throw a huge concert in the spring, shut down Amsterdam Avenue, put up a stage, and showcase all the beautiful Jewish music that exists today. Let's bring people from all walks of Judaism and introduce them to our unique institution through a splendid Jewish culture party. Or we can just sit here and pick our toes.

- Last but not least, what about our freaky radio station?

There you have it. Just a few ideas to get your mind salivating and into a new mode of thinking. Please don't misunderstand me. I am not advocating that we change our religion; what I am saying is that we can incorporate modern thinking with our timeless beliefs. We must adopt modernity to suit our purposes and not forsake it wholesale. We must begin to think BIG. Let us break out of the shell of neo-ghettos! To those who say this vision is unattainable, I say "It is not hidden from you and it is not distant... Rather the matter is very near to you - in your mouth and in your heart - to perform it" (Devarim 30, 11-14).

## FORUM

### Orthodoxy and the Diverse Face of Judaism

BY ROBERT GUTTMAN

In recent months, the Orthodox Jewish community has been confronted by a flurry of issues involving Orthodoxy's interaction with Reform and Conservative circles. As Orthodox Jewry continues to push forward into suburbia, it has become increasingly necessary for rabbinic leaders to formulate a position as to what, if any, relationship should be maintained with members of such progressive synagogues. This need, which has been tackled at "Dorm Talks" sessions here at YU, was underscored by recent events involving the New York Board of Rabbis.

Recently, the rabbinical umbrella group sponsored an inter-faith prayer meeting, leaving in its wake an uproar among the Board's more right wing clergymen. In response, the Board's president, a YU *mus-makh*, issued a call to its members, trying to allay the fears of those disconcerted by the convocation. Essentially, the organization told its Orthodox members that the Board was simply providing notice of the event without taking any official position on it.

The board, which claims membership from all three branches of Judaism, has come under sharp attack from a variety of Orthodox rabbinic authorities of both the rightist and Modern Orthodox persuasions. Their contention is that positive outcomes, if any, from such a rabbinic organization would be overshadowed by the disturbing impression that Orthodoxy regarded more progressive, neo/non-*halakhic* Judaism as legitimate. Indeed, foremost amongst the opponents of such inter-denominational rabbinical groups have been the *Roshei Yeshiva* of our Yeshiva.

In a way, the problems encountered in dealing with interdenominational relationships affect even the layman, and in particular the students and alumni of Yeshiva University. As Yeshiva students find themselves spread out in prominent graduate schools throughout the nation, and professionals and businessmen come in contact with Jews who hold different religious, if any, affiliations, the Yeshiva student is particularly vulnerable to the pitfalls that can result from such associations.

The notion of one sheltering one's self from contact with individuals of different ideologies is a uniquely religious idea. While the much heralded principle of *Tikkun*

*Olam* is a critical component of traditional Jewish theology, it is similarly an accepted priority to regard one's own religious convictions and ideals on a higher plateau, addressing one's own religious needs before venturing out to help others. On the other hand the notion that mere contact with Conservative and Reform elements of Jewry will somehow weaken one's personal convictions and morals seems illiberal, a vestige of a more intolerant time. Certainly, in an age in which Orthodoxy is flourishing in America, can't our rabbinic leaders extend an olive branch of conciliation to our well-meaning brethren?

Post-modernist thought supposes that instead of there being a singular, absolute truth, there are various self-sustaining truths, each with its own contextual and circumstantial base. In the framework of traditionalist Orthodox Jewry, such a "tolerant" definition of truth cannot exist. Be it self-assurance or perhaps even hubris, one of the requirements for calling oneself an Orthodox Jew is the confidence that the Orthodox path, the path of the unchanging *halakha*, is the correct one. While there are various contrasting and even opposing streams of thought within Orthodoxy, the litmus test for defining authentic Judaism is adhering to a *halakha* that has remained undisturbed by modern and post-modern philosophies. Nevertheless, it is only organized cooperation on the rabbinic level which can send the message that the wall that separates traditional and progressive Judaism is capable of being breached.

This stance may strike the casual observer as intolerant or even "fundamentalist". If so, they are quite right, since despite the negative connotations of the term, fundamentalism, if defined as possessing a certain set of immutable beliefs, is the path of the Orthodox Jew. Regardless of whether one chooses to define oneself as Modern or Ultra Orthodox, there must be bedrock of personal beliefs, and those beliefs leave no room for progressive considerations. Thus, whether or not Orthodox rabbis continue to participate in organizations condemned by many *Gedolei Torah* is irrelevant, the fact being that participation in such groups is outside the pale of an authentic Jewish outlook. Orthodoxy has always been willing to open its homes and synagogues to Conservative and Reform Jewry.

## GRANDMA'S COOKIE JAR

KOSHER-D



2551 AMSTERDAM AVE.  
NEW YORK, NY 10022  
(212) 588-4855

# Student Soap Box

## Easing the YU Burden

BY DAVID KEESEY

Like many others before me, I had a particularly difficult year at YU. The normal pressures of the double curriculum were particularly hard, and I crashed. It wasn't until the end of the year that I found help and guidance from the counseling staff on the fourth floor of Furst Hall, and by then, I had fallen pretty hard.

The assistance they gave me was well received and appreciated, but it is always difficult to build a relationship with people, their good intentions notwithstanding, who are really perfect strangers. The individuals most responsible for a student's well being should be those he interacts with on a daily basis - his rabbis and *mashgichim*, his dorm counselors and academic advisors.

So many students here are turned off by their own religion. So many students are turned off by this place and want to leave it in a hurry. So many students can't handle the course load and fail. Many of these people go unnoticed. They're the quiet ones, who rarely seek help. They're the students who don't get involved in student activities. Some of them sleep through their semester; some are never able to go to sleep. And this is no light matter.

There are better ways of improving this situation. In fact, the counseling staff should be the last in line to help students. I'll bet most students don't know there is a counseling staff, and if they do, they don't know where it is, and if they know that much, they feel that getting help is below them, and that they can handle their problems by themselves. These people screw up and crash, and when they do, they crash hard. I know far too many people at YU who fit this description.

There are people who can make a difference, but they don't. How about the individual's Rabbis? Are they making sure that their students are healthy, and managing their curriculum? Do they even know what courses their students are taking? How many times has your rabbi asked you where you are going for

*Shabbat*? In many cases, they don't even know their students names, and too often if they do, they have no idea what the student is all about - what their life experiences are, who they are as a person.

And what do the resident advisors do exactly? Do they go knocking door to door trying to get to know the individual students better? Do they check up on the students to make sure they are handling their college lives? In my experience, they don't. They enforce the rules of the dorm, because that's their job. They throw a floor party every once in a while so that people can have more food and eat stale potato chips, but they don't appear to truly care about the students.

Do I get an advisor that's there for me, to help me make decisions and plan out my academic career? Hell no. Instead, there are long lines to get two minutes to sit down with an advisor, or whatever they call them, and get a signature. There is no one checking up on the individual student and making sure that everything is going well in the academic realm.

This topic is not to be taken lightly. YU, more so than any other college, can create an extremely harsh and unhealthy environment for the students. Changes need to be made; not specifically on the fourth floor of Furst Hall, but in the dorms and the Beit Midrash. People's lives are at stake. I've ran into several people who just couldn't handle the pressures of such an unhealthy environment. Some students lose confidence in their ability to perform in school, and can become despondent, even to the point of suicide. Often times all they need is an *alter yeshiva bachur's* advice; a friendly chat with their Rebbe, or the Mashgiach; some advice from the local dorm counselor, who truly cares about how they are.

This school claims they care. But the fourth floor of Furst is not going to get the job done. The Rebbeim and the *Mashgichim* and the Resident Advisors need to take a far more active stance in making this school a healthier environment to be in.

## The Terrors of Guidance

BY CHANANYA WEISSMAN

I stood outside the door to the guidance office and trembled. I'd heard some nasty allegations concerning the academic advisement at YU, too many things from too many people to pass it off as mere whining from disgruntled students.

Maybe that's what it is, my mind tried to soothe me (a bit patronizingly, I thought). Maybe all the students at YU you've ever come into contact with are a bunch of smug ingrates who don't know good advice when they hear it.

It was possible. Accordingly to my philosophy professor, I might really be a blue alien on Mars just dreaming up this supposed existence, or a brain in a jar somewhere in Belfer Hall, with wires stimulating me to think that all this is real. When considered in these terms, all the students at YU being a bunch of smug ingrates who don't know good advice when they hear it was certainly a plausible possibility. With this in mind, I knocked on the door.

"Come in, if you dare," croaked a hideous, aged voice.

I've always been a reckless one, and took the thing up on its challenge. Stepping inside the office, I was met by a horrific sight. There were four desks in the room, and three of them were occupied. By the desk nearest me an old woman was seated, wrinkles and blisters covering every inch of her visible skin and a jungle of gray hair flying every which way. The desk was entirely empty, except for a small glass ball.

"Sit," she commanded. I sat. "I am Nolda," she proclaimed. "I am here to guide you in the path of wisdom."

"That's great," I replied, regaining my wits quickly (as I am wont to do), but I just need some quick help. See, I want to drop advanced genetic engineering and pick up seasonal sports, but that would leave me with only ten and a half credits. What should I do?"

"I shall now consult the powers of fortune. Please wait patiently," replied Nolda, whereupon she closed her eyes and began to hum. Her hands reached out seemingly blindly and grasped the glass ball in front of her. She rattled it, then replaced it on the desk. Little white flakes floated up from inside the ball, and slowly settled back to the bottom. After a few minutes, Nolda began making strange noises, not unlike snoring.

I disengaged myself from this setting and proceeded to another desk. A pensive-looking fellow awaited me, and I sat before him. He said nothing, just stared blankly at me.

"Hi, uh, I need some advice," I said. "Why?" he responded slowly. "The world is coming to an end."

This was hardly what I wanted to hear. "What do you mean?" I asked.

"The world is coming to an end in the near future. We will all perish. Kaput."

"I see," I said, even though I really didn't. "In the meantime, but that would leave me with just ten and a half credits. What should I do?"

"It doesn't matter," he replied. "You're going to die anyway. We all will."

Nolda was still engaged with the powers of fortune, so I proceeded to desk #3. I recognized the occupant as one of the security guards.

"What do you think of this?" he asked, looking up at me. He held a sheet of paper, on which he had been writing until my interruption. He cleared his throat and began to read. "We, loyal employees of Yeshiva University, have served you through times good and bad. We've stood by you in your moments of difficulty, consoled your grief, felt joy at your success. We now turn to you in our time of need. You have always treated us well, but due to some misunderstanding or clerical error, our salaries are -"

"Wait, hold on," I said. "This will never work. You can't reason with these people; they'll suck you dry. What you guys need is to revolt. Show them you mean business. You need a slogan, too, some kind of song. Something like: What do we want? A contract! When do we want it? Now!"

That got him scribbling furiously, and I left him to it. I was the one who needed help, after all. I approached the fourth desk and sat down, feeling completely helpless. No one was even there.

"Who dares disturb my slumber?" moaned a voice from under the desk, and a terrifying creature leapt out. It grabbed me and then I woke up. I was sitting outside the guidance office, having evidently dozed off while awaiting my turn. There was no one else waiting, so I walked right in. A friendly, smiling man was sitting there. He greeted me warmly, offered me something to drink, and asked how he could help me muddle my way through college. We talked for about 15 minutes, and he helped me tremendously. At the end, we shook hands, he patted me on the back, and out I went.

It really was as I had suspected. The guidance was wonderful, and anyone who said otherwise didn't even deserve good advice.

I didn't notice the two little bite-marks on the side of my neck until the following morning.

WEDNESDAY MAY 26 11 AM

THE THEATER  
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

Commencement  
1999

SENIORS, HAVE  
YOU FILED FOR  
GRADUATION?

IF NOT, PICK UP KIT  
FROM THE OFFICE  
OF THE REGISTRAR  
ON YOUR CAMPUS



THE COMMENTATOR  
is currently soliciting submissions for the  
Student Soap Box, a recently launched feature  
devoted to sharing student viewpoints with  
the broader University community.

Preliminary drafts may be sent to:  
The Commentator  
500 W. 185th St.  
New York, NY 10033  
commie@ymail.yu.edu



# FORUM

## LETTERS

### Offstage Dramatics

To the Editor:

As President of the Yeshiva College Dramatics Society (YCDS) I would like to express the society's utter dismay at what was written in a recent *Commentator* article. It has been suggested that Yeshiva students should be permitted to act in "drag," dressed as women, while portraying women's roles on stage. YCDS wholeheartedly disagrees with point of view for obvious religious and dramatic reasons.

The Dramatics Society follows the religious guidelines determined by the rabbinical and secular staff of the University. These guidelines are in place to ensure that all students in this university feel comfortable participating in and attending our productions. Dr. Beukas has worked for 34 years under these guidelines to avoid any controversy that would be disruptive to the YCDS organization and members of the cast and production crews. Dr. Beukas and the Dramatics Society are happy and content with the current guidelines. We do not approve of the suggested changes made by Mordechai Levovitz.

#### Mordechai Levovitz Responds:

My article concerned the current policy relating to the dramatics society that does not allow men to portray female characters.

I also noted that the policy for Stern's dramatic society is such that women are allowed to dress up and portray male characters.

The article then went to *halakhically* defend my suggestion, proving that according to mainstream *halakha* there would be no problem with men cross-dressing for a theatrical production.

I also noted that according to the most stringent *halakhic* view, cross-dressing would be prohibited not only in male productions, but also in female theatrical production.

Thus, I proved that to be *halakhically* consistent, one policy must change – either Yeshiva College should allow male characters to cross-dress as female characters or Stern should prohibit females from cross dressing as male characters. Surely consistency within the *halakhic* policies of YU is a worthy goal.

I concluded, by stating I believe if YU were to rethink its policy concerning the dramatics society, **we, (as in any student interested in acting)** would greatly benefit from the new spectrum of acting opportunities.

Yes, it is my opinion that we would all benefit from allowing students to cross-dress as cross-gender characters in our theatrical productions!

I have every right to have and state this opinion. It is my personal opinion, not necessarily the opinion of YCDS, of Dr. Anthony Beukas, or of anyone associated with the dramatics society. Consequently, there was no reason or requirement to speak or confer with any members of the executive board of YCDS concerning this article. Furthermore, never did I misrepresent the truth or quote erroneous sources.

There is a policy that prohibits boys in YCDS from cross-dressing while portraying female characters. I am well aware that in a YCDS production three semesters ago, a boy dressed in masculine clothing and acting with masculine mannerisms was supposed to be portraying another character's mother. Consequently, as I've heard from Beukas and other members of YCDS, that character didn't work out well. Obviously, it didn't work out well; he wasn't able

The Dramatics Society and Dr. Beukas understand that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but we suggest that these opinions be based on proper research. The *Commentator* did not contact Dr. Beukas or any member of the Executive Board of the Dramatics Society to check on the legal status of the subject in question. The current regulations now in place meet the Executive Board of YCDS and Dr. Beukas' requirements for producing our productions for the 1998 – 1999 season. We are saddened that this article led to the removal of the author from the cast of this semester's production. The author's lack of regard for the cast, crew, and director necessitated this decision.

Any student has the academic freedom to express his views in *The Commentator*, but by doing so he must recognize his responsibility to the organization of which he has voluntarily become a member.

Aaron Zerykier  
YC '99

President, Yeshiva College Dramatics Society

to properly portray a female character because he wasn't able to dress the part. This is exactly where my article comes in. I didn't mention this instance in my article simply because besides being insignificant to my point, I wanted to spare Beukas the utter embarrassment of publicizing his theatrical failures. Certainly, the pseudo-female character in that production proves all the more that permitting the dramatics society to cross-dress when portraying female characters would in fact be substantially beneficial.

#### The Sad Truth

On the evening of Wednesday, September 9, a day after the last *Commentator* was released, I was called over to speak with Aaron Zerykier, the president of YCDS, right before play practice. Aaron explained to me that the dramatics society and Beukas were receiving a lot of flack from *Rabbeim* and donors because of my article. I asked why that would be, being that the article was solely my opinion and really had nothing to do with the opinions of Beukas or the dramatics society. Zerykier responded, that because I was acting in the play and because I stated my opinion that we would benefit from allowing theatrical cross-dressing, some people might misconstrue my article to erroneously believe that I was speaking on behalf of Beukas or the dramatics society.

Upon hearing this, I immediately said that I would have *The Commentator* put a disclaimer in the paper stating that the opinions in the article "This Policy is a Drag!" expressed the personal opinions of the writer alone and do not necessarily represent the views of Beukas or YCDS.

Zerykier refused to listen, stating that the damage was too severe and the article was too misleading, and thus a disclaimer would not be strong enough to resolve such a problem. He told me that he had discussed it with Beukas and they had decided that I must write a personal retraction. He showed me a paper on which he jotted down certain ideas that he and Beukas had discussed for my retraction, and began to dictate to me what it must include. He demanded that I include:

- An apology for embarrassing Beukas, the dramatics society and everyone associated

with the dramatics society by misrepresenting their opinions.

- An admission that I misrepresented the facts.

- A statement regarding my incomplete research, in that I failed to ask Beukas or contact any member of the executive board of YCDS before writing my article. (The exact wording Zerykier used was "shoddy" research.)

After hearing this list of demands, I told Zerykier that while I sympathize with any pains the dramatics society may be feeling, I personally do not believe that I had done or written anything wrong, or anything that merited an apology. I told him that I thought my article stated the truth and certainly did not misrepresent any facts. There was no reason for me to consult with Beukas before writing my article, for why would I be interested in his opinion for a *halakhic* article? I didn't think Beukas could add any significant insights into the position of the *Rambam* or the interpretation of the *Ramoh* and *Bach*.

I made it clear to Zerykier that while I had no problem writing a disclaimer proclaiming the article was only my opinion, I would not write something that I vehemently disagreed with, and it would be morally wrong to force me to do so. There were enough ways to clarify the fact that the article didn't represent the official opinion of YCDS without disparaging its content.

But Aaron was obstinate. He explicitly told me that there was no room for compromise. I asked him what would happen if I refused to agree to his terms. He told me that if I didn't exactly write his form of retraction, I would be immediately kicked out of the play. I told him that I didn't think what he was forcing me to do was fair, and I needed more time to make such a drastic decision. He refused, and told me that I must decide right then and there.

I did what I think was the right and ethical thing to do. I refused to lie and write something I didn't believe in. I refused to give in to a blatant abuse of power; no one has the right to tell me what to think or say! I told him that I would agree to write a disclaimer, but refused to write his form of a retraction. Zerykier asked me to take my stuff and leave. So I left.

### THE COMMENTATOR

welcomes letters from its readers.

Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number.

Students should include the school in which they are enrolled and expected date of graduation.

*THE COMMENTATOR* reserves the right to edit all letters for syntax, content, and length.

The Commentator

500 W. 185th St.

New York, NY 10033

*commie@ymail.yu.edu*

The next day I heard from a student in Beukas' speech class that the good doctor had told over my story in class. Only, he had taken creative license with the facts and had flagrantly bent the truth. He told his class that the reason I was kicked out of the play was because I had refused to write in *The Commentator* that the opinions in the article were my own and not those of YCDS.

What chutzpah! The nerve of this man, using his public forum and privileges as a teacher to blatantly and utterly lie about a student! Not only did I agree to have a disclaimer printed, it was my suggestion. I begged Zerykier to just allow me to clarify that it was my own opinion, but he refused. Now Beukas has the unmitigated audacity to lie to his students, saying that I'd rather be kicked off the production than publicly acknowledge that my article was solely my own opinion. Why anyone would believe this is beyond me. I, unlike Beukas, am not ashamed of who and what I am. I cherish my opinions and am not afraid to express them. I don't need Beukas or YCDS to agree with me. I have the right to express both my artistic and *halakhic* opinions, and Beukas' personal insecurities cannot be given the right to limit my freedoms. I am deeply hurt that because of such stupidity I will have to go through four years of college without dramatics experience. This is truly unfair.

The issue is now in the hands of the student body. Does a teacher or president of a club have a right to force a student to publicly say something the student doesn't believe? Are they allowed to kick him out of their club or class if he refuses to? Can a teacher abuse his public speaking privileges to lie to his class about people? Should these abuses of power and lying be allowed to limit free speech within the sacred confines of Yeshiva University? I think not! Show your outrage that a student can be treated in such a manner, and express it to your friends and parents, teachers and deans. Let us make sure that something like this doesn't happen again to you or me. If we just stay quiet, teachers like Beukas and sycophantic toadies like Zerykier will continue to abuse their positions.

# FORUM

## LETTERS

### Need to Unite not Fight

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to David Anziska's article, entitled "Controversial 'South Park' Minyan Divides Student Body" (Sept. 8th issue). It appears that a much greater problem exists than that of whether or not a particular show should be watched and the correctness of the minyan which precedes it. The problem has only been exacerbated and made as clear as day through the comments of individual students quoted in the article, and the remarks of the reporter himself. This problem is the great rift which divides the YU student body.

We, at YU, are not living a reality. Although YU is a top-tier national university it remains very different from its peers, simply because everyone at YU is Jewish. For the majority of students at YU, the years spent here will be their last spent in an entirely Jewish environment. Whether continuing on to graduate school or going out into the work force we will soon have to adapt to people of other races and cultures.

How can we expect to do this if we can't even get along amongst ourselves?! We don't realize how fortunate we are to be in YU, to live on a daily basis in the Jewish community which YU provides us with.

It is not my place to say whether or not it is proper for one to watch a particular show, or what is the proper way to daven. We have at YU the most prestigious compilation of rabbeim found in a single yeshiva. This being the case, if there are students who feel that certain actions are problematic, speak to the

rabbeim about it, and they will address the issue in the proper fashion.

If those complaining about the show and the people who watch it are doing so out of concern for their fellow Jew - which is the only acceptable reason - calling them "disgraces" and saying that they are not part of the yeshiva (or that they are on a lower level) and other disparaging remarks are certainly not going to help the issue. On the contrary, these type of comments turn a small disagreement into a civil war.

The reporter made it his point to constantly stress that the people who were against those watching the show were from the "yeshivish," "black hat on head and Gemara in hand," "chareidi," more religious looking students." While there is no way to justify the comments which were made by individual students, they don't represent the entire MYP program or religious student body of YU. We are fortunate here at YU to have Jews of all backgrounds coming together. To have people on a regular basis make it their point to clearly label the differences which exist within the student body is a crime. We should, during this important time in which we live, be focusing on the similarities that exist among us and doing things to bring everyone closer together. YU gives us a tremendous thing providing us with the environment that it does. To not appreciate and take advantage of it is simply a "disgrace."

Jason Orenstein  
YC/MYP '01

### South Park Psak

To the Editor:

I read the article "Controversial South Park Minyan Divides Student Body." It placed great emphasis on the divisions within the student body. I am unclear, however, on one point. Are we not all united not only as a nation but also in our common acceptance of *halakha*? Why, then, were two *non-halakhic* viewpoints presented on what is clearly a *halakhic* issue? Would it not be

wrong not to consult with a *halakhic* authority on a *halakhic* issue?

Perhaps the *Kiddush Hashem* generated by the unanimous acceptance of a *psak* will prevent this from becoming "another petty yet contentious issue" that will "become fodder for endless controversy."

Yitzchok Segal  
SSSB '00

### Hakarat Hatov

To the Editor:

Several weeks ago I received a phone call from a friend asking me if I had been to campus recently. I told him I had not. Other than dropping by occasionally to see some friends, I do not spend much time on the Uptown Campus of Yeshiva University. Well you should drop by, he told me; when pressed further he explained that 'The Pole' was up.

My initial reaction was one of disbelief, followed by a loss of speech, and eventually a self serving smile. Upon his assurance that he was not kidding, I hung up the phone and paused to consider the accomplishment and wonder whether it would go unnoticed. The Pole was up, I had to see it.

So while in the City, I stopped by the Main Campus. Sure enough, there it was, standing next to the others. I refer to the fourth flag pole next to the American flag outside Belfer Hall, the addition that allows for the Israeli flag to fly permanently on our campus.

The addition of the pole may have gone unnoticed as the Israeli flag has been soaring

above campus for over a year. In late 1997 it quietly replaced the NY state flag after requests from student leaders year in and year out. In 1996-1997 student leaders, unwilling to take no for an answer, insisted on administrative action.

Finally, with administration cooperation, it was agreed a fourth pole would be erected. Throughout the discussions involving securing a new pole and installing it, the flag stayed, just as was promised.

I would like to express my appreciation to the members of both YCSC and the Student Life Committee of 1996-97 for making this entire project possible. Additionally, my thanks to Dr. Nulman, Dean Himber, Mr. Rosengarten, and the other members of the administration who saw this project to completion.

The pole has been installed. A promise not forgotten; a promise delivered.

Jason Buskin SSSB '98  
YCSC President, 96-97

### Shabbaton Troubles

To the Editor:

The first *shabbaton* of the year, arranged and sponsored by the Senior class, was held at Stern on September 11th. The actual *shabbaton* was a smashing success, from the guest speaker, Yeshiva University President Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, to the overall *ruach* that was present.

This was not just a regular *shabbaton*, however. As opposed to students signing up with a club leader and going to the cafeteria to buy meals, there were numerous behind-the-scenes events that occurred in order to make the *shabbaton* successful.

Before the Senior board collected any money for the *shabbaton*, they had secured a certain number of available spots from Student Services. Blindly relying on the ability to house students in the same hotel that they had in the past, Student Services promised forty spots. On Wednesday, September 9th, however, they found themselves with only 10 available spots due to the hotel's reluctance to accommodate YU as they had in the past. After learning the Senior class had already signed up 30 people for the *shabbaton*, Student Services found themselves in somewhat of a bind, to say the least.

With the diligent work of Mrs. Zelda Braun, Assistant Director of Student Services

at Stern, and Mr. Andrew Leibowitz on the main campus, neither of whom, incidentally, are in charge of the *shabbaton* program, the crisis was resolved early Friday morning.

Student Services is here to assist the students in any way they can. After being confronted with the aforementioned problem, Student Services did come through in the clutch. They must realize, however, that this was the first of many *shabbatonim* this year and although there is currently a lack of hotel space for the attending students, they must work as tirelessly for the upcoming *shabbatonim* as they did for the Senior class. The Junior class, for example, was forced to cancel their *shabbaton*, originally scheduled for October 24th, when they were informed of the housing problem on Monday, hardly enough time to inform the people of the sudden change. In addition to the lack of space, Student Services has developed the bad habit of placing students in apartments, forcing them to bring their own linens. This problem will do little but discourage students from attending the *shabbatonim*, an important part of the YU/Stern lifestyle.

Eric Schubert  
SSSB '00  
Vice President, Senior Class


### Torah U'Maddah Exemplar

To the Editor:

In a recent column in *The Commentator* entitled "The Farther You Are From YU The More Prestigious It Becomes," the writer notes that Rabbi Michael Hecht is "a supreme example of a successful merger of *Torah U'Maddah*." I simply wanted to write in to confirm the truth of that observation. In my years as a *talmid* in his *shiur*, a student in his constitutional law class,

and finally as a (more) grown-up student with questions involving the merger of the two disciplines he so well mastered - I cannot express how amazed I am at the breadth and depth of the knowledge and wisdom Rabbi Hecht has. He is one of Yeshiva's most underappreciated assets.

Michael Broyde  
MTA '82, YC '84, RIETS '88



## BENNETT GROCERY

**4 Bennett Avenue**  
**(corner 181 st. & Bennett Avenue)**  
**(an official stop of the Y.U. Van)**  
**(212) 923-7140**

**We carry a full line of kosher food products, deli, microwaveable dinners, fat free & health foods, vitamins, gifts & children's games**

**Pick your own order or call it in and have it delivered (\$50 min.)**

**Melech Monoker, Proprietor**

**Sun. 8:30-1:00 M,T,W,TH, 7:30-6:30 Fri. 7:30-1:30**

**5% discount with this ad**



# **ATTENTION LIBERAL ARTS STUDENTS:**

Are you interested in **ENGLISH?**

Perhaps **SCIENCE?**

Do you enjoy all subjects?

Or are you undecided about a career?

**CONFUSED???**

*Begin your search for answers . . .*

**Career Exploration Workshop  
Thursday, November 5, 1998  
2:45 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.  
Furst Hall Room 313**

# ARTS & CULTURE

## The Neshama of Carlebach

BY ZEV STUB

For almost forty years, the Carlebach legacy has had a major role in defining the spirituality and soul of the Jewish community. Reb Shlomo, Zt"l, was world renowned and beloved for his stories and songs. Equally endearing was his genuine kindness and love for humanity; his warm handshakes and hearty embraces, making him the "Godfather of Kiruv." After his untimely passing four years ago, it is not surprising that among the people continuing the tradition he began, is ....another Carlebach.

Neshama Carlebach, Reb Shlomo's 24 year-old daughter, has already made her mark. After recording two albums and performing concerts around the world, there is no doubt that she can perform. Her sensual vocals give new life to the familiar melodies crafted by the elder Carlebach. Displaying the charisma, confidence, and warmth of her holy, holy father, Neshama is now proving that she is a standout performer in her own right.

Neshama Carlebach is a busy woman. Taking my early morning phone call, infinitely more awake than I am, she fends off another interviewer, this one, calling from a radio station in Israel. After traveling for five months, she is back home in Toronto for only a few days, and speaks of impending engagements in Los Angeles, New York, and Israel. That she does this while pursuing a college degree is impressive; the "two full-time jobs" she juggles are as exhausting as the most demanding of dual curriculum workloads.

Yet with so much to do, Neshama demonstrates the patience and positive karma that have become part of the Carlebach trademark. She tells that after her parents' divorce, when she was six years old, she and her father remained "exceptionally close." Although Reb Shlomo was really a father to everybody, he would make time to call his daughter several times a day while touring. She recalls, "My father was always singing. He was so sweet, exactly like what he was onstage was what he was at home."

But it was Reb Shlomo's stage presence that set the example for Neshama's singing career. Although she had dabbled in performing arts since she was five, and had trained as a singer since age twelve, Neshama's real preparation came while performing with her father. Early pictures show little Neshama onstage with Reb Shlomo, standing on a chair and peering, wide-eyed, over his shoulder. Years later, the two would sing together, and Neshama was taught some hard lessons. Her father would *shlep* her on stage, and "he would literally walk off the stage and sit down." She recalls an instance when she was sent out to open a show shortly after the two had arrived from a particularly exhausting flight. The incident left her terrified and confused. "It felt strange to me," she said. "I mean, why is he waking off the stage when this is his show...but when he passed away I realized...he knew he was shaping me to take over." Reb Shlomo's final ten-month tour was also intended as a showcase for Neshama's talent, and it inaugurated her new career.

Neshama's career thus far has been stellar. At age 24, she has two albums already out: *Neshama/Soul*, released in 1996, and *HaNeshama Shel Shlomo*, a father-daughter effort completed just two weeks before Reb

Shlomo's death in 1994, and released on his *yahrtzeit* in 1997. Neshama's vocals are passionate, soulful, and sometimes sultry, revitalizing her father's classic music. Neshama's modernized band adds to the music's updated twang, featuring electric guitar work unparalleled in Carlebach history. Anthems such as *Ein K'Elokeinu* and *Amen (A Medley)* rock and roll in a noticeably un-Carlebach-esqe fashion, while songs like *K'vakorat* and *Ana Hashem* are as heartfelt and poignant as any ballad by the divas in the top 40. Although Neshama is less impressive at telling stories- an act only Reb Shlomo could really get away with- she produces beautiful music that is fun, moving, and unmistakably groovy.

Unfortunately, Neshama's music has been subject to much controversy within the Orthodox world because... let's face it, her voice is a lot more feminine than her father's! Violating the *issur of Kol Isha*, she has been the subject of repeated verbal attacks. (Admirers have quipped that her comely voice helps clarify the reason that the prohibition was instituted.) She approaches her critics with a healthy, open-minded attitude. "Those people, *gezunter hait*- it's not my audience," she says. "If it offends them; if it takes away from their *kavanah*, I'm honored that they're not coming, because I'm also serving *Hashem*, but I'm singing for those people who need me to sing, who feel like I connect them to that place." She recounts a time Reb Shlomo, appearing on television, was asked by an angry caller, "How dare you call yourself an Orthodox rabbi, and you're bringing your daughter up on stage?" Grasping his daughter's hand, he replied, "We're living in a time of emergency... my daughter, if my daughter can *m'karev* one woman, to light candles on Shabbos because she's singing, she has to sing."

Neshama, who is also Orthodox, adds, "My heart breaks so much for the women who feel like they don't have a place, just because there is a *mechitza* between them and the men." She says that she is proud to be a woman, and hopes to give voice to women everywhere. She says, "My father was very into giving strength to women in their way, not making them *shaliach tzibur*, and not by making them wear *kippas* and *tallisim*, but giving them the strength to feel connected on their level."

Neshama dreams of teaching children to feel connected in the classroom, and already teaches part-time in day schools in her community. She hopes to avoid what she feels is often a dry, unfulfilling approach to Judaism, and help the children appreciate the richness and spirituality that their religion offers.

For the moment though, she is working on a new album, which will contain a surprise. Neshama recently received a gift of over one hundred of Reb Shlomo's songs that were not released. She therefore will be performing "all new, old" material for the first time on her upcoming album expected next year, as well as at upcoming shows. Neshama, who promises that "it's not a Madonna-type show," performs at the West Side Institutional Synagogue on November 7<sup>th</sup>, in a concert commemorating her beloved father's *yahrtzeit*. Although the name is the same, the younger Carlebach's music is a completely new sensation; as Lisa Traiger of the Washington Jewish Week wrote, "This is not your grandfather's *yiddishkeit*."

Carlebach



## Fact, Not Opinion

BY DAVID RAPPAPORT

On a daily basis, outside MTV's studio on 1515 Broadway, there are dozens of kids screaming for Jesse Camp. Speculation in the entertainment industry has run rampant as to whether Jesse's unintelligible demeanor is nothing but a contrived sham by MTV to win the hearts of America's sub-par IQ teenagers. This reporter believes it is a sham, but not one that MTV has condoned.

Mr. Camp became an MTVVJ by winning the "so you wanna be a VJ" contest. The post-victory press conference featured curse words and inarticulate sentences. Mr. Camp's wardrobe was even more unlikely for this decade as he appeared on television not unlike a roadie for the rock group KISS. And what about the hair? Bearing a slight resemblance to Sid Vicious (in its flamboyance), MTV execs had all but put the finishing touches on their nefarious scheme to fire Jesse after two weeks. Unfortunately for them, hundreds of high school KORN fans began showing up in front of the MTV offices in Times Square in order to appear on Jesse's show LUNCHTIME WITH JESSE. The exec's had no choice but to keep him as ratings during the lunchtime hour more than tripled. So why do I think Jesse is great for MTV, despite the fact that he is a fake whose parents are both educators and his high school alma matter is an extremely well-respected private school in Connecticut?

I love him because he is them. Jesse Camp was raised on MTV. MTV taught him how to speak, what to like and what the "real world" should be like. His very presence is the ultimate revenge on a channel responsible for the stupidity of the majority of America's young people. Remember that the greatest quail confronted by MTV's production staff prior to Mr. Camp's arrival was how low they could get Serena Altschul's neckline to go. Now confronted with the evil it has wrought, the question remains, what will MTV do about it? The answer: show more half-naked models playing volleyball on the beach 4 hours a day. Athletic complexes aside, let's talk about the issues. November elections will soon be upon us and that means MTV will begin to mobilize its 1998 "Rock the Vote" campaign. The prospect of another year of this is absolutely abysmal. From a marketing standpoint, what is MTV's audience of voting age? The answer is out-of-work sub-par buffoons who think that GNP stands for Gorgeous Naked People. Do we really need the opinion of people who think that Bob Dylan is Jakob Dylan's father? The answer is undoubtedly no. I don't need

someone whose life was dramatically altered by the deep inner meaning of Marilyn Manson to vote.

Speaking of Marilyn Manson, why has he gone Glam? Instead of a proper horrific figure created for the singular purpose of becoming the thorn in the Christian Coalition's backside, we now have a fourth-rate Marc Bolan screaming to get his T-Rex kicks out.

And what about Hole? I'm so sick of the public allowing Kurt Cobain's ungrateful murdering slut widow her 15 minutes. Someone needs to slap her and say "You were never good and all you'll ever be is (expletive deleted)." Not only that but what kind of name is Hole? Why not name your band NOUN?

I digress. Please don't vote. It's your right as an American not to vote. As long as you pay taxes you can complain about our philandering president. By not voting you are taking a firm stance by stating "I have absolutely nothing to do with my pedophile president and the Republican Party's shameless enabling of the American public." If we all stop voting, no one will be elected and then we might be able to rethink this idea of democracy through once again. Maybe this time we won't be creating a country by escaping the religious persecutions of another country and subsequently not waste time instituting religious persecutions of our own.

Comments are welcome. If you found any part of this column offensive that means I've done my job and done it well. Feel free to write me care of this publication and I promise swift retaliation.

This month's musical recommendation is Nuggets, original artifacts from the first psychedelic era 1965-1968. Containing such fabulous one-hit wonders as THE MOJO MEN, THE VAGRANTS, THE STANDELLS etc. Nuggets is a fantastic box set compilation put out by those wacky guys at Rhino Records. A must for anyone searching for great psychedelic pop singles. Not only do you get 4 CD's of 20 plus songs, an extremely enlightening book is enclosed relating a time period when great pop music was written in the garage and everyone tried to sound like The Beatles instead of poor-ass Seattle pap. Any band that got fifteen minutes in this three-year period is here for consumption, with the possible exception of The Archies' "Sugar, Sugar."

P.S. I'll give anyone \$5 if they can name the singer of that song by next issue.

Stay tuned for next column, which promises to be more inane than the last.



# Columbia University Simchat Torah '98: HIGH HOLY TIMES IN NYC

BY SENYA MALER

Sundown Sunday. *Hoshanah Rabba* converges into *Shemini Atzeret*, and Jewish students of New York converge on Columbia University. The Jewish populations of every area institution were well represented, from Queens, Brooklyn College, NYU, and yes, Yeshiva boys with our heads held high, very content with our 70 block exodus downtown and 32 point leap up the poles of U.S News and World Report.

Holding on to brightly colored neon meal tickets or clad in pink wrist bands we entered the hallowed gates and Ivy League aura of Barnard College. *Kiddush* was recited in the Barnard *Sukkah* in shifts as it emptied and filled up three or four times to be *yotzi* the entire crowd. The *sukkah* itself was quite large and well decorated, complete with fliers and streamers including the proud rainbow flag of those who would never let celebrating *Sukkot* interfere with celebrating diversity. From the *Sukkah* we filed past the ticket counter into adjacent McIntosh Center where the festive meal was held. After a short interlude by a few members of the Columbia Jewish Student Union and a welcome introduction from chaplains Rabbi Charles Sheer and Rabbi Jenny Rosen *shlita*, the plastic wrap was ripped off the trays and a mighty feast ensued.

As the final chicken scraps were being consumed Rabbi Sheer asked that all trays with left over usable food be brought to the front of the hall for distribution to "our homeless neighbors" which would commence at the close of the meal. After the communal rendition of *Birkat Hamazon* the crowd was split into those that would spend the next hour walking down Broadway handing out trays to those less fortunate, those who joined in an hour of learning with the Rabbi, those who revisited the *Sukkah* to take advantage of the wine bottles left unsanctified and unclaimed, and those who had made other plans for how to kill the hour before they were off to 122<sup>nd</sup> and The Feinburg Auditorium of JTS to scalp tickets to the Pizmon concert. This performance of Columbia University's Jewish accapella group was the one stop on the three day tour to which one could not gain access simply by flashing a smile and/or wristband. Access to this performance was by advance ticket sales only. Then again, access to the Woodstock festival was also originally meant to be by advanced ticket sales only. In both cases, everyone who made the trek saw the show.

I'm pretty sure that upon entrance more than half of the spectators were completely oblivious to who or what Pizmon was. However, I'm completely sure that upon exit none of the spectators would ever be oblivious again. Under the direction of Maya Bernstein, Pizmon combined soul and harmony in a Hebrew version of the '98 World Cup Carnival song and a magical rendition of *Eishet Chayil*. Though met with well deserved, rousing applause, these songs proved to be only a

coming attraction to an encore which nobody could expect and nobody will forget. Karen Berenthal's solo rendition of Achinoam Nini's *Boi Kala* was a performance that could be described as *Mamosh Kol Isha!* I choose to describe as simply unbelievable.

At the close of the final curtain call most of the crowd slowly made its way back to the Barnard *Sukkah*. The *Sukkah* and surrounding area was packed and rocking with Jewish songs and positive energy. Despite the fact that the wine supply was long exhausted, due to those who chose the re-visit the *Sukkah* option after dinner, at times the electricity of genuine *simcha* transcended the physical realities of midterms and crisp night air.

8:45 A.M. Time to go to shul. (At least that was the plan before many retired to their sleeping arrangements four hours earlier.) By conclusion of the services at around noon, the crowds had been revitalized. The walk back to Barnard mirrored the one of the previous night, and lunch, though in a different location, was held in similar spirit. As the final words of *Birkat Hamazon* were sung and the excess trays were again inspected and readied for distribution, most chose to reclaim their sleeping arrangements, well aware that the previous evening's proceedings would prove considerably more restrained than those of the one to come.

Their preparation was not in vain. *Mincha* began at six PM and *Shemini Atzeret* became *Simchat Torah*. The call went out for energy and the masses responded accordingly. After *Maariv*, Congregation Ramoth Orah burst into *Hakkafot*, the first set in a long night. Dinner began, and all attempts of making plans for later and getting tanked up early were underway. The well-practiced post-dinner drill went smoothly, trays were circulating Broadway and the masses were circulating the large assortment of pre-*Hakkafot* parties and get-togethers.

10:30 P.M. The Columbia *Hakkafot* were ready to get underway. Again those in charge were insistent on carrying out their pledge that no one would be allowed into the McIntosh/Barnard Hall building without a Columbia ID or pink wristband, but through one method or another the Woodstock principle applied. The three separate revolving *Hakkafot* circles, each with their own *Sefer Torah*, were enough to cater to most mainstream religious affiliations and the atmosphere was in a fact one of tolerance and jubilation.

After the final revolution, it was time to revisit the multiple points of liquid nourishment around campus to regain strength for the main activity of the evening. This was of course the 35 block, rain dampened trek to 79<sup>th</sup> and West End to dance away the night with family and old friends, fellow Jews of New York City and Reb Shlomo Carlebach. The Shul, smaller in size than spirit, couldn't contain all those determined to blow its roof off. The mass of humanity spilled into the street and occupied that as well. Scores of Jews from every wing, affiliation, and denomination all dancing together, danc-

## Broadway on BROADWAY

BY STEVEN BERNSTEIN

I am not a big fan of New York City. What's to like? New York is polluted, crime-filled, loud, congested, and extremely expensive. It comes to no surprise then, that when the name of this metropolis is mentioned in conversation, I cringe. People say to me, "Steve, you live in New York. Don't you just love it? You have the world at your fingertips — restaurants, museums, theater." "No," I answer, "I absolutely hate it." I then proceed to list off the aforementioned attributes of this so-called "capital of the world." "Sure I can go to a museum, if I can make it out of my dorm building without getting shot. Sure I can go to a restaurant, but who wants to risk being poisoned? Yeah, there's theater, but who can afford the price of a ticket?" Basically, I tell people that New York is a nice place to visit, but you wouldn't want to live here.

Unfortunately, I do live here. Fortunately, I learned to accept my tragic fate. Moreover, I figured that as long as I'm here, I might as well take advantage of the purported "world at my fingertips." And so, I journeyed forth to see numerous Broadway shows. I then went hungry for two months (and still put on weight...go figure). Dejected and depressed, I again regressed into my I-hate-New-York-self and, for months, stayed away from my one true love — the theater. It was then that, since I had no money and was too afraid to leave my dorm, I was sitting in my room, flipping through *The Guide to the Perplexed*, and noticed an entire section all about ways to get the most out of Broadway for the least amount of money. This moment restored me, and again I was the happy theater-guy everybody knows and loves.

So there I was, skipping my bio-for-poets class, standing in line at TKTS. I looked up and noticed a banner that read "Broadway on Broadway." I asked the lady at the TKTS booth what exactly "Broadway on Broadway" was. She told me, "It's a free concert featuring songs from the this season's Broadway musicals. It's going on this Sunday in the middle of Times Square." So I went.

"Broadway on Broadway" was more than a free concert in the middle of Times Square — it was amazing. Fifty thousand people showed up for the event (okay, so maybe New York being congested is not such a bad thing). Since not everybody would be able to have a clear view of the stage, the event was broadcast live on the NBC Astrovision by Panasonic. The concert began with the overture from *Girl Crazy*. This was done in celebration of George Gershwin's 100th birthday. Following the opening number, the audience was treated to numbers from *Chicago*, *The Lion King*, *The Sound of Music*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Cats*, *Cabaret*, *Ragtime*, *Rent*, *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*, *Les Misérables*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Miss Saigon*, and *Titanic* (to name a few). Each number was performed by the musical's cast. After the body of the show, the cast of the soon-to-be-released *On The Town*, previewed a number called "New York, New York." The finale had the casts of all the shows join together to sing "Give My Regards to Broadway" as confetti fell from the rooftops surrounding Times Square. Paul Gemignani then led the orchestra in "Dance at the Gym Suite" from *West Side Story*. This was done as a tribute to the late choreographer, Jerome Robbins, who passed away this past month.

"Broadway on Broadway" is currently in its seventh year. It is an excellent way for the poor college student to get a taste of Broadway for free. Though you now have to wait another three hundred and some odd days to see it, I still suggest you see the show. I loved it (but I still hate New York).

ing for Torah, dancing for Shlomo, dancing for the very future of *Klal Yisrael*. Between *Hakkafot* different speakers stood up to deliver a few words on the significance of the up coming *Hakkafa*. Reb Shlomo's younger daughter Dariah spoke about how all those present could follow in her father's footsteps, spreading Torah and positive energy throughout the world, while another speaker commented simply about the significance of one night a year where the primary objective is, "to pick up Torah not women." The rest of the vibrant revolutions were complemented by the hundreds of voices in perfect unison and the Carlebach Chassidim keeping beat on the resonating metal doors of the Aron Kodesh.

We embarked on our trek back to Columbia at a little after five in the morning. All noticed that after the experience we just had, it was easier to walk the thirty-five blocks, probably on account that our shoes weren't touching the ground.

As expected the *Shacharit* attendance was slightly less than in the days before. Obediently, we followed the well rehearsed motions for the final time. *Musaf* flowed into lunch, lunch flowed into *Mincha* then *Maariv* then *Havdalah*, and as *Simchat Torah* became Tuesday night. *Z'man Simchatainu* had drawn to a triumphant close.

THE YU COMMENTATOR

ARTS & G

# ARTS &



## What Dreams May Come

Starring Robin Williams, Annabella Sciorra, and Cuba Gooding Jr.  
BY YAIR OPPENHEIM

There are only a few films each year that can perform the feat of changing the way people think of how movies should be made, by providing some form of breakthrough by which future films will be judged. Though "What Dreams May Come" is certainly not a perfect film, it clearly fits the bill in this situation.

Robin Williams stars as Dr. Chris Neilson, who early into the film meets his soulmate, played matter-of-factly by Annabella Sciorra. They soon get married and have kids. An accident soon takes the lives of their children, and in yet another auto crash, the life of Williams. All of this occurs in an unflinching seven minutes. Within time, Williams meets with what appears to be his guardian angel Albert, played by Cuba Gooding Jr. As Williams contemplates what he must leave behind against what he must accept, he decides to move on. He soon enters a fully rendered three-dimensional heaven, whose scenery is made of his wife's paintings. The landscape which surround Williams is literally mind-blowing, which Williams clearly feels, and soon learns to adjust to his version of heaven.

Williams soon grows tired of sitting around by himself and wishes to find his children, and he eventually does in a rather charming and roundabout way. This soon becomes irrelevant, as he discovers what has become of his wife. Shocked, outraged and confused, he demands more than an answer and decides to venture into hell with Albert and the aid of a "tracker" to find his wife, and do what he can to remedy the situation.

There is much to be said of the film as a whole without deconstructing it. The concept of the afterlife has rarely been touched in such detail until now, as previous to the age of effects, nobody could do it justice in visualizing it. Thus, the concepts in the film flow freely, and bounce from one idea to the next. Though the script is a bit lacking in terms of sharpening dialogue, the ideas are technically presented well by the characters since you don't expect Williams to speak in sonnets; he says he loves his wife and the audience can believe him, as he is constantly reinforced by a huge amount of flashbacks of him being with his family in emotionally charged moments. This in of itself is a fascinating aspect of the film - it is one of the few films that actually tries to be emotional from the beginning to the end. Sensitive viewers will be caught in this spectrum of emotions and should clearly love the film. Other "less sensitive" (or male, for lack of a better term) viewers, may actually find the film to be emotionally manipulative since it acts as a forced catharsis. In its

effort to keep the viewers drowning their eyes, it loses a finale which would have been more effective were the rest of the film to be less touching. All in all, though, it succeeds.

Robin Williams, though, does not deliver one of his best performances. He gives a rather charming and lightweight ambiance to his character. It can most notably be compared to his role as Peter Pan in Spielberg's *Hook*. Annabella Sciorra doesn't make much of an effort to pull off a great performance, as her character is limited by the script. Oddly enough, perhaps due to the writer's or director's choice, she is out of character for part of the movie. Anybody would think it odd if a sweet, sensitive and charming woman was to become a cold and almost soulless art dealer who dresses in black. Cuba Gooding Jr. is once again miscast as Williams' guardian angel. Even before his breakthrough role in *Jerry Maguire*, the man has always been noted for overacting and for playing the same character. The role of Albert is clearly not one that merits a two-dimensional actor, as it is a role that has the potential to be soothing, philosophically deep, and yet very vibrant - something along the lines of Shakespearean acting.

Philosophically, the film deals with what heaven and hell should represent to people, what a soulmate means, and the value of love. Though brave and true to those ideas, it deals with those subjects at the expense of some important areas of logic, which may offend the intellectual sensibilities of some. The presence of G-d is explained simply by the sentence: "Oh, he's up there, shouting down that he loves us." To have a G-d removed from society may be unappealing to members of any religion. G-d's presence could have still been amplified by the script while still remaining non-denominational. Religion is also looked poorly upon in the film as simply needed when there's a funeral. Psychiatrists are treated like imbeciles, unwilling and incapable of helping anyone. These are odd viewpoints, considering the film's message on the value of life.

The film itself could not have been made without the help of a team of conceptual artists. In that respect, it is clearly the most beautiful films made in years. The effects as Williams enters his still dripping painting of heaven are indeed heavenly. It should be noted that aside from the idea of having Williams live in his wife's paintings, which deserves accolades for originality, the effects supervisors had to provide the audience a vision of paradise none have seen before, an arduous task. The colors and backgrounds are all accounted for. People fly, swim and play in the graceful manners which can only be found in paintings.

Nor are the visions of hell to be forgotten. The burning ships and bodies strewn about are not generic by being gory. Though ghastly and horrific, they remain within the realm of taste and offer a horrifyingly poetic vision of evil. A floor of heads is surely something that will chill the spines of many. Like *Beloved*, it manages to display ideas and words in a poetic manner.

The film is highly recommended to all fans of visual effects, adventures and romance and will undoubtedly scare producers into not touching the afterlife as a subject in cinema for a long time.

## Beloved

Starring Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover  
BY YAIR OPPENHEIM

In the opening sequence of the film, the camera moves cautiously through a graveyard pausing at a simple, unassuming stone marked solely by the word "Beloved," and immediately, a sense of mystery is imparted to the audience. Thus begins "Beloved," based on the prize-winning novel by African-American author and Nobel laureate Toni Morrison, directed by Oscar-winner Jonathan Demme (*Silence of the Lambs*), and starring Oprah Winfrey and Danny Glover.

The story begins in post-Civil War Ohio, where Sethe (Winfrey's character) has established a life for herself and her adolescent daughter Denver, played affectionately by Kimberly Elise. She is visited by her old friend Paul D (Danny Glover), whom she hasn't seen in years, due to his constant running as an escaped slave. Things seem simple until they enter Sethe's house, which is plagued by paranormal forces. After a vicious altercation ending with a seeming victory, things return to normalcy; Paul decides to stay, gets a job, and with some effort, manages to win the respect of Denver. Relationships develop and a level of happiness is achieved.

Things drastically change when the trio, while returning from carnival, observe an oddity by the side of the road: leaning against the trunk of a tree in a trance-like state is a young black woman in expensive clothing unmarked by the war. Things seem even odder as she possesses the undeveloped mind of a child; she doesn't know how to move or speak well. Normal assumptions are made that she was part of a band of escaped slaves who hid in caves and socially degenerated, as their human contact over the years was next to nothing. As the family adopts Beloved into the unit, things don't seem normal anymore, and Paul seems to be the only one able to notice Beloved's creepy resonance. Paul begins questioning her past, which soon begins to reveal what brought her to Sethe's home. This, in turn, unearths intense and surprising secrets from Sethe's past, which Paul doesn't take too easily. After that fact, the plot ties up its loose ends by testing the characters on what the value of redemption, friendship, and love mean to each, culminating in a satisfactory finale.

In terms of pure filmmaking, Jonathan Demme pulls out all of the stops and offers an epic story whose cinematic depth works on so many levels; it is essentially poetry in motion. The poem, if you will, is well written, dripping with imagery, and tells a great story. For this reason, it may or may not be accepted by audiences. In parts it is slow moving, but that is only in order to assign proper character development, and even moreso, stunning imagery and scenic shots.

Demme, aside from directing his actors/actresses well, was able to pick the perfect shots in each scene, many of which are hauntingly beautiful, with the scene of the "arrival" of Beloved in the lake especially moving. It all makes sense, as this is a ghost story. The set design and costumes are great to look at, especially in the urban scenes. By an artistic standard, one may then venture to say that as a whole, "Beloved" is a better film than "Silence of the Lambs"; subject matter aside.

Of all the working elements, though, the script is most likely the highlight of the film. The words are very poetic, an element of the novel which people thought would be lost in the adaptation. Time and again, when "hip" directors wish to adapt Shakespeare and yet commercialize it, they end up destroying the source material, most notably the dialogue. "Beloved," thankfully, never stoops to that level, as the main writing credits were given to its author Toni Morrison, with credit also extending to Akosua Busia, Richard LaGravenese, and Adam Brooks.

With regards to acting, the film showcases every actors talents in one form or another. Among the smaller performances, Kimberly Elise performs well using her charm, and Beah Richards is a pleasure to watch as the Old Baby Suggs, a preacher to the newly free. Beloved, played by Thandie Newton is an extremely layered character. In a complex and well executed performance, Newton plays her in a way reminiscent of Linda Blair's role in "The Exorcist," though very innocent and calm, jerky movements and odd speech patterns highlight her character. Oprah Winfrey gives what may indeed be an Oscar-winning role, though it's hard to judge if it was her best performance as her only other mainstream acting role was as a supporting character in Spielberg's "The Color Purple." Danny Glover easily sheds his "Lethal Weapon" persona, and in its place gives what is the best performance of his career, with his last great performance being, coincidentally enough, in "The Color Purple." In the film he manages to use the entire spectrum of facial expressions to express the emotion within his character, and like Winfrey, is quite eligible for an Oscar.

"Beloved," in its entirety is also one of the best genre-crossing films made. It serves as a period piece chronicling the post-Civil War era, a film portraying the lives of blacks, a ghost story, and a study of the changing role of women in a class society. That, along with the best script adaptation of the year and some powerhouse acting, makes "Beloved" as tough an Oscar contender as "Saving Private Ryan."

Note: The film contains scenes that some people may find objectionable.

C  
U  
L  
T  
U  
R  
E



# ARTS & CULTURE

## LITERARY

### Ye Faithful or How I Spent My New Year's:

December 31

I'm sitting on my food and dirt-stained sofa wearing a tee shirt bearing the symbol of the Robert Plant/Jimmy Page reunion concert, and jeans of Levi and Strauss. When was the last time I showered? Or shaved? Couldn't have been that long ago. Recently I've had no reason to. Of course, I would. If I had to worry about offending somebody else.

I wonder what Jimmy Page is doing right now.

I'm alone, not by choice. Well not quite alone. I have Kurt Loder and Lisa Loeb, and Moon Zappa keeping me company. Not to mention the Wise owl that stares at me from his nest on the potato chip bag.

Okay, I'm alone.

But what is New Year's anyway? I mean, just some arbitrary night that was chosen to make you feel blah blah blah blah —

That's not working for me. It never does. Rationalizing. Ha! I'm bound to self-pity. I'll just have to live with it. And now I have yet another reason: I can't even get it together enough to explain away the meaninglessness of New Year's Freaking Eve!

I let some time pass.

Tonight I've laughed with Comedy Central. I've cried with A&E. I got into some trouble with Mr. Ed and Samantha Stevens on Nick at Night. Now, I'm back in Times Square with MTV. I look like crap. My mouth has a dry salty, sour taste — dry from the potato chips and pizza.

The apartment is dark, and the only light and noise is coming from the TV.

It's getting close.

Why am I alone. Why? I ask myself. Because I'm not good looking enough? Because I wouldn't settle and just go out with just anybody? Yep.

Yeah. That's it. It has nothing to do with the fact that my date — the reason why I spent a fortune on my haircut and wardrobe for the evening — ditched me in the end. Where's she right now, huh? Probably out... having fun... and —

Well, I don't need her. I've got...

...Martha Stewart on Lifetime.

Here it comes. That meaningless commercialized... no, that's just not going to work tonight. I am looking at the phone. I'm hoping it will ring. I am hoping this, because I know if it does, that will be a good thing. It can't be my mom. My mom already called and is out for the night. My mom is out for the night. And I am here. A l o n e. a l o n e. a l o n e. a l o n e. a l o n e.

Okay — so, a phone call would definitely be a good thing.

I am looking at the phone. And the clock. And Times Square.

It rings. It RINGS! IT RINGS!! I jump off the couch (for the first time in about 5 hours) and run to it. To my savior. I let it ring once more. You know: to play it cool. Don't wanna jinx it. (Rings again.) But I also don't want to let an opportunity get out of reach, so...

"Hello?"

"Good evening"

(Good evening? Who says good evening?)

"Yes. Who is this please?"

"I'm calling from AT&T."

"Ya don't say." I'm angry. I'm fuming. I never fume, but I think I'm beginning to fume now.

"I'm sorry?" The man was obviously confused.

"You should be." And with that, I hang up.

And then I just sit on the floor, a few feet from the TV that's still talking to me, holding the purveyor of evil in my lap. "Te-le-phone." I say out loud to nobody in particular, looking at it. It's actually funny. Why is the phone shaped like the Liberty Bell?

I pick it up, for no reason at all. Maybe I'll rip the cord off. Maybe I'll slam the receiver against the wall. Maybe I'll bite it.

Instead, I listen to the dial tone. And,

I dial 0. That perfect number centered in the bottom row of the organized keypad. "OPER."

"Thank you for calling Bell Atlantic. Can I help you?"

Pleasant enough.

"Well, actually, um..."

"Yes sir?"

Sounds like a nice young lady.

"Well, you know how it's New Year's and all..."

My voice trailed off.

"Sir, can I help you?"

She was beginning to sound irate. Maybe this wasn't a good idea. Forget it.

This wasn't right. Not at all.

But maybe it wasn't me. Maybe she wasn't the right operator. I was beginning to get my confidence back. This was something I've never done before, but I knew enough to know that if I called back, the odds of getting the same woman — if I was lucky enough to get another woman (it had to be a woman, don't know why) — were very good.

I still had one more minute. I was determined.

I dial 0, again.

"Thank you for calling Bell Atlantic. Can I help you?"

This time, I'm more confident.

"Yes, hi. First, I'd like to say thank you."

She laughs.

Excellent sign.

"Okay... For what?"

"Well, you know how it's New Year's?"

"Yes, yes I do."

She sounds really friendly. Not only that, but she continues, almost reading my mind.

"Are you alone tonight?"

"Actually I am." Did I call the operator, or *Psychic Friends Network*?

"Sir, Happy New Year." She says calmly.

"Well, Happy New Year to you too," I say cheerfully.

"And," the operator seems hesitant.

"Yes?"

"You're welcome, sir."

Silence for a moment.

"Can I help you with anything else?"

"May I ask your name?"

"We're only supposed to give out our operator numbers. You know, if there's any complaints."

"Oh no." I answer. "Nothing like that. It's just that, well..." I pause not really knowing exactly what it is I want to say. "You really brightened up my year, and I'd like to know your name, if that's okay."

"What the heck — it's New Year's. I'm Hope."

"Hope, it's nice to meet you."

"While it is a pleasure to meet you, I could get into serious trouble if I just sit and chat like this."

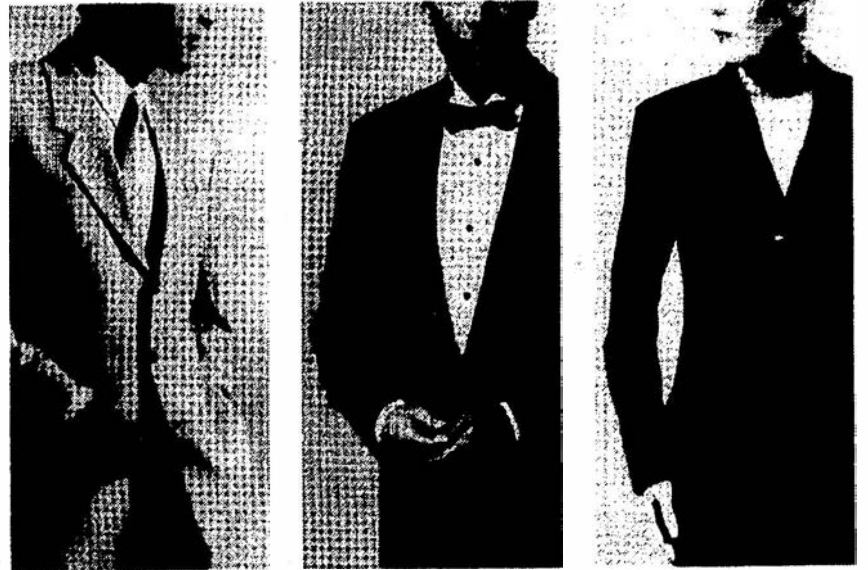
"I understand." Pause. "Hope, thank you."

"No. Thank you."

I could tell she was smiling.

## Everything you want to wear

...at Low Off-Prices everyday. At Syms, you can choose from over 200 Authentic Designer and Brand Names on everything from casual wear to professional and formal wear. Syms always has current styles on the clothes you want to wear in your size.



www.symsclothing.com

Midtown: Park Avenue & 54th Street • 212-317-8200

Downtown: Trinity Place between Rector and Battery Park • 212-797-1199

AN EDUCATED CONSUMER IS OUR BEST CUSTOMER

SYMS

## GW Semester in Washington

An Undergraduate Program in Political Management  
Spring, Summer, and Fall Sessions

### Experience Springtime in the Nation's Capital

- Learn From and Network Among "Washington Insiders"
- Produce Radio and TV Advertisements in Campaign Simulations
- Compete as Consulting Groups on Strategic Lobbying Plans
- Live 3 blocks from the White House and Monuments
- Bike and rollerblade by DC's Cherry Blossoms
- GW's central location can put you on Capital Hill or the K Street corridor of lobbyists & Interest groups in minutes.

The George Washington University  
WASHINGTON DC

The Graduate School of Political Management

GW is an equal opportunity/affirmative action institution

For more information, contact: 800) 367-4776, (202) 994-6000 <http://www.gwu.edu/~gspm>

Now Accepting Applications for Fall and Spring Sessions Apply NOW!

## Academic Exercise: Some Gym Classes Now Include Text Books

BY JACKY FLEISCHMAN

Upon returning after a long summer vacation, many Yeshiva students were greeted with a rude surprise. The Athletic Department, former sanctum for macho athletes and would-be jocks, had undergone drastic changes, shocking many and leaving others in despair. In an effort spearheaded by Dr. Richard Zerneck, Director of YU Undergraduate Athletics, a proposal has been adopted which calls for nearly every gym class to require a textbook, final exam, and in some cases, even reading assignments.

The last thing people want to hear at the start of the semester is that they need to buy another textbook. For Rich Frohlich, SSSB '00, the "gym is a way to let loose and clear your head from all other schoolwork. Bringing textbooks into the picture will surely take away from this relaxing atmosphere and the important release it brings." And so the argument goes, it's bad enough that students are forced to overpay for books, is it really necessary to bring textbooks to gym class as well?

One of the most beloved individuals on campus, YU's athletic king, Stan Watson, agrees with Zerneck's initiatives. He is a firm believer that gym classes should be taught like all other college classes, using textbook and other teaching aids as necessary. For Stan, "the gym is tantamount in importance because it lets a person learn more about themselves." This was the spirit that motivated him to develop a new course, "Wellness and Fitness," which is geared towards helping students become more aware of themselves. The course teaches principles of healthy living, including proper maintenance of diet and exercise, ideals meant to be carried beyond college.

For Zerneck, the chance to teach people how to properly take care of themselves, something which he believes many YU students neglect, is one that "should not be overlooked."

Zerneck strongly feels that the new class

should be the "foundation of all classes in the coming semesters." For that reason he wants it to become a requirement for incoming students in the coming semesters. Beside the gym activity itself, he feels that all physical education courses should teach more theoretical knowledge about game strategy and execution. For example, instead of just playing basketball, its rules and historical origin should also be stressed. Sports, in this way, becomes a metaphor for going through life, avoiding obstacles and maintaining balance and stability. Still, students wandering through the gym wondered, "What ever happened to basketball being fun? The rules and history should be taught in referee school!! Let the boys play some ball!"

There are still several gym classes that are without textbooks. The reason for this is simply that the athletic department has been unable to find suitable textbooks. While this mishap may belie the suggestion that gym classes are, perhaps, meant to be more than academic exercises, it also means that the recent push by the Athletic Department still faces an uphill battle. In this vein, one student noted, "Maybe there's a reason for that; the gym is supposed to be fun. Doesn't chemistry take care of the intellectualism?" Still, Coach Watson is of the opinion that gym classes are, in fact, more important than all the science and accounting classes since, unlike those classes, the gym teaches you about yourself and your body.

For most students, the only real problem with the new program is the emphasis it places on textbooks. Many would just as soon settle for getting out of Seasonal Sports rather than being lectured about the finer points of soccer history. But, for Zerneck, that is just the point. "Students have a responsibility, especially at Yeshiva, to take care of their health. We want to teach them lasting lessons about fitness." Despite the apparent sincerity of intent on the part of the athletics department, many students remain skeptical.

## Conference on Contemporary Issues in Modern Judaism Convened YU Co-Sponsors Landmark Event

BY JASON CYRULNIK

On October 13-15, a nationwide conference aimed at addressing, head-on, the major issues that concern modern Judaism and its society was co-hosted by Yeshiva University in Israel. Prompted by the growing gap between religious and non-religious Jews in Israeli society, Modern Orthodox leaders felt it necessary to define more precisely their general outlook, specifically their position on social issues.

The three-day conference began in Kibbutz Ramat Rachel on the outskirts of Jerusalem and continued in Northern Israel at Kibbutz Lavi. The controversial nature of the issues broached worried some, yet, an optimistic Rabbi Jeffrey Woolf, Bar-Ilan Talmud professor and conference organizer, stressed that the conference was designed to be "a renaissance, not a revolution."

While the conference was aimed at providing a forum for the very broad subjects of a re-examination of Modern Orthodoxy and religious Zionism, the particular sessions targeted four basic issues. First, speakers addressed the issue of religious leadership in modern society. The list of speeches featured among others, an address from Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Israel. Judaism, culture, and communication, specifically the use of electronic media, and Torah and democracy dominated other sessions.

The last of the four major issues was *ma'a-mad haisha*, the role of women in Jewish society. For this session, a group of 50 women hoping to expand their role in religion joined the proceedings after coordinating their views on the issue in a separate one-day discussion prior to the conference.

In accordance with the goals of the conference, the format of each committee session was specifically designed for group participation. Panels of speakers, usually four, would address the audience. Subsequently, the floor would be opened up for comments in both formal and informal discussion groups. This format was enhanced by the

diversity of the participants; over 150 rabbis, leaders, and educators representing numerous different outlooks attended. The diversity of the participants was targeted by, but perhaps more importantly mirrored by, the heterogeneity of the conference's sponsors - the Religious Kibbutz Movement (Kibbutz Hadati), Yeshiva University, Bar-Ilan University, and Beit Morasha (an institute for Jewish education).

The success of the conference, many asserted, has yet to be determined. For the most part, it will depend upon the commitment of the participants to integrating the various views that were expressed during the conference and to carrying its message to leaders worldwide. Regarding specific viewpoints that were presented and adopted by the conference, attendees acknowledge that they didn't anticipate many conclusions, and accordingly not many were reached. At the same time, however, it was a "very important beginning in that it provided a forum that didn't exist before, for the discussion of certain issues," stressed one participant. Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, President of Yeshiva University, delivered the concluding remarks on Thursday, capping off the three-day event.

Just 25 years ago, American Jewish leaders called to meeting the Lavi Conference, where, together with Kibbutz Hadati, they addressed similar issues of concern to Jewish society. While the issues have changed their faces somewhat, the enthusiasm of the organizers has remained intact. Sponsors were excited, not only by the progress made at the sessions, but also about the message sent by simply having convened such an event. Looking toward the future, Rabbi Robert Hirt, Vice President for administration and professional education at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and conference speaker, emphasized the need to take "a more assertive stance to integrate all segments of the Jewish community," and place the emphasis on "our common values." Conference participants both before and after the event echoed this sentiment.

## Yeshiva University Office of Student Services

500 West 185<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10033  
Tel (212) 960-5480 Fax (212) 960-5482  
e-mail: [aleibowit@ymail.yu.edu](mailto:aleibowit@ymail.yu.edu)

October 22, 1998

Dear First Time On Campus Students,

Hi, my name is Andrew Leibowitz, and I am the Coordinator of Student Services at Yeshiva University's Main Campus. I am sure by now you have received my letter asking you to meet with me. In case you did not receive it I want you to know that I am seriously devoted to meeting each and every one of you.

I am here to help you in any way that I can and would greatly appreciate the opportunity to get to know you. I would also like to inform you of the many different services offered by Yeshiva University to its students.

Please call me at 960-5480 or drop by the Office of Student Services at Furst Hall, Room 419 to schedule an appointment or even just to say hello.

Sincerely,

  
Andrew Leibowitz  
Coordinator of Student Services



## Exclusive Interview with Chuck Schumer

BY ADAM MOSES AND CHANAN HOSCHANDER

*The Commentator attempted to interview both candidates in the NY Senatorial election; however, Alfonse D'Amato declined to accommodate our requests.*

**Commentator:** What aspect of your platform, to your thinking, distinguishes your candidacy as more desirable than that of Sen. D'Amato to moderate or undecided voters?

**Schumer:** Al D'Amato and I are very different legislators. I have authored and passed the Brady Bill, Assault Weapons Ban, the 1994 Crime Law which put 100,000 police on the streets, the Violence Against Women Act, and the Hate Crimes law to punish violent crimes of bigotry. With the exception of the Hate Crimes law, Al D'Amato has opposed every one of my bills. In addition, during his 18 years in the Senate, Al D'Amato has never passed a significant piece of national legislation.

**Commentator:** The media has sought to frame this election as a battle along ethnic fault lines. Particular attention has been devoted to your "Jewish credentials," as well as those of your opponent. Do you believe casting policy issues in this narrow fashion is a service to the quality of substantive campaign discourse?

**Schumer:** In a race where my opponent will outspend me three to one, I have to answer the charges he makes in his ad campaign. In the primary election I talked only

about substance and never once mentioned my opponent's name. That is not possible in this race.

Regarding our "Jewish credentials," both Al D'Amato and myself have nearly identical records regarding Israel. Given our records, I am disappointed that in upstate New York he is running ads criticizing me for supporting foreign aid — which we all know means aid to Israel.

**Commentator:** The tone of the advertising clash between yourself and your opponent has been, at best, rancorous. It seems to many pundits that these contentious exchanges have diverted the focus of public debate away from more relevant matters. Do you agree with this assessment?

**Schumer:** I would love a campaign that talks only about the issues. That is my passion as a legislator and it is also my strongest suit. But as I said before — the tenor of this race is really controlled by Al D'Amato.

**Commentator:** In the event that the House resolves to impeach President William Jefferson Clinton, would you, as a Senator, be inclined to favor his ouster?

**Schumer:** Based on the evidence that has been supplied by the Office of the Independent Counsel thus far, careful reading of the impeachment clause of the Constitution and various scholarly articles that interpret that clause, I have concluded that the President should be punished, but not impeached. His actions, though reprehensible, do not rise to the level of high crimes and misdemeanors as cited in the Constitution.

### Election '98

"We're dealing with two friends of the Jewish community and it's a very difficult choice to make, to have to opt for one over another," said Michael Miller, executive vice president of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York.

For the candidates, the Jewish vote is likely to be critical. Jews comprised roughly 25 percent of the statewide Democratic primary vote, according to Edison Media Research. This strong turnout, in an election whose overall turnout was only 12 percent, magnifies the influence of the Jewish vote well beyond their numbers.

With the Jewish influence on the election so strong, it has become a key battleground for the candidates. Schumer, who hails from the Midwood section of Brooklyn, a strongly Jewish neighborhood, has always depended on the Jewish vote. For Schumer, city votes are especially important since he needs them to combat D'Amato's expected lead among upstate and suburban voters.

However, D'Amato is not willing to concede votes even in Schumer's home district. He has campaigned heavily in Midwood, with his advisors noting how he defeated Robert Abrams in 1992 by capturing 55 percent of the district's vote and 40 percent of the district's Jewish vote. Both candidates are now relying on strong support from within the Jewish community. According to Miller, the "Jewish vote" will play a pivotal role.

While the Jewish vote is clearly crucial, the decision of whom to vote for is more difficult. Both candidates have demonstrated a commitment to Jewish issues, and on many issues they find themselves agreeing with each other. How, then, to vote, is an "agonizing choice."

Both candidates are strong supporters of Israel, and work towards sending aid. Additionally, D'Amato, through his position on the Senate Banking Committee, has been hailed as the hero of the "Swiss gold" for his

## IN SEARCH OF THE "JEWISH VOTE"

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

efforts on behalf of Holocaust survivors in recovering millions of dollars looted by the Nazis. D'Amato also captured the support of Chassidic voters by appearing in Crown Heights during the 1991 riots.

Schumer has long been identified with national anti-terror efforts, calling for strong punishment of the Hamas organization as well as others. He also led the fight to prosecute a civil rights case against the murderers of Yankel Rosenbaum, the Yeshiva scholar fatally stabbed in the 1991 Crown Heights riots. The perpetrators were ultimately found guilty.

As supporters of purely Jewish causes and on international issues, both candidates stand out. Closer to home, there are key issues which distinguish the two, issues which may sway the vote in either direction amongst various Jewish groups.

Schumer is pro-choice on abortion, which will certainly win him votes from more liberal Jews, yet may alienate him in Orthodox circles. D'Amato has pushed hard in favor of school vouchers, which would supplement the cost of private schools, easing the burden of sending children to Yeshivot. Schumer, though, has pushed hard for tax credits and low interest rate loans for college students.

On these issues, Dov Hikind, a Democratic Assemblyman from Brooklyn and an Orthodox Jew, noted, "Many liberal Jews vote by party or based on a narrow issue. I do not expect people from the outer boroughs to vote as blindly."

In terms of Israel, D'Amato has been identified more with hard-line Israelis. To differentiate between D'Amato and Schumer in that area, many point to Schumer's vote against the use of force in the Persian Gulf war. "When it came to the defining moment for supporting Israel," notes Hikind, "Chuck Schumer voted against it." While everyone is "for Israel," he noted, this may be considered a sign of lack of support for Israel.

Miller added that, in general, as long as

## YCSC Sophomore and Freshman Elections Held

BY MATTHEW SCHARF

On September 17, the Yeshiva College Student Council elections for the sophomore and freshman classes were held. Voting took place in the lobby of the Rubin Residence Hall between 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM, and ran smoothly without any noticeable hitches. The newly elected officials are:

### Sophomore Class:

President: Brian Glass

Vice President: Eric Distenfeld

Secretary-Treasurer: Aryeh Goldberg

### Freshman Class:

President: Eric Gutman

Vice President: Nathan Siegel

Secretary-Treasurer: Natanel Barookhian

The Canvassing Committee, an independently operated YCSC organization, ran the elections. Their duties included the monitoring of candidates and campaigns to ensure that all election rules were adhered to, the arduous task of checking the official class standings of all eligible voters, as well as the tallying of ballots. When reached for comment, Moishe Singer, Assistant Chairman of the Canvassing Committee, said, "All the candidates ran a very clean campaign and we thank them for that."

In most undergraduate schools it is only the freshman elections that are held at the beginning of the fall semester. The sophomore class elections are held at the

end of the spring semester along with the junior and senior class elections. However, in YU, due to the fact that the majority of students spend their freshman year in Israel, the sophomore elections are postponed until the majority of the class arrives on campus. The drawback to this is that incoming officials do not assume their duties until relatively late. Nonetheless, YCSC President Dror Barber remains confident that, although they are off to a late start, he is sure that the incoming officials will make the best of it and work with us to make this a very productive year.

This optimism and open-mindedness extends to the candidates as well. Sophomore class president, Brian Glass said, "I'd like to wish everyone a successful year and that I, as well as Eric and Aryeh, are open to any suggestions that one may have as to better the college experience of any sophomore here at Yeshiva University. Freshman class president Eric Gutman also remained enthusiastic about the situation."

Voter turnout for this election was as expected with about a 50% turnout. The Canvassing Committee, headed by Chairman Michael Ausubel, will remain inactive until the end of the spring semester when the junior and senior elections will be held. YCSC officials continue to encourage all to take part in the student body's governing organization.

### Election '98

the community, everyone knows that he gets things done." Additionally, there is the matter of simple *hakarat hatov*. "You don't simply abandon your friends like that," he said. He also noted that the Orthodox community has always been very independent, voting for the candidate who supports their ideals.

D'Amato's friendship is evident in his steering federal funds towards programs for Orthodox and Chassidic neighborhoods. The result is long-standing support that D'Amato is confident will carry him. Schumer, though, in a recent interview with *The Jewish Week*, contended that D'Amato's support comes more out of "political expediency rather than personal conviction."

"I think D'Amato has done some good things for the Jewish community," Schumer noted. "I compare my record to his every step of the way. I work just as hard and just as long and, I think, more effectively than he does because when I speak in Washington, people believe it's out of conviction, not simply out of political opportunity."

For Jews, the upcoming vote is certainly important. Both candidates are "good friends" of the Jews and have worked effectively in advancing the needs of the Jewish community. As a Jew, Chuck Schumer is perhaps in a better position to appreciate the needs of the Jewish community and may therefore fight harder and more convincingly on those issues. Conversely, Al D'Amato has fought hard on Jewish concerns, and as an outsider has demonstrated his allegiance to the Jewish community. Who to vote for, then, is a difficult decision to make.

Perhaps, with neither candidate clearly distinguishing himself on Jewish concerns, the vote will come down to larger issues, taking this election beyond the narrow scope of the Jewish community. As one student who planned to vote said, "I don't think I know who I'll vote for until I step into the booth and close the curtain."

# Employees Reach Contract Agreement

*Continued from page 1*

and Cardozo campuses who are now looking forward to a three percent wage increase effective immediately.

The thirty-seven month contract includes a three percent raise retroactively to October 1, 1998, an additional three percent raise on October 1, 1999, a two percent raise on October 1, 2000, and a final two percent raise on October 1, 2001. The contract is set to expire on October 31, 2001.

The Union voted to accept the school's "final offer" tendered in what came to be the definitive negotiation meeting on October 19, 1998. The offer was an improvement upon the previous standing offer, a thirty-six-month contract including a three percent raise on October 1, 1998, a \$1800 bonus at the end of the contract's second year, and a \$600 raise at the end of the third year. This offer was ultimately rejected by the union members, who desired percentage raises in base pay, rather than bonuses.

## Negotiations

The bargaining began on September 17, with the first formal negotiation between the University's team of selected administrators and the union representatives, delegates, and approximately 75 employees who chose to attend. The YU team was led by Labor Counsel Gerald Bodner, YU's lead negotiator for the past 23 years. A graduate of Cornell's School of Labor and Industrial Relations and New York University's School of Law, Bodner was the focal point of employee demands and the diplomatic mouthpiece of the University.

YU fronted an impressive display of administrative firepower that included Chief of Security Donald Sommers;

Director Of Public Relations David Rosen; Director of Finance Bernard Pittinsky; Director of Human Resources Phil Ress; Director of Enrollment Management John Fisher; Director of MIS and Academic Computing Arthur Meyers; Director of Supporting Services Jefferey Rosengarten; Human Resources Manager Michael Sperling, Assistant Director of Finance Harvey Spolansky; acting Vice President for Academic Affairs Sheldon Gelman; Yeshiva College Dean Norman Adler; Dean of RIETS Rabbi Zevulun Charlop; Director of Business Affairs for Cardozo Law School Matthew Levine; Assistant Director of Food Services Jacob Leiberhan; and Douglas Rodgers from Facilities. Across the table from the University front sat Union delegates such as painter/plasterer Rodney Hart; librarian Bernice Katz, and the Colon brothers, Freddy and Herman, of plant engineering.

Jefferey Socol, Assistant Director of Facilities Management, was noticeably absent from the negotiation process. One union member hypothesized that Socol was not present, "because they [YU Administration] were smart enough to hide him."

The negotiations were a drawn out and detailed process, with every facet of the contract language scrutinized. Both sides of the table handed out propaganda in an attempt to bolster their positions. YU circulated a memo that purported to compare "benchmark" jobs of comparable positions at other universities in the New York Metropolitan area, with the memo concluding, "YU's rates within its 'industry' are entirely competitive and in some instances are higher than that paid elsewhere."

This did not satisfy the employees, who demanded parity with salaries at AECOM, which are in most cases significantly higher than those on the Uptown Campus. For example, according to the delegate's numbers, a painter of the same classification at AECOM earns nine thousand dollars more than his counterpart at the Main Campus.

The University countered by stating that AECOM is a hospital, not a university, and therefore its employees are accordingly paid at a higher wage scale.

The negotiations continued over the duration of the holiday break. As students returned to campus they were greeted by the sight of employees wearing "Contract Now!" stickers and daily demonstrations outside Belfer Hall during their lunch hours.

The decisive bargaining session was held on Monday, October 19. At the closed door meeting, both management and labor acknowledged that it was the eleventh hour, and that either an agreement had to be reached or a "job action" (most likely a strike) would be imminent.

The talks stretched out past three in the morning. Various workers even brought their children, who sat with their parents for the duration of the night. Dinner for the workers was purchased by a group of students, who wished to express their support for the employees and their families.

Over fifty Union members discussed and argued in the twelfth floor cafeteria in Belfer Hall, while a committee of Union officials and delegates formed a committee and met with the University's representatives. YU's final offer was announced at close to four AM and was finally accepted in a vote by the union membership on Wednesday at three PM.

## MESORA

**Students' Right?**

**Necessary Evil?**

**Issur D'Oraitia?**

**VOICE YOUR**

**OPINION AND**

**LET US KNOW**

**ON OUR ONLINE**

**MESSAGE BOARD**

@

WWW.

**YUCOMMENTATOR.**

COM

**THE COMMENTATOR  
Would Like To  
Wish Commander  
Ernest McNamee  
A Speedy Recovery**

# CAMPUS BULLETIN BOARD

YCSC invites all students to join one of the various student council committees. You can pick up an application from Dror Barber (Mo 222) or Howie Mazin (Mo 202).

SOY's Special Midterm Blowout sale - Soncino gemarachs and Jastrow Dictionaries for only \$20. Purchases can be made in the main Beit Midrash.

BLOOD DRIVE - The first blood drive of the year was held on Wednesday and Thursday Oct. 14-15. Over 150 people came in to donate blood in the Morg lounge. The next drive is scheduled for December 23-24. For information contact Nachum Stollman at 543-4725.

YUDS - Yeshiva University Debate Society began another great year with their first tour-

namment, hosted by YU on Sunday, October 25th at Stern. Sara Lowe placed third in the debate category and first in the speakers category, while Ouri Cohen, in his inaugural debate placed first in the debate category. YUDS is the largest and most active club on both campuses and is looking for few good argumentative Jews. Anyone can join to be a debater, judge or coach by signing up at: <http://debateyu.base.org>

COMMUNITY LITERACY PROGRAM - Tutors needed! Please contact Jonathan Bendheim at: [bendheim@ymail.yu.edu](mailto:bendheim@ymail.yu.edu)

HAMEVASER - Win \$50 in the Hamevaser essay contest! Deadline for all entries on the topic of "Women in Jewish Life, Law and Lore" are due by November 15. The winner will

receive \$50 and will be published in the next issue of Hamevaser. Contest is open to all students in YC, SCW, RIETS, & BRGS. For more info e-mail: [hamevaser@graphecs.com](mailto:hamevaser@graphecs.com).

YUCS - Learn Web Design! Yeshiva University Computer Society will be conducting a series of four classes designed to teach you how to make your own web page. Classes on the uptown campus are scheduled for Wednesdays, Oct. 28, Nov. 4, Nov. 11, and Nov. 18, at 8:00 PM. Classes at the midtown campus are on Tuesdays, Oct. 27, Nov. 3, Nov. 10, and Nov. 17, at 9:30 PM. The classes at both campuses will be parallel - anyone is welcome to attend at either campus. Please check for more details and dates at: <http://www.yucs.org>

YCDS - Yeshiva College

Dramatics Society Presents their Fall '98 Production, "Lord of the Flies." Watch for details.

A Torah Tapes Library is now open and fully operational. Hundreds of titles on all topics from notable rabbis are now available. Full inventory catalogue online at <http://clubs.yucs.org/soy/tapes>

TANAKH JOURNAL - Announcing the inaugural issue of the Yeshiva College Tanakh Journal. All students in YC, SCW, RIETS and BRGS, are encouraged to submit articles on a topic, theme, or parshanut issue related to tanakh. Please contact Ari Mermelstein@ 740-1269 or [mermels@ymail.yu.edu](mailto:mermels@ymail.yu.edu) for more information. Deadline: December 5th.

Volunteers are needed to visit children in New York City

hospitals. Please contact Joseph Weilgus at 740-8660.

YCSC and SCWSC announce the 1998 Hanukkah concert extravaganza, Thursday evening, December 17, at 8:00 PM.

THIRD COLLOQUIUM - Thursday, November 5, BH921, 1:15 - 2:15. Renee Schlesinger speaks on "Strategies in Couple Communications: Where do You Fit?"

ER - The ER club invites all students to weekly meetings, every Thursday at 10:00pm in the Morg. Lounge.

Attention Club Presidents: Planning an event? Have a special announcement? Please direct all necessary info to: [commie@ymail.yu.edu](mailto:commie@ymail.yu.edu)



# A FINANCIAL STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

## OPCS HOLDS CAREERS IN FINANCE NIGHT

BY MIKE ZAIDEL

The Office of Placement and Career Services continued its effort to keep students abreast of various career options with its "Careers in Finance" event on September 14<sup>th</sup>. About seventy-five anxious Yeshiva University students joined twenty-five of their Stern counterparts to "hear professionals from the world of finance discuss their positions." Advertised as an event open to all majors, most of the attendees were finance majors, or at the very least, Sy Syms School of Business students.

Ira Jaskoll, Dean of SSSB and Director of OPCS, admitted that for an individual to be successful in the financial sector without the parallel major would be difficult. He felt that while the major is not a necessity, students should still "know something about, and have ability in finance." For those with this background and interest in finance, the night was a valuable one.

Described by Laizer Kornwasser of Merrill Lynch as a "meeting to help educate," the event was indeed that. While only five of the seven alumni on the speaker list spoke, those who did, presented valuable advice on diverse financial career issues. The speakers were well prepared and candidly described some of the most basic financial principles, as well as the fine points of particular financial careers.

### THE ALUMNI

Daniel Cohen of Bear Stearns present-

ed an overview of financial careers and warned students to keep their eyes open to the breadth of financial careers available. He dispelled the myth that investment banking was the only financial career and also described commercial banking. Unlike investment banking, which invests for companies, commercial banking is the means that raises capital for corporations. Daniel Cohen informed the students that a finance background not only gives you the opportunity to pursue a career in financial services (investing for individuals and corporations), but also opens the door for managerial finance.

Merrill Lynch's Laizer Kornwasser graduated Yeshiva University in 1992, worked in accounting for two years, attended Harvard Business School and is now an investment banker. He described investment banking as an "exciting, fast paced and extremely challenging career." Investment banking, he emphasized, requires a tremendous amount of commitment. In fact, other investment bankers that had planned to attend the "Careers in Finance Night" could not because they were still working. Kornwasser advised those with the desire to become investment bankers to spend time developing strong leadership and communication skills, not their resumes.

Unlike almost all the other speakers, Sender Cohen of Lehman Brothers was not a Sy Syms student at Yeshiva University. A British History major at Yeshiva College, he emphasized that a business major is not the be-all and

end-all when it comes to financial careers. While he felt that a student should "learn certain things before your interview," financial experience is not necessary. Cohen's responsibilities include analysis of technology stocks. He stressed that the focus of a stock analyst should be the client, not the firm. For the students interested in pursuing a job in this field, he placed math, writing, and people skills as the abilities that are most essential. No matter one's business expertise, without these aforementioned proficiencies this job is a difficult one to obtain. Sender Cohen warned students that "even the most brilliant stock pickers in this field can get fired quickly."

Bennet Schachter graduated Yeshiva University only a year ago and now works in institutional sales for Goldman Sachs. While he recommended interviewing for multiple positions, "students should still be directed toward the career they [wish to] pursue." The bulk of his instruction came in the form of a well-prepared thirteen-page handout entitled "Institutional Sales Overview." The pamphlet outlined the ins and outs of his field for those "Career Night" attendees interested in institutional sales.

Abraham Cohen of Merrill Lynch described himself as someone who "knew nothing about Sy Syms or stocks" and is now a consultant for fourteen thousand people at Merrill Lynch. His incredible tale began when in Israel he met this "maniac named Zalman." This man turned out to be Sanford Burnstein, head of a large

financial corporation. Through this contact, his financial interest began. He sent out over four hundred and eighty resumes for various financial positions, and eventually he found his calling in private client services. He knew nothing of the field, but was given a phone and told to get clients! Cohen walked around to different offices soliciting business and now manages fifty-two million dollars. His advice to the students attending "Career Night: "Be a salesman!"

Merrill Lynch's Ami Aharon chose a financial position which he claimed is not as physically demanding as investment banking. Working in debt capital markets allows him to finish work by seven at night and remain free on the weekends. He told students about the keys to interviewing for financial positions. Aharon felt that a candidate must know five pieces of information before his interview: "why you went to Yeshiva University, why you chose your major, why you applied to this company, why you applied for this specific position and why will you be a good addition to this company."

After the speeches, students were given the opportunity to ask questions and meet with the alumni. To those attendees searching for a career in finance, this OPCS event was considered helpful. The consensus was that the speakers were informative and entertaining. Elijah Kaplan, a Syms Junior, illustrated the impact of the event when he proclaimed, "I learned so much about finance, plus I got to hang out with some Stern girls!"

**Shomer Shabbos**

*Member of Diamond Dealers club, NY*

# NOW IS THE TIME TO INVEST IN FUTURES..

We carry a full line of pearls, diamond bracelets, diamond earrings & designer jewelry

**COME TO TAGGER DIAMONDS FOR  
GREAT SELECTION,  
SERVICE,  
QUALITY  
& PRICE**

**Tagger Diamonds, Inc. \* Importers of Diamonds & Fine Jewelry**  
66 West 47<sup>th</sup> St. Booths 19A & B New York NY 10036 \* Tel (212) 730-2225



## Yeshiva's Own to Give Concerts in NY Metro Area

BY ERIC ROSE

Yeshiva University's homegrown Jewish music group, B'samim, is beginning a three-month concert tour in the New York metro area. The group, led by Yeshiva College alumnus Shmuel Bodenheimer (YC '97) has already booked four performance dates including one at the "Mecca" of Jewish music, Queens College.

B'samim currently consists of five former or current YU students. The band includes vocalists Elie Borger (YC '97) and Elisha Mayer (YC '98), guitarist Alex Remer (YC '00), drummer/vocalist Ephraim Yablok (YC '98), and Bodenheimer, who serves in the capacity of keyboardist/vocalist/composer. According to Bodenheimer, the name, B'samim has significance to the Yeshiva students who have been imbued with a *Torah U'Maddah* duality. It intends to convey the message found in *havdalah*; that of combining the holy with the secular within the context of our Jewish lives.

B'samim's first real exposure came at the annual YU Chanukah concert last year, when it opened for Avraham Fried, Dedi, and Mendy Wald. The YU community responded well to the band, composed entirely of fellow YU students. Audience members also appreciated the distinct sound the group brought to the stage.

In the months following the concert, B'samim's popularity spread beyond the proverbial borders of the YU campus. The release of their first album, "Lihavdil," at last year's SOY Seforim Sale ushered the band into the realm of mainstream Jewish music, highlighted by their inclusion in the annual Israel Day Parade concert in Central Park.

Bodenheimer explained B'samim's appeal as partially resulting from the lack of diversity within modern Jewish music. "There is a tremendous want for artistic creativity," he emphasized. "B'samim's goal from its inception was to add something new to Jewish music. Unlike other Jewish bands and soloists that rely on outside orchestras for accompaniment, B'samim is completely self-sufficient. We combine strong rich vocals with our own heartfelt accompaniment in singing many newly composed songs to produce a sound that is all our own."

Like many Orthodox bands, B'samim has sought to impress a message upon its followers. Its songs reflect central themes in

Jewish life and the lyrics often originate from *Tehillim*, *Tefillah* and *Tanach*. A spokesman for the band claimed that the theme song of their first album, "Havdalah," discusses the essence of Judaism, life's purpose, and the task of bringing the holy into the mundane; a task that many at YU and Stern can appreciate. Other tracks, such as "Heenai Ma Tov," call for peace and *achdut* (unity) within the larger Jewish community.

B'samim attributes their good fortune to the support of the YU community. Guitarist Alex Remer comments that, "One of the things that's great about B'samim is that we're part of a community. We're a bunch of guys who went to school together and we're a part of that whole experience. It's an amazing thing." B'samim tries its best to show its appreciation to the YU community for all its support. At last year's SOY Seforim Sale, B'samim offered advanced copies of "Lihavdil" to YU students before its release to the rest of the public. When asked about future concerts on the YU campuses, Bodenheimer had the following to say, "A concert with our closest friends, where it all began for us? We'd love to."

B'samim can be visited at their website: [www.bsamim.com](http://www.bsamim.com). The band already has a good idea of what material will be appearing on their second album and hope to record sometime this summer for release next Chanukah. They will be performing in numerous upcoming local concerts, where they will offer samples of their upcoming record. Their first release, "Lihavdil," is available from Sameach Music and can be purchased at most Jewish music outlets or through their website.

### Concert Dates:

Oct 24<sup>th</sup>, 1998

Teaneck High School  
T'zvil V'zemer Choir  
(201) 287-0663

Oct 25<sup>th</sup>, 1998

Queens College  
Miami Boys Choir and Yoel Sherabi  
1-877-OCT-2598

Nov 14<sup>th</sup>, 1998

Teaneck, NJ  
Rock Balala  
(201) 862-044

Dec 19<sup>th</sup>, 1998

Jacob Javits Center  
TBA

Uh Oh...

I'm stressed Out!



Want to learn  
some simple stress reduction techniques?

## Come to a Stress Reduction Workshop

Date: Thursday, November 5

Time: Club Hour 2:45p.m. - 3:45p.m.

Room: Furst Hall, Room 208

with  
Rabbi Yehudah Fine

Guidance Staff

Presented by the Office of the Dean of Students and  
The Office of Student Services

<http://www.ce.columbia.edu>

## Off-Campus Learning Opportunities

Columbia

Study Abroad  
Visiting Students  
Summer Session

Visiting Students

If you need more reasons to be in New York,  
Columbia University can provide them!

### Summer Session '99

You just missed our best summer ever—but it's not  
too early to plan for 1999! Bulletin available  
February '99—reserve yours today.

### Study Abroad

• Columbia University in Paris • Berlin Consortium  
for German Studies • Summer Program in Italy  
(Scandiano) • Summer Program in Beijing.

For Study Abroad:  
(212) 854-2559

e-mail: [studyaway@columbia.edu](mailto:studyaway@columbia.edu)

For other programs:  
(212) 854-2820

e-mail: [sp-info@columbia.edu](mailto:sp-info@columbia.edu)



Continuing Education & Special Programs



# Yeshiva Sports

## Tennis Team Looking to Extend Undefeated Streak

BY MICHA PORAT

The Yeshiva University Tennis Team is ready to begin a new season. Try-outs recently concluded and there are several new faces on this year's team to join the core group of returnees. The returning players include veteran talents such as David Shwartz, Steve Langer, and Yonaton Bendheim. Last year's Rookie of the year Jeff Taub, rising stars Ari Raskas, Adam Aftergut, Joseph Weilgus, and Steve Pollack, and Micha Porat, coming off a tough ankle injury, round out the returnees. Top new players include Ari Ellenberg, Erik Taub, Daniel Resnick, John Kestenbaum, and Edo Jacobowitz.

This season is considered a rebuilding one as the team tries to overcome the loss of many key players. The team will sorely feel the absence of Tzvi Silberstein, Shai Samet, Edon Hirt, and Yeshiva University Athlete of the year Josh Hasten, all of whom graduated last year.

Coming off an unprecedented fourth undefeated season, the tennis team will attempt to continue a remarkable unbeaten streak that has spanned thirty-seven matches. This will definitely not be an easy task, as many of the players lack actual match experience. The players do, however, have high hopes that they will be able to keep the streak alive.

When asked about his teams' chances of continuing the streak through a fifth year, Coach Jon Bandler replied, "We have the potential to be a good team. I am concerned about the fact that several players don't have much match experience, but with enough practice I am confident we will have a successful season. No predictions (for the team's success) because in the past we've had very experienced teams, and experience is very important."

The team has held two very promising practices thus far. They hope to be able to ignore their apparent match inexperience, compete like veterans, and keep their wonderful streak alive. Furthermore, the team is stressing their ability to maintain the honor and respect associated with the name of the Yeshiva University Tennis Team.

# Go Macs!

## Fencers Looking Ahead to Successful Season

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

Yeshiva University boasts a number of athletic programs. The fencing team is a standout among them, as much for its traditions as for the individual successes of its stars.

Just last year a new record was set when one of the sabre fencers competed in the final round of the NCAA Northeast Regional Championships with nine other champion fencers. To understand this accomplishment, realize that most of the fencers in that final round with our man had been fencing since childhood, and YU fencers rarely have any experience before joining the team.

The team travels all over the East Coast fencing with the best possible Division I teams, including Johns Hopkins University and St. John's in Queens. There will be one home tournament later this year with YU playing host to other local schools.

Team fencing consists of three different weapons, and while they are similar in objective (scoring five touches on one's opponent before one receives five touches against) there are big differences in style. Epee uses the entire body as a target and there is no "lead of attack," meaning that it is not necessary to defend against an opponent's attack before staging one's own. Additionally, it is possible to have both athletes score a touch at one time, called a double touch. Both foil and sabre do enable "lead of attack" and thus, only one fencer can score a point at a

time. Foil's target is the torso, both front and back, excluding the arms and legs. In both epee and foil one must hit the opponent with the tip of the weapon, depressing the tip to score a touch; however in sabre, one may utilize the side of the weapon to score. The body target in sabre is above the saddle line, from the waist up, including the arms and head.

This year there are only five returning fencers, three in epee, and one each in foil and sabre. Co-captains Steve Mellner and Hadar Weiss together with Alex Traiman fenced epee last year, and give the team a solid epee squad with their return. Recently married Avraham Goldberg is making this his fourth year on the sabre team, and will lend his experience and knowledge to the newcomers. The sabre squad will feel the loss of expected returnee Akiva Herzfeld, as he decided to spend this year in Israel. The team wishes him the best of luck in his studies. Yevgeny Pavlovsky survived a harrowing first year on the team in the foil squad and built up the conviction over the summer to return strong in his sophomore season.

The fencing team has a long tradition at YU, due to the commitment of its coaches, Head Coach Arnie Messing and Adjunct Coach Pete Rosas. Both they and the team put in long hours training in the basement of Furst Hall. The team is looking to improve on last year's record, and is looking forward to a successful season overall.

## Basketball Intramurals off to Exciting Start

Basketball intramurals are off to a terrific start this year. Student interest in the league is reaching all time levels as the number of students declaring themselves eligible for the draft soared to a record amount. For the first time in three years, students were unable to be placed on teams due to the fact that the gym can only be secured an hour or two each night. In an effort to accommodate more students this year, the league has reverted to the nine-team league of two years ago, in which every team gets one bye week in the season.

The first game of the season featured the teams seeded first and second in unofficial preseason polls. Elie Konigsberg, captain of Team 1, decided to follow in the footsteps of Michael Cantor, assembling an all-Mesorah team. Last year's Mesorah team had been gearing up for a championship run until Avery Joel broke his ankle,

ruining the team's chances. This year's Mesorah team opened up with a big win against, the 6'7" Alex Shakhmurov, and Team 7. Alex, also known as Shaq, will be playing for the varsity Macs in the second semester. This semester he will get help from Russ, David Waknin, and ex-Mac Moshe Abehsera. Team 7 is currently picked to finish second to this semester to Team Mesorah. However, if they are able to acquire Burry Newberg, currently demanding a trade from Team 9, they will have a good shot at winning the championship.

The remaining seven teams don't really have a legitimate shot at winning the championship this semester. Daniel Esses, the captain of Team 2, has assembled an all-Sephardi team this semester. In the team's first game, they were blown out by Team 3. Team 2 is currently picked to finish in the league's cellar and will be considered lucky to scratch out any wins this season. Team 3,

whose captain, Pinky Mikhli coached his team to a championship last year, will be led by Ami Robinson and Mark Hecht. Between these two explosive players, Team 3 is picked to finish with a winning record.

Team 4, whose captain, Seth Grossman, is fighting Carl Hochhauser for the old-timer of the year award, looked very solid in their opening-day victory against Eli Brazil's Team 6. Team 4, however, has been in dire straits since Joey Aharon's season-ending injury. Their future is up in the air at this point. Brazil and Team 6 are likely to finish the semester with a sub-.500 winning percentage.

Team 5, captained by Greg Samuels, is looking to scrape up one or two wins this season. To do this, they must rely heavily on their captain, and the play of their star Ephraim Yablok. All and all, this proves to be an exciting season of intramural basketball.

# YESHIVA COLLEGE

## CAMPUS NEWS

### SOY Constitution Suppressed

#### Conflicting Reports and Suggestion of Tampering

BY AARON KLEIN

The Commentator has learned that the 1998 Student Organization of Yeshiva (SOY) constitution has not been released to any student or faculty organization of Yeshiva University, or to the members of the current SOY Board.

The constitution was amended last April by the previous SOY government, and students who have requested to browse the revised constitution were denied access to it. Until recently, only two copies of the constitution were known to exist. One of those was thought to belong to SOY President Michael Gewirtz. The other was in the possession of Menachem Luftglass, the previous SOY President.

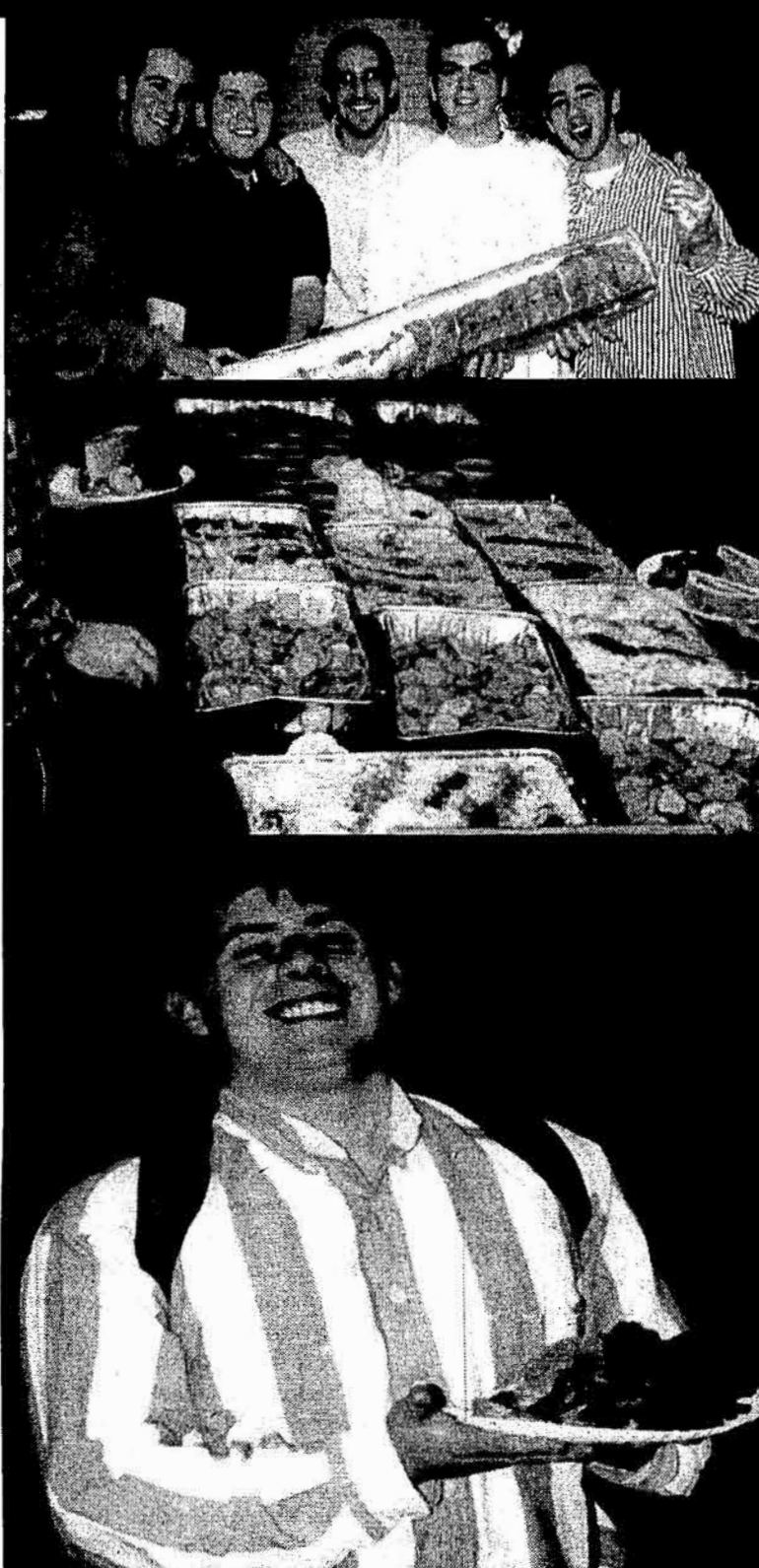
SOY is the organization that represents the students of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, including undergraduate students enrolled in the Mazer Yeshiva Program as well as *semikha* (Rabbinical) students. Although none of the student council constitutions have been printed in this year's Guide to the Perplexed student directory (as has been the standard procedure in the past), SOY was originally asked to submit its constitution. Gewirtz, who didn't release the constitution, explained, "I had an issue as to whether I wanted it printed in the Guide and decided not to put it in. The constitution may be a public thing, but it shouldn't be flaunted in public."

SOY Secretary Eliezer Schnall asked for a copy of the constitution earlier this year during a conflict within the SOY board, but wasn't provided with one. Gewirtz explained, "The real reason Schnall didn't get it was because that particular situation resolved itself without use of the constitution." Other members of the current SOY Board, who wished to remain anonymous, claim that they have asked to see the constitution, but were denied access.

Gewirtz and several members of the previous SOY Board originally stated that there were two changes made to the constitution last April. The first change allowed for the creation of an additional Vice President whose duties would include overseeing the annual Seferim Sale. The second modification created a new Board position for a *semikha* graduate student who would be appointed by the current SOY government. It is not clear what powers or duties this *semikha* student would be granted.

SOY originally claimed that both amendments were unanimously approved by last year's Board and added to the constitution. The addition that would allow for a *semikha* student to sit on the Board was proposed and created by Luftglass, who is now a *semikha* student. Ephraim Shapiro, the previous SOY secretary stated, "We don't believe that Luftglass created this position for himself, this misconception is completely false."

After numerous requests over the course of one-and-a-half months, Gewirtz finally provided *The Commentator* with a copy of the SOY constitution. Hours before it was received, both Gewirtz and members of last year's Board contacted *The Commentator* to retract their previous statements denying the existence of any amendment that would allow for a *semikha* student to sit on the SOY board. Accordingly, the version of the SOY constitution that was received by *The Commentator* contained no



*The Office of Student Services sponsored a World Series "Dougies" party on October 20th, for game three of the series.*

*Top: Andrew Liebowitz and his Hassidim enjoying a hoagie of their very own.*

*Middle: "The spread heard round the world."*

*Bottom: A self-satisfied Yankee fan enjoying more than just the game.*

mention of this amendment.

Gewirtz explained that he originally misinformed this reporter when he stated that the *semikha* student amendment was added to the SOY constitution. He cited his failure to properly review the constitution as cause for this misinformation. However, members of the previous Board who also stated that the amendment was added to the constitution, did not provide an explanation for this apparent inaccuracy.

There are currently no faculty advisors or student committees that are directly responsible for the review of student council constitutions. Some students have expressed concern about possible manipulation of the SOY constitution by previous Board members for personal gain. As of press time, Gewirtz was still the only current SOY Board member with a copy of the constitution. He affirms that no changes were made before providing *The Commentator* with a copy. Additionally, he asserted that Menachem Luftglass, who still possesses the other copy, holds no official SOY position.

### MISSING MORG MART MAKES SURPRISE REAPPEARANCE

BY ADAM BENSLEY

Prior to the holiday break, Morg Mart celebrated its reopening. With this event, students were finally given the opportunity to once again buy food late at night. Since the caf store remains closed after regular hours, which extend only into the evening, Morg Mart is at present the only option students have to buy snacks on the Yeshiva University campus at night.

Located in the basement of the Morgenstern Residence Hall, Morg Mart affords students who live in Morg the ability to buy food without making the cross-campus trek to the Rubin Residence Hall where the caf store is housed. The management of Morg Mart has adopted several other policies to further distinguish itself from its better known competitor. The store will be open from 8 p.m. until 2 a.m. Sunday through Wednesday, one hour longer than the traditional hours of the caf store. In addition they are hoping to have a weekly Dougies or Chopsticks night.

The food sold in the store consists mostly of snack foods such as candy and pretzels along with hot dogs and other assorted meat products. Instead of using the large refrigeration units, beverages such as Arizona Iced Tea and Coca-Cola can be found in a large ice bucket that bears a striking resemblance to the ones used at tailgate parties.

However, Morg Mart still does not match the range of food provided by the caf store, and most importantly the store is not compatible with the caf card. Also, despite the amount of food present, the setup of the store leaves something to be desired. With much of the space not utilized, the store can seem empty despite the amount that is actually there.

Six to eight student employees, who generally work in two to three man shifts, staff the store. The store is run by the Joint Business Society of the Sy Syms School of Business. Elan Magence, Morg Mart Manager, exclaimed, "we are very happy with the overall reaction of the students to Morg Mart. We hope that this success continues and welcome any suggestions that the student body might have."

This year's version of Morg Mart is hoping to overcome problems that have haunted the store since its inception several years ago. Students have become weary of the store's sporadic openings and travails, and many students feel that the store will not last. Two years ago the store was plagued by financial difficulties which eventually led to inventory problems. Last year the store suffered through severe management problems and was closed after being open only a few short weeks. With the backing of the JBS and strong management, the store appears to be headed in the right direction with no glaring problems that could lead to a premature closing.

Overall the response to Morg Mart has been positive. Jesse Mendelson, YC 99, commented, "it's good to see ambitious students on campus willing to take chances." Although happy with the store, other students still feel that Morg Mart is only a bridge to the eventual opening of the caf store. Eric Schubert, SSSB 00, explained the typical Rubin Residence Hall feeling. "For now they're the only game in town so they have my business. But once the caf store opens, it'll be tough to continue going to Morg."

THE COMMENTATOR  
500 West 185th Street  
New York, NY 10033