

# COMMENTATOR

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The courage to be modern and Orthodox

## Edah Holds Conference

### YU REFUSES TO SANCTION FUNCTION

BY DOVID MENCHELL

On Sunday and Monday of President's weekend, February 14-15, Edah's first international conference met at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Midtown Manhattan. The conference, entitled "Orthodoxy Encounters a Changing World," drew over 1500 attendees from across North America, England, and Israel. Participants came to voice support for Modern Orthodoxy and learn about important issues which it confronts.

Attendees chose from over fifty forums, text-study sessions, and

presentation/discussions on a broad range of topics. The large attendance far exceeded the expectations of the conference's organizers; a couple of weeks before the conference only 400-500 were expected. Just as impressive was the encouraging showing of youth, with over 225 exuberant college students from all over the continent attending.

The conference opened with a keynote address delivered by the director of Edah, Rabbi Saul Berman. Berman elucidated the goals of Edah and the direction of Orthodoxy in the modern world. Our generation's new paganism, Berman explained, consists of several problematic elements in society, namely materialism, "value relativity," in which the concept of absolute truth is abandoned, and self-centeredness.

In Modern Orthodoxy, a difficult path is taken in combating these problems, namely that of maximum integration with society while maintaining a total commitment to *halakha*. This idea is implicit in Edah's slogan, "The Courage to be Modern and

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## GAMBLING ON CAMPUS?

### You Bet!

BY CHAIM SCHNEIDER

Heading home for vacation, most students look forward to seeing their parents, visiting friends, and relaxing. For a growing number of students, though, vacation is a chance to head out in a different direction. For many students, gambling, both on and off campus, has become a popular diversion. This development is worrisome to concerned friends and administrators who fear that the recent trend may develop into something more serious.

The *Commentator* set out to examine student attitudes and concerns about both organized gambling and similar games. While administrators spoke freely about their concerns, most students were reluctant to be quoted by name, some worried about offending their friends and others out of fear. For this reason, the names mentioned herein have been changed.

David, tired of simple vacations and uneventful weekends, noted the standard complaint. "YU can get boring, so I decided to go have some fun." With an open mind and an open wallet, he drove to Atlantic City, the East Coast's Mecca of casino gambling, for a day of excitement.

"I went to Atlantic City having read a lot about gambling. I went for a day, and for fun I put a little money in it; I ended up cashing out with \$250. About two days later I went back, lost a little bit, and then

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## Yeshiva College Arts Festival Successfully Staged

### HUNDREDS ATTEND TWO WEEK EVENT

BY AARON KLEIN

The Third Annual Yeshiva College Arts Festival, arranged by students Benjamin Joffe and Benjamin Schiller, took place this month with a series of events that were open to both students and faculty. According to Joffe, the aim of the Festival was to stress the importance of students applying and exercising intellectual and artistic talents outside the classroom, and to promote arts awareness on campus.

Yeshiva College Dean Norman Adler instituted the Festival in 1997 in hopes of widening the aesthetic scope of the Yeshiva College experience by giving students a chance to express themselves artistically. He calls the Festival a "playground for the mind and spirit." Adler stressed that although the Dean's Office was home to the Festival committee, the events were planned "for the students, by the students."

Dean Joyce Jesionowski feels that the classroom is where intellectual life begins and forums such as the Arts Festival are where intellectual life is further expanded, with students deriving pleasure from each other's accomplishments. She said, "I cannot even begin to emphasize the extent to

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Arts Festival Coordinator Benji Joffe presenting poem

which I was impressed by this year's Festival...I was pleased to see the many sides of the students."

The two week Arts Festival kicked off on Sunday February 7th with an opening concert that featured musical performances by the students. It was the first ever YU-sanctioned secular music show, and it showcased various types of music including folk, pop, klezmer and alternative. Dov Pickholtz and David Keesey were the first performers and had the crowd rocking in no time. Next came various tunes performed by other students

## Rally Staged in Support of MTA

### SCHOOL'S FATE YET TO BE DECIDED

BY JASON CYRULNIK

Anyone who thought MTA would sit idly by as its future slowly disappeared right before its very eyes appears to have been mistaken. Wednesday, February 17 found hundreds of high school students, administrators, teachers, and even alumni pouring out on 185th Street in organized protest. Unlike many protests designed to target a particular action, this one protested indecisiveness and the absence of a clear response on the part of Yeshiva University in deciding the fate of its affiliated boy's high school The Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy.

Following recent reports of Yeshiva University plans to shut down the boy's high school and the subsequent outcry from many different sectors of the Jewish community to save MTA, YU offi-

cial scrambled to clarify their position. It didn't work. YU Public Relations confirmed the existence of merger talks, while official YU statements, at least as articulated to the high school administration, pointed to the prospect of an incoming freshman class.

Against this backdrop of confusion, the Yeshiva University Board of Trustees' Executive Committee held a meeting on Wednesday, February 10 to discuss the situation. At the meeting, Elliot Gibber, Chairman of the High School Board

and a key player in the recent developments, presented his plan for financial independence, one of three options being considered by the University at the time - closing the school, merging it with another area high school, or granting MTA financial independence and autonomy. Gibber's presentation was designed to sway YU officials to abandon the second option, which would effectively end MTA's existence.

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MTA students flock en masse to protest threatened closing

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## MESSAGE FROM THE YCSC PRESIDENT

**DROR BARBER**

Dear Fellow Students,

It has been about a month since I have had the opportunity to address the students in the proper Commentator forum. A lot has happened since then so I thought I might fill you in. I would like to thank Moishe Singer for his continuous efforts on behalf of the Yeshiva College Student Activity club to bring the theatre into Yeshiva University. Our excursion to Footloose was a resounding success enjoyed by both campuses. I am also indebted to Dov Brandstatter, Brian Glass, and the Junior and Sophomore classes for their hard working in the planning and execution of our second annual paint ball trip. I would also like to invite all Yeshiva College students to the first annual Yeshiva College Bowling Tournament. There will be fun, food, and free T-shirts for all that choose to participate. The event will take place on March 14th, and busses will be leaving campus at 5:15.

Now for more pertinent business; WYUR will be fixed this month. We have the transmitters in our office and are just waiting for Jeff Socol to meet with our radio engineers and get the final okay. We here at the student council would like to invite all those interested in participating in WYUR, whether as a DJ, a board member or station manager to come by and speak to either Hadar Weiss or myself and get involved. We would also ask that you stop by the Student Service office and communicate your desire for this to be their number one issue on their agenda. It is my opinion and that of many others that the wheels have been turning to slowly on anything concerning WYUR and we would like to grease those wheels with student pressure.

Finally, I would like to get the students thinking about the upcoming elections. We will be asking for name submissions on the week before Pesach. I would like to encourage all those who are interested in helping out the students and advocating their needs to run for the various positions available. Well I guess I will let you get back to your studying (yeah right!) and good luck with all your midterms.

Dror Barber  
President, YCSC

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## Principled Dedication Trumps Foolhardiness

The YU community recently had the good fortune to benefit from two concurrent student-run events. A corps of committed student activists maintained their lofty sense of purpose amid a hailstorm of administrative stonewalling to successfully plan, organize, and actualize the YC Arts Festival and SOY Seforim Sale.

Both functions met with unprecedented success despite the tireless opposition of those who would prefer a cessation of student activity on campus. We believe it is here appropriate to recognize the efforts of the students whose unsparing devotion assured the success of these events. We commend you for your fortitude and unflinching dedication of purpose. May your commitment to enriching the Yeshiva undergraduate culture persuade your fellow students that good occasionally triumphs over the forces of small-minded tyranny for the benefit of the whole of the University community. We have always held the view that the good battle is one worth waging. It is refreshing to observe that we are not alone in this conviction.

## Customer Service

At the risk of sounding shrill or redundant, we feel that attention once more must be called to a salient fact of YU life that seemingly never changes. The recent success realized by students in organizing events for the benefit of the University community was in the face of efforts by the administration and employees to hinder their every move. The constant procrastinating and obfuscation by certain employees and administrators is unfortunately the rule, rather than the exception.

For decades, the administrative body overseeing this campus and its branches around the city has exhibited minimal concern for the life and well being of its students. The preoccupation of enhancing the general endowment of this institution and pursuance of scholarly academic recognition does not forgo nor exempt the university's responsibility to its students.

Yeshiva has a responsibility towards its students. The few offices in this university that do indeed treat students as customers should be commended for their efforts in enhancing student life on campus and expanding opportunities of student interest. Faculty and administration should take a lesson from these offices and must realize whom they are here to serve. If we the students are not sanguine with our stay here at YU, why would we have our children endure the same experience?

## THE SECOND PORTRAIT DAYS ARE HERE!!

MASMID '99 PROUDLY  
PRESENTS THE SECOND AND  
FINAL SENIOR PORTRAIT DAYS.

WHO: SENIORS WHO HAVE NOT YET  
TAKEN PORTRAITS & THOSE WHO  
WANT RETAKES  
(IT'S NOT OUR FAULT YOU'RE UGLY).

WHAT: SENIOR YEARBOOK PORTRAITS

WHEN: MARCH 9<sup>TH</sup>, 10<sup>TH</sup>, AND 11<sup>TH</sup>

WHERE: RUBIN SHUL

WHY: LAST CHANCE TO HAVE YOUR  
PICTURE IN THE YEARBOOK

HOW: MAKE AN APPOINTMENT ON THE  
SIGNUP SHEET POSTED  
IN MORG LOBBY

HOW MUCH: \$20 INITIAL PORTRAIT,  
\$8 FOR RETAKES

WHO DO WE MAKE THE  
CHECKS OUT TO? YCSC

QUESTIONS? CONTACT DANIEL  
DRABKIN @ 543-9662



FROM THE  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

ADAM MOSES

## YESHIVA'S DEMISE, EDAH'S RISE, AND THE EMERGING PROGRESSIVE ORTHODOX BALANCE

American Orthodox Judaism's progressive wing, it seems to me, has stagnated for some time. An unhealthy satisfaction with the status quo and a pervasive sense of apathy vis-à-vis communal philosophical direction afflict many of its adherents. Matters of faith are not the subject of spirited public discourse but of obfuscation and revisionist rabbinic legislation. Intellectual autonomy in the pursuit of theological meaning has receded leaving *halakhic* chieftains the unchallenged reins. I am witness to the coming of age of another brood of modern Orthodox careerist automatons who will lead spiritually uninspired lives characterized by little more than an obscene quest to reach the suburbs.

Perhaps most importantly, Yeshiva University has finally succumbed, bifurcating into essentially distinct yeshiva and university units that are, at best, tenuously connected. A glance at the modern Orthodox Jewish panorama reveals significant concerns. It is true that Orthodox ranks have remained numerically steady over the past decade, but only by resorting to a *neo-shtetl* suburban pizza shop culture. This model hardly bespeaks

the forward thinking dynamism that makes a merger between religion and contemporary sensibilities a legitimate possibility for thinking people; a possibility which Yeshiva University once sought to foster.

Perhaps Rabbi Saul J. Berman shared some of these thoughts as he ascended to the podium to deliver the most important oration of his life.

As Rabbi Berman squinted at the prodigious Grand Hyatt assemblage from behind his bulky glasses, he was at once a diplomat advancing a simple message of communal accord and a visionary expositing a sophisticated institutional *modus vivendi* for progressive Orthodox Judaism. Rabbi Berman's opening keynote address to the first international Edah Conference on February 13 compellingly introduced a number of the principles that will guide the function of his modern Orthodox organization. The most significant propositions, to my mind, included a passionate disavowal of factious vitriol in Jewish public discourse, a bid for intellectual integrity in Jewish theological discussion, noting that a diversity of acceptable views exist in the *halakhic* system, emphasizing the importance of education as a counterbalance to exploitation at the hands of *halakhic* manipulators, and encouragement for the development of a more meaningful role for women in *halakhic* sacramental life.

Many of these, of course, are not novel ideas. Some have been treated rather extensively in the *Torah U'Maddah* literature of this very institution. Yeshiva University, however, has forfeited the mission its founders envisioned for it by abdicating its role as the organizational bulwark of progressive Orthodoxy. While the University is, arguably, at its zenith in many respects — record enrollment, endowments cresting the \$800 million mark, first tier position in national ranking publication, most accomplished collection of *magidei shulim* in the United States — it serves a different communal function than it did two decades ago. Yeshiva is no longer the vanguard of liberal Orthodoxy, the staging ground for broad-minded traditionalism, but a cowering

schizophrenic giant with its institutional head in the sand.

As Yeshiva's identity crisis sent it reeling off the stage of relevance, an obvious leadership vacuum emerged. Those who believed a model of Orthodoxy that integrates tradition with modernity to be attractive no longer had a central body that advocated their views in a meaningful way.

Edah, it seems to me, is an attempt to address the aforementioned leadership vacuum by unifying the progressive Orthodox community under the banner of an entity that will state more affirmatively what Yeshiva today only non-committally explores in its scholarship. Under the direction of Rabbi Berman, an uncommonly eloquent exponent of integrationist Orthodoxy who possesses respected rabbinic credentials, Edah hopes to answer Yeshiva's silence and Agudath Israel's jihad of fanatical revisionism with a textually coherent approach to revitalizing modern Orthodoxy.

Yeshiva University President Norman Lamm, Julius Berman, and other Yeshiva aligned notables have withheld their support for Edah since, they insist, it is an institutional redundancy. Edah is Yeshiva they seem to mean.

In a way, they are correct. A substantial plurality of Edah Conference presenters were products of Yeshiva education. These presenters' arguments frequently dovetailed the *Torah U'Maddah* notions synthesized at Yeshiva. It is not the case, however, that Yeshiva vigorously propagates the ideals of liberal Orthodoxy as once it did. It is the case that Edah at present overtly seeks to fulfill this abandoned function. Thus, I am not persuaded of the accuracy of Lamm's and Julius Berman's thesis. Edah seems to play a distinct role that Yeshiva is no longer willing to. If Yeshiva wishes to be King, it must defend its values against the barbarous incursions of the *halakhic* despots who seek the demise of liberal Orthodoxy.

These observations, of course, lead to the realization that the institutional landscape of contemporary progressive Orthodoxy is undergoing a transition that will likely reveal a new balance. Yeshiva may very well remain an organ of moderate Orthodox research and scholarship, but, barring its spontaneous generation of a spine, it will not soon be the recognized communal leader it once was. Edah may very well step forward to serve as an activist functionary devoted to the sort of enlightened innovation that I believe *halakha* and the forward march of history demand.

Perhaps this modified arrangement is functionally unproblematic. Perhaps it is best if Yeshiva withdraws to pursue its ambitions as a university rather than thrusting itself into the partisan melee that will determine the course of contemporary Jewish civilization. This would seem to me, however, a less than poetic anti-climax for American Orthodoxy's most notable institutional success. Must Yeshiva sideline itself from meaningful participation in the debate over the direction of modern Judaism precisely when progressive Orthodoxy is beset by such pressing peril? So it seems. Alas, things change. As Yeshiva rides off into the benighted sunset, an era concludes. I mourn the loss.

## Edah and the "Luchos Ho'edus"

BY RABBI DR. MOSHE DOVID TENDLER

An editorial in the February 12<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Jewish Week* accuses me of not "fighting fair" in my criticisms of Edah. However, the issue is not one of fairness. Rather, the issue is truth and integrity. What (perhaps better said, who) is Edah? What is its agenda? In two recent letters to the editor of that publication, my statements were severely criticized. I should like to respond to these criticisms and, at the same time, reaffirm their accuracy and truth.

The thrust of my observations was to identify Edah as a new movement with an old, failed mission — to legitimize revisionist forms of Judaism. In the main, feminism is the engine that drives Edah's train. Its cargo is a toxic load of pluralism; its destination is the legitimization of the Reform clergy. Ironically its message is described as "*Ahavas Yisroel*" but in reality it can only lead to the destruction of all that is sacred to those who honor in practice the covenant of Sinai.

In one of the two aforementioned critical letters, one of the founders of Edah denies that "trucking (his word not my word) with gay, non-Orthodox rabbis is a sin." How frightening that this educator of our teenage youth, who should be preparing them for a life of *kedusha* by defining human sexuality in Torah terms, places his imprimatur on the behavior patterns of those who have defaced the Godly image. Has this self-declared scholar ever studied the Torah laws of "*Kesher Reshaim*?" He questions my statement, which I hereby reaffirm, that without a single dissenting

voice, the entire Rabbinic faculty of the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, an affiliate of Yeshiva University (inaccurately referred to in the above publication in shorthand fashion as "Yeshiva University"), instructed the administration of Y.U., that it can not associate with Edah. The names of certain Edah conference presenters may be faculty members of other divisions of Yeshiva University, but they are not on the faculty of RIETS — "the Yeshiva" — the *raison d'être* of Yeshiva University. It was disingenuous to suggest that some halachic imprimatur was conferred on Edah because of the participation of faculty members of Werzweiler, Stern, Cardozo and the like.

Edah's mission is to interact with the liberal clergy and thereby legitimize the illegitimate. In a personal conversation with the Executive Director of Edah, I was told that his "mission is *Tochacha*" (i.e., rebuke of the non-Orthodox in order that they correct the error of their ways). I posed this query twice: "Will you greet a patrilineally descended, gay, non-theist clergyman of the Reform movement as a colleague?" He answered in the affirmative, explaining that to do otherwise would impair his ability to perform the mitzvah of *Tochacha*!

He went on to justify his position by reminding me that my great teacher Rav Soloveitchick, zt"l, approved participation in the Synagogue Council of America, where the Orthodox and liberal clergy cooperated. This insulting attempt to dodge the accusative finger of halacha by attributing to my great *Rebbe* that which he considered anathema taints, in and of itself, the integrity of the mission of Edah. The now defunct Synagogue Council limited its activities to representing the Jewish community vis-à-vis the outside world — "*klapel chutz*." It did

not, nor was it intended to deal with the fundamentals of Jewish belief and practice such as conversion, intermarriage, the Jewish character of the State of Israel, etc. Indeed, Rav Soloveitchick, zt"l, ruled that one must forego the great mitzvah of Shofar on Rosh Hashana rather than enter even a Conservative temple to hear the blasts.

We are long past the point of "*Tochacha*" with the liberal clergy. By their decisions on patrilineal descent, non-ritual conversion, and rejection of Torah laws of divorce and the institutionalized abandonment of mitzvos, they have split *Am Yisroel*. We are now two species in the biological sense. We cannot interbreed! There is no escaping the fact that a patrilineal descended person or non-halachic convert is *not a Jew*. A child born to a woman who is remarried without benefit of halachic divorce (*Get*) is a "*mamzer*" — bearing the mark of bastardy, never to marry within the Orthodox (or Conservative) communities.

The Reform leadership knew of these consequences when they abrogated Torah law but they mistakenly assumed that by now Orthodoxy would be no more — that they would be dancing on our graves!

Tragically, we are standing at the gravesite of their Jewishness as their children overwhelmingly intermarry and lose their identification as Jews.

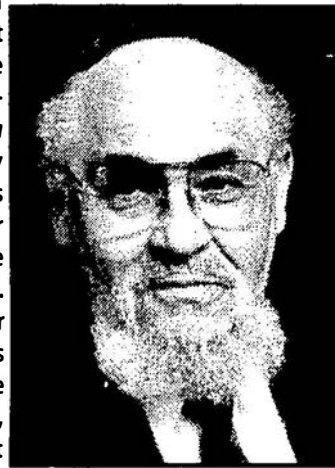
Whoever accepts as a colleague or as a variant Jew of a different denomination, a patrilineally descended or non-ritually converted non-Jew as a Jew, is plainly devoid of scholarship and has left the pale of Judaism. Whoever interacts with Reform clergy in matters concerning our religious commitments, here or in Israel, is, in fact, legitimizing their heresy and blasphemy and thus, has left the pale of Judaism. Add to the issue of Jewish identity the reality that Reform clergy approve of same-sex marriages, permit "bloodless circumcision" to substitute for the Covenant of Abraham, and officiate at mixed marriages with Christian clergy, and *Tochacha* becomes an opportunistic defense of collaboration with those who defile all that is holy and sacred to Judaism.

When did Christians become "*Goyim*" rather than remain within *Am Yisroel* as sinful Jews? I surmise that this occurred after Paul's Mission to the Gentiles, when requirements for conversion were relaxed and mitzvos were abolished. Reform is perilously close to the red-line, by its abandonment of the practice of the faith of Judaism and pursuit of the God of Autonomy.

Edah is a Trojan horse with the enemy concealed within. The founder-in-hiding of Edah fired the first cannon several years ago. He declared: "God broke His covenant with Israel when He did not intercede during the Holocaust. We, as Jews, are no longer obligated to observe the mitzvos of the Torah. If we do so it is a voluntary act." Blasphemy substituting for pseudo-scholarship!

The above should explain why I stated that the Edah leadership "lack integrity, are engaging in deception, are ignorant of *Halacha* and lack scholarship. The composite result is to place them outside the pale of Judaism." By what authority do I "imperiously" (as I am charged) make these declarations? By the Divine authority granted every Jew who would teach the truths of *Hashem's Torah* to all who would listen.

May Hashem assist me in my studies that I err not!



"YESHIVA IS NO LONGER THE VANGUARD OF LIBERAL ORTHODOXY, THE STAGING GROUND FOR BROAD-MINDED TRADITIONALISM, BUT A COWERING SCHIZOPHRENIC GIANT WITH ITS INSTITUTIONAL HEAD IN THE SAND."

# FORUM

## OPINION

### A Return To Jewish Modesty

So, who did you pick up at the SOY Seforim Sale? Ahem....I meant *what* did you pick up? Did you happen to purchase the chart book? That's right, the chart book. I'm not talking about the Breslov Prayer Calendar or that book with colored diagrams of a *lulav*. I'm talking about "Modesty - An Adornment For Life," a companion booklet to a much larger and exhausting tome on female modesty. Check it out. It's the ultimate guide for modesty in this age of obsessive/compulsive *halakhic* minutiae. And you don't even have to read it. You can simply look at the pictures.

Inside, the reader can view pictures of women dressed both modestly and, of course, immodestly. But don't get too excited. The potentially compromising and immodestly portrayed models are actually sketches of men wearing female clothing. That's right - men. Not to worry, though. Women constitute the remainder of the chart book. Indeed, no image spared; no angle is overlooked. Every jot and tittle of the female body, every alluring inch, is - so to speak - covered.

The modestly rendered sketches are labeled "Kosher" while the immodest sketches are labeled "Not Kosher." Apparently, even with the dignified and ennobling *halakhot* of female modesty, women are just pieces of meat. But they are carefully inspected pieces of meat, fit to be served at the most stringent and exacting of Jewish tables.

The chart book is yet another example of the mind-boggling explosion of painstaking *halakhic* inquiry that has seized the Jewish community. Too be sure, that's not necessarily an undesirable trend. Torah as studied in meticulous detail is part of what makes Judaism enriching. In addition, detailed and precise *halakhic* inquiry is quite essential to the *halakha's* development and endurance; and the degree to which this occurs *en masse* is the degree to which more of the Jewish community is exposed to the viscera of Jewish tradition. But making the study of modesty radically *halakhic* necessarily clouds the true meaning and intent of modesty itself.

Do we really want to think of modesty in such a legalistic way? Do we really want to spend time closely inspecting the length of our clothing only to find ourselves playing *halakhically* brilliant measurement games? After all, every legal system has its loopholes; and if there is no desire to adhere to the ideology embodied in the *halakha*, the *halakha* can be reinterpreted and reshaped. This is true of any legal system and it has certainly been true of *halakhic* modesty.

As applied to modesty, this rigidly legalistic way of approaching *halakha* is already having confusing sociological results. That's why a visible number of Modern Orthodox woman dress in a

*halakhically* modest fashion but remain hopelessly immodest. I'm referring, in part, to the preponderance of *sheitels* that are more attractive than real hair and shirts that cover the sexy and forbidden elbow, but are snugly tight. Both of these examples, among many others, emerge from a modesty-culture that is formally legalistic and that has very much missed the point.

Ultimately, the reader of the chart book will learn nothing about modesty. The initiate to Jewish modesty would do best to look elsewhere. I'm referring to "A Return to Modesty" by Wendy Shalit, a book not available at the SOY book sale.

Wendy Shalit graduated from Williams College in 1997 with a BA in philosophy; and although she is only 23 years old, she's been called a "prodigy at cracking the codes of culture" by the likes of George Will.

Shalit's book, as the title suggests, is a defense of female modesty. But it's also a harsh indictment of contemporary American culture.

Shalit surveys the current scene - rampant stalking, gang rape, eating disorders, loveless "hook-ups," the demise of courtesy, sexual harassment - and concludes that this sexually aberrant condition is the product of a society that has shunned and stigmatized female modesty.

"I propose that the woes besetting the modern young woman - sexual harassment, stalking, rape...are all expressions of a society that has lost its respect for female modesty." Later, Shalit claims that "It's no accident that harassment, stalking, and rape all increased when we decided to let everything hang out."

Her position is well-researched and her arguments are convincing. She draws from a wide array of sources, ranging from university research to *Cosmo* and *Marie Claire*. She also cites numerous Jewish sources, including the *Rambam*, *Rashi* and Rabbi Norman Lamm. It was actually an encounter with an Orthodox relative that convinced Shalit of modesty's virtues and value.

And what, according to Shalit, is the value of modesty? "Woman who dress and act 'modestly' conduct themselves in ways that shroud their sexuality in mystery. They live in a way that makes womanliness more a transcendent, implicit quality than a crude, explicit quality."

Ultimately, Shalit argues that modesty is a powerful tool. When it is absent the consequences are devastating. When it is present, it is not only a stabilizing cultural force, but it's an ennobling and transcendent quality. This point may not be obvious to traditional Jews in the midst of confronting modernity. To these Jews, a hair-splitting chart book is certainly no guide. The Jewish community desperately needs to internalize Shalit's research. Only then can the chart book have any meaning.

### A Little Respect Please

The need for individuality of thought in the *halakhic* decision-making process is undeniable. Throughout history, *halakhic* principles have been debated, beginning in the *Gemara* itself where *Amoraim* such as *Abaye* and *Rava* openly differed on the most fundamental of *halakhic* principles. Similarly, *Rishonim* such as the *Shach* and *Taz* often found themselves at odds in evaluating the understanding of individual Talmudic positions. This is central to *halakha* - allowing for open debate on *halakhic* issues and their application to emerging situations.

Here, however, modern opinions diverge. Classical *halakhic* theory works on the tacit assumption that certain ideals cannot be called into question. Its success stems directly from the fact that debate centers on the application of these principles and how the particular guidelines are applicable to the cases presented.

Others posit that the very ideals which comprise the *halakhic* system may themselves be called into question. *Halakhic* ideals which had been held in the highest esteem may be voided, they say, following

a modern reinterpretation. This position, that the Rabbinic opinions which have been trusted for hundreds of years are unsound, is especially disconcerting.

It has been noted recently, both by Orthodox and non-Orthodox writers alike, that the success of Orthodox Jewry stems directly from its pedagogical system. The flow of knowledge, passed from generation to generation, forms a corpus of information which guides people in their daily lives. By contrast, modern deviations from classical Jewish interpretations fail simply because they lack a solid basis for maintaining this continuity.

One of the emerging trends in Modern Orthodoxy seems to be the desire to read older *halakhic* dictums in modern terms. In this vein, a column appeared in the last issue of *The Commentator* attempting to justify using the paper as a forum for open discussion of *halakhic* issues. This is a fine suggestion; assuming that the discussion focuses on the *halakhic* process itself. What better forum for exposing students to the rigors of the *halakhic* process than the pages of their own newspaper! However, what the author insinuated in his arguments must be carefully scrutinized.

*The Commentator* is not a place for cynicism towards the *halakha* and the Rabbinate. Were that the case, I could easily argue, as others had similarly implied, that my freedom to choose a mechanic to fix my car confers on me an innate understanding of the car's inner workings. Clearly, this is not the case.

The column opened by noting a confrontation between secular **culture** and **halakhic values**. It seems to be attempting a Hegelian synthesis, concluding that the inevitability of conflict leads, by necessity, to a compromise by the well-established *halakhic* corpus. The *halakhic*

process itself involves making *chakirat* (distinctions) and *diyyukim* (implications) as to the nature of the laws in place. As such, it allows for seemingly incompatible situations to work in congruity.

However, the mechanism of *halakhic* "compromise" does not weaken the *halakha*, it simply determines the criteria for its application. The article notes further that "*halakha* and learning are not merely morning classes peripheral to everyday life; they imbue us with a methodology." This is obviously a valid statement, assuming that the methodology one uses is the methodology of the *halakhists*. The assumption that *halakha* must necessarily defer to cultural (read: modern) situations is simply untrue. This assertion smacks very clearly of alternative motivations.

What is missing from the essay is the realization that most people do not think along the same lines. Believe it or not, just because the *halakha* doesn't seem fair in light of current social considerations, that does NOT mean that the *halakha* must be reworked. Believe it or not, many things

do remain *assur*, even in today's society. *Halakha* is not a cultural code of conduct. The hallmark of a good argument is that it effectively explains the concerns brought to light by the opposing viewpoint. Blatant misrepresentations of *halakha* coupled with effusive arrogance are not enough to convince us otherwise.

What was most upsetting about the treatise was its overt lack of respect. Where does one find the gall to welcome us to a "new age" in which "No one, and that includes the *rabbeim*, is beyond reproach!" If one questions anyone's opinion, it must be done with respect. I am confident that I speak for others in saying that slinging *invectives* in this manner is beneath contempt. Does the author really think that displaying a lack of *kavod* toward the *rebbeim* will endear him in the eyes of the *halakhically* disenfranchised?

Fundamentally, we must resist the temptation to reevaluate the guidelines that comprise the *halakhic* system, despite modern pressures to do so. Statements calling a woman's voice as *ervah* "dirty or unethical" are perversions of *halakha*. If a woman's voice is an *ervah*, then it is prohibited for whatever reason, not because it is dirty or unethical. An unmarried woman's hair is not *ervah*, yet a married woman's is. Clearly hair is neither dirty nor unethical.

Yet these misinterpretations do fulfill one promise which the article noted, namely that there will be "more provocation." Public statements which hurl stones at those in YU and the *frum* community who refuse to bend *halakha* to make life more comfortable for others, misrepresent the *halakhic* process and do not engender meaningful discussion. Only with careful consideration and due respect should *halakha* be brought into such a forum.

**Josh Abraham**  
Columnist

**Yehuda Burns**  
Features Editor

# FORUM

## OPINION

### Meet Tamir Goodman II



Dear Am Yisroel,  
Hi, I'm Tamir Goodman and I represent your Hellenistic values. Many of you know me from the intellectually challenging and religiously minded periodical *Sports Illustrated*, and from the has-been, washed-out, ex-basketball player turned voice of Jewish conscience Nahum Segal. I am writing to you to personally thank you for your idolatrous behavior and the blind support which you have shown for the phenomenon of moral assimilation which professional sports represents, and of which I am a product of.

Only one hundred years ago my career choice would have been considered a blot on the face of Judaism and my community would have been ashamed of me. Now, thanks to your unwavering support for the mindless endeavor of pro sports, which contributes little to the world except for the perpetuation of material and base values, I have become a star. Following this example kids won't have to spend arduous long hours in the *beit midrash* trying to master timeless texts. Instead they can practice those things which are truly important to the Jewish people.

You know, I'm a bit nervous to leave Yeshiva, go to Maryland, and embrace the culture that I will find there. I hope that within the confines of College Park, with its smelly locker rooms, crazed fans, and modest cheerleaders, that I shall find a *chavrutah* with whom to share the little time I will have available to learn Torah.

Its funny, though I have little time for the *beit midrash* these days, one *pasuk* still haunts me: "And in their traditions do not follow." (Leviticus, 18:3). Rashi, the great Biblical commentator, could have mentioned any of the various cultural institutions of the non-Jews, yet he chose sporting stadiums as being representational of "their traditions". I thought it was ironic, but my coach told me not to worry about it and practice my lay-ups. So I did.

The best part of being at Mary-Land will be the TV coverage. Now the whole world will know what we Jews are all about. Yes, we will show them that we are just like

them, other than some minor clothing differences and a stubborn propensity for laziness on Saturday; we are no different. That moral high ground upon which we have been perched will crumble and fall, and all that elitist talk of being a "light unto the nations" will dissipate.

Sometimes I see sports as a unifying force in Judaism. In a time of fractionalization and constant in-house bickering amongst ourselves, sports represents the last vestige of hope. Only under the lowest and stupidest common denominator of pro sports shall we unite. Instead of fighting about what should be done in Israel or worrying about the relationships between our various religious denominations, all of us Jews should unite in holy Madison Square Garden and enjoy some of Nature's own frost-brewed Budweiser. With athletes at the helm of religious Jewry in the place of those backwards stuffy rabbis we shall survive. Amen.

Frankly though, I'm not the hero, I'm just a simple Jew who's making a living from a not-so-honorable occupation. The real heroes are you who follow and support pro-sports. I am only a byproduct of your incessant preoccupation with stats, athletes, and emphasis on worldly success. It is your selective morality which sees nothing wrong with this vanity of vanities that is to be praised. It is your intellectual dishonesty regarding pro sports that has lead the way. I have heard that in the dorms of your university ESPN is the most watched channel on television, and for that I applaud you. It is so wonderful to see that we Jews have finally embraced this lifestyle after so many years of fighting it. The Greeks would have been proud.

Look, in the final analysis its all about image. Like the pig who stuck out his split hooves and said "look I'm kosher" but in reality was *treif*, so to is professional sports, seemingly within the confines of Jewish Orthodoxy but essentially an act of assimilation. I therefore thank your for gullible belief that *kippah* and *tzitzit* belong on the court, and for accepting pro sports as a viable outlet for your time and money. With Jewish society endorsing pro sports I will continue to be sign of assimilation and degeneration of values. Till the next game, keep wasting precious time and money, and may Jordan bless you.

Love,  
Tamir Goodman

### To Truly 'Get Ahead'

As the turn of the millennium rapidly approaches, many are following a trend encouraging immediate entrance into the professional world. At YU this includes packing maximum credit loads into each semester, well paying summer internships, and hours upon hours working on resumes in the placement office. All this in an attempt to 'get ahead in this fast-paced world.'

The question to raise here is simple: What on earth are we 'getting ahead' of? Why would anybody want to rush through college in order to thrust themselves into the rest of their life? Are we 'getting ahead' of our pathetic roommates who sleep all day and procrastinate all night? Are we 'getting ahead' of our own expectations of success? Are we thinking how proud our grandparents will be when they compare their grandchildren's salaries amongst themselves? Or maybe our parents have put a lot of money into our educations and we don't want to let them down.

It all makes a lot of sense, or so it would seem. If you are not something in this world, you are nothing. Therefore, get out and make something of yourself while you still can - right? Wrong.

Our parents have indeed invested a lot of money into our college educations, and with good intention, because we are the future of America and of the Jewish people. Without a college education, or a winning lottery ticket worth millions, it is nearly impossible to satisfy any of our life goals. It is certainly important to get the most out of an education. This way, we will indeed be able to 'get ahead'.

This past Thursday, an event concluded that will without a doubt affect this University for years to come. The YC Arts Festival took the uptown campus by storm for two weeks, and the results were simply extraordinary, to the point of spectacular. Those in attendance at any one of the festival's various events felt a tremendous sense of accomplishment from the individuals participating as well as a feeling of pride for the entire university.

Continuously, and religiously (no pun intended) Yeshiva University shows its unique excellence in Torah learning and achievement; however, times are few and unfortunately far between, when a Yeshiva University student is able to properly showcase their talents of secular culture in the proper environment, with the proper audience, and with the proper recognition. The Arts Festival gave our school a chance to prove itself momentarily elite in a secular sense, properly executing the concept of *Torah U'Madda*.

For the first time in my short tenure at this bizarre institution I have realized that 'getting ahead' is not only in the core requirements of graduation. 'Getting ahead' involves the complete college experience. Now for the second question: What is the complete college experience?

The complete college experience is not a theory that can concretely be defined. Rather, the complete college experience is

### Gus's Corner

#### Alex Traiman

an advanced concept allowing each individual student a potential for maximum overall gain. This overall gain refers not only to course work and dual majors, but to meaningful endeavors which benefit others - individuals, communities or the entire university.

Despite popular belief, Yeshiva University does offer a complete college experience. It is possible that the experience you find here is not exactly what you had expected to encounter, but it is a viable experience none the less. YU does indeed afford every student that enters its domain creative outlets to embrace. There is an outlet here for every student's efforts, for every student's creativity. While the Arts Festival is the quintessential proof of this creative escape, creativity does not start and stop with a two-week festival. There are many venerable activities on campus for one to express their talents. The list is long, and I do not favor any one activity over another. The point is if you search, you will find what you are looking for.

By participating in such activities, whether affiliated with this university or not, you will be able to partake in the full college experience. In fact, it is more than well worth it to push off the heavy course load, and even, Heaven forbid, a couple hours studying or learning a week to participate in such activities. Do not get sucked into the three and out theory of college. Three and out has never been a means for success in football and it doesn't seem to work with a college education either. Stay a while, join a club, take an interesting course that the school offers even if it isn't a graduation requirement. Take an extra art, history or creative writing course. There is a poli-sci with your name on it. Take a music course and pick up the clarinet you haven't touched since high school. Who knows, you might even enjoy it!

The Arts Festival was a tremendous success on all fronts these past two weeks. Let us not look at this as the culmination of efforts, but only the beginning, merely a stepping stone for other cultural outlets. This is only an indication of greater things to come. Those who have worked on the Arts Festival and other meaningful campus activities know what it takes to create something worthwhile, and know the feeling of inner satisfaction one receives upon completion of a worthwhile project.

Take this message to heart, and furthermore, take it easy. Relax a little. It will be worth it. Enjoy college. These are the best years of your life. Slow down and take part in those activities you have always wanted to. Don't worry. Truly embrace the college experience and you will most certainly manage to come out 'ahead.'

### GRANDMA'S COOKIE JAR

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# FORUM

## OPINION

### YU? Well, Why Not?

BY ZOHAR AZOULAY

Sometimes I just don't understand the students here in YU. It seems to me they always find something to complain about – the neighborhood, the campus and the lack of girls. Well, tell you what boys, open your eyes. We are in a great place that tries to provide us with everything we need as Jewish students. The small campus gives us the advantage of small classes, we enjoy some great sports facilities including the gym and the swimming pool and we even have a direct van to Stern! However, it doesn't mean that everything is perfect.

One of the issues that most students complain about, and in this case I think we all agree, is the food. Don't get me wrong, as a person who served in the Israeli army I learned to appreciate the quality of the food – the potential is there (although not all the time is it fully reached). The real problem is the quantity and the prices. We "get" \$650 on our cafeteria card per semester ("get" is the wrong word, in fact it is money we are forced to pay in advance to the meal plan. I wonder who is behind this "plan?") Last semester we had 78 school days and 14 *Shabbatot* (not counting the 23 days of vacation during which I had to get food on my own.) A simple calculation shows we have \$7.50 a day. That is seven dollars and fifty cents a day!!! And the prices in here can be considered the anarchism of the nineties. I opened the menu and tried to put together \$7.50 worth of food. On a normal day one may only have a main dinner dish and 2 oz. of salad or a main lunch dish with french fries and a soda (small). That's it.

By this calculation, in order to buy three meals a day we'll have to fast for the next two days. If we do eat normally, I guess we'll have to announce bankruptcy by the end of the semester. We definitely can't afford treating friends for lunch, therefore, we cannot afford friends. Sounds ridiculous? Seriously, the best menu I could put together is a bagel with cream cheese and coffee for breakfast, pizza for lunch and one hot dog and a small coke for dinner. Well, you tell me how exactly do you expect us to get our recommended daily nutritional value.

Going to the Caf store does not solve the problem either; everything there is "fat free," "sugar free" and "half the calories." We even had "Weight Watchers" candies. I think the people in the food services had mistaken us for too long with Stern students. We have in this university athletes and people that study hard, but we need food in order to function. Is that too large of a request from a student?

Another thing that bothers me is *Shabbat* meals. With all the appreciation to the complimentary \$5 cost, I do not understand why do I have to beg (literally) for wine or another piece of *challah* at *Shabbat* lunch. (I'm sorry for not being a perfect *Ashkenazi*, but I'm still not fully used to *gefilte-fish*.) In addition, the people that choose the menu need to understand that *seudah shlishit* is the only food we have from *shabbat* lunch until Sunday breakfast and we can't live on salads and cake.

We are forced to spend more money (money that we don't have) on food outside the university, whether it is extra supplies for *shabbat* or fast food during the rest of the week. I guess Time Out and Deli Kasbah are making good money, so at least someone is happy. Our only hope, perhaps, is Morg Mart, providing us twice a week with decent amounts of tasty food for affordable prices. (By the way, we are still waiting for the sushi night...)

Before he was elected, Dror Barber, our president, pointed out that the high prices are due to a bill that is only on the paper, as he described it, between the university and the food services.

I call on the administration in Yeshiva University to cancel this "fake bill" between the school and Food Services. I think it's about time.

I call on the people who give money to this university and ask you: Do you know where your money goes?

I call on the people who decide where to spend this money to reevaluate their priorities. It's really nice to have new elevators, but since we can't afford the food, I wonder who is going to survive this semester in order to benefit from them in the future?

I call on the people in the food services to cut the high prices. We need and, therefore, demand, enough food at reasonable and affordable prices. Curb your greed!

But above all, I call on my fellow students not to surrender to the thought that you can't make a difference, because you can. So let your voices and protests be heard! You have the power – we have the power to change.

To complain – we do all the time, to point it out – I just did, and I hope that someone is listening.

## 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

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New York, NY 10033

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### Student Soap Box

## BEAUTY IS IN THE SOUL OF THE BEHOLDER

BY CHANANYA WEISSMAN

The terms "beauty" and "art" belong to that class of fuzzy nouns that people can almost make a career out of trying to define ("humor", "evil", "science fiction" and "*Torah U'Maddah*" come to mind as well). We're thoroughly convinced we know what these words really mean, but when pressed for a precise definition find ourselves taking general stabs at an amorphous villain. Beauty is presumably a good thing, be it in a physical or abstract sense, and art is creative stuff. Beyond this lies a dark abyss of uncertainty, and philosophical conversations that can grate one's nerves to a powder.

I shall save the business of exploring these realms of abstract categorization to those whose nerves are thicker than mine. For purposes of this exposition, our hollow definitions of "beauty" and "art" will suffice.

Many Jews suppress their own artistic inclinations and shun the artistic expressions of others, afraid they may stumble on the manifold spiritual land mines that litter the field. To me, this is akin to avoiding a supermarket that sells both kosher and non-kosher foods. The differences between these foods are extremely subtle at times, and they lie side by side on the shelves, yet all of us have confidence in our ability to march up and down the aisles and make the right decisions. At times we may err and mistakenly consume something forbidden, but the supermarket is far too vast and promising to be prohibited as a result. Similarly, there is far too much to be gained from art, be it entertainment or intellectual exploration, for this vast supermarket to be entirely closed due to the negative pitfalls a careless shopper may encounter.

Nevertheless, the items in the artistic supermarket are not conveniently labeled kosher and non-kosher, at least not to the degree that most of the decision-making is out of the hands of the consumer. This being the case, our impressions of what's allowed and what isn't are influenced by the artists around us, many of whom have no concept of *kashrut* or lack thereof. Our religious insecurities can be cast aside in the face of overwhelming societal permissiveness. As religious Jews, we will always know that certain artistic expressions are definitely unacceptable, but our sensitivity to less flagrant expressions can be eroded.

I refer in particular to the short story event of our recent Arts Festival, which I attended. Thirteen students of YC and Stern presented their creative efforts, exhibiting a wide range of impressive talents. What disturbed me, however, was the fact that nearly half of the short stories centered around or contained direct sexual references. We're not talking about a man and a woman gazing into each other's eyes. We're talking about stories replete with sweaty naked bodies and heated passions.

I imagine most of the writers would have been embarrassed to read such things in public just a few years ago. Sexuality was taboo until they'd grown up a little and society had encouraged them that, come on, it's

just a bodily function. There's nothing dirty about it. It's a beautiful thing. Feeling a great weight being lifted off their creative impulses, these writers felt permitted, if not comfortable, exploring physical love in their writing.

Without venturing too far into precise definitions, I would agree that sex can be a beautiful thing, but it isn't necessarily a beautiful thing. Urine, feces, vomit, body odor, kidney stones, hemorrhoids, cerebral palsy, rigor mortis, meningitis, gingivitis, and internal bleeding are all related to the body and its functions as well. However, any artist who feeds himself with ventures into these areas is fasting most of the time. These things are all intricacies of creation, and some of them are vital to our survival, yet society is disgusted by them.

Most people consider incest to be a perverse act, but would be hard-pressed to explain why. Theodore Sturgeon wrote a novella exploring this very question (I didn't care for it enough to commit the title to memory). A man visits a planet on which incestuous relationships are as natural and "beautiful" as any other. At first the man is shocked and horrified, but eventually subscribes to their philosophy.

Clearly, we must have a basis other than instinct with which to equate "beauty" and "ugliness". Otherwise, our innate and unqualified beliefs can be eroded by our environment or through philosophical debate. We have the Torah, and, while definitions of physical beauty are left to the individual, spiritual beauty, the sort of which sex must be classified under, has its parameters. It can be extremely holy, or, if perverted, an abomination; "beauty" and "ugliness" to the greatest extremes.

There is a *halakha* in *Maseketh Derech Eretz* which forbids belching in public (I must confess to having transgressed this on occasion). Belching is a bodily function and can be physically satisfying. Nevertheless, it is considered crude to exhibit this behavior in public. This is not to say that belching is inherently disgusting or ugly, but that, if exhibited in an inappropriate forum, it becomes ugly. Similarly, the elimination of bodily waste is not a horrible and disgusting event, but it can become one if performed outside its acceptable parameters.

While sex is certainly not a perfect parallel, the idea is really the same. There is nothing filthy about sexual expression, but its place is neither on the stage nor in the writing center. The human heart, a universal symbol of love, is forever contained within the body, out of sight. The *Mishkan* (Tabernacle) was covered with layer upon layer of curtains to protect its beauty, the implication being that gratuitous exhibition would tarnish its appeal.

The fact that society disagrees with us is irrelevant and should only strengthen our resolve to act correctly. Rather than feel burdened by the Torah and ashamed of our differences with those less privileged, we should proudly abstain from false *kashrut* labels in the artistic community. There's plenty of kosher stuff to satisfy anyone's need for expression.

# FORUM

## LETTERS

### Long Live MTA

To the Editor:

As a parent of a student currently at Central, I find it appalling that YU should even be considering the closure of any of its high schools. As a teacher, and one who is somewhat familiar with the current educational industry, I can say that there are very few schools within the New York area that offer the high academic standards of the YUHS system.

Given the realistic world we live in, there really are little choices for a parent to choose from in a quality high school. The so called "black-hat" schools do little to prepare their students for life after high school. Their emphasis is on learning Torah. While admirable, they do little to provide a solid bases for survival in the real world. The "co-ed" high schools, on the other hand, are interested in the "bottom line" rather than the *hashkafa* of their students. It is

To the Editor:

I am not a MTA graduate, but I believe that YU has made a mistake of immense proportions if it has decided to close down MTA. The exposure of MTA *talmidim* to the main *beis medrash* and the *Gedolim* who *davened* and gave their *shiurim* there, and to the current Roshei Yeshiva, cannot be minimized solely because YU deems the

quite common that many students are not from *shomer shabbat* homes.

Only the YUHS offer the best of both worlds - academic excellence combined with Torah. What more can a parent ask for? Indeed, it has been this formula of success that has allowed YU to offer these programs for the past 85 years.

Instead of being ashamed of this "money loser," YU should hold it up with pride and proclaim its greatness. The very fact that YU, B"H, has the ability to underwrite these institutions and offer scholarships and grants to prospective students should be applauded and encouraged. After all, aren't our students the future of *K'lal Yisrael*?

May the YUHS continue for another 85 years.

Ephraim Klein  
Cedarhurst, NY

high schools to be expendable. No other Yeshiva would divest itself of its own *mesivta*. YU should continue improving MTA, and ask itself why its own alumni are so ambivalent about their children attending its schools.

Steven Brizel  
YC, JSS'76

### Concerning Tamir

To the Editor:

*Baruch HaShem*, the times they are a-changin!!! Tamir Goodman has a talent that should not be repressed. He has the uncanny ambidextrousness of one of King David's mighty 300. May he prove himself worthy in and out of the arena, thus taking Torah to the Nations. *Kippot* may become fashionable, and revered by Jew and Gentile

alike!!

We God-fearers are watching (and smiling with joy) in Kansas. The KU Jayhawks could use a little help from Tamir; in fact, he reminds me of one of their past players who also could shot with either hand, Eric Pauly.

Eric Swim  
Kansas City, MO

### Offense Taken

To the Editor:

It's disturbing to see that *The Commentator*, with the publication of its recent Purim issue, has continued to perpetuate the time-honored Jewish tradition of being an "am *m'forad*," by promoting divisiveness and dispute within the YU community. I guess I shouldn't be surprised to see such offensive trash coming from a pub-

lication that doesn't even need to rely on the mythical *heter motzi sheim ra* of Purim in order to call others "twisted fools" and "trolls." I, for one, will be happy to be leaving this campus at the end of the semester.

Reuven Weiser  
MYP, YC '99

To the Editor:

Most of us have been to a comedy club or two here in the city. Now I don't know about you, but I can laugh at jokes on many topics, so can most of my friends. However, one can spot a bad comedian right away, especially when that comedian resorts to terrible jokes on sexual and promiscuous topics. It gets even worse when that comedian has no material prepared and therefore reverts to a monologue where every other word is inappropriate, and hopes for a cheap laugh. Usually, the comedian looks back at his audience and realizes he has made a big mistake. *The Commentator* however, just keeps the bad jokes coming.

I have to say that I am disappointed with the *Commentator* staff. This year's Purim Issue

had the potential to be one of the funniest ever. Some of the concepts for the articles were pure genius. Unfortunately, the *Commentator* had to cross the line from funny to offensive.

YU is a Jewish Orthodox institution. While *The Commentator* may voice the opinion of their staff, I doubt that the majority of Yeshiva College thoroughly enjoyed the extremes to which it was taken. Maybe other universities can throw in some garbage language, but we are supposed to have some ethics here, especially when it comes to our rabbis. Please try to remember that in the future. I guarantee more people will laugh.

Jennie Weiss  
SCW '99

### Tastefully Funny

To the Editor:

When I read the Purim edition this year, I was pleasantly surprised. Besides a few scathing remarks about Susan Jacobs and the Socols, (take that or leave it), I actually found

the issue tasteful and funny. This is a first in three years. Thanks for doing a good job.

Miriam BenEzra  
SCW '99

### Re: Kol Isha

To the Editor:

As an NCSY advisor, I have faced the 'mythical' problem of *Kol Isha* on any number of car trips with the girls singing along with whatever they happen to be listening to. I always tell them not to sing in the car. And not because of *Kol Isha* but because of

To the Editor:

I was somewhat taken aback - and embarrassed - by Mordechai Levovitz's article on the myth of *Kol Isha*. It is difficult for me, an alumnus of Yeshiva University, to believe that the school that had associated with it such Torah luminaries as R' Yosef Soloveitchik, R' David Lifshutz, R' Moshe Bick and others, would condone the tone and approach of the author. Is the author really a student of YU, and yet is insulted when young Orthodox women refuse to sing in public? Is it truly a shame that of all the things in Jewish life available for us, one may not be able to take advantage of musical theater?

The fact that large numbers of Orthodox Jews don't appear to have any qualms about listening to women singing live just means there is another breakdown in our commitment to Orthodoxy. I remember years ago *davening* in *shul* on a hot summer Friday night. The air conditioning was too cold for an elderly man, and he opted to sit in the *ezras nashim*, where there happened to be a few women sitting. There was a major fuss, but one

To the Editor:

I was disturbed by Mordechai Levovitz's analysis of the *Kol Isha* issue, for three very simple reasons:

a) Given the introduction to his analysis, Mr Levovitz's clear agenda was to be *malkil* (lenient) before conducting his research on the subject. Not surprisingly, he indeed found the *kuloh* (leniency).

b) His conclusion, that "in [his] humble and non-authoritative opinion...[*kol isha*] is nothing more than a *halakhic* myth," rings quite authoritative and brims with hubris. He implicitly suggests that every contemporary *posek* who disagrees with him on this issue is engaging in *halakhic* myths.

To the Editor:

The article on *Kol Isha* illustrates what happens when we extrapolate incorrectly from sociological norms to the realm of *Psak Halakha*. The flawed major premise is that many ritually observant people violate *halakha*, therefore, the *halakha* in question has no operative force. Would the author reason that the IRS has no application because many people cheat the government?

Regardless of the well researched discussion, I am dismayed that this article was published without the caveat that no Rosh

*Pikuach Nefesh!!* May I also be so bold as to ask for next issue's *Heter* to allow me *Ervah* that is "in touch with Western reality" and that would make President Clinton blush?

Aaron Leff  
REITS '01

elderly man said, "Let him be, this is America."

Parallel to this Mr. Levovitz's "This is the '90s." As Orthodox Jews, our *halakhah* doesn't change because of the place or time. Perhaps an increasing number of people feel the same way as he does, but that doesn't mean we change the *halakhah* to suit their sensibilities.

"*Ragil*" or not, the fact is, that female singers are not always modestly dressed, and often don't just stand there but depending on what they're singing, accompany their act with physical movements that may be sexually charged. Recently on the subway, I saw a high-school age *bachur* carrying a program from "Miss Saigon." From what I have read, the female singing is probably not the only reason for staying away from such shows. I am deeply saddened that the editors of *The Commentator* have seen it fit to give so much space to an article that in effect mocks Orthodox practice.

Stewart M. Wise  
YC '74

c) Mr. Levovitz will argue that this letter does not directly address the substance of his *halakhic* analysis, and therefore my criticism is flawed a priori. Yet, my criticism is not in the detail of the analysis, it is the very fact that he *paskens* on the basis of this analysis. Never having studied at YU, and only recently having discovered *The Commentator's* web site, I have a very naive question: Doesn't YU have any *poskim*? Isn't this precisely what they are there for? Isn't it sophistry to go through a subjective analysis of the *halakhic* literature before finding a predetermined *psak*?

Arnold Lustiger

Yeshiva had approved the content, or that the author had discussed these issues with either his *rebbe* or *posek*. The facts are that the media are pushing the edge of a moral envelope in advertising, content and orientation. I look forward to a *Commentator* article on why the bulk of our contemporary media, for reasons beyond the limited issues of *Kol Isha*, are a major challenge to and cannot be reconciled with the goals of *Torah U'Madda*.

Steven Brizel  
YC, JSS '76

# FORUM

## LETTERS

# FORUM

## LETTERS

### More Kol Isha

To the Editor:

Re: Kol Isha by M. Levovitz – that was quite an opus, but let's keep it simple. According to the article, the Talmudic text cited says that certain sacred religious acts should not take place against the background of a woman singing, because it interferes with the experiential sanctity of the act, just like one shouldn't say *Shemona Esrei* in a place that smells. The later citation by the *Orach Hachayim* expands the enumeration of religious acts, but stays within the confines of the *Shema* being both prayer and an object of study. Neither of these texts refer to instances outside the realm of religious sacred actions, such as entertainment or pleasure. All these later interpretations are tacking on asceticism where no evidence of original intent to prohibit exists. This exegesis proves to me once again the fallacy of creating mountains of prohibition from molehills, and then pulling one's hair out to try and rationalize around these monstrosities once created.

I should also note a particular comment of

To the Editor:

I would like to note that it was refreshing to read Mordechai Levovitz's article in *The Commentator*. I hope many rabbis respond to it and that such issues – illustrating clashes of modern perspectives with traditional stringencies – will continue to be openly confronted

another reader to whom I forwarded this article. One paragraph in particular, with its reference to Reform and Conservative Jewish practices was particularly off-putting to that reader, and I agree with his point as well. There is something intellectually dishonest about fashioning ever-stricter *halakhic* requirements in response to the leniencies of non-Orthodox Jewry. *Halakhic* interpretation should stand on its own two feet and not just to the right of what stands next to it. In other words, if Reform and Conservative practices are truly outside the realm, they should be ignored rather than become the impetus for even more radical interpretations of *halakha* as a defensive reaction. Such a reaction only serves to further marginalize the *halakhist* in the long run, appealing only to those willing to go ever-further toward the Right in adherence to the person who issues such pre-emptive rulings.

Ivan Ciment  
YC '87

and assessed. The fact that various forms of "Orthodox" Jews lie on both sides of the *kol isha* fence only encourages this kind of individual evaluation.

Tzvika Nissel  
YC '96

To the Editor:

Mr. Levovitz, never in all my years of existence have I found someone who exemplifies the idiom "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing" more fittingly than you. It is exceedingly apparent from your article that not only do you know very little *halakha*, but the little that you know, you misinterpret. If you would only look as far as your own Yeshiva's publication, *Beis Yitzchok*, you would see just how wrong you are. In the 1997 edition of *Beis Yitzchok*, on page 232, we have the Rav's shiur as brought down by Rav Hershel Shachter.

"One time the student council of the college came to ask the Rav, if it was permissible to buy opera tickets for the students, and the Rav said it was *assur* (non-permissible), because of *Kol B'Isha Ervah*."

At this point you may feel inclined to say "Of course the Rav, who was a right-wing fanatical zealot (sic), would forbid such a thing. But I am not that pious. I do not want any *chumrot*. I want to be a *Nuvel B'Rishus HaTorah*. My article only deals with the hard facts, the *Ikar Hadin*." Therefore, I will prove to you that even *m'ikar hadin, kol isha* is *assur*.

The central pillar to your fallacy is your interpretation of the *halakha* of *ragil*. You contend that since we live in such a modern and progressive society, where hearing women sing is the norm, then a woman's

voice is no longer considered an *ervah*. As a proof, you quote the *Arukh HaShulchan*, Rabbi Epstein, as saying "...*Ragil* means whatever is normal for women to do in that generation" Unfortunately, your interpretation of the *Arukh HaShulchan* is woefully wrong. The *Arukh HaShulchan* clearly states that for something to be considered *ragil*, it must be something that is constantly heard, such as if your wife constantly sings around the house. Its prevalence in society does not give it a status of *ragil*.

To illustrate to what extent a woman's voice must be present in your life to give it a status of *ragil*, I would like to quote the *Mishnah Berurah*. The *Mishnah Berurah, siman. 560, Shar Hatzion 25*, says, "If your co-workers are women, then you must make sure that they don't sing while working, because of *Kol B'Isha Ervah*. We see here that even your co-workers, with whom you spend the majority of the day with, do not fall under the category of *ragil*."

Now that your *heter* of *ragil* has been disproved, the only *tzad* you have to listen to *kol isha* is in a non-live setting, such as the radio. (And even that is dubious, however since I have found *poskim* who allow it, I will not attempt to disprove it.) However, going to Broadway shows is 100% *assur*.

Josh Max  
Mesivta Yeshivas Rabbi Chaim Berlin '04

### Halakha Is Rarely Subjective

To the Editor:

In the most recent edition of *The Commentator*, a YC student wrote an article challenging the legitimacy of the three thousand year old prohibition against *kol isha*, the voice of a woman. Interwoven with logical leaps used to legitimate his idiosyncratic interpretations of the text was the underlying theory that *halakha* is subjective, a theory that almost never holds water.

Ironically, there is one situation where this theory is applicable, and it is quite similar to the *halakha* of *kol isha*. In *hilkhot tzniut*, Maimonides teaches us that there are two parallel *halakhic* standards to which *halakha* holds us. The first is objective *ervah*, literally nakedness as defined by the objective law of the Torah. These are the minimum requirements not to transgress Torah law. The second category includes any societal stringency taken on by the community as a whole, which by virtue of its acceptance becomes binding *halakha* for all Jews. Therefore, for a woman to wear a skirt above the knee (the minimum length) is *assur*, and additionally for a woman to wear a skirt above the ankles in a community such as Meah Shearim, which has adopted a stringency barring such behavior, is also wrong. What becomes obvious from this is that *halakha* can be subjective in as much as it can add to, but not subtract from, Torah requirements. (Rambam, *Mishna Tora, Hilkhot Isurei Biah*)

Torah by its very nature begs the question of whether we are expected to decide *halakha* based on study of its established laws, i.e. Torah, *gemara*, and *halakhic* works, or if we are to put more emphasis on the prevalent practice of the times. It is clear that prevalent practice in Europe was that *halakha* was taught in the home, defined by whatever the parents

had done. What, then, occurs when we find our *mesorah* to be a *minhag ta'ut*, a mistaken custom?

Years after his death, it was determined that the Hafetz Hayim's *kiddush* cup did not meet the *halakhic* minimum required to make *kiddush*. Do we assume that the Hafetz Hayim was negligent in his observance? Obviously not. Do we, then, assume that the *halakha* must be somehow wrong because such a *gadol* acted differently, or do we assume that the Hafetz Hayim did not think to impugn his father's *kiddush* cup that had been his father's before him? Clearly, the latter is correct. The *halakha* is static, and unchanged by an error in transmission.

The initial claim presented is flawed on this basis. Levovitz's 'statistic' that "It follows that a large percentage of YC has seen or will see the musical 'Les Miserables' is intrinsically flawed because it assumes that hearsay is accurate. All his information really tells us is that some percentage of 140 tickets were purchased for male YU students. It certainly does not establish even close to the supposed majority of YU's 1100 students that the article implies.

Let us assume for a moment that this assertion was even factual. *Halakha* is not subjective, and is certainly not determined by majority rule. I suppose that he would also advocate abandoning the archaic laws of *shabbat* and *kashrut*. Certainly the laws of family purity are antiquated in our modern society which has evolved to know more of objective truth than G-d who created it. But of course this is ludicrous, and I am quite sure that he would not advocate any such thing.

The article's presentation of *kol isha* issue includes errors too numerous to mention here, so we'll take a quick tour of the highlights. The most glaring mistake is the author's negli-

gence of mentioning that the famous *kulah* of the *Serdei Eish* that two simultaneous voices are not heard separately. This notion, entertained by the *gemara*, applies, according to the *Serdei Eish*, only in a situation of *kiruv*. He also discusses the concept of *ragil*, that something that one is used to becomes, in some way, *mutar*. He cites this concept in connection to the *gemara* that says that a man can not say *shema* where he can hear the singing voice of a woman. Even according to the *Arukh Hashulchan*, who allows a man to say *shema* in earshot of a woman because of *ragil*, the woman would not be allowed to sing.

This is a classic example of the *Rambam* mentioned above. There are minimum parameters of *ervah*, and above and beyond those minimum requirements only what is mandated by society is necessary. If a behavior is accepted, or *ragil*, and meets the minimum *halakhic* requirements, then it is acceptable. But societal acceptability below those requirements does not mitigate acting in such a manner. The naked body of one's own *non-niddah* wife is *ragil* to him, but he may not say *shema* while she is naked in his view.

Here is the basic *halakha*, not a *kulah*-search, as presented in Levovitz's article. The *gemara* says "kol b'isha *ervah*." The *Shulchan Arukh* brings down the same statement, as does the *Rambam*, and they both bring down a key clause that has gone unnoticed. The basic *halakha* is that a woman may speak to a man without committing an *issur*, but that any use of the female voice to be sexually provocative is *assur*. What both the *Shulchan Arukh* and the *Rambam* add is "V'davka im *sharah*," "definitely if she sings." One instance that has the objective quality of being sexually provocative is that of a woman singing, which is thus *assur*.

The article asserts that if a woman's song is to be objectively provocative then it is "thus dirty and unethical." To introduce such quali-

tative analysis which is utterly without basis is dangerous. While it is true that the Torah always considers a woman's song to be seductive, it does not follow that this act is therefore dirty or unethical. A hammer can be used to build; it can also be used as a murder weapon. A woman's voice is also a tool. While it is not physically dangerous, it, like all other forms of *ervah*, can either be used to dehumanize or to make meaningful relationships stronger, to build or to destroy. Don't make statements like, "In this day and age, the idea that ... is insulting and *dishonorable*," or, "Anyone today who thinks that ... must severely out of touch with western reality." Rather, question why society has fell to such a level in which the very tools that *Hashem* granted in order to sensitize us to the power of our sexuality, are being portrayed as archaic if not used to destroy that sensitivity.

I consider myself Modern Orthodox. I also consider the ideal of Modern Orthodoxy to have failed in practice because we have not learned that Torah is not subjective. The synthesis of modernity and Torah is necessary for the Jew to accomplish his mission in the world of *or lagoyim*, and is key to a true understanding of Torah. Realizing this goal is for the Jews to be the uniting factor that forces secular society closer to Torah ideals, and not vice versa. When pop culture becomes more important than what the Torah thinks, then that synthesis has failed. JFK implored the American people to "Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country." On the religious level, Torah is not about what is convenient or accepted in modern society; it is about *halakha* and subservience to our Creator. We ought not ask what we can do to make Torah fit our needs, but we can do to make our needs fit Torah.

Noach D. Roth  
SSSB '00



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## Hussein Leaves Legacy of War and Peace

*Weinberger Reflects on Jordan's Past, Present, and Future*

BY YEHUDA BURNS

The passing of King Hussein of Jordan leaves a dual legacy. On the surface, his death came while searching for peace with Arab neighbors and even, ostensibly, with the Israelis. Still, peace with Israel was not always forthcoming. His record as a moderate ruler in the face of other Arab authoritarian regimes, however, is especially impressive.

With his death, the questions of stability that have plagued the small nation seem likely to return. Now that a strained peace with Israel has passed several tests, the question of whether Abdullah, the King's son and heir, will be able to retain the stability that his father established arises.

From the outset of his reign, which he began at the age of 16 in 1952, King Hussein faced adversity and was confronted with a constant struggle for control. He witnessed the shooting of his grandfather by Palestinian nationalists in 1951 shortly before he took power. In 1956 he had to fend off an Army coup instigated by Egypt's President Nasser, who would prove just as menacing in Israel's Six Day War. In 1967, Nasser conked Hussein into battle, claiming that Israel's Air Force had been shattered. Jordan lost the West Bank in the ensuing battles. This was possibly the low point of Hussein's 46-year reign.

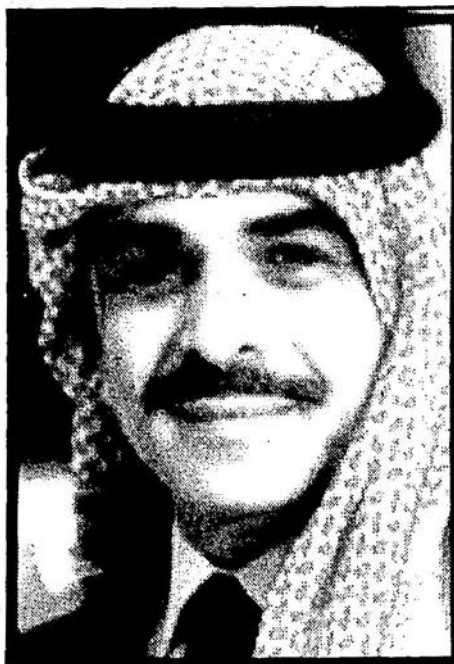
In September of 1970, Jordanian troops were forced to confront armed Palestinian fighters, led by Yassir Arafat, who had established a nationalistic stronghold within Jordanian borders. By 1974, an Arab Summit meeting had declared that Hussein no longer represented the Palestinian people and Arafat's PLO assumed that function. In 1988, at the height of the Intifada, Hussein relinquished his claim to the West Bank to the Palestinians.

Dr. Naomi Weinberger, a political science professor at YU who is an expert on Middle Eastern affairs, described the political savvy of King Hussein. "His style of ruling was to always hedge and straddle the fence, always leaving himself room to maneuver and some deniability." She explained how the reversals of fortune that periodically shook up the empire taught him that shifting between extremes was both militarily and politically dangerous. It was this political ideology that allowed him to openly support Syria in the early 70's, then turn in favor of Iraq as it grew in power.

Interestingly, this characteristic is highlighted by the complex relationship between the King and the Palestinian people, who comprised a significant portion of his own empire. Many Palestinians regarded the King as an enemy of the Palestinian people for his non-aggressive stance with regards to recapturing the West Bank. However, despite the distrust, Queen Noor, the King's wife, is of Palestinian heritage and was often viewed as a key player, albeit behind the scenes, in Jordanian politics.

For Dr. Weinberger, it is the accomplishments of the King within Jordan that stand out as his greatest achievements as a ruler. "What he did was take a small, poor country surrounded by larger neighbors with much greater influence, and gain for it a far greater option in the inter-Arab arena than it would have otherwise seen." This ability to take advantage of situations and influence the politics of the region in a way beneficial to his beleaguered people may be one of the greatest political accomplishments of the decade. That Jordan had more regional influence than its small size might suggest is a testament to the Hussein's accomplishments.

Throughout the history of the Israeli state, the attitudes of Israeli leaders and society



toward Hussein have varied. Of late though, there appears to have been a change in sentiment. The once maligned dictator is now viewed more as a friend of peace than as an Arab oppressor. Secretly, King Hussein had moved in recent years towards closer ties with the Israeli Government, conducting secret meetings with officials in the hope of accomplishing some sort of peace. Openly, however, he was disparaged by some ranking Israeli leaders until relatively recently.

The history of Israeli distrust toward Hussein largely dissipated following the Gulf War conflict. Following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the King sought to keep Jordan in a position of neutrality, angering the US Government and creating the impression among Israelis that he actually supported Saddam's regime. Eventually, Saddam denounced the King, who did not ally himself with Iraq during the war. Jordan could have easily allowed Iraqi ground forces to cross through its territory toward Israel. By not allowing this, Hussein demonstrated to Israelis that he was not seeking the downfall of the Jewish state.

What emerged before the King's death was the warmest peace between Israel and an Arab ruler since the 1978 Camp David Accords with Egypt. Largely, notes Dr. Weinberger, the peace was a direct result of the King's personality. "Once he decided to make peace, he did it with open-hearted gestures, not with reluctance." His genuine desire for peace was reflected in his reaction to the shooting of seven Israeli school children by a Jordanian soldier in 1997. He visited the families of the children personally, extending condolences and, as the mother of one of the slain children added, he promised here succinctly that, "There will be peace."

While the signing of the peace agreements with Jordan represent a definite highlight of warm relations between Israel and the Arab nations, many are not so easily convinced of the authenticity of the King and his partners in peace. The King's detractors note the fact that had it not been for the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 between Israel and the Palestinians, the 1994 peace treaty with Jordan may never have happened. Dr. Weinberger explained that the strained nature of the King's relationship with his Palestinian subjects would not allow him to openly welcome peace with the Israelis, people whom they considered their mortal enemies. In fact, even today, the peace stands largely as "The King's Peace," its success hinging on the charisma of Hussein himself rather than a genuine yearning for peace on the part of his subjects.

Drawing from these results, Dr. Weinberger looked towards the future as Abdullah moves to take control of Jordanian affairs. "I learned from those events that if

the King, with all his stature, security and respect, could still not move for peace until Arafat had already done so, it seems that his son, who remains largely unestablished, will not be able to take the peace forward unless the Palestinians take the lead."

She also noted how the Jordanian people as a whole expected the peace and its international acclaim to bring economic prosperity. Palestinians, in particular, had hoped that it would bring them a better deal in their negotiations with Israel for independent statehood. "The Jordanian people don't see what they expected, and now skepticism sets in. Clearly they can't be terribly enthusiastic about him [Abdullah] until they begin to see the things they expected."

What remains to be seen in terms of the maintenance of a lasting peace between Israel and Jordan is how King Abdullah will respond to his new position. Abdullah is far from a seasoned political force. He is a recognized military officer who suppressed a series of riots inside Jordan in recent years. His powerful stand, despite his inexperience at maintaining the political balance that characterized his father's reign may be enough to retain Jordanian stability. Largely, though, noted Weinberger, the Jordanian people will expect the country's political system to liberalize under their new ruler. "The King had tried it, but had to crack down to maintain order. Recently, though, he had made attempts at liberalization. Lacking the clout of his father, Abdullah will likely be forced to proceed on this course to please the people."

With respect to the Palestinians inside Jordan, Weinberger noted, "They have had a flavor of the Israeli democracy and will get frustrated, having followed the progress of the West Bank Palestinians." Once again, how the freedoms of Palestinians in the West Bank and within Jordan develop will determine how happy they are. Similarly, this will determine how their approach to Israeli relations will unfold.



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# ARTS & CULTURE

## FILM REVIEWS

### Affliction



BY YAIR OPPENHEIM

*Starring: Nick Nolte, James Coburn, Sissy Spacek and Willem Dafoe*

At some point in life, every man must face up to whether or not he has met his father's expectations. When a father is a drunken, abusive shell of a man, a fatalistic mentality soon replaces an optimistic one. That said, "Affliction," based on the novel by Russel Banks, can be best summarized as "the Anti-Father's Day movie."

Nick Nolte stars as Wade Whitehouse, the sheriff of a small town in New Hampshire, who lets external forces take control of his life and ultimately shift his life, or what seemed like one, towards unravelment. In the beginning of hunting season, a local resident takes a wealthy businessman out deer hunting, with the businessman winding up dead. This raises Wade's suspicion. After consulting with his brother Rolfe (played by Willem Dafoe), Wade begins to develop his own conspiracy theory about what happened. While Wade assumes that the plot seems to thicken, he is forced to deal with a death in the family, a custody suit over his daughter with an ex-wife who detests him, a foul-mouthed father, and a painful toothache. This leads Wade to start taking risks with his life, starting with his case.

His dormant dark side soon begins to surface, and a man who was once a shy, unassuming father becomes a raging source of volcanic fury. Since two vicious animals can't live in one cage, Wade who was used to being pounded into submission by a drunken father must now face his father as a contender on equal footing and put an end to the insults, the liquor, and the shame.

Dealing with these problems sends Wade reeling into the abyss with no support or savior in sight. Without any sense of accountability, Wade runs to meet his doom, losing his friends, community and job in the process. When his only connection to reality ends up being his father, the final string is cut and Wade loses his identity in a tempest of anger.

Without any doubt, this movie is a

man's movie. Though starting off a tad slowly, the film picks up steam and rams through the audience like a Mack truck at the end. There hasn't been a film where a man "goes pop" in a long time, and this certainly fills the gap and makes up for it. It's depressing and it hits you in the gut because it's undeniably real.

Nick Nolte gives the performance of his career, and though he doesn't have a fan club yet, this will give the man some support. His progression towards madness and aggressiveness has already earned him numerous industry awards and put him in tight competition for the Best Actor Oscar (for which he was nominated, against Ian McKellan of "Gods and Monsters").

Even more appealing is the second "treat" of the film. Glen Whitehouse, Wade's rough father, is played by James Coburn, who was nominated for his performance as well. Every scene is a show stopper for him. He steals all the attention with uninhibited cruelty, and clearly stakes his claim for worst father figure in the history of cinema. Sissy Spacek plays a decent role in the form of Wade's girlfriend Margie, and Willem Dafoe is somewhat underdeveloped as Wade's brother Rolfe, which frankly shouldn't matter, since Nolte's dynamite performance is the locus of attention. When you've got an impending explosion, does anything else matter? Never - the sight is too transfixing. This is the case with our view of Nolte.

The film was written (as an adaptation) and directed by Paul Schrader, the writer behind a few of Martin Scorsese's classics such as "Raging Bull" and "Taxi Driver." His characters are flawed and jump out of the screen because they're intense. That's what keeps the film moving. The film is a fascinating reverse parallel to "Taxi Driver." "Affliction" takes place in a small town with a character that lets life and society afflict him to the point where he lets loose his rage on those around him and forces his life to spiral downwards. "Taxi Driver" is situated in the city and its flawed protagonist, Travis Bickle, takes his anger out on others to make sense of his life and gain redemption in their eyes. What's interesting is that Nolte and De Niro played characters that never operated on the same wavelength to begin with; it only took an external situation to set either of them off with a bang. Nolte blankets his rage, lets it loose and then sucks it back in again. De Niro, by contrast, attempts to take out his rage, absorb it, and then flush it out once more. In their minds they win, but in society's they lose.

### When Falafel Meets the Big Apple

BY ZOHAR AZOULAV

O.K., so you still do the Dougie's and a movie routine, at least now go do something different for a change. The Israeli Film Festival gives one a great opportunity to glance into the life of contemporary Israel. Surprising as it may sound, Israel does have a thriving film industry and in fact it is blessed with some very talented people. The movies in the festival vary, from highly dramatic plots, to documentaries about Itzhak Rabin, to the relationship between Israelis and Palestinians. It captures Israel and its culture.

A few movies, however, stand out above all the rest. They are at the peak of excellence in the festival. "Dangerous Acts" was chosen to open the festival. This is a psychological thriller starring Gila Almagor, who portrays a woman confronted by the man who killed her entire family in a car accident. Almagor, probably one of the best actresses in Israel today, has won in the past many international awards not only for her exceptional acting, but also for being a pioneer in dealing with the issues of post-Holocaust life in the newly born state.

"Afula Express," which was released last year, is back by popular demand. It is a romantic comedy about a mechanic who goes to the big city and decides to pursue his childhood dream

of becoming a magician. While performing in his hometown, he tries to get back together with the woman he always loved.

My personal favorites, however, are "Basic Training" and "Florentine." "Florentine" describes the lives of twenty-something year old friends and delves into their innermost personal and emotional conflicts; their joyous as well as their sadder moments. The series deals with real issues young Israelis face these days such as the assassination of Itzhak Rabin, relationship with their parents, sexuality and daily struggle of survival.

"Basic Training" is an action series that deals with the effects of joining the Israeli army on young soldiers, their family and friends. As a person who went through this process, I can testify to the films brutal realism.

These two very well made mini-series, originally made for T.V., were a huge hit in Israel this past summer. Anyone who feels he has any connection to Israeli young adults or wants to have one, must watch them. I highly recommend it and in fact it's "Yehareg U'bal Yaa'vor." The festival is ending March 11, so as long as you have time, take my word for it and Go Go Go!!!

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### The Moshav Band

BY ELI GUROCK

Personally, one of the worst moments in my life was in high school when I realized that the innocence I once had was gone. The good old days were over and all I had to look forward to was times of responsibility and regret. Little did I know that later on in life I would look back on that time as my innocent youth. Now, I regard still another time as my time of innocence, the time I spent in Israel. This time period I can rationalize as innocent. No parents, no rules, nothing to do, total freedom, blah blah blah, it definitely was the last period of innocence in my life (so far).

When I came back from Israel I kept one memory as a reminder of my time. That memory is of my Sunday nights. Every Sunday night from February to the end of the year, I went with some friends from yeshiva to a little place in the Russian Compound called "Kalba Savua." There we stayed out to two in the morning listening to a band called "The Moshav Band". We became friends with the band, their friends, and other American students who were also regulars at the club. Looking back, there is nothing I miss more about Israel than those once a week meetings.

Unfortunately, though, once back in America all I had of my beloved band was a few bootlegs of their shows and one horrible studio tape. I longed for their music, but came up empty. There were rumors of a tour last year, but to no avail.

My prayers were answered this year, when my friend Noah, who is the lead singer of the band, Inasense, told me that his brother's band, The Moshav Band, was coming. I could-

n't believe it! I would finally see my old friends again. Noah told me that the band's first official show was that Saturday night at Rutgers, but that they were going to open up for his band on Thursday. Once again, I could not believe it.

That Thursday night I showed up at the little bar in the East Village to relive my innocent youth, but what I got left me confused. On stage, the band was amazing. They played tighter than I remembered, while mixing their old songs with new ones. They opened up the show with one of my personal favorites, "Waiting for the Calling" and set the place rocking. The crowd didn't stop dancing throughout the entire hour and a half long set, which included a cover of the Phish/Talking Heads song "Cities".

The band played and jammed and talked to the crowd between songs. I felt so happy to see them back on stage, but something was missing. I kept glancing at my watch, realizing that I had to go home soon because I had work the next day. My reality caught up with my fantasy. I realized that as much as I love The Moshav Band, their music appealed to me in Israel, but now I am in America, in YU, in New York, and in a very different time in my life, their music just isn't as appealing. But that is just my stupid *mishugas*.

I went to see them again that Saturday night at Rutgers and again, the band played a magnificent show. They are playing again in New York City later this month for their last two shows in America. Go see them Saturday night, March 13<sup>th</sup> at the Wetlands opening up for Inasense, and then again on Monday March 22<sup>nd</sup> at Columbia University. They put on a great show and are a lot of fun.

## THEATRE

Theatrical Facts...  
In my Opinion

BY STEVEN BERNSTEIN

You might have noticed that I did not write a review of "Les Miserables" after everyone went to see it last month. The reason for this is simple - my mother always told me that if I didn't have anything nice to say, to go and tell her all about it (or something like that). Anyway, although everybody rants and raves about how great of a musical "Les Miserables" is, I don't think it's all that and a bag of chips. Granted, the music is fantastic ("Master of the House" is one of my favorite songs), but I just don't think it deserved the long run that it has enjoyed. This may seem shocking to many of you, but I actually have reasons to back up my opinion. I warn you however, that my reasons are the reasons of an extremist.

In recent years, I have pretty much been unimpressed with what Broadway has had to offer. The sad fact is that the majority of today's Broadway hits are not Broadway shows at all. They are transplants of British and French operas. That's right. Most of the "musicals" that you see on Broadway today are in fact not musicals at all, but operas. Before I progress any further, let me define my terms. If there's one thing I learned as a Speech & Drama major, it is that you must always define your terms:

**musical (myoo'zi-kel)** *adj.* Of, pertaining to, or producing music: a musical instrument. *n.* A musical comedy. musical comedy. A play in which dialogue is interspersed with songs and dances.

**opera (o'per-e)** *n.* A musical and dramatic work consisting of a play with stage action and the words sung to music, usu. with orchestral accompaniment.

The basic difference between the two genres is that an opera is sung in its entirety while a musical comedy has songs sprinkled in between the dialogue. One important note:

though it is called a musical comedy it does not necessarily have to have the standard happy ending that defines a comedy. Tragic plays such as *West Side Story*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *The Sound of Music* also fall into the genre of musical comedy.

Okay. Now that we can see a clear difference between a true musical and an opera, let us progress. In my extremist opinion, these Webber and Boublil & Schönberg imports have no place on a Broadway stage. Though I must admit that they are a valid form of theater, I still hold an animosity towards their genre. What upsets me about these Old World operas is that they have displaced and nearly killed the Great American Musical. The musical comedy is truly an American art form. Just as America is a proverbial salad-bowl, so too is the musical comedy. It is an amalgamation of all forms of performing arts.

Actually, now that I think about it, operas are an amalgamation of performing arts as well. Damn! That just shot a hole in my argument. Not that I care. As I said, I'm an extremist when it comes to this stuff. Extremists don't need logical arguments, their opinions are based on emotion, not logic. So let me tell you my emotional opinion. I really have no gripe against operas - I just like musicals better. (To set the record straight, I really did like "Les Miserables." I just stated that I hated it for shock value so that you would read on.)

In my emotional opinion, I am upset that the Great American Musical is dying. It also perturbs me (and this part here is fact, not opinion) when people, including the producers of these Broadway operas, confuse an opera for a musical. They are two entirely different things. Let's all make me a happy theater reviewer and call a spade a spade. Operas are operas and musicals are musicals. Oh well, I guess I don't have anything mean to tell to my mother after all.

SCDS to Perform  
The Bard's Season

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

In this, the year of Shakespearean triumph in the movie industry, the Stern College Dramatic Society has decided, in a last minute switch, that the Bard should triumph in their theater as well. The surprising move came a few weeks ago, when the students involved in the play banded together to can the production of "Nobody's Gilgul" due to what was perceived as the inappropriate nature of the characters' material. In its place will be two comedic one-act shows, the first entitled "When Shakespeare's Women Meet" and the second "The Second Best Bed," both of which have Shakespearean themes.

The switch actually comes as a rallying point for the downtown Dramatics Society, which suffered the compounded disappointments of not being able to perform in the theater recently purchased by Yeshiva University for exactly such a purpose, as well as being frustrated with the controversial dia-

logue in "Gilgul."

The two acts will be directed by Liz Renna, a Stern student and future Hollywood hopeful, who displayed how much credit she attributes to her extremely talented cast by commenting "I'm directing it. What else is there to say? Hello!"

The first act has six of Shakespeare's leading women (Juliet, Cleopatra, Portia, Ophelia, Desdemona, and Katherine) meeting and offering each other advice, while the second one involves what Shakespeare did not leave his wife in his will.

The play, showing in Koch Auditorium downtown March 15-18, is eagerly anticipated by students wishing to get their fill of the arts following the closing of the Arts Festival. Tickets can be purchased ahead of time downtown from the President of the SCDS, Devorah Cencer and Faye (nee' Berman) Gitlin, and uptown from Hadar Weiss, all of whose numbers should be in the Guide or on the soon-to-be-plastered-up posters.



Dov Pickholtz and David Keesey entertain all during Festival's opening concert.

## Arts Festival

Continued from page 1

including Dudi Feur, Ephraim Yablok, and Josh Landa. The audience received a real treat when the hilarious Galena twins, Isaac and Seth, introduced a new kind of music termed "Galena Rock." Interestingly, they were the only students who performed Jewish music. After a brief intermission, Elie Rosenblatt and Nathan Mintz astonished the crowd with a vibrant and inspired klezmer performance. Then the lights went out, a disco ball and colorful Christmas bulbs illuminated the room, the crowds curiosity level piqued visibly, and Ilan Rubinstein took the stage. Many felt that his acoustic performance of "Coffee House Philosopher" was at once intense and satisfying.

The evening ended with a much anticipated showcase presented by David Rappaport. He performed two alternative songs and an original disco-tech presentation that was reminiscent of "Poem Electronique" by Charles Ives.

The music was monumental, the seating was mixed, and the evening was enjoyed by all. Adam Aftergut, a JSS/YC sophomore present at the concert, said, "It was awesome. I was very impressed. I wish I had invited my friends from Columbia to see it."

On Monday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, a poetry reading was held in the Writing Center. Students from both Yeshiva and Stern Colleges were invited to read their original works in an intimate environment. Many talented students, including Yishai Fleisher, Alter Shimon Reiss, Yehudit Robinson, Eli Shoshani, Jake Berkman, and Arts Fair Coordinator Benji Joffe, recited their poems to a more than enthusiastic audience. The Writing Center was packed and the crowd listened attentively as the poets voiced their moving pieces.

Of the night, Dr. William Lee, Professor of English, said, "It was the best essemble of talent in poetry I've seen in sixteen years."

Wednesday February 14<sup>th</sup> was the date planned for the long awaited and much discussed dramatic presentation. However, one of the main performers came down with laryngitis so the presentation was moved to a later date. Instead, Rabbi Shalom Carmy gave a speech on Art and Religion. He read a letter written by Rav Kook addressing the issue of art and its appropriate role in Judaism. He then discussed the meaning of this letter with the audience. Afterwards, he answered questions from both the students and faculty members who were present.

Sunday February 14<sup>th</sup> featured a student-run tour of the new additions to the YU Museum - a display of original art works created by the students of YU and Stern. Among the works were elaborate sculptures, paintings, and other forms of visual art. A microphone was passed around and each artist explained the significance of his/her work. The evening was attended by many students and faculty members, and ended with light refreshments as well as a new found appreciation of Yeshiva student art.

The next night was host to a jazz and chamber music concert presented by the YU Jazz Ensemble and Dr. Noyes Bartholomew. The event, which took place in a recital hall on the second floor of Schottenstein Student Center, began with Sonata No. 9 by Corelli,

which was performed by Daniel Robbins on the clarinet and Yair Oppenheim on piano. The next piece was Sonata No. 1 by Brahms, performed majestically by Jake Solomon on the cello and Joseph Zelefsky on piano.

The evening was then enlivened by the Jazz Ensemble, featuring students Didi Weberman, Deborah Roth, Eli Pritykin, Daniel Robbins, Rena Goldberg, Alexander Remer, Joseph Zelefsky, Dudi Feuer, and Joseph Ringel. Instructor and faculty advisor Dr. Bartholomew, played the trumpet and flugelhorn along with his students. The ensemble performed three jazz songs: "Black Nile" by Wayne Shorter; "Naima" by John Coltrane; and "A Coupla Ducks," an original composition by Dr. Bartholomew.

On Wednesday February 17<sup>th</sup>, there was a student short story reading in the Writing Center. It was no ordinary reading. At this event, the lights were turned off, the podium was replaced by a green sofa, the blackboard was covered with a red, artsy blanket, and the front of the room was lit by a strange-looking electrical contraption constructed by Yishai Fleisher only moments before the event was to begin. The student readers had the option of either sitting or lying down on the couch, and they read their impressive short stories to a large audience. The themes of the stories were engaging and ranged from a comical piece describing a young boy who dressed up as a super hero to a female college student exploring memories of her first sexual experience. The event was hosted by Fleisher and Josh Abraham.

The Arts Festival concluded on February 18<sup>th</sup> with an eventful closing dessert reception hosted by Josh Abraham. The reception featured a full course meal, free entertainment, and an awards ceremony. Many students and faculty members were in attendance, as well as a celebrity artist, Morris Katz, who has appeared in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for seven consecutive years for creating the most valuable paintings in the shortest amount of time (less than one minute!).

Shalom Berson, introduced the first performer, Mordechai Levovitz, who began to sing Broadway tunes. His act was soon cut short by Dean Adler, because he deemed its content inappropriate. His short-lived act was followed by Steven Bernstein who impressed the audience with his stunning ballads. The dramatic presentation, rescheduled for that night from its original date, didn't take place because many felt that the audience was already witness to enough drama.

A half-hour video prepared by Yoni Leitner documenting the two weeks of the Arts Festival was then shown and enjoyed by all. Awards were given out to all Festival participants and the evening was pleasantly concluded.

With regards to next year's Festival, Dean Adler expressed hope that "we will have a planning committee as committed and effective as this year's. I also hope that all students participate in some aspect of the Festival." When asked if he will head the Arts Festival committee next year, Joffe responded, "One year is enough for me!"



Deans Adler and Jesionowski pose with artist Morris Katz.

# ARTS &

# LITERARY

*This selection is part of Chapter Two from The Ghetto Theatre, a novel-in-progress by IBC/YC Junior Aaron Klein.*

The boat contained a deck full of excited and well-dressed college freshmen anxiously awaiting the start of the voyage. The night air softly danced through my lungs, awakening my senses as the boat pulled away from the dock, its oppressed motor rumbling beneath us like an old washing machine desperately churning through its last cleansing cycle.

The vessel housed two levels: a large and semi-stylish ballroom below, and a lounge with an outside deck above, complete with a bar and dance floor. The cruise was the last event of Orientation '97, a series of parties, speeches and meetings planned by trite and phlegmatically uninspired faculty members. I attended all orientation events and found the entire thing somewhat childish, although I did meet a few interesting people.

Three days and two sleepless nights had passed since I had first arrived in New York. My temporary insomnia was a delicately wrapped gift thoughtfully presented by the noisy concourses of Manhattan. My roommate had not yet arrived and I was starting to enjoy my privacy.

I was sitting at a full and well apportioned table on the outside deck. To my right was Jeff Benson, a finance major who lived next door to me. Dance music was playing loudly, and it was hard to talk above the sound that pulsed from the speakers like water exploding from an old pipe in the middle of a crowded avenue.

"Just when you think orientation can't get any lamer, they go and throw a party on a boat," said Jeff.

One of the girls at our table said, "At least the food is okay."

I had noticed that she was occasionally flirting with me.

At least my testosterone-charged, egotistically biased mind thought I had noticed her casting deviously feminine, often misunderstood glances in my direction.

"Eat here while you can, because the food in the Caf tastes like raw sewage," I said.

"Tell me about it, and it costs more than imported caviar," the girl responded. "By the way, my name is Lauren." Flirtations confirmed.

"Ian Aurlich, it's a pleasure to meet you."

"You're pre-med, right?" asked Lauren.

"Yeah, how did you know?" I was both impressed and flattered that she knew who I was.

"I saw you at the meeting yesterday. I'm in that program too."

"Do you know which pre-med courses you're taking yet?" I said, making an effort to continue a conversation with this strikingly beautiful girl.

"Probably general biology and calculus. How about you?"

"Biology and chemistry but I need to register tomorrow morning."

"Make sure you don't take Dr. Meit for biology, I hear he's heartless."

"That's what I heard, too," I said as a photographer snapped a picture of the smiling students sitting around our table enjoying the late night breeze. A few months later, a segment of that picture would be aired on the news and in the papers throughout the city, though one of us wouldn't live to see it.

I look back on that night and stare at a picture that wasn't meant to be taken, an image of blood soon to be spilled. I can almost make out figures of the macabre spirits watching me, laughing at me, at my ignorance and at the false sense of invincibility that serves as the trademark of the young, when the world is yours and the Angels of destiny are oblivious to the most adventurous of desires.

The images in the picture once again come to life - the people who gave rise to them having sunk deep within my soul.

"Maybe we'll be in the same biology class," says the girl in the photo.

I can feel the night as if I were on the boat again. Music is playing. It's turned up a notch louder than before. The students sitting at the nearby tables get up and begin to dance.

"So what's your story?" Lauren asked.

"Trust me, you don't want to know," I responded. "I won't ask for your story because that would be unfair."

"You know what? It doesn't really matter. We're in college now - the past is gone and we're starting a new life."

"You couldn't be more right." I was suddenly overwhelmed by a strange and wild feeling, as if I knew this girl in a different lifetime. "You wanna dance?" I impulsively asked Lauren.

I couldn't believe that I thoughtlessly uttered those daring words and before I could think of a plausible explanation, Lauren responded, "Sure, why not."

In an almost trance-like state, we got up from the table and I led Lauren to an area on the deck where the other students were dancing. Lauren was about three inches shorter than I, and had shoulder length brown hair. Her blue eyes suddenly pierced me as I took in her nearly perfect figure. Talking with her began to excite me in secret places. Her face now seemed to glow with all the majesty of a calm ocean sparkling beneath the moonlit sky.

When we reached the dance floor, the first song ended and a new one began. It was a slower tune, one that would ultimately become our silent anthem. We danced through a galaxy of fanciful mystery, silently absorbing each other presence.

Deep within the eye exists a lost world, it's where secrets

are written in an enchanted hieroglyphic. I gazed into her hypnotic eyes, and somehow knew that we would one day share something extraordinary. Later we would admit to each other that it was there, on that boat, on that night, under those stars, that Lauren and I, two strangers at the time, forged a speechless pact that would lead us into the rest of our lives.

As we danced to the music, and I came to the realization that I was actually having fun. I could pinpoint the exact moment that my fears of isolation melted from my thoughts. I knew that the night was young and that I was enjoying the ride after all.

Just then, a fire ripped through the dark sky. Like a surprise attack on sleeping soldiers, the storm came from nowhere and startled everyone at first. The clouds initiated their remorseless revenge on us dry, defenseless passengers before anyone could get inside.

"My dress is going to be ruined," said Lauren. "Where is this rain coming from?"

"I don't know, I was just looking at the stars," I said. "We better get inside."

We followed the wet crowd into a now overpopulated lounge and stood next to the door. With everyone at last inside, a stream of lightning illuminated the room and hit the deck almost precisely where Lauren and I had been standing just a few moments ago. It created a small fire that was immediately extinguished by both the crew members and the fierce rain. The motor gave off an alarming sound that was heard above the noise of the crowd. The boat began to tremble like the debilitated hands of an overworked seamstress. A few girls were screaming, and the music was abruptly cut off.

After a bell sounded, the captain began to talk on the loudspeaker. "Passengers, we're experiencing slight technical difficulties, but everything is under control. We're on our way back to the dock and should be arriving shortly. I repeat: everything's under control."

We heard a crack above us and water started to drip from the ceiling, further drenching an already wet crowd. At this point everyone started to scream.

"It's like we're on the freakin' Titanic," said Jeff, now standing next to me.

I responded, "They just had to rent the cheapest boat on the Eastern seaboard, didn't they?"

"This whole situation is pretty comical if you think about it," said Lauren.

Jeff shouted, "I can derive no humor from this entire evening," and then burst into laughter when a stream of water came flooding down on me. His laughter was immediately silenced when the ceiling above him gave way and rainwater soaked him as well.

Just then a group of students began to sing, "Row, Row, Row Your Boat," and everyone joined in, singing the nursery rhyme in two exuberant, half-musical rounds. Finally someone yelled "Pump the music back up." Within a few moments the wet students were dancing under springs of rainwater that poured in from the ceiling like a tropical waterfall hidden deep within the rainforest. The unexpected storm didn't wash away the festive mood of the boat. It became a game to dance around the leaks that sprang from almost every square inch of the cheap plaster that hung above us. People started to talk again. The boat started to shake again. And so we stood there, a mass of energetic college students, cracking jokes, socializing and dancing the night away on the leaking, rocking, moaning ship that had been struck by lightning and was heading back toward dry land.

# CULTURE


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## Yeshiva College Arts Festival: BEHIND THE SCENES WITH YONI LEITNER

BY AARON KLEIN

Many students participated in this year's Yeshiva College Arts Festival in one way or another. Some helped with the planning, others performed or displayed their impressive works of art, and still others sat in the audience and watched attentively as their fellow classmates put their reputations in jeopardy.

One student was present at every Festival event. You may have seen him parade up and down the room with his trusty camcorder, often sticking his microphone in the faces of startled and unprepared attendees. This student collected eight hours of pure, unadulterated festival footage. He then spent over sixteen hours of his own free time editing that material, creating a half-hour documentary that was viewed at the Festival's closing reception. This student has seen the beautiful and the ugly. He has boldly gone where no camera man has gone before. His name is Yoni Leitner and his mission is impressive.

I took Yoni into a dimly lit room deep within the confines of our sometimes mysterious campus. There, he revealed to me his hidden thoughts on the Arts Festival. All his secret knowledge spilled out in a stream of consciousness that held no prisoners. The following is our transcribed conversation:

AK: Okay, the first night of the Arts Festival. The opening concert. Give me all the details.

YL: Well, at first we didn't think anyone would show up, it was already 8 PM and no one was there... then out of the clear blue, everyone piled in! Pickholtz was great. The violinist was amazing, I don't remember his name but he stunned the audience. Later, he said to me, "I was horrible!" I said, "You sure fooled us, man." Then those wacky Galena twins got up. Everyone went wild. The disco part by Rappaport was pretty interesting. All and all, it was an incredible night.

AK: Next came the poetry reading. What did you think of that?

YL: It was a very artsy environment. They had sushi! Sushi! Last year we didn't have sushi... it should be served at all events. Forget about Dougies! Yishai was a great host. Everyone did their little spiel, read their poems. Some works were deep, sad, depressing. Some happy and funny. Dr. Lee seemed to get into it. It was a pretty calm, cool, Village-type event. Nothing crazy.

AK: The dramatics presentation was scheduled for that Wednesday, but was canceled last minute. In its place, Rabbi Carmy gave a speech on art and religion. Give your thoughts on his speech, maybe adding in your own opinions on the subject matter.

YL: Um... Rabbi Carmy gave a... very interesting, scintillating speech. Dr. Lee asked good questions. The students asked good questions. Everyone asked good questions. Let's get to the next event, shall we?

AK: Well, Sunday was the student art display. Dig out those memories.

YL: Dig out those memories... Who do you think you are, Oprah? Well, the art was awesome. It gave good exposure to all the students in our school who are artistically talented. Who would think people in YU and Stern could paint like that? People walked in and were just blown away by this art.

AK: What was the strangest piece on display?

YL: This tiny picture... from far it looks like just a square paper with dots. When you look real close, you see that the dots are really little people running in a marathon. I thought that was cool. All the art works were strange in their own way.

AK: The Classical and Jazz Ensemble took place the following evening in Schottenstein.

YL: Yeah. The recital hall was packed. The deans brought their friends. Everyone got into it. The Jazz teacher, Dr. Bart, is so cool. He grabbed a trumpet with one hand and another trumpet with his other hand and started

playing each one like it was nothing. Very impressive. I liked the way he joined the rest of the ensemble. You don't see that very often... teachers joining in with their classes. I must say that I thought the flutists (note: they were girls) were pretty cute. In fact, all the ladies who came from Stern were gorgeous throughout the events and I think I'm in love with all of them. Aaron you better not be putting this in.

AK: Alright, what did you think of the short story night?

YL: Sorry bud, I missed it. That was the night I edited all the Festival footage.

AK: Okay, it looks like it's time for the Big One. The Event of Events... drum roll please... The Closing Reception. I've heard all the lurid details of the evening from the YU gossip club. Take me there. Recreate the evening for me.

YL: I'm telling you, that evening had everything... girls, drama, suspense, food, and, of course, my video. I'll set the scene. It was a cold night, the night of the 18<sup>th</sup>. I'll never forget that date. People strolled into Belfer's Weissberg Commons. Everyone was well dressed. There were even waitresses. People were in suits. Fruit cups were on the table. Very classy, I must say. Morris Katz, the famous painter, was there. The deans once again brought their friends. There was a big screen to show my movie. The food was great, like attending a formal event... the Golden Globes with a twist.

Well, Shalom Bersson, who was in charge of the dramatic presentation, introduced Mordechai Levovitz. He came out and started to do his thing... I don't know what his thing was, but he did it and he literally got carried away. And I mean literally. The audience was a bit confused, shocked. Steve Bernstein came on and did three songs. He was incredible. They didn't do the dramatic presentation for obvious reasons. Then the awards were given to all participants. This was very noble of the coordinators to do. It was called the Benji Joffe Award, I think. Then my video came on and woke everyone up. I introduced myself and rolled the tape. The audience loved it! People were on the floor laughing at certain parts. I got a lot of compliments, it was *tres* cool.

AK: Was making this video difficult? What did you learn from this experience?

YL: It was very difficult. I had to cut so many scenes out because people were constantly picking their noses in the background! It was so hard to find a scene where someone actually wasn't picking their nose...

## YUNMUN IX Draws Record Turnout

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

The Office of Admission's YUNMUN IX (Yeshiva University National Model United Nations) was a success once again. The conference took place from February 7-9, hosting over 500 students from more than 30 yeshiva high schools across North America. It was the largest model UN of its kind.

The purpose of the event, sponsored by the Office of Admissions, is recruitment. Students come, however, to partake in an educational, social, and often times competitive conference.

While the effectiveness of YUNMUN as a recruiting event is difficult to gauge, participants agreed that the conference is representative of the University's Torah U'Madda motto in the form of a positive experience. "In conjunction with this year's ranking, YUNMUN showed me the academic side of YU of which I was unaware," said one Los Angeles student who was waiting to hear from Columbia, Penn, and YU. "I never realized the role that Stern had under the YU umbrella until now. It's fantastic," said one high school woman.

Under the leadership of Aliza Fox, Secretary General, Kenny Sicklick, Under-Secretary-General, Alison Bogin, USG, and Ben Mantell, USG, there were 15 committees. Stern/SSSB students served as chairs and assistant chairs on more than half of the committees, and YC/SSSB students served on the others. Participation was completely voluntary, and the help of everybody who attended - chairpeople, assistant chairpeople, rapporteurs, waiters and waitresses - was an integral part of the event's success.

Each high school sent a delegation representing one or more countries to an array of committees patterned after the structure of the United Nations. The conduct of the committee sessions was also similar to the parliamentary procedure used in the United Nations. Committee issues ranged from crises involving the IMF to women's rights abroad.

This was the third year that YUNMUN was held at the beautiful Legends Resort in Great Gorge, New Jersey. Once again, the peaceful snow-capped mountain environment proved to be conducive to both work and play.

The festivities began Sunday with the arrival and registration of each of the schools. Unfortunately, the resort was being refurbished, and only half of the rooms had been renovated, so many of the students (and facul-

ty chaperones) were disappointed with the décor. The catering, however, for which YUNMUN is well known, maintained its fine reputation.

After dinner and Maariv, the opening ceremonies included a d'var Torah as well as an address by Aliza Fox, a Stern College senior. Fox expressed her excitement about the event, setting the tone for the conference. Traditionally, the first committee sessions are spent addressing procedural concerns. Said Assistant Chairman Dov Brandstatter, "The caliber of the this year's delegations became clear as early as the first session, they were the best I've seen."

The Torah U'Madda theme that characterizes the YU experience was seen by looking no further than the rigorous YUNMUN program. Monday's schedule consisted of nonstop committee sessions throughout the day interrupted only by davening, shiurim, and meals. The delegate handbook included a section titled, "Speeches, Speeches Everywhere." Indeed. Speech after speech; delegate after delegate; proposal after proposal. The conference yielded many effective and bold resolutions, each committee only to be outdone by the next.

After Shacharit and breakfast on Tuesday morning, delegates either had their final committee sessions or participated in the General Assembly Plenary. Final resolutions were passed in committee, while others were ratified in General Assembly votes. Upon completing final meetings, tensions rose as delegates awaited the Awards Ceremony.

While not the sole purpose of the conference, the Awards Ceremony adds a touch of competitiveness and seriousness where it might not otherwise exist. The goal of each committee session is to solve the topics at hand, not to beat an opponent. The criteria for Best Delegate and runners-up awards include speaking ability, working with others to form coalitions, ability to write and pass resolutions, and general participation. While the individual awards were generally dispersed, The Ramaz School walked away with the Best Delegation, while YULA ended up in second place.

YUNMUN News, a daily paper that updated current issues on each committee, came out each day. Watching the delegates get on their buses to make their trips back home, one could see the paper clutched under each arm to be taken home. The paper provided an informative and fun way to preserve YUNMUN memories.

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## MTA Protest

### Continued from page 1

Gibber's proposition, as reported in the last issue of The Commentator, closely resembled a model that he had circulated almost four years ago, when he became High School Board Chairman. The plan had never gone into effect, however, and Gibber was left to await the proper time for its implementation.

According to sources familiar with the negotiations, YU's response to the proposal at the Board meeting was generally "positive." They acknowledged, albeit unofficially, the abandonment of the merger option for the coming year, effectively guaranteeing that MTA will remain open at the start of the new millennium. Official word of any decision, however, was never released.

MTA was far from satisfied. Rabbi Michael Taubes, the school's principal, deemed the YU response, or lack thereof, "totally inadequate." Taubes pointed to concern on the part of prospective parents whose doubt regarding the future of MTA deters them from seriously considering sending their sons to MTA.

It was this observation that prompted a radical request on the part of the MTA administration from Rabbi Lamm to clarify, once and for all, the future of MTA, before it was too late: "We fear that without a clear and unequivocal public statement of long-term support and endorsement of the school from you before the February 17th deadline [the Bureau of Jewish Education prescribed date for acceptance-letter release], many parents will be unwilling to send their sons to a school whose future is perceived to be in doubt." The MTA plea was sent to Rabbi Lamm in writing on Tuesday, February 16th.

Lamm effectively ignored the request.

The result was an hour-long protest on Wednesday, February 17, by the entire high school (staff and students included) outside of Furst Hall. Chants of "M-T-A" accompanied a heartfelt outpouring of Tehillim. The prayers were led by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen, MTA's Mashgiach Ruchani, who added a flavor of sincerity to the gathering. New York State Police patrolled the scene to ensure that everything remained under control, and within two hours, 185th was as empty as it had been earlier that morning.

The "protest," as it was dubbed, was not so much a protest as a request. Students and administrators alike simply reiterated their desire, even need, to have a clear cut answer from YU before the March 9th date that YU administrators had announced. Acceptance letters, according to General Studies Coordinator Dr. Seth Taylor, had to be mailed out February 17th; and in order to mitigate the effects of the recent month's developments, letters of acceptance had to be accompanied by a strong show of support from YU regarding a commitment to the high school. Anything less would amount to a pocket veto. "There's a limit to how long people are going to wait before bailing out," explained Taubes.

Despite a lack of indication of a University decision, it remains clear that YU is entertaining numerous possibilities. Subcommittees were set up by both the RIETS Board and the YU Board of Trustees to address the issue. Rabbi Michael Shmidman, the only YU official to contact MTA regarding the situation in the past month, informed Taubes that no decision was imminent within the next "several weeks." Whether or not that was meant to undermine the rumors indicating that March 9th, the next YU Board meeting, would



Participants in MTA protest included YU Dean Michael Hecht (Top), entire MTA student body (Bottom)

be the date of revelation, remains unclear.

Not only is the time of decision in question, but sources close to the closed-door deliberations have informed The Commentator that the possibilities have been changing as well.

At a recent meeting, an unpublicized option was raised. The suggestion called for MTA to downsize from a high school to what the source deemed a "prep school." Such a change would entail MTA becoming an "elite" institution comprised exclusively of the most capable students.

MTA insiders deem the option "ridiculous." Firstly, it doesn't seem to be aimed at solving any of the present problems that have prompted the present debate in the first place. Secondly, it is not promising from a "practical standpoint, economic stand-

point, or an educational standpoint," according to Taubes.

Practically, it is difficult to imagine MTA not accepting the numerous students who academically would not meet requirements, but whose various connections to YU would assure abuses of the system.

Economically, Taubes expressed extreme doubt as to how such a move would solve any "existing problems" that supposedly trouble YU now, as it would only limit the number of incoming students.

YU Roshei HaYeshiva met with President Lamm in an effort to express their concerns. Through a series of emotional addresses the Roshei HaYeshiva took turns presenting their opinions on MTA's place in the Jewish community. The success of their words has yet to be determined.

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## YU AND EDAH

BY BEN SANDLER

Anyone in MYP is familiar with the general lack of support for Edah amongst the Roshei Yeshiva. But many of the YU students who attended the recent Edah conference noticed that a significant number of people presenting at the conference also teach at YU or have *semikha* from RIETS. What remains unclear to many students is what the specific objections of the Roshei Yeshiva are and how YU fits into the new vision of Modern Orthodoxy that Edah is attempting to put forward.

The Rosh Yeshiva most associated with opposition to Edah is Rabbi Moshe Dovid Tendler. His primary complaint against Edah is that its goal, in his view, is to blur the lines between Orthodoxy and other factions. "Feminism is their driving force and the cargo is pluralism," explains Tendler. He complains that not being able to tell people that they are non-Jews (i.e. those who are Jewish only by patrilineal descent) is perverting the definition of a Jew. Although Tendler has often been understood as attacking Reform Jews, his actual complaint is more refined. He stresses that what he calls "irreligious Orthodox Jews" are our people. Rather, the problem is with the Reform and Conservative rabbinic leadership, who have the education and "know better," and are purposely leading their people astray. He wants the laity to realize that they are "tinokot shenishba" and encourages them to reject a movement which will allow a "patrilineal descent, non-theist, gay Rabbi."

Part of why Tendler is the most noticeable voice in YU is that most Roshei Yeshiva are unwilling to talk to the press. This leaves their invective towards Edah and other current issues which they present in *shnur* to be, for the most part, publically unexamined.

However, Rav Hershel Shachter, arguably the most widely respected Rosh Yeshiva at YU, did discuss his views on the issue with this reporter. He started off by saying that Edah is "interested in dealing with contemporary issues with a *halakhic* approach ... which is commendable." However, he stressed that the people who review the relevant *halakhot* must be the greatest *talmidei khakhamim*, which those involved in Edah are not, nor do they claim to be. He sees women's issues as a major focus, although not the only *halakhic* issue dealt with by Edah, and feels that they are not contacting the proper authorities.

Rav Tendler feels that Edah has not found acceptance among YU students since, he believes that most students see it as deviating from Orthodoxy. He says that the current generation of students is the best ever and that the students are in agreement that *halakhic* Judaism is in full consonance with what the *gedolim* say.

Rav Shachter is more open to the ideas that Edah presents, but felt that another organization was unnecessary, as YU is capable of addressing the issues. He blamed the YU leadership for not taking positions on the issues or addressing people's concerns.

*Mashgiach Ruchani* Rabbi Yosef Blau does not feel that the issue of Edah's relations to YU is a crucial matter, nor, according to Blau, do the Roshei Yeshiva feel that the issue of Edah in general is relevant enough to YU for them to take an official position on it. However, he did note that the large YU attendance at the conference shows that a lot of people are interested in Edah's positions. He also does not feel that it is true, as many in Edah have claimed, that there has been a major shift to the right among Modern Orthodox Jewry. He noted, in contrast, that *haredim* had picked up three major aspects of Modern Orthodoxy, namely acceptance of the state of Israel, having jobs, and teaching women.

Blau argues that YU's lack of initiative in addressing the issues addressed by Edah,

especially non-controversial ones such as improving *t'fila*, is due to a shifting of focus from "the movement to the University." He explained that YU is both the leader of Modern Orthodoxy as well as a university, and at different times focuses on different things. In the past, YU ran seminars and adult education programs, but they have now shifted their focus towards improving the University.

Most people in the Yeshiva seem to recognize that many of Edah's issues are relevant, but would prefer for them to be dealt with within our current structure. Rabbi Norman Lamm expressed this view in a letter to *The Jewish Week* in which he stated that he was not opposed to Edah's goals but he was opposed to setting up a new organization.

Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, a member of the Edah board who described himself as "the one who gives the Roshei Yeshiva something to complain about," feels that YU would not want to be involved in Edah since they do not agree with his goals. He argues that most of the Roshei Yeshiva have departed from Modern Orthodoxy and see it as a necessary evil or want to get rid of it. He claims that they focus on *bein adam l'makom* to the exclusion of *bein adam l'khaveiro*, and that in YU, "people who focus on *Torah U'Madda* are kept down."

However, judging from the conference, most people do not share Greenberg's view of YU. Many of the rabbis who teach at YU and are involved in Edah value what the school stands for, but are committed to pushing the changes which Edah proposes. Keep in mind what Edah lists as its main goals enhancing

one's spiritual life and involving more Jews in serious Torah learning. These are not things with which very many rabbis would disagree.

When all is said and done, many YU people went to the conference and many didn't. Many of us identify with Rabbi Berman's view of things and many of us don't. But as varying views of what Modern (or for those who don't like that term, non-Haredi) Orthodoxy unfold over the next few years, there are a couple of things most rabbis would tell you to keep in mind.

First, if someone presents an opinion, whether it's your Rosh Yeshiva or Yitz Greenberg, find out what is behind their statements. Do not summarily accept or reject anything. This leads not to a less respectful community, but a more educated one, and one which is better able to formulate opinions.

Second, and most important, Judaism is a person's personal connection with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. It does not involve membership in any organization. Recently, the papers reported that following the Haredi demonstration in Israel two weeks ago, hundreds of Israelis signed up with the Reform movement. This seems extraordinarily silly; just because they signed up to join a movement, does that mean they are any more or less religious? Or does it mean that they wrote their names on a piece of paper? So don't be hesitant to explore new ideas or go to listen to a rabbi presenting his views. What's the worst that will happen? You won't validate his opinion by going and you won't permanently commit yourself to being a follower of this individual or anyone who donated money to make his speech possible. The worst that will happen is that you'll disagree, and you'll probably go home with a clearer understanding of your own beliefs.

YU will continue to turn out *talmidei khakhamim* and both religious and lay leaders of Modern Orthodoxy. It will always be the main focus of modern, *halakhic* Judaism because of the broad spectrum of ideas represented here and the broad spectrum of bright and ambitious students which graduate from this school. But this requires that YU maintain its intellectual freedom and excellence and not resort to fear-mongering and divisive or defensive tactics.

## Edah Conference

Continued from page 1

Orthodox." Berman invited all Jewry to join Edah in this quest, fighting the "new paganism" by employing the tools of open-mindedness, intellectual integrity, persuasion for improvement rather than rabbinic authoritarianism, and the Torah's values of tolerance and urgent ethical duties. Berman's vision calls for a true two-way street between culture and Torah values. We must draw from culture's true wisdom to enrich the life of Torah, prudently choosing what to absorb, and enrich culture by bringing to it the eternal values of Torah. Edah's task, as described by Berman, is to bring this vision of responsibility to the whole of Jewry. Other important values which Berman stressed included productivity in society as an imitation of God and empowerment through classical Jewish texts in order to yield Jewish values.

From after the first keynote address until the closing keynote address on Monday afternoon, conference participants chose from the many presentations and sessions offered by scholars and rabbis. One of the most commonly addressed issues was feminism – both in regard to women's increased role in ritual religious life and to problems faced by women such as those of *agunot*.

Other common themes which received significant attention included *halakhic* creativity, autonomy, and adaptiveness, textual criticism and accuracy in both Talmud and Tanach, religious problems facing Israel and its democracy, the direction and origin of Modern Orthodoxy, and the views and heritage of Rav Soloveitchik. The conference also contained a special dinner and discussion for college students entitled, "Being Modern and Orthodox on Campus."

A common criticism directed against Modern Orthodoxy today is the leniency some of its adherents take in practicing *halakha*. It was clear from many of the speakers at the conference that Edah does not advocate this sort of leniency in practice. Rather, the importance of full *halakhic* adherence was stressed throughout the conference. Rabbi Berman said, "We should not for a moment yield to anyone a claim of greater integrity than ours in our commitment to *halakha*."

Openness and respect for differing opinions was a recurring theme felt throughout the conference. Although not every speaker's thoughts were agreed upon, there was always a sense of respect for everyone working within the *halakhic* framework.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, a YU alumnus and RIETS *musmakh* who is now rabbi of Efrat, in his speech on "Previous Minority Opinions in the *Halakhic* Process," called the Edah conference, "maybe the most important statement in Orthodoxy made in the last two decades." In his presentation, he related a story from the *gemara* from which emerged the idea that the majority of *Chazal* hold that God wanted an open transmission of the Torah

with room for human *halakhic* creativity. He called these different opinions within the framework of *halakha* "the glory of Judaism."

Riskin also used this story, in which *Rabban Gamliel* died as punishment for delegitimizing Rabbi Eliezer, who was the minority opinion against him regarding a *halakha*, as an illustration of what is deserved by people who denigrate those whose opinions in *halakha* differ from their own. In this context, Riskin made reference to YU Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Moshe Tendler's controversial censure of Edah, which Tendler declared to be "beyond the pale of Judaism." Rabbi Tendler also attempted to forbid people from attending Edah's conference. Riskin believes that not giving Edah a chance is "narrowing the broad world of Torah," which is "the most profound *chilul Hashem* imaginable."

Another common criticism of opponents of Modern Orthodoxy is its supposed lack of spirituality. It was clear that Edah fought vigorously to dispel this notion. The *tefillah* services at the conference were accompanied by meaningful explanations and heartfelt tunes, and practiced with devout seriousness. Speakers placed emphasis on infusing daily life with uplifting spirituality by living according to the Torah's moral code.

Although YU chose to abstain from participating in the Edah conference as an organization, its influence pervaded much of the conference. Current YU and SCW professors who were presenters included Rabbi Berman himself, as well as Rabbis Walter Wurzbarger, Avi Weiss, Shmuel Goldin, and Dr. Steven Bayme. Approximately forty of the presenters had studied at YU at some point, either for undergraduate, graduate, or *semikha* work. Although President and Rosh HaYeshiva Dr. Norman Lamm chose not to attend, he did submit some of his past speeches to be included in the Edah packets. There was a large showing of YU students in attendance, with an estimated fifty undergraduate men and women participating.

The students who attended the conference, representing the next generation of Modern Orthodox leadership, found the conference to be a very positive experience. Seth Braunstein, a Junior at Queens College, said, "What I heard at this conference was a true expression of my most inner feelings of what Orthodoxy should be."

David Mirsky, a YC senior, remarked, "I was thoroughly impressed by the entire experience. It was surely a watershed event for Modern Orthodoxy, and I hope that all Jews will be touched by this open confrontation with many of the divisive issues which tend to fracture us."

Rabbi Riskin was extremely enthusiastic about what the conference meant for Modern Orthodoxy. "This proves that Modern Orthodoxy is alive and well," he said. "Everyone was premature in writing our obituary notices."

### News Analysis

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# CAMPUS BULLETIN BOARD

**YUDS:** Hashem granted YUDS victory over the weekend at SUNY Morrisville. Speaker Awards: 1st: Elan Weinreb. 2nd: Zev Katz. 3rd: Illana Barkey. Debate Awards: 3rd: Elan Weinreb. YUDS members comprised 25% of the tournament pool (4/16) and took back 50% of the awards (4th places were offered as well).

**Israel Club:** April 16-17th is the Israel Club Shabbaton at Stern. For details contact Hadar Weiss @ 781-3280

**Commencement:** If you are a graduating senior, please come by the Office of Student Services located in Furst Hall, Room 419 to pick up your invitations for Commencement '99. It is important to note that the invitations are to announce your forthcoming graduation to family and friends and ARE NOT TICKETS to enter the theater at Madison Square Garden. Tickets for graduation will be distributed on May 5th and May 6th along with your caps and gowns.

The Computer Science Clubs of YC and SCW present: Exploring Avenues in Computer Science and MIS Careers. Find out from professionals in the field about computer careers in: Software development, Scientific Research, and Business. Tuesday,

March 9, 1999 at 8:15 PM. Midtown Center Room 718. Van leaves the Bookstore at 7:45, and will head back from midtown at 9:45

The Yeshiva College Book Project (1998-1999) presents a lecture by Professor Benjamin Braude, Department of History, Boston College, this Tuesday night March 9, at 8:00 PM in Furst 501. The title of the lecture is Racism and the Sons of Noah: Parshanut and Polemic in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The lecture is open to all students and faculty members of Yeshiva College. Refreshments will be served. For more information email jacobson@ymail.yu.edu or contact the Dean's Office.

**BOWLING TOURNAMENT!** 1ST Annual YCSC Bowling tournament-Free Bowling! Free T-shirts! Free Prizes! Sunday March 14th 1999. Buses leave from bookstore at 5:15PM. For more information, contact Aryeh Goldberg at 827-3909.

**USHERS NEEDED-YCDS** need people to usher during the upcoming production. All ushers receive 2 complimentary tickets to a different night's performance. Please contact Craig Eagle @ 923-4391.

**SCIENTIFIC POSTER RESEARCH SESSION:** Sigma Delta Rho Science Research Honors Society presents the annual scientific research poster session one week after Pesach. Anyone who has done scientific research in the areas of Chemistry, Biology, Physics or Math can participate. All abstracts for the posters must be handed into Akiva Marcus (MO 219) or Jeff Bander (MO 325) no later than March 11th. (So if you are writing an abstract for the research journal, you can hand in that exact abstract for the poster session) Any questions, contact Akiva Marcus @ 923-8064 or themorg@aol.com.

**Israel Club:** Check out the YCSC Israel Club's new publication for news from Israel. Available now, all over the YU campus. It's time for Israel to be heard.

**Got Meat? We do!** Rub shoulders with recruiters from top firms! The Marriot World Trade Center, Monday, March 22, 1999. For more information contact: Jack Almo @ 568-5314, Ari Feldman @ 781-7679, Carla Shron @ 686-0742, or Malkie Winkler @ 252-0089. Remember to send in \$30 along with your response card now!! The SSSB annual reception is open to all undergraduates.

**P.P.C. IS HERE!** Pesach Products Committee-Charedim Hand Shmura Matzoh, only \$11.60 per lb. Place your orders now! PPC is located this year in the Morg basement. Orders must be placed by 5pm on March 15th. A list of representatives are posted all over campus. For more info contact pcmatzah@hotmail.com.

**SOY Seformim Sale 99:** Gratefully acknowledges all of the tireless and selfless efforts by all of the dedicated workers and volunteers from all schools who helped make this year's sale a resounding success. Nobody can ever fathom the amount of work that goes into the seformim sale and it would never exist without everyone's help. Kudos to Facilities and Security for being there at all times.

**Stern College Dramatics Society:** Presents "An Evening of One-Acts," March 15-18 at Koch Auditorium. Watch for details.

**Pesach Food Drive:** Anyone who wishes to assist in the 5759 Pre-Pesach Food Drive, in any capacity, please contact Yonatan Kaganoff @ 543-3951 or email ykaganof@ymail.yu.edu.

**YU Chess Tournament:** To sign up for the YU Chess Tournament email

josh89@aol.com. Admission is free and open to everyone. Tournament begins Wednesday, March 17. 1st prize: \$60, 2nd prize: \$30, 3rd prize: \$15.

**YCSC Shabbat Committee:** Yeshivat Sha'arei Mevasseret Zion Shabbaton with Rav Yedidya Burzon, Parshat Vayakhel-Pekudei, March 12-13.

**Russian Minyan:** Due to popular demand, the Russian Minyan has been revived! Muss Hall room 101, 8:15 AM. Special raffle for first ten to arrive - Door Prizes! Breakfast to follow, and it aint just bagels. Bring your Tefillin. For info contact Reuven Bleich @ 960-5315.

**Softball Intramurals:** Sign up for softball intramurals outside the Athletics office. For info contact Jesse Mendelson @ 781-0952.

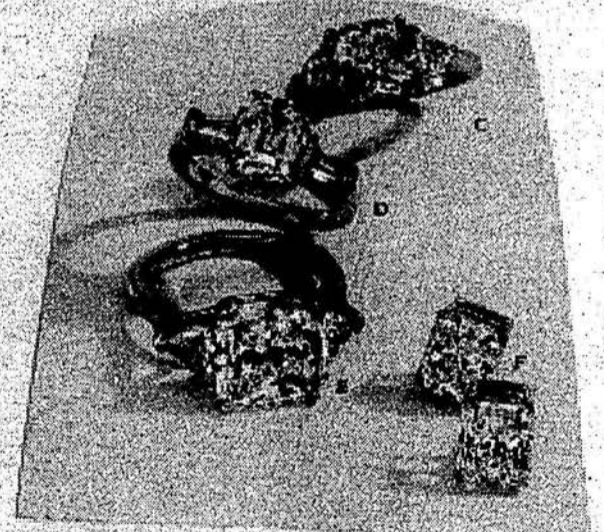
**Chabad Club:** The Chabad Club is sponsoring a free trip to the Rebbe's kever on Sunday, March 14. Buses leave from in front of the bookstore at 2 PM. To reserve spot contact Yosef Levine @ 568-0112.

Do you want your event or listing in the Campus Bulletin Board? Email the particulars to commie@yucomentator.com

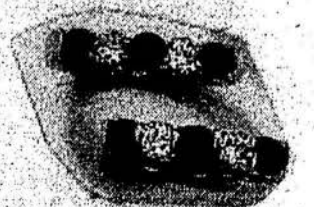
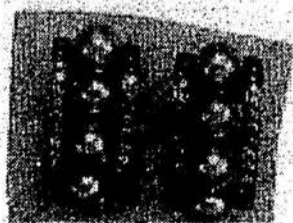
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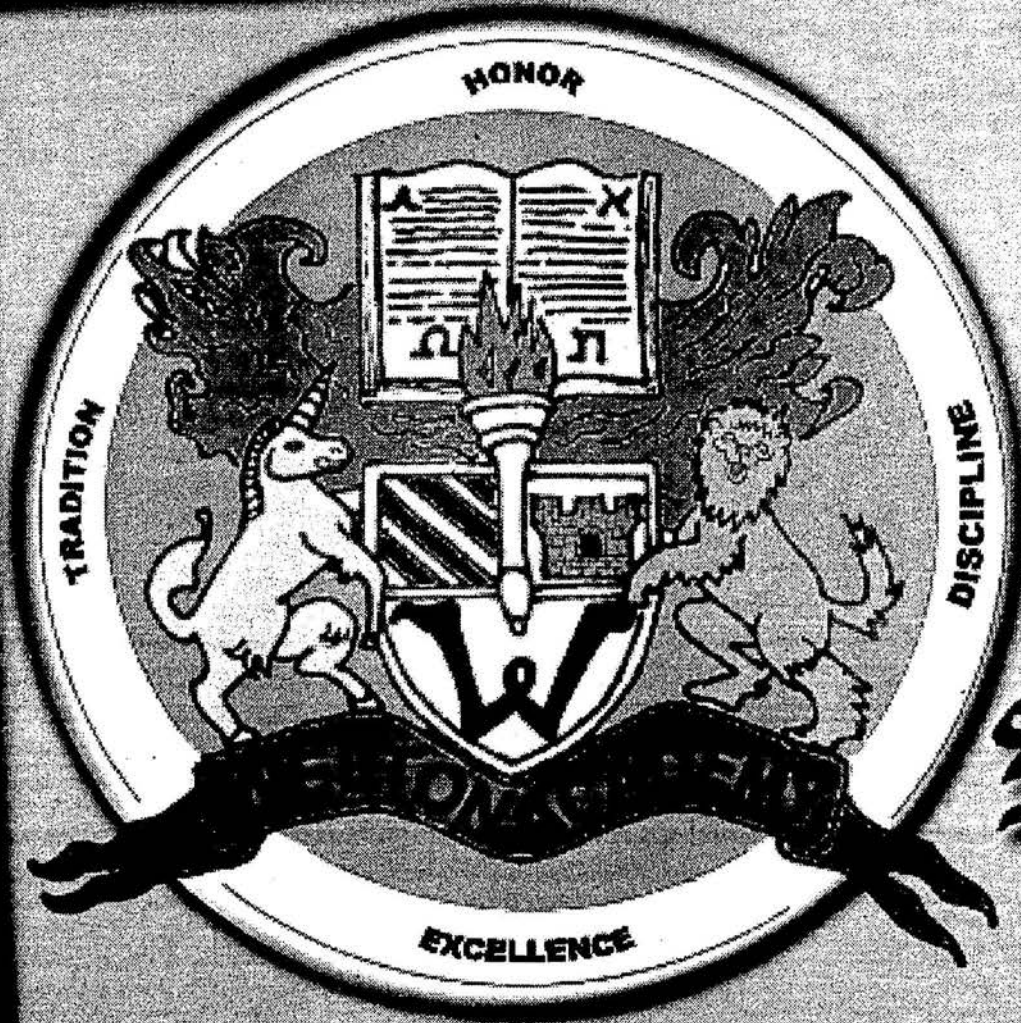


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# Gambling: Rolling the Dice On Campus

*Continued from page 1*

I was going back constantly and I kept on losing."

The Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey [800-GAMBLER] emphasizes the stages a gambler follows. There is a four-stage sequence after which one may be considered a "compulsive" gambler. During the winning phase, the individual gambles occasionally and may frequently find himself on the winning side. Though success seems to come easily at this stage and self-confidence abounds, the good times are only temporary.

"It doesn't make any mathematical sense, but beginner's luck sometimes does work. When you go into a casino for the first time, you may win right away," David said. "But when you continue going, you start losing, and you simply think, 'I'll get that money back again.'" This self-confidence evolves into arrogance, the losing stage prevails, and the gambler begins to borrow money from friends. Restlessness and irritability mark the second phase, as the gambler begins to lose track of his responsibilities.

Here is the trap that lures gamblers. With the odds stacked against them, they fail to note previous losses, focusing instead on their winnings as a sign that success may not be hard to come by. Forgetting earlier losses, the gambler is easily fooled into thinking that he will soon win again.

With the onset of the third and final stages, which bring the gambler to desperation, there is a marked increase in the time spent gambling accompanied by noticeable alienation from friends and family. After hitting rock bottom, the compulsive gambler deals with hopelessness, suicidal thoughts, emotional breakdown, and withdrawal, seeing gambling as the sole means available to escape reality.

Dean of Students Dr. Efreim Nulman echoed the motivations of students. "Like any other addiction, gambling starts out being fun and competitive," he explained. "People believe it is potentially moneymaking, but of course they don't want to focus on the fact that it's also potentially destructive financially. As you get in deeper and deeper, your pockets get emptier and emptier.

"Some of it has to do with one's self-esteem, with one's perception of oneself, with one's values or moral limitations in life. But some perfectly moral people get into gambling innocently, and once they get into it, they don't know what they're predisposed to do," Nulman explained.

College students nationwide have been criticized of late by the media for their gambling tendencies; from innocent card playing and sports pools to casino gambling, lotteries, horse racing, and bingo. Review articles have focused on the widespread availability of gambling venues, both legal and illegal, enticing young adults to break out of the innocence of their youth, luring them to the potential vices of gambling. YU administrators feel that gambling is far less prevalent here than it is at most other universities. Still, gambling is recognized as a major problem on campus affecting a significant percentage of the student body.

"Gambling is a problem right now on all college campuses, particularly involving sports. I think that gambling on the Yeshiva University campus is, statistically speaking, much less of a problem than it is at most schools. I have no doubt about that," Nulman emphasized. "It exists, but I think it has to be very carefully watched. And since we as an institution are aware of it, we are going to do everything we can to stop it."

No specific school policies deal with stu-

dent gambling other than the Student Handbook's prohibition of gambling specifically on the YU campus. Additionally, the general code of conduct mandates the requirement to comport one's self in accordance with the ideals of YU. Recently, however, the administration has established a program aimed at promoting awareness of the potential dangers of gambling. Still, many students feel that the administration has not done an adequate job of lessening gambling among the student body, which some feel has become rampant.

Mark, a frequent gambler, said, "Students gamble all the time here at YU, because it's fun and exciting. Gambling is officially forbidden and is frowned upon by some, but as far as a real school-wide effort to confront the issue, nothing like that has been done to stop gamblers."

As a result of this *Commentator* inquiry, the Athletics Department has started planning an anti-gambling campaign. As Division III members of the NCAA, all intercollegiate athletes face strict penalties both for themselves and for the school's NCAA athletic program if caught gambling. Having already conducted a meeting with the basketball team about the consequences of gambling, similar sessions are currently in the planning stages for all of YU's other athletic teams. However, by focusing the anti-gambling efforts only on student athletes, the multitude of non-athlete gamblers are being overlooked by the school.

Dr. Richard Zerneck, YU's Athletics director explained his concerns. "I would say that the problem with [school-wide] programs would be that the individuals for whom this really might be needed would not come to something like this. Gamblers are in denial. They don't see it as a problem. By meeting with each of the teams, we are forcing at least some students to discuss the degrees of the problems with gambling."

Because gambling is an addiction much like drugs and alcohol, those involved in the destructive activity often do not realize the extent of their problem until they have already caused irreparable damage. But if gambling is seemingly such an evil enterprise, why do individuals find it so alluring, knowing the associated dangers?

"People gamble for entertainment," Mark explained. "I know that the odds are against me, and when I place a bet, I know it's obviously not an even bet. On the average, people know that they will end up losing because of the commission they pay. But it adds a new dimension even to an average sports game to having a little money riding on it."

Nulman wondered, "Part of the fun of sports is that the competition is already built in. Why is there a need for another layer of competition? Obviously, the pressure of one's peer and social groups is going to say that there is an additional level to engage in, but if you get yourself into gambling, you're putting yourself, and potentially your family, at risk."

The psychology of the gambler is a well-researched topic, resulting in many so-called conclusive explanations of the gambler's motivation. "For some, the addiction is based on the need to feel control, for others it's the ego trip that the power of gambling gives them," David noted. According to some psychologists, it may even be due to a need to lose. "For me it was just a chance to make money," he explained. "When I was behind, I thought it was just due to a flaw in my system, or because I wasn't disciplined enough, and that I could fix it. The point is that nobody wins. It's mathematically

impossible to really win."

As March Madness and the hype over the NCAA basketball tournament approach, many YU students turn into avid sports fans and active gamblers as they fantasize over "easy" money. In addition to the complex *halakhic* issues confronting the permissibility of gambling, David stressed the oft-forgotten notion that gambling is a no-win situation for the common man, that even years of research into the inner workings of betting cannot guarantee success for the gambler.

"There is no method that works. People have been writing books for years: the La Branche system, double up after you win, double up after you lose, progression-regression, none of it works. Casinos make their money because of the thousands of people who are there, there is that one guy who pulls a slot machine and hits the jackpot, and the lights start flashing, and there's a crowd around him. He is given free stuff to lure him back, and he eventually loses it all. And that's just one guy," David said.

"Everybody else loses from the start, whether gambling in a casino, betting on sports, or playing the lottery," he emphasized, somewhat regretfully.

Clearly, despite the inherent risks and potential pitfalls, gambling remains a prevalent force among YU students. While organized gambling on campus has not taken strong roots, many worry that the potential for gambling in the surrounding neighborhoods and the ease of betting, now, over the Internet, will fuel a new growth. This speculation keeps the administration on its toes and students, many simply looking for a good time, wary.

## SOY Seforim Sale

*Continued from 24*

ously. Much work was put in by Ben Sandler and Mendy Berkowitz, who devised a computer program and system to solve those and other problems.

According to Sandler, what makes the Seforim Sale so unique is that it is solely a product of students' efforts. In addition to the aforementioned organizers, plus Jeff Weiss as floor manager, and Ephraim Shapiro as music and software coordinator, numerous students chipped in with their time. An estimated twenty-five students put in hundreds of hours each. All volunteers were partially compensated with Seforim Sale credit.

Erdfarb complimented all of the staff for their job, saying, "I'm extremely impressed with the whole staff. The crowning achievement was the efficiency with which we were able to get everything done, despite the numerous obstacles." Erdfarb was particularly proud that this year's total of dollars grossed compared favorably to top past years' Sales despite being restricted to fewer retail hours.

Innovations for this year's Sale included a much improved web site, designed by Ephraim Shapiro. Also, for the first time ever, the Seforim Sale had a book signing. It was conducted by Chanoch Teller on Thursday night February 11.

The most telling sign of the Sale's success was that over 10,000 people came and benefitted from the experience. Erdfarb hopes that next year's Sale will match this year's level of success without the administrative stonewalling.



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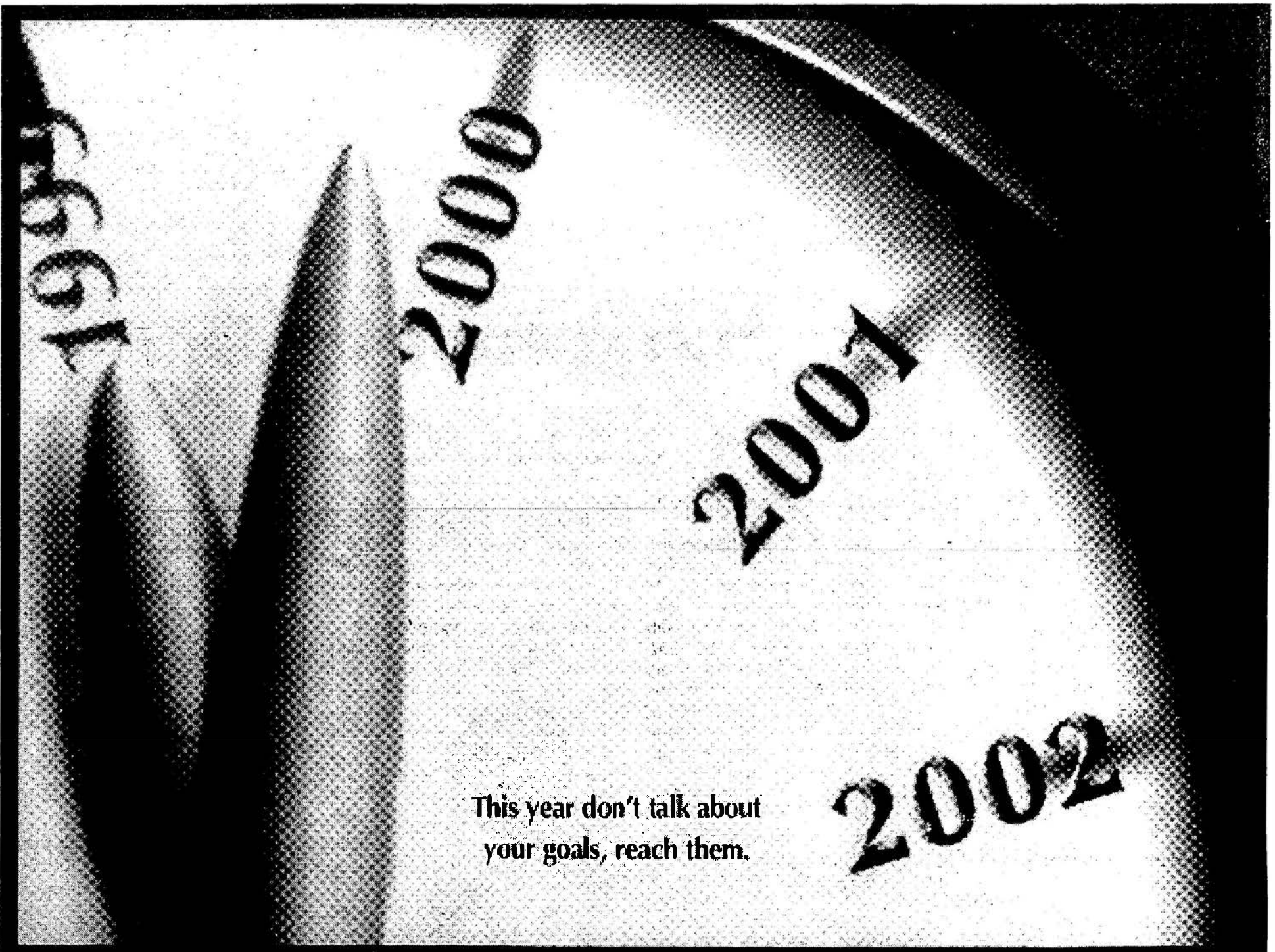
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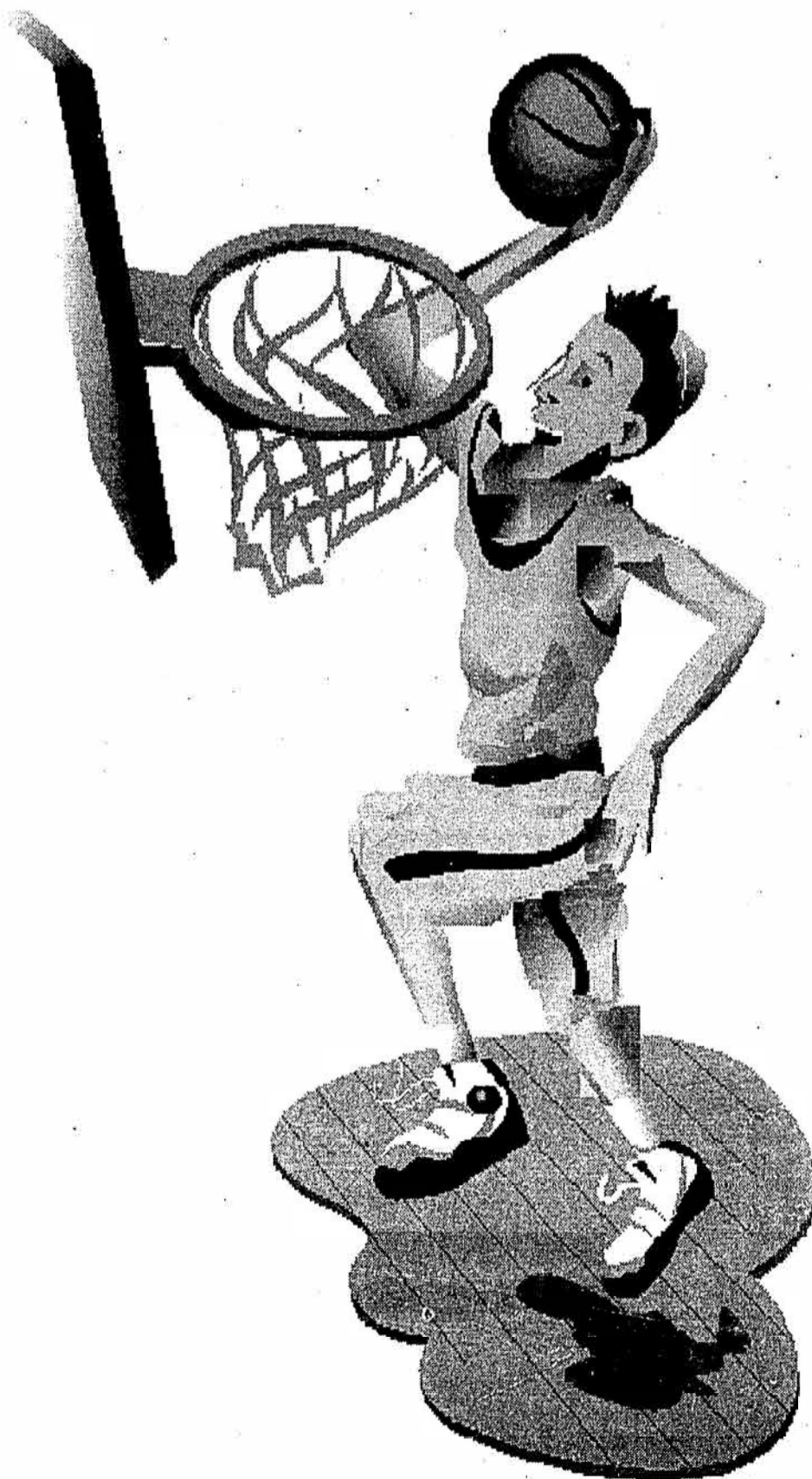
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# Yeshiva Sports

# Go Macs!

## Macs' Basketball Season Comes to End

BY COMMENTATOR STAFF

After one of Yeshiva University's most spectacular basketball seasons, the Maccabees finished with an astonishing 16-7 record. The Mac's win total tied the highest in YU history, achieved by only two other Maccabee teams. Regrettably, the Macs were not invited to the East Coast Athletic Conference Tournament, the prestigious Division III tournament in which YU occasionally competes.

The second half of the season began with the return of captain Marc Nadrich and Alex Shakhmurov, two veterans whose addition helped to lead the Macs to their remarkable record. Marc's return inspired the Macs' success, adding both his strong performance at guard as well as his emotional intensity. In response, on Senior night of the season's last home game, the school recognized Marc for his dedication and devotion to basketball while studying here at YU. Meanwhile, Alex, whose fans call him "Shaq," returned to fill the void in center caused by last year's graduating team members. After ending the first semester somewhat short of their expectations with a 7-4 record, the Macs went on an impressive 10-3 run to complete a spectacular 16-7 season.

What is often forgotten regarding this Maccabee team is the lack of confidence the fans evinced in the team at the outset of the season. The team's detractors believed that the team was too young, and lacked both team unity as well as the necessary experience to succeed. Throughout the season, the performances of Nachum Palefsky, Yossi Gev, and Dov Weiner constantly astounded the fans; these three sophomore members, along with David Neiss and "Shaq," rounded out the starting five. With Nadrich and Joel Kruger coming off the bench, the Macs proved unstoppable. Of course, it would be remiss to exclude the valuable contributions of Avi Karesh, Uri Yudewitz, David Battalion, Steven Hershman, Asaf Hod, Tuvy Meyer, Shane Rabin, and Yoni Zadok that made this a truly spectacular season. However, the most essential component of the Macs' success was the fans' support, for which the team remains everlastingly thankful.

Next year, as the Macs are only losing Marc Nadrich, the remaining members hope to improve what was an exceptional season.

## Sarachek Tournament to Take MSAC by Storm

BY GREG SAMUELS

Yeshiva University is set to host this year's Red Sarachek Basketball Tournament, scheduled to run from March 18<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The tournament, named after famous Jewish basketball coach Red Sarachek, is a competition between some of the best Jewish high school teams in the nation. While many in both the gentile and Jewish worlds scoff at the concept of "Jewish basketball," this year's event should prove that Jewish kids can play ball after all. This is due in a large part to the fact that "The Great Jewish Hope," Tamir Goodman, will be returning to play for the Baltimore Talmudic Academy (T.A.) Tigers.

That's right, the same Tamir Goodman seen on "The Nightly News with Connie Chung," pictured in Sports Illustrated, and who is slated to play for Gary Williams's nationally ranked Maryland Terrapins, will showcase his talent for us. Last year, observers considered Goodman's flashy play one of the main highlights of the tournament. Yet, according to YU Athletic Director, Dr. Richard Zerneck, this year will not be a Tamir Goodman circus. "There are many talented players and teams in this year's field," he said, "and we want to focus on all of them, not just Mr. Goodman."

Each year, the tournament electrifies crowds of YU students, many of whom are alumni of the competing high schools. Yussi Shar, a graduate of T.A., said, "It is both fun and exciting to be able to see students from my old school play basketball as I like watching their games and seeing Tamir play. The best part, however, is that my brother Dovie is their team manager, so I get to see him too." It appears that the tournament not only features quality basketball, it also seems to bring families together.

There will be 18 teams in the field, including MTA. If you get a chance, come down and watch the games.



*Congratulations to the YU Men's Fencing Team for winning the gold medal in Epee at the MACFA conference championships last Sunday at West Point. Special congratulations goes to Steve Mellner for finishing 6th in the conference and receiving Second Team All-Conference honors.*  
Epee Squad (L-R) Alex Traiman, Hadar Weiss, Steve Mellner

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## OUT OF TOWN STUDENTS FORM COMMITTEE TO ADVANCE INTERESTS PLANS AFOOT TO REVERSE "BACKWARD" UNIVERSITY POLICIES

BY MIKE ZAIDEL

The Yeshiva University experience can often be intimidating. The constant balancing act between a rigorous curriculum and extra-curricular involvement can be overwhelming. When life away from home in dormitory residence facilities is added to the mix, even maintaining sanity can become a chore. Aryeh Goldberg, a SSSB sophomore from Chicago, Illinois, believes that much of the Yeshiva student's inconvenience in living outside of the tri-state area could be alleviated with greater student involvement. Goldberg, along with some of his out of town compatriots at Yeshiva University, formed the Out of Town Residence Committee.

The impetus for the creation of the Committee was, as Aryeh put it, "a lot of people complaining that the school is dominated by New Yorkers." The Committee, which has already been sanctioned by YCSC president Dror Barber and is sponsored by YCSC, is made up of seven out of town YU students hoping to give non-New York students less to complain about. Its members were chosen from active dormers from across the country and include Joseph Babani (Seattle, WA), Aryeh Goldberg (Chicago, IL), Oren Harroche (Denver, CO), Ben Mantell (Los Angeles, CA), Adam Moses (Silver Spring, MD), Marc Tannenbaum (Toronto, Ont.) and Michael Zaidel (Hollywood, FL).

The Committee has several different on-campus improvements under preparation. A program is being constructed to offer students free airport shuttle service before and after school vacations. The Committee is also looking into extending library as well as Belfer computer lab hours to include Saturday nights because,

as one Committee member noted, "most major colleges have libraries open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week to accommodate students who live on campus."

Additional out of town upgrades are to include priority dormitory placement, extended cafeteria hours, and keeping the dormitory open for vacation weekends.

While the Committee members hope to independently have bearing on out of town student lifestyle improvements, the primary influence for the Out of Town Residence Committee's work is to be from student feedback. Oren Harroche, a YC junior, is a member of the committee. He sees the committee as an opportunity "to improve the quality of life for the out of town minority in the University." As the Committee's computer authority, Oren is creating a web site for the Committee. The web site, which is its final stages of development, will promote projects the Committee is currently working on and include a forum for students to voice their own suggestions or displeasure. Its address at [www.clubs.yucs.org/outoftown](http://www.clubs.yucs.org/outoftown) will also create a mailing list of all out of town students to inform them of significant committee undertakings. Committee leadership warned that its efforts will only be successful if there is widespread student involvement. Committee members beseech the numerous YU out of town residents to become committed to the reversal of the University's "backwards" treatment of out of town students. **With any luck, the Out of Town Residence Committee will afford out of town residents an opportunity to voice their perspectives as well as reform something quite important to them, their living conditions.**



YU Employee David Diaz donating blood at recent YC blood drive.

## SOY SEFORIM SALE "MOST SUCCESSFUL" TO DATE Student-Run Event Carried Out Smoothly Despite Administrative Hindrances

BY DAVID MENCHELL

This year's SOY Seforim Sale was the most successful ever, measured by profit accumulated, according to its two co-chairmen. The Seforim Sale, a yearly tradition carried out by YU students for the metropolitan Jewish community, began on February 7th and culminated on the 21st. Though confronted by all too typical administrative impediments in the preparatory stages, to the credit of the student coordinators, the Sale ran extremely smoothly.

As in years past, the Sale provided an extensive selection of merchandise to the YU student body as well as to the Jewish community at large. An estimated 6000 English and Hebrew titles were offered at an average discount of 30% off typical bookstore prices.

The wide variety of classical Jewish texts combined with Jewish literature included works in the areas of Tanach and its commentaries, Jewish law, Jewish philosophy and thought, Talmud and its commentaries, responsa, reference books, Jewish history and biographies, and prayer books. The range of materials extended to Jewish children's books, cookbooks, music CDs and tapes, computer software, tzitzit, and other common Jewish items. The Toras Chaim and Arzei Halvanon Haggadot proved to be among the most popular single selections, selling between 70-100 copies each.

In planning arrangements for the sale, Co-Chairmen Amichai Erdfarb and Chaim Loike encountered the usual lack of cooperation from the upper University administration. Sale organizers were not able to secure the room, Belfer 502, until late in the

arrangements. Erdfarb said that members of the lower administration dealt with were extremely helpful, but the upper administration made every permission request an ordeal. The upper administration members never availed themselves directly, but required written requests for every minute detail and then did not give Sale organizers the opportunity to negotiate. However, Security and Facilities Management, particularly Jeff Socol and all the captains, were extremely helpful, Erdfarb related.

Other administrative hindrances included securing elevator usage. Because the third elevator in Belfer Hall was not functioning, Sale organizers were unable to schedule any retail hours during the day, even on President's Day. The reason given was that classes, in particular at the Wurzweller School of Social Work, would be disrupted by the increased bustle and demand for elevators. As a result of only night retail hours, Sale workers faced more exhausting hours as they had to restock each time the Sale closed. Frustrated by the lack of assistance, Loike said, "The administration does not like the Seforim Sale," with their only explanation being that they feel it is against students' interests.

Despite the obstacles, the Sale still ran more smoothly than ever. People involved in previous years' sales were able to implement changes that provided needed improvements. Last year's two biggest problems were that the computers were connected to several different databases rather than a single one, and that the check-out centers did not always work simultane-

continued on page 20

## MIS Holds User Meeting

BY BEN SANDLER

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the MIS department of YU held an open meeting for all users of the computer systems. The meeting was billed as not having an agenda, and attendees were encouraged to bring up topics they wished to discuss. An email was sent to all Main Campus students and faculty inviting them to the meeting.

The meeting had a very low turnout; about five users showed up. MIS was represented by George Sullivan, Assistant Director of MIS, Paul Scudato, Assistant Manager of Academic Computing, Dominick DeRosa, Manager of Networking and Research for MIS, and Joe McGoldrick.

The first topic that was discussed was the year-long delay in responding to the Computer Science Club's proposal for having an officially-sponsored student-run UNIX server in YU, connected to the YU network. Sullivan reported that the Network Planning Committee, housed at

Albert Einstein, still did not trust undergraduate students to run the system, and were looking into housing the server outside of YU.

The major topic of discussion was the poor state of functionality in the computer labs. Scudato explained how the current system for fixing the computers works, but acknowledged that the system was not perfect. He strongly encouraged all users who discover non-working computers to report the problems to [labhelp@ymail.yu.edu](mailto:labhelp@ymail.yu.edu). He also mentioned that they were looking into ways to obliterate the problems caused by the public file storage system, known as the L drive. He noted that his general policy is to delete programs or setup programs that he finds on the L drive, but keep all documents or things that look like people's work.

All problems, concerns, and questions regarding the University computer facilities should be addressed to [labhelp@ymail.yu.edu](mailto:labhelp@ymail.yu.edu).

## THE COMMENTATOR

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