

המפתה

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Purim 5753

Hamefateh



The Official Y.U. Pickup Guide

EDITORIALS

Affirmative Action

In response to the controversy over where the Purim *chagigah* should be held, *Hamefateh* would like to express its view. We believe that the women should celebrate in the *beis midrash* and the boys should be relegated to the MSAC. After all, the poor women of Stern have historically been mistreated and given second-rate status. Why, they had to beg for years just to get that pathetic excuse for a *beis midrash*, while the boys have always had two. As for the campus, those Stern hovels clearly don't begin to compare to the magnificent campus uptown. Similarly, the current policy banning women from using the pool is unspeakable; it's a blatant example of the administration's sexist attitudes. The women have to drag all the way uptown to the library to socialize, while no boy would dream of using that *nebbach* imitation of a library downtown. One must not forget the gym; the Stern hockey teams have nowhere to practice. Finally, for years, Stern has been blessed with a minor league newspaper, while all the journalistic talent has been sent uptown. We hope that this year's *chagigah* will serve to improve the University's attitude towards its women and boys and will end some of its unquestionably unfair practices.

A Plot Foiled....

Hah! You thought that your plans had gone undetected, but our sources of information proved too resourceful for your insidious intrigue. Yes! You have been foiled. No, you could not annihilate our Purim issue. Despite your despicable efforts, our periodical marches on. Death to the infidels—who plotted to rain on our glorious parade.

Who could be so cold, so intellectual to argue that our serious scholarly works were more important than our grand festival of fun? None other than the Dull Duo themselves—The Segals, may their names forever be properly-transliterated: Mikhael and 'Alizah.

Our intelligence got wind of your perfidious plan from its horrible inception that fateful night last Spring when you sat against our bugged bookcase and pretended to pore over Tradition articles. "We need to put out six issues next year," you said. And your evil partner replied, "Yes, but that frivolous Purim issue stands in our way." So, you hatched your plot of misdeeds and marriage. "Come honey! Let's use our wedding to foil those clowns and throw a wet blanket on their nonsensical noodles."

So, you threw lots and out it came: Feb. 1, how perfectly sweet! They'll have no time for scholarship and play, you thought, no time for 20 serious pages and another silly 12 as well.

How did you think that your hopes could survive, so erroneously conceived and dully contrived?

You'd marry and abdicate and then with some schtick You'd pick a poor editor who's nothing like Schick?

He'd be so dull and dry and drowsy That no one would laugh; his attempts would be lousy. But, didn't you know that dull bore could well rhyme And cared not a fig for budgeting his time?

So here's a big raspberry and a barrel of naphth From the Mefateh staff, Too Bad. PTTHHH! PTTHHH!

Bitter Music...A Fact-Free Editorial

The university has just announced its shocking decision to open the Sarah and Philip Belz School of Jewish Music to women. We at *Hamefateh* deplore and strongly condemn this decision which strikes daggers into the hearts of authentic Jews worldwide. A policy of co-education at Belz cannot be tolerated within the sacred confines of *Yeshivas Rabbeinu Yitzchok Elchonon*. The *halachos* of *kol isha* have been neglected (*rachmono letzlan*) by too many of our holy brethren and we at *Hamefateh* refuse to allow this snake to penetrate our midst. To add *cheit* upon *pesha*, the school has decided to welcome to its faculty that infamous folk singer Shlomo Carlebach. How can we allow such defilement of our sacred music?! This can only be the work of the *Yetzer Hara* which dances in our midst to destroy us. We urge all of those whose souls burn with the fire of Torah to join us in protest. How much longer can we remain silent? Before long, our holy institution will be destroyed! Let us all rise up in anger and may God have mercy on the sinners.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

I'm totally fed up with all of this *achdus* trash being bandied about in the paper. With all of these editorials going around about how no one supports *Hamefateh* and how its staff is made to feel like a bunch of second class citizens, it's time to get up and stop complaining! For the first time we at Yeshiva have something in common, something on which all students can agree. EVERYONE hates *Hamefateh*. Period. End of debate. Isn't it great to finally have some *achdus* in the world?

Pessie B. Goldberg

To the Editor,

(if that's how you putrid, purile, intellectual paupers persist in labelling yourselves.)

Perhaps you've sensed the hint of frustration in my voice. Two points for you, then. Note this last expression: two points. Borrowed from basketball, the world of sweat-socks, not Sartre. Aintellectual. You probably love it. *Hamefateh*'s new image -- new and impaired. Well, I'm sorry gentlemen, but I will not go along with this sham.

Hamefateh is, and always has been, host to "unapproachable intellectualism," coupled with the necessary corollaries of conceit and condescension. It is a place where we can put the names Kook and Kierkegaard in the same sentence without separating the two with a lame *I havdil*. It is a publication aimed at "fit audience... though few" (*Paradise Lost*, Book VII, ln. 31). This last quotation comes from Milton, *zichrono l'vrakha*, and thus, like *sheimos*, cannot be cavalierly dismissed. Its point is clear: we must cater to the educated elite alone.

In *Paradise Regained*, a later, messianic, work, Milton explains his logic. The 'people' are nothing more than "a miscellaneous rabble...of whom to be dispraised were no small praise" (Book III). We, the staff of *Hamefateh*, dare not reduce our rigorous standards, pimping ourselves to increase "readership and writership." This last noxious neologism only serves to confirm my point: when you try to pander to the proletariat you inevitably sell yourself short, resulting in potential *k'fira*, or, far worse, mistaken grammar. The project is doomed to fail, as absurd as a merger between the *New Republic* and the *New York Post*.

Don't get me wrong. I have nothing against tearing down walls per se; it's the tearing down of ivory towers which makes my stomach churn, my bile boil. The difference? Simple, you slow-witted slugs. When, for example, the Berlin Wall came tumblin' down, the result was an increase of knowledge. East met West, files were opened, and more and more information leaked out. In our case, the reverse would be true, our paper's academic integrity threatened by the mind-blowing mindlessness of the "vulgar masses."

Even should you be convinced of the validity of my position, -- a proposition not unlikely considering the erudition and eloquence so evident in my writing -- the damage may already have been done. Average people may get the wrong idea, convinced that they too can write articles. My only consolation is the fervent hope and prayer (2 words -- one *k'neged* Torah, one *k'neged* Madda) that our former years of stand-offishness served their purpose, and the mediocre masses were too intimidated to read your editorial.

Keeping my fingers crossed (in a pluralistic, multicultural spirit), I'll sign off. Oh, and just remember, we're *Hamefateh* -- and the "H" is for haughty.

Avrohom Gordimer

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HAMEFATEH

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CRACKING THE MBAT

-- The Pricey Review --

Updated for 1993!

WHAT IS THE MBAT?

The *Mishnah Berurah* Achievement Test, or MBAT, causes much unwarranted fear and dread in Yeshiva University students. When you know a bit more about it, your anxiety is likely to drop considerably. Although there are no substitute for our overpriced individual courses, the techniques in this book will enable you to perform spectacularly on the MBAT without having to cram and learn any actual Halakhah.

The Pricey Review has learned that the old MBAT format is being phased out. The new MBAT will consist of five 30 minute timed sections, one section each for: practical halakhah, reading comprehension, Brisker logic, *hashkafah*, and an experimental section. The experimental section does not count unless it is signed by one of the Deans.

WHO TAKES THE MBAT?

All Yeshiva University students can take the MBAT, though most choose not to. We have scientifically proven that avoiding the test is the single most effective way of not scoring badly on it. *Semikhah* students are exempt from taking the test, as they might possibly gain something from studying for it. Chaver program students, of course, are exempt from just about everything, and they get up too late to take the test anyway.

Finally, depending on your *shiur*, you may find that you are not required to take the MBAT, or that it is not strongly encouraged. For example, no *talmid* in Rav Parnes's *shiur* has ever taken the MBAT.

WHO IS R.I.ETS?

The MBAT is administered twice yearly by R.I.ETS (Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Testing Service). R.I.ETS is a large organization in Washington Heights, New York, but the MBAT is not the only test they write. Among other things, R.I.ETS also develops tests for Postal Service workers, *Semikhah* students, Burns Security guards and is a leader in *chinukh* innovation with *Aleph Beis* charts for *cheder* children. At R.I.ETS, everyone spends all their time writing tests. In fact, the Vice-President of R.I.ETS's daughter spent a summer composing test questions because she wasn't accepted into YUSSLR and didn't want to spend another summer in a bungalow colony. So just remember, the questions were written by *real people*, just like you and me, and if you follow our techniques, you can beat the system.

USE POE

By guessing, which we call POE (Process of Elimination), you can increase your score. For example, if we flip a coin and "heads" you win a dollar and "tails" you lose 25 cents, you can use POE to guess that I'm not going to agree to this, as I will lose money.

R.I.ETS composes its tests so that smart people can do better than stupid people. You might think that having a smart person with you while taking the test would be a good idea, but this is not the case - no smart people take the MBAT. They avoid it. However, having an average person with you while taking the test can be a big advantage.

MEET YOSEPH BLOGGS

Yoseph Bloggs is an average person. Not too far left, not too far right. He went to Morasha and has been depicted in more Dorm Talks scenarios than you or I will ever encounter. Having Yoseph with you when you take the MBAT means that you can spot the easy answers and eliminate them. For example:

2. Is *negiah assur*?

A. No. B. Maybe. C. Yes. D. It depends. E. "B" and "D."

Any time there is a vague answer, it is probably a trap for Yoseph Bloggs, since that is the kind of answer he would choose. In the above example, B, D, and E are the Yoseph Bloggs answers, and can thus be eliminated. Now you are left with two possible answers, so you can safely guess between them and have a 50 - 50 chance of being right *without having to actually know the halakhah!*

SUMMARY

A. If you can avoid taking the MBAT, don't take it.
B. See "A."

SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES - HALAKHAH

If the question asks for a *psak din*, the answer cannot be a *Rishon*. For example:

14. In the case of *safek pesik reisha* with a *gramma* on Shabbos who do we *paskein* like?

A. Rav Moshe B. The *Mishnah Berurah* C. Rashi
D. Artscroll E. The *Maharsham*.

Answers C and E are *Rishonim*, and can't be correct. Answer D is a Yoseph Bloggs answer, so we can safely eliminate it. We are left with A or B, which means you have a 50 - 50 chance of getting the right answer. Guess.

Many questions ask for answers in measurement form. Unless the accompanying drawing is "not drawn to scale," we recommend you use the side of your answer sheet as a ruler, and cheat. For example:

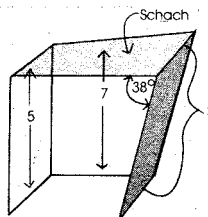
22. A certain *succah* has one wall 5 *amos* high, one wall 7 *amos* high that reaches the *shkakh*, and a third wall that is *x amos* high. The *succah* is kosher. How many *amos* is *x*?

A. 5 *amos* B. 4 *amos*
C. 10 *amos*

D. 65 *tefachim*

E. 8 *amos*, 3 *tefachim*

Answer: If you check with your "ruler" you will find that the correct answer is "E". Note that the question number is #22, indicating that this is a difficult question. This is because if you solve it algebraically you must remember to convert *tefachim* to *amos* to arrive at the answer. But by cheating, the question becomes very easy to solve.



SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES - READING COMPREHENSION

In every R.I.ETS test there is always a passage on a persecuted minority, and this is always the easiest passage. Therefore, you don't even have to read this passage to know most of the answers, because the attitude towards this minority will always be positive, yet slightly restrained. For example:

11. The author's attitude towards the Sefardim mentioned in the passage was:

A. Mildly condescending.
B. Spiteful and full of hate.
C. Respectful and deferential to their various customs and requests for Sefardi dorm counselors.

D. Confused and irritated.
E. Sarcastic, comparing them to Lubavitch.

Let's examine the possible answers.

A. This can't be correct, as R.I.ETS would not be condescending to Sefardim.

B. This certainly isn't correct, and displays strong emotion.

C. This is the correct answer, even if you happen to disagree with it.

D. While R.I.ETS might be confused and irritated by

Sefardim, they would never admit it. Eliminate.
E. This may look like a correct answer at first, though simply because Lubavitch are another persecuted minority does not mean R.I.ETS would have any reason to be sarcastic. Therefore, "C" is the correct answer.

SPECIFIC TECHNIQUES - BRISKER LOGIC

The Brisker logic portion of the exam is largely considered one of the more difficult parts of the MBAT. It is in this section that obscure concepts, difficult terms, and Latin phrases are used most often. Students in Rav Kahn's *shiur* have the biggest advantage, as they have heard many of these words and terms before - although they may not understand them. Therefore, we at the Pricey Review suggest you sit next to one of them and copy their answers. This is not always feasible, since not many members of that *shiur* take the MBAT. The following is an example of a Brisker logic question:

5. *Ipso Facto: Kal Vachomer = Reductio ad absurdum:*

A. Gefilte Fish B. E. *pluribus unum* C. Carp D. Tuna

E. None of the above

This is actually an easy question. "A", "C", and "D" are all types of fish. "B" is a Yoseph Bloggs answer because he sees Latin used in the question, and assumes the answer will be in Latin as well. (The correct answer is "A.")

EPILOGUE

Taking the MBAT is a very stressful ordeal, and it is imperative that you prepare properly for it. Therefore, the night before the exam, go to bed really, really late, and perhaps you'll oversleep and miss it altogether.

Are you arrogant and stuck up?

Do you get your highs from having starry-eyed *yeshiva* kids slobber at your feet?

Is *kiruv* a higher priority in your life than religion?

Do you spend your free time talking about dating and marriage?

Then **NCSY** is for you!! Hundreds of *yeshiva* kids are waiting for the opportunity to get closer to God and hang out with girls. Join now and you may someday become a *kumzitz* story yourself!

MEZUZAH: KEYHOLE TO ETERNITY

By Aryeh Kablan

GOD'S LOVE

Have you ever wondered why the grass is green? Why the sky is blue? Why Mickey Mouse has only four fingers on each hand? The reason for all of these things is that God created the world.

But why did God create the world? To the best of our understanding, He created the world as an act of love. As our Sages teach us (*Etz Chaim, Sha'ar Shkhem*), "God collects no wages, for who could pay His overtime?" Alternatively, creation may exemplify God's prodigious sense of humor, especially His creation of the rutabaga.

Our Sages agree that God created the world to bestow upon it the greatest good. What is this ultimate good? God Himself. In other words, the goodness of God is good, because the Godness of good is God. Of course, this means that both the Godness of God and the goodness of good are also both God (by which we mean good). For a more extensive discussion of this idea, see my book, *Good God!*, pp. 18-25.

Man can partake of this good (i.e., God) by resembling Him. It is for this reason that God gave man the ability to write. (Also the ability to sneeze, a topic to be analyzed in my forthcoming *Handkerchief of Heaven*.)

Of all living creatures, man is unique in that he engages in writing. From this we understand that God too engages in writing. This is an important principle, because many religions believe that God is illiterate. But what does God's writing represent?

GOD'S WRITING

You might think God's writing is the Torah. But that would be too obvious. We must seek a deeper, more mystical, less coherent explanation.

The Hebrew word for writing, *ketivah*, may also be arranged to read *kai ha-y"b*, the sect of twelve, referring of course to the twelve tribes of the Jewish sect.

It becomes clear that, just as man's writing makes him a unique creature, God's writing makes Israel a unique people. This uniqueness is also the theme of that haunting Chasidic prayer, "We're Number One!"

In what way is Judaism unique? Is it the high proportion of Jews who practice law, medicine, and accounting? No. Is it the emphasis upon personal sanctity and spiritual growth? No. Is it the fact that a Jew might have to climb twenty-three flights of stairs on a Sabbath be-

cause riding an elevator is "work?" Yes.

But Judaism is also unique because of the Exodus, which God, in a sense, "authored," just as he has "written" every page and every chapter of Jewish history (not including footnotes and bibliography). It is the Divine authorship

of our fate that sets Judaism apart. (For another thing which sets Judaism apart, see my book, *Cutting Short One's Pride: A Deeper Look at Circumcision*.)

THE MEZUZAH

This brings us to the precept of *mezuzah*. In Deuteronomy (6:9), the Torah says: "You shall write them on the posts of your doors and on your gates." Why does God command us to write His message on doorposts as opposed to, say, renting space on a billboard or printing up bumper stickers? Because by writing the *mezuzah*, we are imitating God, Who writes on the doorposts of history and the gates of the universe!

Not only do we imitate God by writing a *mezuzah*, we also participate in the completion of creation. This is alluded to in the word "*mezuzah*," which can also be read *mi-zu zeh*, meaning "from this [comes] that," an implicit reference to God's fashioning the world from void and chaos. As our Sages teach: "As Adam entered the portals of Paradise, he kissed God's *mezuzah*" (*Tipshutei Zohar* 84:2).

But there is a deeper significance to *mezuzah*. The *mezuzah* is a sign to all who cross one's threshold that the house is a Jewish home. Taking this in its most abstract sense, we can say that God's *mezuzah* is a "sign" that He lives in a house with doors. Could there be a more inspiring lesson?

If God lives in a house, this raises many profound questions: Is it a Rambler or a Colonial? Who takes care of the lawn? And, most importantly, is there a chandelier in every room?

Only the greatest mystics in history have merited, through meditation and prayer, to momentarily peer through the crack and glimpse the Divine and notice His decor. Few of us can achieve this level, however. We must satisfy ourselves with imitating His ways by fulfilling the precept of *mezuzah* and by eschewing flowered wallpaper.

AN EVEN DEEPER LOOK

A *mezuzah* is essentially a box. Like all boxes, it has eight corners. In Judaism, the number eight has special significance. The ritual of circumcision is always performed on the eighth day. The eighth of the Ten Commandments is "You shall not steal." The *tzitzit* has eight strings. The miracle of Chanukah lasted eight days. And the eighth word of the Ten Commandments is *mi-beit*, "from the house of."

This teaches us that one who attends a circumcision on Chanukah and steals a pair of *tzitzit* will be expelled "from the house of" God. But writing a *mezuzah* will atone for such a sin. (For more *gematriot*, see my book, *Eight Days a Week: Kabbalah and the Beatles*.)

But the eight corners of the *mezuzah* have still more significance. It is customary to inscribe the Hebrew letter *shin* on the outside of the *mezuzah* case. The *shin* has three arms. Subtracting three from eight yields five, which represents the five books of the Torah. We therefore learn that one who studies Torah, but skips all the words beginning with the letter *shin*, has no more intelligence than an empty *mezuzah* box.

CONCLUSION

I had hoped to outline the basic laws of *mezuzah*, but used up all the space explaining its deep significance. Fortunately, your friendly neighborhood rabbi will happily guide you in the practical fulfillment of this profound precept. Indeed, consulting a local rabbi is also an imitation of God; but you probably guessed that already. And with God's help, and the help of the spiritual satellite dish we call the *mezuzah*, we shall merit to greet Moshiach in the valleys of Zion and the streets of San Francisco.

Do You Know Me?

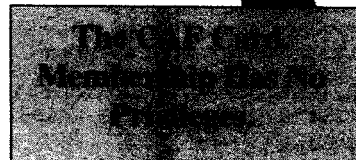
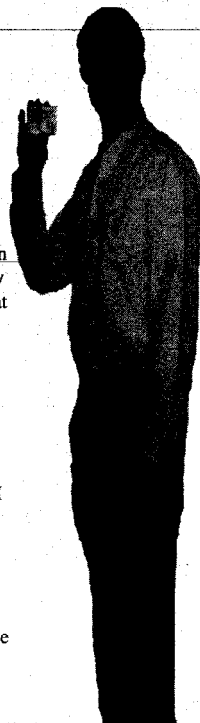
I'm recognized wherever I go, because I carry the CAF Card.

I've been a member since Fall '89. Only with the CAF card can I buy Scallops and then run over and buy a Purim Basket at the C-Store. No Revolving Debt - I Won't Get Caught in that trap!

And there's no preset spending limit, for when I entertain in the CAF.

So enjoy the privilege of the CAF CARD.

Besides, you have no choice.



MISNAGDISHE MAISIM

with a guide to their interpretation by an obscure contemporary scholar

A Pillar of Fire

One day a fire broke out in the city of Mussinev and all of the townspeople ran to their Rav, the noted scholar Rav Schukel, crying, "Moreinu Verabbeinu, the city is burning down!" Rav Schukel called to his faithful *shamess* Reb Yankel and asked for a glass of water. Reb Yankel brought his Rebbe the water upon which Rav Schukel proceeded to say the proper *berakha* with great devotion and drank. When he finished and saw everyone staring intently at him he exclaimed in disgust, "Nu, why haven't you called the fire department yet?!"

In this tale, the author stresses the unfortunate fact that when a miracle-working rebbe becomes too prominent and socially active within a community, the residents will tend to rely on him for every little detail. This reliance on the rebbe often results in neglect of the basic municipal infrastructure, e.g. the fire department. However, in our tale, this neglect is compounded by the fact that Harold Mazik, the town's inept fire chief, couldn't install a fire alarm if his life depended on it. Since it was in fact Chief Mazik's house that caught fire, it becomes quite understandable why the fire department was not immediately notified. Besides, Rav Schukel held that the famous dictum *shomer pesa'im Hashem* didn't apply to incompetent fire chiefs, but rather, only to Reagan Democrats.

The Black Dove

A man stumbled into the town of Alick and asked Rav Chakham, the holy author of the critically acclaimed *Shut She'al Ve'e'eneh*, "Holy Rabbi, where can I find peace?" The Rav gazed at him for a minute and replied, "You mean besides in a dictionary?"

Not only do we have, in this tale, a meaningless and quite ambiguous question, but the Rav (from a brief inspection of his published volume of responsa) obviously deals exclusively with practical down-to-earth issues such as how powerful a microscope do you need to check an *esrog* or how many yemen are needed to form a *minyana* at a *tefillas noshim* and how many *ba'alei batim* are halachically required to screw in a light bulb. Also, what would a *misnaged* like Rav Chakham be doing in the chassidic town of Alick? Furthermore, why would he waste time holding the questioner in his gaze if he was, obviously, in the middle of writing a *teshuva* about whether *shomer pesa'im Hashem* applies only to Reagan Democrats or also to anyone crazy enough to use the New York subways? This is all quite irrelevant, however, because, had the Rav tried to answer the peacenik's question, he would have immediately faced crucifixion by Rush Limbaugh for being a leftist liberal swine.

The Shidduch-Minded Son

When the eldest son of Rav Itzele of Moderniev reached marriageable age, Rav Itzele went off to see his old friend Rav Chatzkel of Centristan to inquire about a *shidduch* with Rav Chatzkel's eldest daughter, who was also of marriageable age, not that it mattered. An agreement was reached and the *choson*, Rav Leibele, was summoned to Centristan for the wedding. A few days later, the carriage pulled up in front of Rav Chatzkel's house and out came Rav Leibele in a wheelchair. When Rav Chatzkel's daughter Faige (who like any *tzenu'a* seminary girl had been peeking out of a window) saw the wheelchair, she burst into tears and locked herself in her room screaming "I refuse to marry a cripple!" It soon became obvious (from the fact that Faige refused to unlock her door) that Faige

was quite adamant in her refusal to marry Rav Leibele. After Faige's mother fainted in shame, Rav Leibele wheeled himself over to Rav Chatzkel and delivered a brilliant exposition on why the custom of the *choson* not seeing his *kallah* during the week before the wedding was totally irrelevant and outdated; therefore, he should be allowed to speak to Faige without delay. Rav Chatzkel replied, "Even though you sound like some liberal whippersnapper from Cincinnati you're more than welcome to speak to her, provided that you can get into her room." Rav Leibele responded by wheeling himself over to Faige's room and unlocking the door with his trusty skeleton key. He wheeled over to Faige and said, "While traveling here I had an amazing dream. I went up to the *Beis Din shel Ma'alah* and asked, 'Look guys, I'm getting married now and, although I know that she's my *bashert*, I don't know *bubkes* about her. Can you please tell me something?' However, before I could get a reply, my carriage crashed and I sprained both of my ankles. I should be up and around in about 6 to 8 weeks." Faige buried her face (and a very pretty one at that, after all, *bnos yisroel na'os hen*) in her hands and said in a small, quiet voice, "I said that I would never marry a cripple but I guess that crazy *shlemazels* like you don't count," and got up to wheel Rav Leibele out to tell everyone the good news.

Many crucial problems are raised in this particularly famous story. First, why was Rav Leibele driving a carriage, in flagrant violation of the Benei Beraq *takkanah* prohibiting yeshiva students from driving? Also, why didn't he sue his H.M.O doctor for malpractice and N.B.C. for causing the carriage to explode? Besides, couldn't this entire incident have been avoided had the couple been allowed to go out on a date to a hotel lobby after 7:30 PM?

A Partner From Hell

The night watchman of the holy town of Khelm was making his usual rounds when he stopped to peek through the window of Rav Illui. What he saw was the astonishing sight of Rav Illui yelling and screaming in a completely empty room. The watchman was convinced that Rav Illui must have reached such high levels of *tzidkus* that not only was he learning with *Eliyahu Hanavi* as a *chevrusa*, but he was arguing with him as well! In the morning, after *Shachris*, the watchman approached Rav Illui and said, "Holy Rabbi, we both know that in terms of *tzidkus* I can barely reach your socks but please tell me: what did you learn with *Eliyahu Hanavi* last night?" The Rav replied "That wasn't *Eliyahu Hanavi*, that was my *Yetzer Horoh*; he makes a much better *chevrusa*. Besides, we were arguing so much that we didn't get any learning done."

Here we have a detailed assessment of what ails the yeshiva educational system. Why do people learn in a Bais Medrash when they can't hear themselves think? What makes the *Yetzer Horoh* a better *chevrusa*? Was the

Yetzer Horoh trying to persuade the Rav that one can attain as uplifting a spiritual experience by learning *Nach* as by learning with *Eliyahu Hanavi*, or was he simply trying to explain that the *Netziv* did not close down the Volozhin Yeshiva because of the inclusion of secular studies, but rather due to the amount of time requested by the government for them. We also

have the particularly grappling question, why didn't the Rav simply blow the "peeping Tom" away with his newly purchased AK-47 assault rifle? Was this particular watchman suicidal or is this a trait of most watchmen about whom such stories are told?

The Rooster Speaks His Mind

Some students came to the saintly Rav Eli of Melekh early in the evening and begged: "Holy Master, please teach us the secret of *Kapparos*." When Rav Eli realized that the students would not budge without an answer he told

them, "If you really must know the secret of *Kapparos* then watch tonight and see how Shloime the town drunk does *Kapparos*." Later that night the students gathered outside Shloime's house and peeked in through the window. In the corner of the room sat Shloime with a *siddur* and rooster. He mumbled some words from the *siddur* and then waved the rooster over his head three-times as he continued to mumble. When he finished putting the rooster back in its coop he turned towards the window and said "Are you guys satisfied now?" In the morning the humbled students returned to Rav Eli and asked, "Is this the secret of *Kapparos*?" Rav Eli replied, "Look guys, Shloime was so stone drunk last night that he didn't even see you out there. If you are still bothered with these questions then forget about *Kapparos* altogether; after all, it's *Darkhei ha'Emori* anyway!"

Look, Rav Eli was tired after a long hard day of haggling with some crazy *ba'alei batim* over his contract and destroying his eyes staring at *esrogim* through a magnifying glass. All of a sudden some lazy students who didn't want to read the current halachic literature began to take away from his hard-earned family time. What was he supposed to say? On the other hand, how was Shloime able to keep a rooster in his house without being fined by the Health Department or sued by the ASPCA and other animal rights groups? They probably wouldn't let him *shecht* his rooster anyway even if he wasn't using *Chassidische shechita*.



MAID IN HEAVEN: A JEWISH MARRIAGE GUIDE

By Aryeh Kabban

LOVE

Love, our Sages teach us, is a many-splendored thing. It can strike at any time, on a bus, in synagogue, even (though rarely) on a date. Love is more precious than gold; in the words of one contemporary *Chasid*, "Money can buy me love."

But we are taught that God created the world as an act of love. We therefore see that being in love is an imitation of God. (Note: While imitating God is fine, doing impersonations of Him is unseemly and irreverent.)

So now you're in love. What do you do next? If you're a Torah-oriented Jew, not much. You can tell your parents. And you can tell your rebbe. (You don't have to tell God; He already knows.) And you should definitely tell the person you're in love with. The next step is getting engaged.

GETTING ENGAGED

The engagement period is a critical one for every couple. Among many traditional Jews, it is after the engagement that the bride and groom actually meet and learn each other's first names. Among very modern couples, being engaged means you can now share each other's toothbrushes.

This is the time for meeting the parents of your intended. You will want to make a good impression, so remember to dress modestly (if you're a girl), bring a small gift (if you're a boy), and shave beforehand (in either case). Very traditional boys will be too young to shave.

It is customary for the groom to buy his bride a diamond engagement ring. In traditional circles, this kind of custom is called *yehareg ve'al ya'avur*, i.e., highly

recommended. Our Sages have also established a formula to determine how much one should spend on the ring: 1) take the amount you can afford; 2) multiply by eighteen; 3) that is how much you must spend.

The ring symbolizes many things. First, a ring has the form of a link in a chain. This symbolizes that marriage chains a man and deprives him of his liberty. As our Sages teach: "Who is a free man? One who eludes marriage." (See *Shulchan Aruch* 1:10.)

The ring is a circle that has no beginning and no end, which is how marriage feels after a couple of years. This also alludes to *talmud Torah* (Torah study), which is also endless, all the more so because a man won't learn much once he marries.

One final note: after being engaged for a few days, you may develop a deep-seated urge to punch anyone who sings *Od Yishama*. This is a healthy reaction; don't fight it. The time has now come to plan the wedding.

PLANNING THE WEDDING

There are many myths about Jewish weddings, and they must be dispelled. Many people think that a Jewish wedding must be lavish, with expensive clothes, endless food and a seven-piece band. This is not a myth; this is true.

The myth is that the wedding is for the bride and groom. In fact, the wedding is for their parents. This is why three-fourths of the guests are people the bride and groom do not know. Many of these are relatives neither the bride nor groom knew existed. In *halakha* (Jewish law), these people are called "wedding relatives." It is forbidden to interact with such relatives except at the weddings of one's children.

There is a deeper significance to this law. The Hebrew word for relatives, *KeROVIM*, has the numerical value of 358. This is also the numerical value of the word *NaCHaSH*, meaning serpent. From this we see that some relatives are like the evil serpent who tempted Adam and Eve to sin, thus blowing things for all future generations.

SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION

Before the marriage can be consummated, the bride must immerse in a *mikveh* (ritual pool). This ritual is neither embarrassing nor demeaning to women. Chasidim

do it every day.

Immersion in the *mikveh* symbolizes spiritual rebirth. It represents purity and ritual cleanliness. Nevertheless, the custom is for the *mikveh* water to be cloudy, gray, and have little things floating in it. This custom goes back to the time when women immersed in outdoor rivers, braving frostbite, pneumonia, and the occasional Peeping Tom.

Some point out that the Hebrew word *mikveh* is related to the word *tikvah*, meaning hope. This alludes to the fact that women who use the *mikveh* hope they won't contract anything bacterial from the water.

In a deeper sense, the waters of the *mikveh* represent the waters of Eden. But to learn more about this, you'll have to buy my book, *Waters of Eden*, on sale at quality Jewish bookstores everywhere.

PREPARING FOR THE CEREMONY
One of the most important preparations for the wedding ceremony is the veiling of the bride. The origins of this custom are unclear. Some relate it to the biblical story of Jacob, who let his father-in-

law veil the bride and wound up with the wrong woman!

Others trace the custom to the little-known talmudic

sage, R. Yosi ben Seymour, a man blessed with thirty-six daughters. R. Yosi, according to one tradition, instituted the veiling at the wedding of daughter number thirteen, a girl with the complexion of an overripe turnip.

This idea may be alluded to in the Yiddish name for the veiling ceremony, the *bedeken*, which means "Cover her up!"

THE WEDDING CEREMONY

After the preliminaries, the groom and bride are led to the *chupah* (canopy). It is customary that the groom be led first. This is because Judaism regards men as more important than women. As we shall see, this is an important theme of the Jewish wedding ceremony.

The groom is

then dressed in a *kittel*, a long, white garment resembling a bathrobe. The *kittel* recalls the day of the groom's death,



the symbolism of which is pretty obvious, especially if you've been married for a couple of years. This is also alluded to by the word *kittel*, which is rooted in the Hebrew verb *katal*, meaning "to slay." A fuller exposition of the similarities between death and marriage may be found in my article, "Why Moshiach Is a Bachelor."

In some circles, the groom is followed by a procession of relatives and friends. This is a Gentile custom, however, like drinking gin and playing golf.

Finally, the bride is brought to the side of her groom. She should be finely dressed in a beautiful, but modest, white gown. The bride must also wear contact lenses. This is because the Hebrew term for lenses, *adashei maga*, has the numerical value of 497, which is only three less than 500, the numerical value of *peru u-revu* ("Be fruitful and multiply").

At this point, the bride traditionally walks around her husband seven times. There are a variety of explanations for this custom, all of them demeaning or patronizing to women.

THE ERUSIN

The rest of the ceremony is fairly technical from a *halakha* point of view, but a true understanding of its essence reveals how romantic it really is.

Simply put, the man acquires the woman in a financial transaction. He does this by giving her something of value. Although customarily a gold ring is given, any object of minimal value, such as a comb or french fry, will do.

At this point, it is necessary to create an intermission between the *erusin* and the latter part of the ceremony, the *nissuin*. Jewish tradition, with its keen sense of irony, reminds the newlyweds that, until Jerusalem is rebuilt and the Likud returned to power, our happiness can never be complete. In order to introduce some unhappiness into the proceedings, the *ketubah* (Jewish marriage contract) is read.

THE KETUBAH

Like all contracts, the *ketubah* is a dry legal text, somewhat lacking in entertainment value. Worse, the *ketubah*'s text is very ancient and is written in a very ancient language, Aramaic, which has not been spoken for

about 1500 years. Historians say that Jesus spoke Aramaic, but unless he's invited to your wedding, the reading of the *ketubah* will go largely unappreciated.

Today many people spend hundreds of dollars to have an artistically designed, beautifully illuminated *ketubah*, most of which are *possul* (not recommended for use). In *halakha*, these people are called *hedyotos* (airheads).

A SERMON

Instead of reading the *ketubah*, and sometimes in addition to it, a *devar Torah* (sermon) is delivered. To again commemorate the anguish of the destruction of the Temple, the sermon is traditionally long and boring. Preferably, it should be delivered in an incoherent mumble by a scholar who knows neither the bride nor the groom. Instead, he will refer to them generically as the "*chusankalloh*." Even better, he should not refer to them at all, but present a lengthy discourse on sin and damnation.

THE REST

This is followed by the Seven Blessings, *yihud* (seclusion), a big meal and lots of photographs. Of course, the wedding is only the beginning. The real headache of marriage does not take hold until long after the centerpieces from the dinner tables are stolen by the "wedding relatives." Only after the band has gone home will you greet the future of married life with that immortal prayer: "Dear God! What have I done?"

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Book Review: *Aishet Chayil Lo Nimtzeit* by Esther Hadassah Meshures

Rarely does a book reach as far into the depths of the Jewish woman's struggle to maintain *sholom bayis* as does this masterpiece by Mrs. Meshures. The essence of her brilliant insight is derived from her basic understanding of the revered institution of marriage, as taught to us by our blessed *Chazal*, *zichronom livrochoh*. Mrs. Meshures teaches us that the secret to a happy marriage is for the woman to realize that though she may never understand the complicated workings of her husband's busy day, she must struggle to keep him happy, and must make him feel that she is his constant source of

support and joy, no matter how taxing this becomes on her sanity, her health, or her own sense of well-being. Men, the author confides ingeniously, are busier, smarter, more complex, and altogether more important than women. The true *Aishet Chayil* must learn to fearlessly accept her unworthy position as the wife of such an awesome creature, and must dutifully present him with the type of life he deserves.

Mrs. Meshures's style of presentation is wonderfully subtle: she uses the method of case scenarios, demonstrating the right and *rachmonoh leitzan*, wrong ways of communicating with one's husband. The following few passages are excerpts from this fantastic work:

HOW TO GREET YOUR WONDERFUL HUS-

BAND WHEN HE COMES HOME FROM YESHIVA

Wrong

Husband: Kreindel, where is my supper? Haven't I told you at least ten times to have my supper ready after I come home from learning?

Wife: Yankel, I am sorry, but I just got back from the doctor. I waited here all day. Yankel, I'm expecting!

Husband: Mazal Tov to you, *bisha' ah tova u' mutlachas, kain yirba*. Now let's get a move on the dinner. Just because you've done one of your jobs doesn't mean that you don't have to do the others.

Wife: I cannot accept that, Yankel. I think we have to talk about our relationship.

The crucial mistake that poor Kreindel is making is that she

is assuming that Yankel's day was not as important as hers was. This is a gross error, since it almost surely was. Who knows what goes on behind those magical walls of the *yeshiva*? Be more sensitive to your husband's needs. He may be the next *gadol hador*, and cannot be bothered with woman problems like pregnancy.

Right

Husband: Kreindel, where is my supper? Haven't I told you at least ten times to have my supper ready after I come home from learning?

Wife: You're right, it will never happen again. By agreeing with her husband, smart Kreindel has avoided all confrontation, and needn't even mention her feminine hygiene.

HOW TO ASK YOUR HUSBAND FOR MONEY TO BUY A NEW DRESS

Wrong

Wife: Yankel, I was wondering, would it be possible to have fifty dollars more this week in my allowance? I need a new dress for my friend's wedding.

Husband: NO. Kreindel, that extra money is for the Rebbe, *shlita*'s daughter's birthday present. Wear a dress you already have. Women, always with the shopping. Your next dress is not coming to you until next Pesach. That's in our *kessubah*, you know. Too bad you women don't understand Aramaic.

Wife: That is unfair, Yankel. I don't ask for much, but I really do need this dress. Maybe we can get a smaller present for your rebbe's daughter just this once?

Husband: No.

Right

Wife: Yankel, I was wondering, would it be possible to have fifty dollars more this week in my allowance? I need a new dress for my friend's wedding.

Husband: NO. Kreindel, that extra money is for the Rebbe, *shlita*'s daughter's birthday present. Wear a dress you

already have. Women, always with the shopping. Your next dress is not coming to you until next Pesach. That's in our *kessubah*, you know. Too bad you women don't understand Aramaic. Wife: Oh! I didn't realize. Please wish the Rebbe's daughter a Mazal Tov from me. You are such a good man, Yankel. I'm so glad I married you.

Not only did Kreindel save her poor, over-worked husband any *agnas nefesh* from further whining, but she also managed to strengthen their relationship by complimenting her husband rather than criticizing him...

... Such is the brilliant work of this true *aishet chayil* of our time. It is suggested that every *kallah* acquire a copy of this groundbreaking literary achievement. It is sure to bring tears to your eyes.

The Story of the Rebbe of _____

His Childhood

The _____ er Rebbe, Rav _____ was born _____ in the town of _____, a small hamlet in the heart of _____. His family was a poor one, so much so that his parents had to sacrifice so that he could learn Torah. In fact, his father once took apart the family _____ and sold it for _____ so that they could pay the

Rebbe to teach their son Torah. Many hours did _____'s mother cry heartfelt tears over her *tehillim* that her son would one day become a great Torah giant.

At the age of _____, it was clear that the young _____ was destined to become a great scholar, as he had already mastered and _____ memorized _____

His parents sacrificed some more and sent him to learn under _____

at the Yeshiva of _____, the most famous and prestigious Torah institution in _____ during _____. There, he never left the Beis Medrash, learning day and night, even neglecting his own personal needs for the sake of learning. (Women from the community, realizing his true potential, brought him food so that he needn't be bothered to waste time eating elsewhere.) The young man soon became known to all as the _____ *iluy*, a title he shunned due to his supreme modesty.

Marriage

At the ripe age of _____, the _____ *iluy* realized that it was time he found a lifemate. The Rosh Yeshiva promptly called Reb _____, the richest man in _____, who offered him his daughter _____ along a dowry of _____, enough that he could continue his Torah learning for the next _____ years. _____ accepted the generous offer, and the match was made. (As they had no telephones, _____'s parents found out about the marriage years later, when _____ by then the Rebbe of _____ showed up unexpectedly for a surprise visit, a clear example of his firm commitment to *kibud av v'eim*.)

Tragically, _____ Reb _____ lost all his money in a Cossack pogrom, and was spared his life only through divine intervention. Reb

_____ , an honest and Torah-loving man immediately called _____ and freed him from any obligation to marry his pious daughter. The _____ *iluy*, who never broke his word, insisted that the marriage would take place nonetheless, as he was sure that Hashem would grant him sustenance to continue his Torah learning.

The Bashert

Let us take a moment to discuss the Rebbetzin of _____, an overly pious *tzaddeikes*. Learning that



the _____ *iluy* intended to marry her despite her abject poverty, she was overjoyed. (It must have been in the merit of the many heartfelt tears she had cried over her *tehillim* that she should marry a pious man.) _____ delighted in supporting Rav _____, and ran their small _____

in _____ with efficiency. (She only needed his help with the books, as young Jewish girls didn't do math. In fact, neither did young Jewish men, but Rav _____ learned math, as he did everything from the gemara. [In fact, Rav _____ once wrote a lengthy work on quantum mechanics in the bathroom, the only time he wasn't learning Torah, but that is an entirely different story.]

After many years in the Yeshiva, _____ left the Yeshiva, receiving *Semikha* from the _____ Rebbe, an immense honor. He was then begged to become Rabbi of no less than _____ towns and villages, of which he chose _____. (Hence his name, the _____ Rebbe)

Life at Home With the _____

Let us make one thing clear from the outset. The _____ Rebbe NEVER read the newspaper. Yet, he was fully aware of current events, which he gleaned from a careful scrutiny of certain *aggadetas* in the gemara. His pious wife, _____ bore him _____ sons, but no daughters, an obvious sign that he had found favor in the eyes of the *Ribbono shel Olam*. The Rebbe spent his days learning in his study, with several minutes

daily dedicated to seeing local businessmen with intricate halachic *sheilos*. The Rebbe published a sefer, *Shut Ha _____*, a vicious polemic against his Chassidic counterpart in the town. Clearly, however, despite use of terms like *kefirah*, *gehinnom*, and *aporkorsus*, the premise of his friendly discourse was *elu v'elu divrei elokim chayim*.

The Rebbe as a Communal Leader

Under his guidance and leadership, the community of _____ built many famous *Yeshivos* and *Battei Knesesios*, often traversing the province (during *bein hazmanim*, of course) to collect for the Yeshiva.

In _____, the infamous *haskalah* infiltrated _____. The Rebbe would have nothing to do with the group, issuing an edict that anyone selling Kosher meat to a Maskil would be forced to sit in the *ezras nashim* for three consecutive *shabbosim*. This ingenious approach forced the Maskilim to run to the next town, leaving the members of the community truly relieved. (Often, the Rebbe would joke about the Maskilim, "They not only didn't know Torah, they were really ugly too.") [It was much funnier in Yiddish, as everything always is.]

The Rebbe formed the world-famous Torah organization, *Moetzes G'dolei _____*. Under his leadership, the Rebbe combatted the secularists, often publishing articles in the Yiddish newspaper _____ which

he nonetheless refused to read. The Rebbe was loved by all who knew him, and in his _____ years of service to the _____ community, was only once accosted with a chicken.

The Loss of A Giant

Tragically, the Rebbe was taken by the *Ribbono Shel Olam* at the age of _____. Well known Torah giants travelled miles to hear about the life of the Rebbe. (His wish that there be no *hesped* for him became known the next day, after it was, of course, too late.) The void left by his passing was filled by his son, _____, but, though he was a great scholar, he was unable to take the place of the dynamic personality of the Rebbe, and was shunned by the _____ community. (Tragically, this forced the scholar to abandon his roots, and he entered the _____ University and became a famous professor of _____. The _____ community never forgave itself for the horrible outcome of the Rebbe's finest son, but assumed he was a bad apple anyway.)

The legacy of the Rebbe is still with us today, as many of the *minhagim* he introduced are still in practice today. (It is told that he instituted the practice of standing during *shmonah esreh*, but that has not been verified historically.) The Rebbe of _____, though not with us physically, remains with us in spirit for eternity.

May Men Wear Tefillin?

They just don't get it! Those men who dare to demand more rights, the so-called "hominists," now actually want to wear *tefillin*, just as women do. I am shocked - shocked! - to hear such scurrilous sinfulness. The hominist threat to authentic Judaism is invidious and insidious, fallacious and salacious - and so my response as a Torah-true woman shall be derisive and divisive, defensive and offensive.

Why Can't Men Wear Tefillin?

I think I speak for all my sister *kana'ot* when I condescend to say that nobody with even a shred of knowledge of Judaism could mention men and *tefillin* in the same breath. (Remember that when some men put on *tefillin* in Biblical times, Mikhal protested.) I won't even go into the technical problems of a man trying to center a *shel rosh* - e.g. how could he rationalize using a mirror, which is obviously *begeid* 'ishah (effeminate fashion), and how could he ever find his hairline once it's receded?

More significantly, *tefillin* is a uniquely feminine ritual. By winding *tefillin* around her arm and ring finger, the Jew is symbolically binding herself to Hashem in a marriage ceremony. When she says "Ve'erastikh li le'olam - and I (Hashem) will betroth you to me forever" (*Hoshe'astadium* 2:21), she assumes the role of *Kelal Yisra'el*, the *kallah*, accepting betrothal from Hashem, the *chatan* (*Tradition*, Fall 1992). What a mockery it would be for a man to mimic this meaningful, matronly *mitzvah*! It's painfully obvious that the men slobbering to wear *tefillin* just want to be like women. Put bluntly, it's *beit haknesset* envy.

The Lofty Role of Men in Judaism

The misguided hominists don't understand that Judaism has always paid lip service to men. In the words of the Rav, Rabbi Josephine B. Solowhatachick, "Of course men are equal...just not as equal as women." A true *ben yisrael* has always been content with his three special *mitzvot*: *kiddush*, *pay'ot*, and *taharat hamilah*. The revered Lugalvitcher Rebbe, *telita*, R. Nechama Mindel Schneurdaughter, strongly encourages the training of boys from the age of three in these exalted "men's *mitzvot*," and has even sponsored the charming book, *A Kos of My Own* (*Shma*, Purim 1985).

The undeniable fact is that women and men have different roles in Judaism. The key verse for women (*Tehillary* 35:14) states, "Kol kevudah bat melekh penimah - all the glory of the princess is within" - i.e. within the *shul* and *beit hamidrash*. Women have been assigned the internal, spiritual role of doing *mitzvot* and learning Torah. Men's task, on the other hand, is at least as lofty: the external, physical role of toiling in the workplace in order

to support the Jewish family. As the verse avers (*Iyovaries* 5:7), "Adam la'amal yulad - a man is born to work." Rabbeinu Momi points out that this verse also includes the other meaning of the word 'amal: raising children (as we learn in the *Shifra*, "Ve'et 'amaleinu, 'elu habanim"). Men get to do that too!

This is the meaning of the often-misunderstood statement in the Gemara (*Womenachot* 1c), "Anashim chazirim hem - men are pigs." This does not, *chas veshalom*, reflect badly upon men. Rather, just as a pig cannot chew its cud (internal) but displays its kosher-style (external) cloven hoof (*Benot Rashi, Beracist* 26:34), so too a true *ben yisrael* doesn't envy the internal role of women but rather takes pride in his external achievements. (Yeah, and monkeys might fly out of my *tukhes*.)

Another text the hominists distort is the *beraklah* of "Shelo' asani 'ish - who has not made me a man." Seen in context, however, it is no more negative than, say, sexism is rampant among the Orthodox. Just as we thank the Shekchinah for sparing us from the miserable life of a *goyah* or *shifchah*, so too we do not envy men their difficult task. They are expected to commute

and spend their entire day in the holy but time-consuming act of making money. (Every Jew

praises her husband for this frenetic activity when she sings the 'Ish Chayil.) Therefore, in the words of R. Marsham Monseyman, "The Torah did not wish to burden the average Jewish husband rushing from his job to putting up the storm windows, to painting the dining room, with the added obligation of rushing out to a minyan" (*Shma*, Purim 1984).

Men and Mitzvot Don't Mix

There is a deeper reason, though, why men are exempt from most *mitzvot*. Let's illustrate with yet another Gemara (*Bava' Batgirl* 365h) that the hominists misinterpret as putting men down: "Anashim da'atan keveidot - men are heavy-headed." This does not mean men are always thick-headed, numbskulls, or dolts! (Well, not all the time, anyway.) Rather, their minds are somewhat coarser than women's, so they are better suited for physical than spiritual acts or the fine points of Talmudic logic. As it says in *Kohellette* (2:24), "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink and enjoy his work." This is why men have traditionally been *machmirim* in the *yom tov* obligations of

eating meat and drinking wine, and in the requirement on Purim to get bombed out of one's skull.

As a *kelat(ah)*, though, our *Chakhamot* say that *mitzvot* are not for fun (*Eruvomy* 31a). According to the Maharella, only women possess the heightened sensitivity and refined souls required for most *mitzvot*. The *nevi'ah* (*Isha'yahoo* 32:9) describes women as *sha'anant*, which means tranquil (or possibly a corny TV rock group from the sixties). Furthermore, only women, who naturally have a *rechem* (womb, the source of the word "womban"), can attain

the lofty level of *rachamim* (mercy) needed to relate to Hashem as *Harachaman* (*Tradition* op. cit.). Finally, the cyclical wisdom which they gain from their (wo)menstrual cycle makes women intuitively aware of the holiness of time and therefore uniquely capable of fulfilling time-bound *mitzvot*.

Men are so different, it's not even funny. (Here's where I take off the gloves.) Let's face it: the "stronger sex" has more brawn than brains. The *Chakhamot* like to point out men's naturally high level of aggression: "It's the way of a man to conquer" (*YevaMs*. 65b). This sheds light on men's otherwise inexplicable macho behavior of strutting around, slapping backs, guzzling beer, and shooting large, defenseless animals. They (the men, not the animals) are thus highly qualified for the ferocious slaughter of enemy soldiers (it's "ish *milchamah*") and the endless bickering and posturing of politics (while women wield the real power behind the scenes). Men are happiest when they are true to their masculine nature. But *mitzvot*? Oh, please. Ever hear the expression, "a bull in a china shop"?

The disastrous results of allowing men to take on the *mitzvot*, especially *tefillin*, can hardly be exaggerated (but here goes). The other side of the *mechitzah* (the 'ezrat 'anashim) would turn into a raucous boys' club of chatting about their favorite teams and latest business deals - all while wearing *tefillin*! What a desecration of all that is holy! Furthermore, I shudder to think of the consequences when men, with their pumped-up sexual drive, get their grubby little hands on *tefillin*. *Hamefateh* is a family paper, so I won't discuss this disturbing issue.

To sum up, *lefi ga'avat da'ati*, the high level of education that men seized for themselves has already deteriorated into *tiflut* (depravity, perversion, turpitude), just as our *Chakhamot* predicted. What will the hominists come up with next - men rabbis?



Hilchos Beis Hakisay...

translated from a pamphlet distributed in Yeshivat Sha'alvim

In *Berochos* 62a, the Gemarah says: "We learned in a baraisa: Rabbi Akiva said, 'Once, I followed Rabbi Yehoshua into the *beis hakisay*, and I learned from him...'." The Gemarah continues: "We learned in a baraisa: Ben Azzai says: 'Once, I followed Rabbi Akiva into the *beis hakisay*, and I learned from him...'." Apparently, there was a great yeshiva and much profound scholarship centered around the *beis hakisay* in Talmudic times. I have often bewailed the loss of this hallowed and ancient tradition-- would I never have the opportunity of sitting at the feet of the greats, among the echoing ceramic tiles, the ancient, crumbling newspapers, the proudly shining chrome toilet tissue dispensers? One fateful day, which happened to be my 21st birthday, which is "memuchan" in gematria kesonah (you chop off every digit but the first-- "dales" is 4, as is "mem", as is "lav"), I entered the restroom facilities at Yeshiva with my customary awe, but this time with an added feeling of impending destiny. I sat, I pondered, and the following chiddushim occurred to me:

Many meforshim have attempted to explain why Hashem's name does not occur in the Megillah; most of these attempts have seemed a *bissul doichak*. (See Zohar, *Rayah Mehemannah*, *Vayikra* 109a; *Midrash Esther Rabbah* 3:10; *Megillah* 15b, 16a; *Taz*, *Siman* 334, *Se'if Kosson* 11, citing the *Mordechai*.) Inspired by a powerful *ruach shvus* and near terminal boredom, I have finally been *mechavein* to the true explanation, before which all other *pshtos* will pale and wither. It is, and sit down before you read this, (preferably in the venerable porcelain palace,) that Hashem's name is not mentioned in the Megillah because all of the events of the *sefer* took place, you never would have guessed it, in the bathroom. The men's room. The hot seat. The thunderbox. The water closet.

The Gemarah says in *Berochos* 8b, "We learned in a baraisa: Rabban Gamliel said, 'I love the Persians for three things: they are modest in eating, modest in the bathroom, and modest in *davar acher*...'." In this behavior, the Persians emulated Haman, who was the master of the commode. How do we know this? The answer to this will solve another question which has always bothered me: the Gemarah in *Berochos* 54a says: "Rav Yehudah said: 'One who devotes much time to the following three things, will have his days and years lengthened: one who davens at length, one who eats at length, and one uses the restroom at length...'." What, I have always wondered, is this supposed to mean? The answer, the insidious truth lurking beneath the placid Talmudic surface, is that Rav Yehudah is none other than Haman! For the word "Rav" in the name "Rav Yehudah" is a direct reference to Haman, as it says in the Megillah, "Vehashitiya kados, ein oneis, ki chein yisad hamelech al kol *rav beiso*" (1:8), and the Midrash tells us (*Shtus Ravbah*, early chapters), Rav Sussiyah expounded: "Al kol *rav beiso*-- this refers to Haman, who is of the seed of Esav, about whom it is written 'Vrav yaavod tzair' (Genesis 25:23); similarly, Esav says 'Yeish li *rav*' (Genesis 33:9)."

"Yehudah" is also a direct reference to Haman, as both "Yehudah" and "Memuchan"

are 21 in gematria kesona, and in *Megillah* 12b, the Gemarah tells us that Memuchan is Haman. The obvious conclusion is that "Rav Yehudah" is merely a pseudonym for Haman! With this in mind, it becomes clear both 1) that Hashem's name is absent from the Megillah because Haman, *rav* of the restroom, is the focus of events in the Megillah, and 2) we now see what prompted "Rav Yehudah" to make his strange, if not uproarious, comment about the bathroom.

When these thoughts occurred to me, I was embarrassed to never having seen before what had been staring me

in the face for years. Chazal have left such a clear trail for us to follow that these *chiddushim* may seem obvious, although I have never seen them in any *sefer*. Hashem must have hidden these thoughts from previous generations until the proper time was at hand. *Ashrei Chelki*!

One problem still itched my intellect: what had lured Haman into the loo to begin with? I knew its attractions for me were pure: after all, where else could I enjoy the opportunities for learning enjoyed by Rabbi Akiva and Ben Azzai? Certainly, though, Haman would not have been interested in the intricate *sugyas* of *beis hakisay*. What drew him in? Again, the answer is embarrassingly simple: "Beis hakisay" and "Memuchan" are both 21 in gematria kesona; that is, Haman's very name reveals his deep-seated (no pun intended) attraction for the bathroom, his strong affinity for the scatological.

Where does the porcelain throne figure prominently in the Megillah? Some examples:

When the Megillah tells us "Ksheves hamelech Achashveirosh al *kisay malchuso*" (1:3), it is clearly referring to the royal restroom. And certainly, as he sat, he understood in his wisdom that this throne was the true seat of his power (sorry), the true repository (depository?) of his might, as the Rambam tells us in *Moreh Nevuchim* (1:9): "They would only allow to sit on the *kisay* one who was possessed of greatness and nobility...the *kisay* became widely known as a symbol of the importance of the one for whom it was made."

What prompted Achashveirosh to throw the biggest party the world had ever seen? Always lighting our way, Chazal nudge us on to the obvious answer with subtle clues: at his leisure on the royal "throne" (like a good Persian), Achashveirosh took notice of the splendor and majesty of his *kisay*, realized how great he must be as the possessor of such a masterpiece, and planned a great feast to show "osher kevod malchuso" (1:4). What is "osher kevod malchuso"? In *Shabbos* 25a, the Gemarah tells us, "Who is truly *ashur* (wealthy)? Rabbi Yosi said, 'One who has a *beis hakisay* close to his table'." "Osher", it seems, refers to the royal chamber-pot. How about "kevod malchuso"? Shemos 6:13 tells us "Vayedaber Hashem el Moshe v'el Aharon Vayetzaveim el Par'oh melech mitrayim." Rashi explains that Hashem commanded them to show *kevod* to Par'oh. What, the Amramite brothers wanted to know, was "kevod"? Rashi tells us several *pesukim* later (7:15): "Behold, he [Par'oh] goes out to the water, and thou [Moshe] shalt stand to meet him." Rashi explains that he was to confront Par'oh as he slunk (slinked? slank?) down to the river to relieve himself. It is clear, then, that "kevod malchuso" also points to the powder room. Clearly, then, the *posuk* in the Megillah, "osher kevod malchuso", means to tell us that Achashveirosh wished to exhibit the most precious royal possession, the most eloquent testimony to his stature: the royal can.

Being a Persian, however, and therefore modest in the loo, he had a problem. Since the *mishteh* was to be

thrown in the *chatzar hamelech*-- in the public eye-- how could he maintain the strict standards of Persian bathroom *tzniut*? Simple: he appointed guards to patrol the throne area and deny royal Peeping Toms their satisfaction. The King committed a grave error, however; he chose "Bigson v'Seresht, shnei sarisei hamelech, mishomrei hasaf" (2:21), two disgruntled ne'er-do-wells who plotted against him and his *kisay*-- "vayevakshu lishloach *yad* bamelech Achashveirosh" (2:21); "lishloach *yad*" hints to the plotters' dastardly plans for attacking the *kisay*, as it says in the Torah: "yad al *keis*". (Shemos 17:16). Mordechai, however, spoiled their fun by tattling to the King.

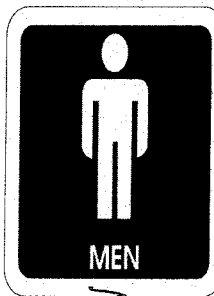
Soon after, Achashveirosh recognized among his toadies and yes-men one who was a particularly noble master of the privy. Yes, he saw Haman. The King honored him and glorified him, lifting Haman's personal privy above those of all the other royal advisors, as the Megillah tells us, "Vayasemkis o'me al kol hasarim" (3:1). Haman soon ran into a problem, however: how could he use his *kisay* in its new exalted position in full view of the entire court? Were the Persians not especially *tzanuah* in the bathroom, as mentioned? Furthermore, Haman was certainly a *chochom*, as both "Haman" and

"chochom" are 14 in gematria ketana, and does the Rambam not tell us all that "just as a *chochom* is distinguished by his wisdom and *midot*, and separated by these traits from the rest of the herd, he must also be distinguished by his actions...and in *asivus tzerachov*", which refers to relieving oneself? So what did Haman do? He pressured the king into issuing the infamous decree: "kol avdei hamelech asher bsha'ar hamelech korim umishtachavim l'Haman" (3:2). Whenever they entered the court, visitors were forced to bow to the ground, obscuring their view of the disgusting proceedings Haman was undoubtedly conducting in his exalted chair, suspended above the entire court.

As we all know, Mordechai stubbornly refused to cooperate, igniting the wrath of Haman, who was furiously embarrassed by the saintly *Sanhedrian's* intent gaze.

This understanding of the events of the Megillah explains the strange *posuk*, "Vayisapeik Haman" (5:10), "Haman held himself in." Many great meforshim have questioned Haman's action here: how could he justify holding himself in? Does the Gemarah not warn us in *Makkos* 16b, "Rav Achai said: 'One who restrains his bowels transgresses *bal teshaktzu*'" (rendered roughly, "thou shalt not make thyself disgusting")? Do not the Rambam and the Shulchan Oruch *paskan* this way *lehalachok*? To my further embarrassment, I found that the answer was again childishly simple: Haman held it in because Mordechai was sitting there staring at him scornfully, balefully, defiantly, as the Megillah tells us: "And when Haman saw Mordechai in the king's gate, and that Mordechai neither rose nor moved for him" (5:9). A true *bakiy* in *hilchos beis hakisay*, Haman knew the *Pri Megadim* in *Mishbetzos Zohov* (Seeman 3, *Se'if Koton* 13), which tells us that the *issur* of *bal teshaktzu* is *nidcheh* by *kevod habrios*, human dignity. And the *Mishna Berura* (*Se'if Koton* 31), Haman knew, agrees with the *Pri Megadim*. So he held it in, gnashing his teeth in mounting fury at what must have seemed to him Mordechai's malevolent recalcitrance.

What would Haman do to relieve (sorry!) the poisonous wrath which filled his breast, the bitter bile which was ruining his pleasure up there on the "kisay hakovod"? Zereah, Haman's wife, had the solution: she and Haman's friends advised him to have Mordechai hanged from a 50-Amot jibbet. Why 50 amot? Haman had



...and the Megillah

not married an ignoramus; Zeresh was just a few rungs below her husband in *beis hakisay* ritual and lore. She knew the posuk, "Vayosed tiyeh *lcho al azenechoh*" (Deuteronomy 23:14), which requires that Israelitish (I love that word) military camps carry implements to dig pits for the disposal of fecal matter (another expression I use at cocktail parties). "*Lcho*" is 50 in *gematria*, hinting that one who violates *hilchos beis hakisay* is hanged on a scaffold of 50 amos.

From where did Haman get a tree 50 amos high? Midrash Abbah Gurion tells us (*Parshah 5*, "*Beis Hamedrash*," *Choveres 1*, Jerusalem, TRZ'CH, Aaron Jellinek, Hamburg manuscript). "He cut a cypress from the king's private garden, a tree 50 amos high and 12 amos in diameter." In other words, he snuck (sneaked? snack?) into the king's *kisay-chamber* in the garden and pilfered, from the royal throne itself, a fitting log. Haman was slippery, but not stealthy enough to fool Achashveirosh, who had been suspicious of attempts at his precious toilet since the episode with Bigtan and Teresh. The king heard Haman saying away in the garden-- "*Vayomer hamelech mi bechotzeir?!...vayomru na' arey hamelech aylov, hiney Haman omeid bechotzeir*" (6:4-5), and immediately suspected Haman of attempting the ultimate *mered*-- Haman, the king was sure, was about to mount the royal throne and (forgive me for even mentioning the heinous crime) to relieve himself there! Angry but not lethally so, the king decided to warn Haman by forcing him to honor Mordechai, who had prevented the last attempt at the throne.

The *Gemarah* in *Megillah* 16a tells us that as the procession was passing Haman's residence. Haman's daughter dumped a basin of excrement on her father's head; when her father, festooned with spoor, looked up and she realized it was he, she jumped from the roof in utter mortification (literally, as she splatted on the pavement far below). Most *meforshim* have assumed that Miss Haman meant to shame Mordechai by dumping fecal matter on him, but the *Gemarah* (*Megillah* 16a) tells us that on the spot, a *bas kol* called out, "Even the daughter of Haman is now worthy of a portion in the World to Come." I have never understood this: she tries to dump doody on Mordechai, but when she misses and mistakenly tzeschmetters dad and regrets it so much that she attempts to join the pavement, she gets *Olom Haboh*?

However, with our new perspective on the Megillah, we understand that Haman's daughter really meant to honor *Mordechai* by showering him with what Persian society considered a veritable perfume, so fixated were they on the john. When she saw that she had conferred this signal honor on the wrong man, profaning the most sacred national honor by awarding it to her undeserving dad, she lost her reason and took the plunge. Despite her suicide, she merited *Olom Haboh*, since her intention had been to honor Mordechai.

Whichever way we understand the *Gemarah*, we have a problem from elsewhere in *Shas*: since the Haman-Mordechai parade took place on the 16th of *Nisan* (see *Megillah* 15a), which is the second day of *Pesach*, why doesn't the *Gemarah* in *Beitzah* 26b bring our *Gemarah* as proof to the *shitah* of Rav Yehoshua ben Levi, who says that it is permissible to carry a *kisay* on *Yom Tov* to a person needed by the public? The most sensible answer I've heard is that since we pasken that "*Ein mashgichin b'vas kol*" (*Berochos* 52a, *Baba Metzi'ah* 59b, *Pesachim* 114a, *Yevamos* 14a, *Chullin* 44a), "We pay no attention to a *bas kol*", it makes sense that we pay no attention to *bas Haman* either,

and *kal vechomer ben bno shel kal vechomer* (in short, the grandson of a *kal vechomer*) that we should ignore *this bas*, who herself wasn't too much on the ball and couldn't even figure out who to dump the chamber-pot on!

That very evening, the king paid his customary visit to his garden to inspect (and use) the royal can, as it says: "*vhamlech kom bechamaso mimishte hayayin el ginos habison*" (7:6). Upon finding the great edifice violated by Haman's removal of the 50-amos beam, the king remembered Haman's suspicious activities in the chotzer several nights previous, as well as Haman's suspicious behavior during the mishteh, as the posuk tells us: "*vHaman Niv'as milifney hamelech vhamalkoh*" (7:6), which literally means that Haman was scared, but hints to Haman's secret ambition: *avis*, or "chamber-pot." Haman planned to usurp the royal throne, seating himself on that grand platform to enjoy the comforts and powers it afforded. The king remembered the royal decree which prescribed hanging on a 50-amos pole for violators of bathroom etiquette, and accordingly commanded that Haman be so punished. "And the city of Shushan was gay and joyous" (8:15).

This *havonah* of the Megillah opens doors in the halachic realm as well. It is well known that *tefillin* may not be worn in the men's room, or, for that matter, the women's room (see Uri Cohen for further details); not just that, but you can't even wipe with the hand which you use to wrap the *tefillin* (i.e. righties can't wipe with the right, etc.). I never fully understood this *halachah* until one day, seated in my customary meditation spot (must I be more specific?), the *malach* appointed over bathrooms appeared to me and whispered in my ear that *beis hakisay*, like *Shabbos*, is an *os*, because of its intimate connection with *Purim* and therefore *Yom Tov*. Because it is an *os*, *tefillin* cannot be worn in it, as two *osios* cannot coincide (*Menachos* 36b, *Ervin* 96a).

I know what you're wondering. How do I justify thinking about halachic matters in the bathroom? I can only refer you to my superiors and predecessors in this matter, Rabbi Akiva and Ben Azzai, who first established the *beis hakisay* as a center of *limud*. For this very reason, it seems to me, we sit during the reading of the Megillah, in symbolic commemoration of the sitting of the *beis hakisay*. How beautiful, then is the *minhag* of Sefardim to sit even during the *berochos* of the Megillah!

Additionally, the *minhag* of eating *Oznei Haman* ("Haman's ears", or "Hamentaschen") is also rooted in the depths of holiness, as the Midrash tells us. "*Lo nisnoh haTorah lidros'eh loh' ochley Haman*" (*Mechilsa Beshalach* 17, *Pesikta Zutrai Beshalach* 13:17, *Tanchuma Beshalach* 20); that is, "The Torah is given to be expounded only by the eaters of Haman." And, as is well known, true acceptance of the Torah did not come until the generation of Mordechai, as the *Gemarah* tells us in *Shabbos* 88a. Why, though, have we chosen the ear to eat? Simple (once again): As the *Gemarah* tells us in *Kesubos* 5a, discussing the famous *parsha* in the Torah about military bathroom laws. "Bar Kapparah expounded: 'What is meant my "*Vayosed tiyeh lcho al azenechoh*" (Deuteronomy 23:14)? Do not read "*azenechoh*," "weapons," instead, read "*oznechoh*," "ears".

Humble, ignorant scholar though I am, it seems appropriate to me to suggest that we spend some time on *Purim* every year expounding *Hilchos Beis Hakisay* and erasing Haman's name by flushing responsibly, with, of course, the special *kavonos* and *yichudim* found in the *sefarim* of the Kabbalists. Chag Sameach.

Letter to a Y.U. Supporter: A Madlib

Dear Mr./Mrs. (Name of Donor),

I just received a malicious and threatening letter from the Y.U. office of development informing me that I had better get a letter to you soon groveling in thanks for the (amount of scholarship) that you gave which went towards my tuition. So, I am writing to express my sheer gratitude for the financial aid I received from the Yeshiva University (Donor Name) Scholarship Fund (I must say, you do like seeing your name in lights, don't you?). Indeed, without the generous financial aid package I received from Y.U., (a pittance of which came from your pathetic little fund) I would not be able to afford to go here (which may have helped me in the long run).

I am currently a (class) in the (school) in Yeshiva College and (Judaic Program) School of Jewish Studies. I should graduate in (date) with a useless B.A. in (major) which will play no part in my future plans, but which somehow satisfied my parents' desires for a college education (go figure). Beside my school work (little of which I actually do), I am the president of the Yeshiva College (whatever) Club, a group I'm organizing now (to have something to stick on my resume). We have done nothing to date of any import, but President of anything looks important on a resume. When I graduate I intend to (move to Israel and) either study for (whatever) certification or work toward a real degree in (Anything useful) from a real graduate school.

I grew up in the (hometown) area where I attended (High School) a religious Zionist day school, if you can call it that. After my senior year in high school, I attended Yeshivat (Yeshiva in Israel) where I studied Talmud, Bible, and Jewish studies full time, and actually learned something. (I stayed on at (Yeshiva in Israel) a second year.)

As my time in Y.U. begins to run out I look back on what I gained here. It's funny, I still haven't found it yet. I was impressed by a students and teachers who maintain a dedicated religious lifestyles and attitudes without sacrificing healthy skepticism and intellectual honesty. But then I left (Yeshiva in Israel). In many ways they have become my role models.

Thank you very much for your generosity. NOT!

Sincerely,

your pal,
(Your Name)

P.S. The letter from the admissions office said to be candid and sincere. I hope you appreciate my honesty.



Moshioch Arrives: As Expected, Nothing But Confusion

In a small ceremony in the Deans' office last week, Dean Rosenfeld was declared the *Moshioch*. The Y.U. world was in shock, especially all the students who were at the time waiting in line to have courses opened. Said one student, "I don't care if he's the *Moshioch*, he's still opening that Bible for me."

Responses were soon forthcoming: **Rav Rosensweig**- "Rav Soloveitchik was of the opinion that only a Rosh Yeshiva could declare himself the *Moshioch*. I don't know, maybe. There's a famous *Pilpula Pinchas* that assumes against the Rav. Should we follow some *Acharon* that nobody has ever heard of? I don't know, could be."

Rav Blau- "Well, Binny once said (I know that some people call him 'Rabbi Blau' now, but we can still call him 'Binny,' wink wink) that he doubted the *Moshioch* would actually come from Y.U.. Yitzi, however, sees the *Moshioch* in rather abstract Kantian forms. Yaki doesn't really care who the *Moshioch* is, as long as I stop accusing him of having taken art. Donald said, 'I always thought it would be you Rabbi, or can I call you Dad now.'"

Rav Charlop- "*Moshioch, Moshioch...* I know I have a file on him somewhere. Let me see, as I thought, he still owes several S.R.'s, we might have to send him to Griss."

Dr. Lee- "I'm no expert on the Jewish idea of *Moshioch*, but based on my understanding of *Torah U'Madda*, I would say it depends on the different views of Maimonides and the *Rabad* in *Hilkhot Melakhim*. Of course, this would have to take *Rav Chayyim's* and the *Or Sameach's* explanations into account..."

Rav Schachter- "Well of course the concept of *Moshioch* is complex and multivariied. One must first differentiate between the two radical extremes and then the sundry shades of semantical differences that lie in between. The first option views it as a formal *din* (i.e. inexplicable *gezerat haKatur*). The *Rishon* who most clearly says this is the *Talmid haMeili* in the *Shittah*, page 93 column 17. The other extreme sees it as a hermenutic cyclic process, though it's hard to say what exactly that means."

Assistant Dean Rosenberg- "Gee, I don't know if he's the *Moshioch* or not, you'll have to go ask him."

The Observer- "Well, of course, nobody would think *Moshioch* comes from Stern. This is just another example of how Y.U. only cares about the boys."

YUSSR- "We thought for sure the *Moshioch* must be Schick. Why else would he spend all his time running around the world? Now I guess we'll have to bring him back and make him director after all."

Dr. Hyman- "None of us here at BRGS actually believe that there's such a thing as a *Moshioch*, but this has a remarkable resemblance to messianic movements in the ancient Ugaritic texts."

The higher-ups of Y.U. responded quickly by forming a committee to study this phenomenon and then a second committee to conduct a study of the feasibility of the first committee, and of the whole *Moshioch* concept in general. No one from the original committee was appointed to the second. Said Michael Eisenberg, "I knew he was going to declare himself *Moshioch*, and I knew who was going to be on the committee, and that they'd make a second committee. I'll tell you the final decision a day or two before it's made."

Y.U. In The News

Marketing Study Complete

After a lengthy and expensive study, a prominent non-Jewish marketing firm recommended that all Jewish studies programs be dropped immediately. The firm also said that it was studying the benefits of significantly raising administration salaries, which would improve student life in general on both campuses.

Recycling On Campus

In a joint effort, the Yeshiva College Philanthropy Society and senior administration officials formed a committee to schedule a meeting to study the feasibility of instituting a program to recycle old excuses to raise tuition. The Student Senate Subcommittee for Administration Actions rejected the plan, and was promptly ignored.

Retreat Declared A Success

Returning from a grueling nine hour joint Administration-Student Leader Retreat, both sides declared the event an overwhelming success. Strangely, the student leaders appeared dazed and practically catatonic, repeating over and over, "Nuhnan - good. Eisenberg - bazzaaaananaad."

Furry Poopers

Citing an overcrowding problem at engagement parties held in Morg lounge, Facilities Management has decided that all future parties will be split, with the men in Morg lounge, and women in the Sephardic Synagogue (with the music piped in). SCWSC President Adeevalayagraubard complained, "There's no room in the Sephardic Shul! And piped-in music is degrading to all Stern Women." Retorted SOY President Hillel Schnefeld, "Who asked them to come in the first place?"

Recycling Too

The Yeshiva College Philanthropy Society and the Tagar Club have recently launched an innovative recycling program: Date Recycling. Said Tagar Club spokesman Bibi Netanyahu, "When you realize that it's just not working out, please, do not just DUMP your date. Instead, place him or her in the specially designated blue bins in the Orange and Morg lounges, respectively. This will prevent needless waste of both time and money. To initiate this program we are sponsoring yet another Shabbaton at Stern College. Hopefully, someone will show up this time."

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan
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