



# OBSERVER

November 2007/ Kislev 5768

Volume LIII Issue 3

## Enhancing Diversity, Public School Students Thrive at Stern

BY YAFFI SPODEK

Though public school students constitute a very small minority of the total student body at Stern College for Women (SCW), they are a group which is growing slowly but surely.

As, opposed to the overwhelming majority of undergraduates who come from Modern Orthodox high schools without the need for much targeted recruiting, the Jewish students attending public schools are "an untapped market of students who would benefit from a Jewish education," explained Rabbi Ari Solomont, YU's international director of recruitment and outreach.

At the November 4<sup>th</sup> Town Hall Meeting held on the Beren campus, freshman Abby Phillips (SCW '11) asked President Joel what initiatives the university was taking to recruit more women from public schools. The president responded positively, saying that the college, through the efforts of its admissions office, is increasingly trying to

connect with prospective students through different outreach programs.

This is in fact the case, as confirmed by Rabbi Solomont. "The President has a passion for what YU



Courtesy of of yu.edu

Rabbi Ari Solomont, YU International Director of Recruitment and Outreach

can do for Jewish students," he explained. "As a former president of Hillel, he has seen what happens to Jewish public school students and ye-

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## GPATS Attracts Range in Pursuit of Women's Learning

BY ALIZA VISHNIAVSKY

On a typical weekday, the Eisenberg Beit Midrash in 245 Lexington Avenue is abuzz with the discourses of the women enrolled in YU's Graduate Program for Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS). These students choose to spend two years engaged in intensive study of advanced gemara and halakha, setting the rigorous tone for women's learning at SCW and in the Orthodox community at large.

This year, the diversity among the program's participants is particularly noteworthy. Traditionally, the women hail from a variety of universities across the United States, including SCW, Brandeis, and Columbia. However, as GPATS Director Rabbi Shmuel Hain points out, "what is different this year is the range in age, life experience, origin, and religious upbringing. What binds the group together is their mutual commitment to Torah learning."

Not all the women entered the program straight out of undergraduate programs, and some even came here from other countries. Leonie Hardy, for example, is an Australian woman who graduated medical school in 2002 and practiced med-

icine for two years. Though Hardy attended Jewish day school in Australia, her background in learning Hebrew texts was limited.

"We learned most of the meforshim (commentators) in English

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## 215 Lex Expansion Plans in Formative Stages

BY ARIELLA WEINBERGER

New plans are on the horizon as the university prepares to make use of additional space in the Sy Syms building at 215 Lexington Avenue. According to Vice President of Administrative Services Jeffrey Rosengarten, the fourth, fifth, and sixth floors, accounting for 30,000 square feet, will be available by the end of 2008.

YU purchased the basement through the eighth floor of the 215

Lexington building over a decade ago, but at the time, there were tenants on some floors whose leases were still in effect. As a result, YU was unable to utilize those floors until the leases were terminated.

As the student population of SCW increases, the buildings must reflect that expansion—from modern facelifts in dorm lobbies, to entire floors being reconfigured and designed, to new multi-media classrooms, a new Beit Midrash, and a new lobby in the 245 Lexington building.

The renovation of the 215 Lexington building is now in the planning stages. The blueprints will not only include plans for the new space, but also for the seventh and eighth floors, which are in need of remodeling attention.

Those charged with the task of creating a "comprehensive space plan" will look at all available space and determine how best to arrange it in order to accommodate the needs of everyone involved.

"We are going to look at all those floors as part of an overall plan and look at what's needed by Stern, Sy Syms, and the Office of the Registrar," reported Rosengarten. "Over a period of time we will determine what is the best layout economically and for the whole operation."

SCW Dean Karen Bacon echoed Rosengarten's statements.

"We are looking to develop a plan for all the floors and this plan should take into account everyone's needs," she commented. "Everyone can have a piece of the plan."

Rosengarten was quick to point out that none of the plans are finalized. The fourth floor might be used temporarily while the seventh and eighth floors undergo remodeling. Rosengarten assured that the plan will entail a step by step process, keeping in mind both the amount of space and the desire to occupy it as quickly as possible. A planning meeting is being arranged with the deans and student leaders in order to determine how to make adequate use of the new space. Since it is still early in the process, the hired architect has yet to draw up concrete plans.

Students are eager to know how the space will be utilized. Dahlia Gold (SCW '08) believes that the space should be filled with more classrooms, especially to alleviate the elevator traffic in 245 Lexington.

Mindy Hack (SCW '08) shared that sentiment as well.

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## Closing Synagogue Donates Proceeds to SCW

BY HILLY KRIEGER

The synagogue of Morris Park Hebrew Center of Pelham Parkway in the North Bronx plans to donate \$200,000 to Stern College for Women, pending the sale of their synagogue building. The Morris Park Hebrew Center is a Conservative Jewish synagogue that was founded in 1928 and will close later this year.

The decision to donate a percentage of the proceeds from the building's sale to SCW actually originated from a provision in the synagogue's constitution, which has not been amended since 1975. Recently, a representative of the synagogue contacted Stern to inform them of this fact.

Ms. Joan Apple, director of Institutional Advancement at SCW, commented on the difficulty of procuring funds for Stern scholarships.

"It's hard enough to get someone to write a check for \$200, but \$200,000, that's really quite a sum,"

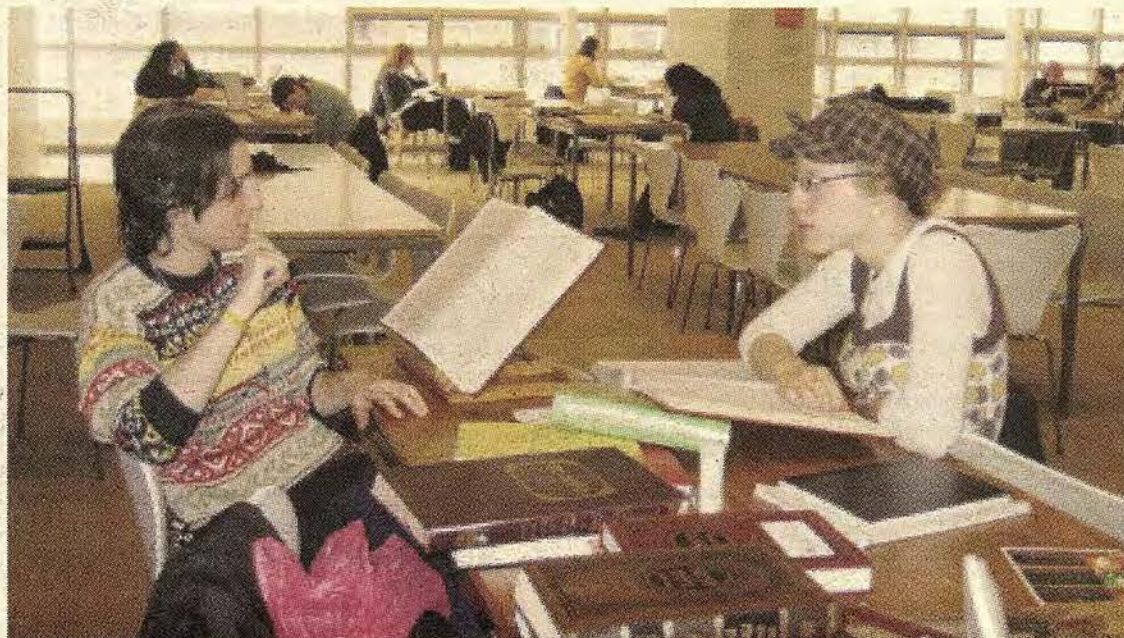
Apple commented. She described how crucial it is for students to appreciate that the money used to fund their education comes from people who really want to make a difference in helping young Jewish women receive a top-notch education at one of the foremost institutions of advanced Jewish and secular learning.

Mr. Gabriel Grumer, a member of the Morris Park Congregation who is handling the transfer of funds, attributed the synagogue's closing to the community's population shift out of the Bronx.

"Thirty years ago, the northern section of the Bronx had a very large Jewish community that was able to support numerous congregations," Grumer said. "The children of the members moved away and then our synagogue was left with very few members [all] in their 70s and 80s."

Grumer noted that Riverdale,

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The Observer/Devorah Stechler

GPATS Students learn Talmud in Eisenberg Beit Medrash

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# STAFF EDITORIALS

## Roll Call? Present. (Unfortunately).

In the year 2007, Stern remains one of the few institutions with a mandatory attendance policy. Such a paternalistic measure is not only antiquated, but is also detrimental to the academic rigor and professionalism of the college.

There are a few motivations which need to be assessed. If the objective of the school is to compel students to act in accordance with their own best interests, it will fail miserably in its attempt to do so. Barring the notion that the ultimate choice to attend class rests with the individual, there is a very obvious internal mechanism that achieves the same end. Women who incur too many ab-

sences and are therefore unfamiliar with the material that is taught, face the possibility of performing poorly in the course. If this eventuality is not a sufficient deterrent against irresponsible behavior, it is highly doubtful that any administrative policy will be effective in its stead.

Furthermore, professors will often act punitively, lowering overall marks by half a grade for each absence in excess of three. This places students in an impossible situation when extenuating circumstances arise. Of course there is the option of communicating such issues, but unfortunately, not all instructors are either reasonable or understanding.

Some have explained that mandated roll call helps ensure a dynamic classroom environment. If attendance were optional, few would come, and ensuing dialogue would suffer. Such an approach however, fails to take into account the basic fact that students will show up for interesting and stimulating courses. This explains the phenomena of well-attended classes which do not enforce the policy.

In fact, eliminating compulsory attendance would create incentives for teachers to go beyond the banalities of the textbook and instead use the classroom as a forum for interactive discussion and debate. Such

improvements in the curricula would undoubtedly serve as more authentic means of generating participation and turnout, than would coercive or disciplinary policies.

It is high time the college stopped assuming the worst of its students. The women of SCW are mature adults capable of making sensible decisions and whose desire to learn is not solely predicated on the promise of an "A." If we didn't value the independent pursuit of knowledge, many of us wouldn't be here in the first place.

## SCW, Speak Up!

In a new and exciting move, the Student Life Committee at Stern has accomplished the formerly impossible: the library is now open for extended hours. Gone are the woe-filled days of yore during which students gazed sadly upon darkened rooms, realizing that the glass door that allowed them entrance to the library was firmly locked. The women of SCW will now have the ability to be more productive than ever before, with the Hedy Steinberg Library open on Thursdays until 1 a.m. and available on Sundays starting from 9 a.m.

According to the committee, the librarians were most accommodating, immediately willing to allocate funds from their budget to cover the costs of increased hours. There is much that we can accomplish if we would only bother to ask for it and to offer a legitimate reason as to why it should exist. As such, it is imperative that students be aware of the organizations that work for them, the Student Life Committee being chief among them.

What would you like to change? Some have suggested the introduction of larger classroom desks,

perhaps something along the lines of the ones the men use uptown. It is strange that we must attempt to seat ourselves behind desks that can hardly fit a notebook, let alone a laptop. There is also the ever-current issue of the cafeteria and its exorbitant prices and lack of variety. There are people here who are willing to help, people whose job it is to work for you, the students of Stern College for Women.

So next time something occurs to you, please don't resign yourselves and assume that the problem cannot be addressed or the situation

fixed. The only way we can accomplish change is to have people desire it and want it, people who will spearhead the effort behind talking about issues and going to the right people with their suggestions.

With the victory of extended library hours in hand, we can move onward to creating the university environment that we all crave.

## Going, Going, Green

We would like to commend the university on its recent inroads with regard to energy and environmental policy, improving its grade from D- to C- on the 2008 College Sustainability Report Card, which evaluates the practices of the 200 American institutions with the largest endowments.

Yeshiva took quick action to remedy its poor performance on last year's survey, expanding the agenda of the already existing Energy Task Force and hiring a new Energy Manager. In fact, YU was among the list of 13 schools raising their envi-

ronmental score by at least one full letter grade.

It is encouraging to see the university embrace the mantra "it's the right thing to do," placing environmental concerns over monetary considerations. Although some adjustments, such as reductions in energy consumption, do have financial paybacks, others, such as eliminating styrofoam usage, do not.

What is particularly noteworthy, however, is the planned inclusion of students into the ranks of the Energy Task Force. If energy costs continue to skyrocket, the uni-

versity may be compelled to institute more sweeping changes affecting class schedules as well as the allocation and use of space. Considering that undergraduates are necessarily implicated in such potential consequences, their input is appropriately being solicited.

Moreover, in order for Yeshiva to join the American College and University Presidents Climate Commitment as a signatory, its students must take part in required programs like the national RecycleMania competition. But the university need not worry about

the participation of its undergraduate women; they have already taken the lead in proposing a series of initiatives to raise environmental awareness on campus, as manifested by inquiries at the recent Town Hall Meeting and the posting of recycling guides in each of the dormitories.

With the groundwork laid for a strong partnership between administrators and students, YU's prospects for advanced sustainability are looking ever more promising.

## Corrections

In the October issue, an incorrect headline was given to the article "Defeating Hitler' Delegitimized: An Attack on Post-Zionism," which appeared in the Israel section. The

correct headline should read: "Avraham Burg and the Post Zionism Movement: An Exploration." The article's purpose was to raise awareness about the post-Zionist move-

ment and the ramifications for the State of Israel and world Jewry.

In the same section, a mistaken headline reported that "250,000

Fill Dag Hammarskjold Plaza to Protest Iranian President," while the correct number is 25,000.

The Yeshiva University  
**OBSERVER**  
245 Lexington Avenue New York, NY 10016  
scwobserver@gmail.com yuobserver.com

Sara Lefkowitz  
Yaffi Spodek  
**Editors-in-Chief**

Shayna Hoenig  
**Managing Editor**

Sarah Medved  
**Copy Editor**

Racheli Davies  
Ariana Denenberg  
**Layout Editors**

Adina Schwartz  
**Opinions Editor**

Yael Wolynetz  
**News Editor**

Nava Billet  
**Israel Editor**

Olivia Wiznitzer  
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Nili Seleski  
**Science & Health Editor**

Chana Filler  
**Fashion Editor**

Shoshana Lief  
**Photography Editor**

Jordana Mainzer  
**Business Manager**

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All letters to the editors should be sent to [scwobserver@gmail.com](mailto:scwobserver@gmail.com)



# Letters to the Editor

To the Editors,

Thank you for making the important choice to highlight a sensitive issue in the cover article "Hardship Away from Home" by Yaffi Spodek. I would also like to commend those who bravely came out with harsh but true statements for the sake of bettering our campus atmosphere.

As a native of Montreal, I feel that I am able to analyze the challenging relationships between the American and international students, perhaps more objectively than most, as I fall somewhere in the middle on the cultural spectrum.

Since first arriving at Stern, I have recognized the desperate need for greater tolerance and communication between students of different backgrounds. Why aren't we seizing the opportunity to actually learn about fascinating new customs and cultures, rather than further propagating stereotypes and unfounded rumors? Kudos to The Observer for bringing this unfortunate reality to the fore. We can no longer justify our failure to address the problem with claims of ignorance.

Nilly Brodt  
SCW '08

To the Editors,

RE: "YC Men Inconvenience Stern Women." While I take issue

with many aspects of Ms. Schwartz's extreme opinion as to how to handle the low attendance of men at co-ed YU events, I have two fairly objective arguments to make regarding her strong "ultimatum," as she so eloquently puts it.

First of all, to the best of my understanding, for the most part, classes in SCW and SSSB rarely go past 4 p.m., if that far at all. To finish classes any earlier than 6:30 p.m. on the Wilf campus, however, is an extreme rarity. Even my own schedule, which allows me to finish at 4:15 p.m. on Tuesdays, has me going to 7:45 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays. The point is, to complain about "vast oceans of homework and a pounding headache," while you have a tremendous amount of free time in which to do your work and unwind and do whatever it is you do to reach your work/play equilibrium, the men do not. The only time to actually do work at all is starting at 8 p.m., and that is only if you don't go to night seder, which brings me to my second point.

While knocking night seder seems to have become the latest fad at YU, it is still something integral to the Yeshiva part of Yeshiva University. Now, the balance of Yeshiva and University is in and of itself a very hot topic, which would not be very objective of me to discuss. However, the only time an event was pushed off until after night seder was for Torah Tours, which: a) featured a large male

population, majority or not; b) needed to accommodate the men, who play a central role in helping communities on Yom Tov. Unfortunately, women cannot read from the Torah, daven for the *amud*, or count towards a minyan, three essential Torah Tours objectives. So by default, the men are catered to.

I am not trying to criticize the fact that the programs are planned during night seder, rather, that there may be a fairly reasonable basis as to the lack of male attendance at such programs. The attendance issue isn't a fact that should be embraced by transferring all programs downtown, but rather a product of causality.

I think that Ms. Schwartz is very quick to indict the men without thinking of the other point of view, and is especially quick to offer a solution that clearly does not solve the issue.

Oh, and last but not least, I have never seen a YU guy look as nerdy as the one in that comic. Come on, that is real Stern propaganda.

Moshe Gelbtuch  
YC '10

To the Editors,

I want to respectfully express my thoughts regarding the article about international students printed in the last issue of The Observer.

I don't feel that "foreigners" is the right term for international students. We are not strangers in this land; we are fellow students.

The feeling that the article left me with is a negative one, and that is not necessarily the experience of every international student on campus. It may not even be the experience of the girls who were interviewed. Most importantly, it doesn't represent the entire international community.

I speak for myself and many fellow international students when I

say that I am grateful to Yeshiva University for the gift that they have given me. I wouldn't be in America if it wasn't for all of the help that they have given me and most of all, I wouldn't have the opportunities to strengthen my Judaism if I wasn't here.

Sophie Lachmann  
SCW '10

## Setting the Record Straight: A Defense of Ba'er Miriam

BY BATSHEVA LIPSCHITZ

I am a proud student of both Ba'er Miriam and Yeshiva University and have gained tremendously from both institutions. They share similar values and messages.

I am dedicated and involved in both schools. I am in touch with staff and administrators on both campuses. But, I wish they would speak to each other. And I wish the student body would stop spreading rumors.

I have heard all the gossip as to why Ba'er Miriam had been removed from the list of seminaries affiliated with YU's S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program. I have also spoken to the highest authorities in both Ba'er Miriam and YU and have heard the reasons prompting this decision.

First, the claim has been made that Ba'er Miriam is disorganized. This is not a very surprising statement. Let us consider that it is both a Jewish institution and one located in Israel. As such, I'm not really sure if anyone expects it be particularly organized. But why is Ba'er Miriam more disorganized than any other institution? Ba'er Miriam is unlike other seminaries in that the schedule is not wholly prearranged. Its calendar is flexible, and changes based on the needs of the students. When Ba'er Miriam sees that the students need a certain class to help them grow religiously, a new teacher is hired and a new class is created midyear. When the students need a break, an extra trip is planned, at the last minute. When the students need a meaningful Shabbat experience, an eleventh-hour Shabbaton is planned.

This creates disorganization, but, more importantly, it adds to the students' development. I can understand the frustration YU may have felt in dealing with Ba'er Miriam on an administrative level, but is that really a reason to remove the school from the program? I would think not, especially when it is clear that the disorganization comes from a place of true giving.

Another reason that has been cited is that Ba'er Miriam is too *charedi* (ultra Orthodox) or *yeshivish*. Is Rabbi Reuven Taragin of Yeshivat HaKotel too *charedi*? Is Mrs. Shani Taragin of Midreshet Lindenbaum too right-wing? How about Rabbi

Moshe Lichtman of Michlelet Mevasseret Yerushalayim (MMY), or all of the other religious Zionist faculty who teach at Ba'er Miriam? Now, it is true that there are right-wing teachers and rabbis at Ba'er Miriam, as well. One example is Rabbi Menachem Nissel, who teaches at almost every other seminary included on the YU Israel program and who is invited to speak at Stern annually.

Some university administrators, again indirectly, have argued that Ba'er Miriam was withdrawn from the list of approved seminaries because it didn't share similar values regarding the State of Israel, which is conveyed in how they commemorate *Yom Ha'atzmaut* (Israeli Independence Day). Ba'er Miriam is a unique seminary in that it does not preach a specific *hashkafa* (outlook) but rather allows each woman to chart her own course. Women are exposed to all halakhically acceptable viewpoints in Orthodoxy, and each decides, on her own, which path is appropriate for her.

On *Yom Ha'atzmaut*, there is a barbecue at night and no classes the next day. Those who choose to celebrate, and actually represent the majority of the student body, are encouraged to do so; those who choose not to, are not required to. I would argue that a similar situation exists at YU, where most undergraduates participate in the Independence Day program, but some do not. I would like to point out though, that most students opting out of the event held at YU often do so because they went to seminaries or yeshivot in Israel, on the joint program, that do not recognize the significance of the day.

Other circulating rumors have attributed Ba'er Miriam's removal to the university's desire to disqualify Shaarei Yerushalayim, which is headed by Rabbi Levi Orbach, husband of the founder of Ba'er Miriam. I certainly hope this is not the reason. The question of Shaarei Yerushalayim's credentials is beyond the scope of this discussion, but if YU felt the need to remove it from the Israel program, why should Ba'er Miriam also get the boot? The schools are com-

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## The Price of Prestige

BY PEREL SKIER

How much are you willing to pay for prestige?

This is the question Yeshiva University students are left to ponder as we compare this year's bill to last year's. Tuition that seemed fairly reasonable at \$26,000 two years ago is no longer, with a total now of \$30,060—and this sum accounts for credits alone. Room and board, meal plans, books, and simple living expenses propel YU's listed budget for this year to only thirty dollars short of \$40,000—and even that is a bare-boned estimate.

In a 2005 feature in The Commentator, President Joel claimed that the university's astronomical price tag is both ordinary and necessary in the modern academic realm. That many colleges are equally unaffordable is incontestable; U.S. News and World Report, which ranked YU as one of the top fifty universities in America in 2005, suggests that most upper-class institutions are increasing their tuition by an average of 5.9% a year—"2% adjusted for inflation," if that makes you feel better. But YU's climb from \$26,100 to \$28,200 to its current 30 big ones represents an average 7% rise, which, if not unthinkable, certainly places the university on the higher end of the spectrum. Perhaps President Joel would argue that the reason for our larger percent-

age jumps is that the other colleges cited in the U.S. News study, such as New York University and Brandeis, already demand an arm and a leg with a \$45,000-48,000 cost of attendance, leaving them with less need to compensate for new and increased expenses. And if he were aiming to operate YU with ivy-league functionality, that might make sense.

But it is precisely here that President Joel's rhetoric falls apart. According to The Commentator article, the president's chief objectives in raising tuition are "increasing the academic standards of the university, increasing the student body, and targeting a gain in prestige and rank." That certainly sounds like a reach for the gold. Yet the same feature quotes President Joel as emphasizing to students the need to "compare ourselves to schools like Kenyon and Haverford as opposed to Columbia and NYU." Confused? Apparently, we are expected to pay ivy-league tuition in return for a small, albeit well-reputed, liberal arts education.

What makes the entire discussion even more ridiculous is the Office of Student Finance's explanation for this conflict of identity: YU's loss of its Jewish-college niche. As The Commentator reports, the Office of Student Finance panics because men and women who would have attended the university's undergraduate programs in days of yore are now being

siphoned off into better-known "college campuses that offer kosher food availability, a Hillel house, no classes on Saturday, and occasionally a nearby *kollel* to learn Torah." YU hopes to win back these students by fulfilling the president's dream of "prestige and rank."

Wait a minute—let's get this straight. The university is losing members of its target audience to elite secular colleges which seem to provide the same spiritual accommodation and better academic instruction, and our plan is to impress them with our costliness? President Joel's proposed solution would be sadly reminiscent of the average non-muscular male sucking in his stomach as a pretty girl walks by, only it's worse: by raising the roof, the university may actually be driving away the Jewish youth it means to attract. After all, if YU is going to cost as much as Harvard anyway, and Harvard has its own Hillel and kosher plan, which would you apply to?

The only way to make YU relevant to new generations of Jewish students is for the university to rediscover what made it so unique in the first place: a warm spiritual environment, rooted in Torah values, where students could cultivate both the religious and worldly sides of their identities. Because a fortune in debt can be accrued anywhere.



## A Business Appeal: Professionalism at SSSB

BY CHANA FILLER

It was the first day of class in Sy Syms, and the professor announced that throughout the semester we would be working in groups. He then proceeded to explain that instead of inciting classroom chaos by allowing us to choose our own teams, he had prearranged them.

Moans and groans ensued. Unabashedly, women cried out, "Why can't we pick for ourselves? I want to be on her team!" Although the majority of the class was made up of juniors and seniors—legal adults, somehow the students had lost sight of this. At the time all I could think was, "Come on, how old are we?"

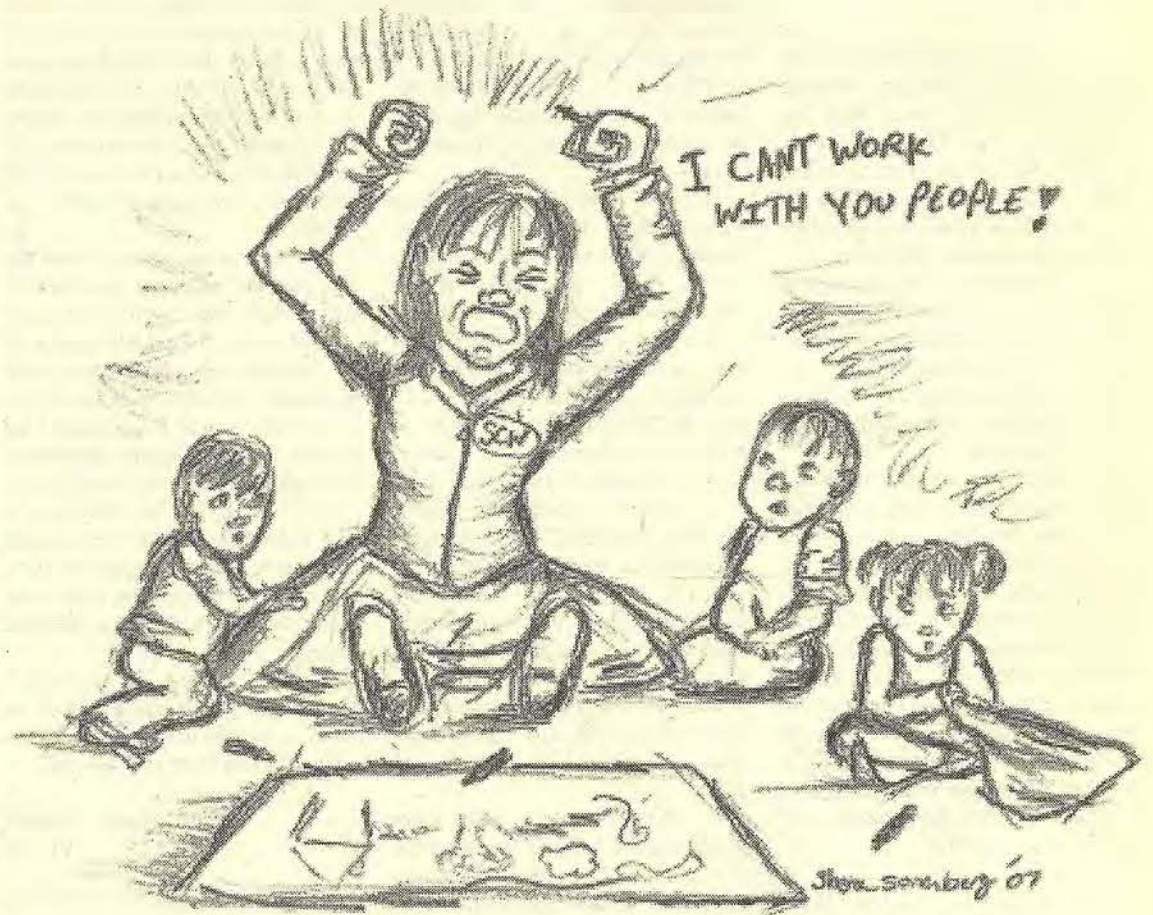
It is alarming that time and time again I encounter immature behavior in my Sy Syms courses. These women fear leaving the comfort of their own circle of friends. But the corporate world, the very field that they are supposedly preparing for careers in, is a place where they will certainly be forced to work with people they do not know and often do not like. There, these women will have to learn to swallow their pride to be able to get the job done.

Not only is it useful to learn how to deal diplomatically with everyone, regardless of personal likes or dislikes, but to also realize that people sometimes surprise us. It is important to bear in mind that while we may not be working alongside our best friends, new friendships and

work relationships may develop. We might be assigned projects with complete strangers whose work complements our own, and the end product will be better for it. Why deprive ourselves of the opportunity to enrich our education? What is so terrible about meeting someone new and working together to complete a task? In business it is impossible to go far if you cannot work well with others.

The jarring lack of maturity and professionalism in Sy Syms has undermined the academic integrity of the institution, while placing the student body at a disadvantage. Too often, professors will indulge the students and acquiesce to their frequent cajoling. How are we to adequately prepare ourselves for the challenges ahead when our own peers bring us down? There is a standard that needs to be upheld. If our performance is mediocre and our attitudes apathetic, what is it all worth? If we fail to take the initiative today, how will we lead tomorrow?

I only hope that by the time our studies at Sy Syms come to a close we will be ready to encounter the culture of the corporate world. We must prove ourselves marketable to the business enterprises we intend on working for upon graduation. However, as it now stands, many of the students at Sy Syms are in for a rude awakening if they do not soon take to heart the importance of mature professionalism.



## Uncapping the Bottle

BY ADINA SCHWARTZ

Imagine a shaken-up coke bottle, the pressure of the fizzy drink pressing against the bottle's cap. All that tension under the surface waits expectantly for release. Human beings are all bottles of soda teeming with gas bubbles. Pardon my unromantic use of metaphor, but it is the truth. All members of mankind share the powerful need to express their inner souls—and in my metaphor worthy of John Donne, the coke would be a person's inner soul. If forced to silence their voices, individuals suffer the tumultuous internal pain of repression. Yet a type of expression exists that many women in Orthodox Judaism find themselves deprived of: the communication of talent through the performing arts.

Just as anyone may feel aggravated when interrupted or not given an opportunity to speak, many Orthodox Jewish women feel frustrated and even hurt by the stifling of their artistic creativity. There are too few opportunities for women to present their talents in the Orthodox Jewish world, and this lack results in women experiencing a repression of their deepest passions. Even on Stern College's campus, where there are countless talented young women, many are left wishing for more chances to shine in the spotlight. No doubt the lack of prospects for theatrically minded women is due to the difficulty in finding enthusiastic support for the performance arts in both the student

body and the faculty. The small music department and the disappearance of the speech/theater major stand as witnesses to this apathy.

The fact that a deplorable dearth of theater exists within the Orthodox Jewish community at large became increasingly evident to me when I attended the ATARA conference on November 11, 2007. The program, which featured workshops during the day and performances in the evening, introduced me to women with abilities meant to be showcased. But not everyone had a chance to express their talents, and many women lamented their inability to find appropriate places to learn theatrical skills or to display them. All of us who came together at the ATARA conference know that God would not give us gifts like musical or theatrical aptitude if He did not intend for us to use them. Additionally, as we see from the Torah, it is often the Jewish women who sing and dance the praises of Hashem, as in *shirat Miriam*, *shirat Devorah*, and *shirat Chana*. These incredible women of Tanakh set a precedent for us to use our talents to inspire and uplift ourselves in a becoming way. No one tried to stop these women from expressing themselves with their God given capabilities. Therefore, today, if there is an unfortunate lack of venues for performing Orthodox Jewish women, then the

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## New York Tourist

BY SHIRA MARGULIES

This past summer, I spent 10 days with my family in San Francisco. We did everything touristy, from Fisherman's Wharf to Alcatraz Prison to the kosher deli in Union Square. Even just standing in the crowd at Pier 39 watching the sea lions play, sleep, and make incredibly obnoxious noises in the bay was a rejuvenating experience. At night, we strolled around the city, eyes peeled and ears perked for the sights and sounds of tourist attractions. Oh yes, we loved being tourists. We reveled in it, wide-eyed with wonder, eagerly pointing our fingers.

But in addition to being a great vacation spot, San Francisco is also a busy metropolis just like Manhattan. It is filled with people rushing to offices and appointments. In fact, as in all major cities, there are many rushing to go nowhere at all. They just like to rush. While we, the tourists, could not get enough of what San Francisco had to offer, the natives passed it all by without even a second glance—or a first one, for that matter.

"It's like two different worlds within one city," my father mused. And that's when it struck me: New York is no different. It happens to all of us. You're late for class or anywhere else and, as you try to run, you are hampered by clusters of non-New Yorkers. Tourists. Some may ask you for directions. Others take up the entire sidewalk to organize their group pictures—for which, of course, they need an expert photographer like

yourself, who they handpick out of dozens of other pedestrians dashing by. How many times do you steal into your classroom drastically late, or slide, breathless, into the seat on the train you've nearly missed, and think to yourself, "Man, I can't stand tourists?"

But here's the rub. While we are running around with no time to breathe, let alone do anything else, and grumbling to ourselves about the leisurely visitors blocking our path, the tourists are appreciating the beauty, wonder, and excitement of our city. If we would just take the time to slow down a little (and there always is time, it just has to be discovered), we too could see New York City through the eyes of a tourist—and there is nothing wrong with that. In fact, it is a *good* thing.

Right before Sukkot break I had to go to Macy's to return an item. It was the first time I had ever set foot on one of the upper floors of the monstrous 34<sup>th</sup> Street store. I was completely dazzled! Every time I went up another escalator it was like stepping into an entirely different world. I went from Jewelry Land to Sweaterville, from Cosmetics Kingdom to an *entire* floor of shoes! And did you know that, as you go higher and higher, the escalators become brown, wooden, and old-fashioned? It was an exciting experience just to walk around. Nearly everyone I passed in the store was a tourist, and I enjoyed feeling like a tourist myself for once.

Earlier in the semester, a friend and I decided to walk to Barnes and Noble together to get our school

books. Along the way, we passed a small park that seemed to just appear out of nowhere. We marveled at how pleasant and novel it was, especially in the middle of a big city. Around another bend, we discovered a touristy shop which sold, not New York memorabilia, but dishes, mugs, cups, tea sets, butter knives, and all sorts of picnic items with exciting designs on them—from neon-colored dots and swirls to the original illustrations of Alice in Wonderland. We spent ages in there, examining everything and exclaiming over each new design we came across.

There are incredible experiences sprinkled all over Midtown and we keep missing them. It is even enough to take your schoolwork and go sit in a park, interspersing tedious statistics problems with people-watching. You can walk along Broadway and stop into places like Toys "R" Us and the Hershey Store, or even say hello to the random person dressed up as Spiderman who likes to hang around over there. The Empire State Building is down the block from Brookdale; have you ever been to the top? There are so many things to do and see and we have the whole year ahead of us to seize these opportunities. We may not be tourists, but that does not mean we can't enjoy our city. Personally, I plan on spending the rest of this year viewing the city as a tourist would and I know I will see things I would never have discovered otherwise.



## Sitting on the Fence: Thoughts on Passionate Living

BY JAIMIE FOGEL

Julia, the sister-in-law of our Torah Tours host, caught my eye the first night we arrived back at her home from our evening meal elsewhere. Julia was stunning. She wore a thick, black, wavy *sheitel* (wig), and had beautifully smooth olive skin. Her full lips and deeply set dark brown eyes were captivating even in the thickly humid Phoenix night. At that first meeting, I picked up the ba'alat teshuva vibe from her innocent mispronunciations of Hebrew words. What I didn't realize until we all ate dinner together on the last night of the holiday was that Julia was not a ba'alat teshuva but a bona fide convert. With familial roots in Spain, Julia grew up in Arizona as the daughter

of a Catholic priest but was always somewhat unsettled by her religious affiliation. The conversion story she told us, which only detailed a tiny bit of what she went through to become a Jew, continued on long after the meal had ended.

What fascinated me about Julia more than her intense beauty and the fact that she was a convert was the unwavering faith she maintained throughout her difficult conversion process. Julia's story is a familiar one to all Orthodox rabbis currently involved in conversions. She faced inconceivable difficulties on her path to becoming a Jew, yet remained steadfast and compliant throughout it all. While it is difficult to be an Orthodox rabbi who creates policies to navigate complex areas of halakha, I would argue

that it is harder to be the innocent subject of those policies. Julia's privacy was heavily violated, but she took all that God threw at her with faith and modesty. She must have mentioned the term "meant to be" 10 times throughout the course of her story. She survived the grueling conversion process and was fortunate to find a loving and warm husband, and to be blessed with a beautiful two-year old daughter.

Julia's story made me think about the state of passion in Modern Orthodoxy. Here was a woman who faced challenges most Orthodox Jews will never encounter. Later that evening, a friend with me on Torah Tours turned to me and said, "Jaimie, I would never have become *frum* (religious). I would have said forget those rabbis and their religion!" Julia had faced challenges that most of us would not have been able to overcome with the constant faith she displays. This led me to think about one of the fatal characteristics of Modern Orthodoxy today: passion, or more accurately, the lack of it.

It often seems that the Modern Orthodox movement suffers under the pretense that post-high school seminary and yeshiva programs will instill the passion and love necessary to lead a committed Orthodox lifestyle. But this is a profoundly mistaken notion. Looking at it objectively, the fact that

we need such a system exposes the problem itself. Yeshiva study has always been the norm, but what these programs provide for many of its students are introductions to the world of intensive Torah learning. That is not the way Orthodox life was meant to be. Jews are supposed to grow up in religiously strong households, and then mature into religiously confident and observant adults.

But, what has happened is that many of the older generations of "Modern Orthodox" Jews have led lives somewhat disparate from normative halakhic living. They, in turn, send their kids off to yeshiva, hoping (or fearing) that one year will accomplish all they could not. While the term "flipping out" is overused these days, we forget about all the students who unfortunately don't "flip." They, on the other hand, return home after a year or so and continue the chain of skewed "Modern Orthodox" living, which will continue to deteriorate with each successive generation. A year of study in Israel is not the answer.

Ironically, in an ideal world, Modern Orthodox Judaism would be the perfect catalyst for instilling this passion. Modern Orthodox Jews sit on the fence that separates Orthodox traditions and modernity. They must constantly reassess where their values lie and thus, they should be infused

with a perpetual sense of purpose. Every Jew ought to be a thinking person, but Modern Orthodox Jews must be especially sensitive to thought and assessment, since they have chosen to try and balance seemingly disparate value systems. Extremes are simple, but to remain somewhere in the middle of the spectrum demands a constant scrutiny of values. Would one walk a tightrope without constantly checking his balance? To be a Modern Orthodox Jew is to see the grey in an oversimplified black and white world. If we have committed ourselves to a dialectical value system, it is dishonest and a damaging to our spiritual health to fall short of that commitment.

To illustrate the point about the lack of passionate living in Modern Orthodox life, take the example of the post-year-in-Israel *shemoneh esrei* (eighteen benedictions) prayer. Very often, students arrive back to the United States full of intensity and zeal for living *frum* lives, and as a result, their *tefillot* (prayers), and particularly their *shemoneh esrei*'s are longer, visibly intense (hand motions, tightly closed eyes, and violent shuckling), and more heartfelt. But this intensity often fades away.

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## Education via AIM

BY OLIVIA WIZNITZER

I come back from class, exhausted beyond belief. I throw my black leather backpack onto the floor, take off my shoes, and cradle my face in my hands as I imagine the piles of mounting homework that I have yet to face. Perhaps I lie upon my bed for a moment or two, kick up my heels and glumly stare at the ceiling. And that is when I leave all this aside and begin the second part of my education. I head for my computer, click on the little icon glowing invitingly upon my screen and am informed that I have been successfully logged on to AIM, AOL Instant Messenger. I scan my buddy list to determine who is on, and that is when the conversations begin.

AIM has been unfairly slandered as a time wasting mechanism. It exists simply to steal your soul, I have been informed. You will become addicted. Once you offer up your time, it will be eaten by that glad little yellow man who runs unmovingly in the bottom right corner of your screen. You will do no work and you will receive no benefit, only the momentary pleasure of a conversation with a friend. It will be quick and pointless, a kind of catching up, perhaps an amusing anecdote, and then you must force yourself away from this gobbling monster lest he devour all your time.

The assumption is that AIM, Gmail Chat, and Yahoo Messenger—as well as their counterparts, social networking sites such as Facebook—are all useful but addictive tools for keeping in touch with friends, but nothing meaningful actually happens during these conversations, nothing that justifies their existence. They are distractions, ways to allow yourself a study break, to inform the world of how you are feeling. Your status message is of utmost importance; with one click people can know whether to comfort or congratulate you.

But for me, Instant Messenger is so much more.

I have had some of the most meaningful conversations of my life via that medium; fascinating and thought-provoking conversations about topics that range from the death of a friend to emotions of

empathy, anger, and arrogance, and above all else, the subject of people. I do not refer to petty gossip, to an indulgence of my baser nature in a furious attempt to keep track of everyone's social moves and mores—who is going out with whom and when this occurred. I am referring to people discussing themselves and what is important to them, the things that make them tick. People describe their feelings and their thoughts, wonder about whether they are normal and their problems legitimate. They come for guidance, for conversation, for an entertaining interlude to break the monotony of their otherwise boring day—but they come nonetheless. And whether I am laughing at my friend who has informed me to "GO TO SLEEP, WOMAN" or poring over the significance of a beautiful statement, it is often through AIM that I come to know people, or at least to know more about them.

I think this is an effect of the distance placed between oneself and the other party, the recipient of one's messages, emotions and thoughts. There are some people who find it difficult to say what they feel when they are speaking face-to-face, when they must look up at another person and try to read their every expression, determine whether they have offended or pleased, attempt to guess what the other person thinks of them. AIM is an outlet for these individuals, a way for them to communicate and to be instantly validated.

It is different from email in that it is immediate. These conversations take place in real time; they mimic true conversations except that people are more comfortable with themselves and what they say. People have the capacity to be more honest when they need not face the possibility of a censoring glare, when they need only type out their thoughts as quickly as they can and then allow them to lie upon the page, printed words of black and white that expose what is important to them, what they find meaningful.

It sounds sacrilegious, but

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## Real Freshmen

BY RAQUEL AMRAM

"Where did you go to Seminary?"

This question is an essential component of any ice-breaking conversation in Stern. The corresponding response must be considered significant—if not, why would the question be so frequently asked? It certainly allows the questioner to label what kind of person she is speaking to: how *frum* (religious), how pathetic, how smart, etc. But where do those who cannot answer that question fit in? What is the response when a young woman answers, "I didn't go to seminary; I'm a real freshman?"

Most Stern women will merely offer a sympathetic and condescending, "Oh." You may not realize it, but that reply can hurt a freshman's feelings. Why is being a "real" freshman looked down upon? Not everyone has the privilege of going to Israel to spend a year or more learning. Before judging, it is important to stop and ask yourself why a person might be unable to attend seminary in Israel.

My personal reason for not going to Israel is a complex story. When I made the transition from public school to Yeshiva in ninth grade, my goal was to be in the honors level of Judaic studies by senior year and to be accepted to the best seminaries. My wishes came true, yet I was still unable to go to Israel. Due to immigration issues, I could not leave the country and come back. I won't go into the details because un-

less you are foreign, you will never understand the nuances of immigration procedures, but the consequence of it was that I could not spend a year abroad, as I had hoped. It took me a while to internalize this reality and accept the facts as they were.

Aside from my own unique experience, there are many others who have different reasons why they came to Stern as freshmen. The ones dearest to my heart are the international students. Have you ever gone to a different country, without speaking the language, and been expected to learn and do well without fully grasping the new environment? These students leave their hometowns, their families, and their friends, sometimes for a full year at a time. They do this for the chance to be in a Jewish environment; a chance they would not have at home. We look at them and automatically judge them as "not *frum*"—but have you ever made such a sacrifice for religion? In their hometowns, some of them are considered the most religious. They pray with a concentration that many of us lack, and do chesed with the same intensity.

And some do not go to Israel, simply because their parents will not allow them to. Yet people automatically assume that those who do not go to Israel for the year are less religious than those who do.

The problem of judging people based on their seminary or lack of seminary education extends to all students. I was talking to my soccer teammates about this article and one woman commented that when some-

one mistakenly thought she attended a certain seminary, she became offended because of that seminary's reputation. We laughed because her story proves my point: people tend to judge each other based on that one year in Israel. It's ironic, because personally, after I am asked the typical question of "Where did you go to seminary?" I feel guilty that I never went to Israel. I feel obliged to explain quickly that "I was going to Michlalah," as if to say, "I'm safe, they still think I'm *frum*!"

When President Joel addressed my speech class, he joked, clutching the podium, "You are judging me!" We all laughed, but it is true: feeling judged and judging others is, unfortunately, a part of life. But it is essential that people begin to see life from other people's perspectives.

It is very easy to grow in an environment that induces such growth—like Israel. However, it is 10 times harder to grow in *chutz l'aretz* (outside of Israel), and the attempt to attain spiritual growth here in the U.S. deserves more respect than just a pitying look. On top of all the challenges the freshmen face, they also feel that the people that they would like to emulate look down upon them. Upperclassmen can have a profound affect on Stern freshmen. I only hope that the next time you encounter a freshman, you will be able to see past her current situation and greet her with a more open and understanding outlook.



# NEWS

## ATARA Conference Advances Women in the Arts

BY ESTHER BARUH

On November 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, Stern College for Women (SCW) opened its facilities to the ATARA Arts & Torah Educational Conference, a symposium featuring Jewish women involved in performing arts. The three-day program, two days of which were hosted on the SCW campus, consisted of various master classes and performances given by Jewish women trained professionally in the arts.

"This is the second year that we have been the venue for their program," confirmed Dr. Hillel Davis, vice president for University Life. The conference kicked off on Saturday night with a screening of "A Light for Greytowers," a movie based on the book by Eva Vogiel and directed by Robin Garbose. On Sunday morning, the program continued with master classes in dance, music, theater and writing. The day closed with a concert entitled "Shir Lamaalote II," which featured various dance and vocal performers from across North America. On Monday the conference continued in Brooklyn with dance-oriented classes.

The creation of the ATARA conference stemmed from the work of SCW alumna, Dena Kosak, who moved to Israel and "created these evenings of women's performances for women only," said Zeldia Braun, assistant dean of students at Stern.

Kosak approached the SCW administration about possibly hosting a similar event for women in the New York metropolitan area.

"There was a concurrence

with university administrators that within a halakhic framework, the women's performance for women should have a place to perform, and we should host this as an Orthodox women's college," explained Dean Braun.

Over the course of many months, SCW officials met numerous times with the coordinators of the conference to discuss the structure of the program and determine precisely where each event would be held.

SCW administrators saw the ATARA conference as a way to further students' opportunities to maximize their talents and to gain ideas for ways in which observant women can utilize their skills in the performing arts.

"We, as a women's college that supports women's endeavors, would be the best fit...we should support an evening of women's entertainment," Dean Braun stated.

Dr. Davis expressed his support for the goals of the ATARA Conference. "I think YU can be a natural venue for lots of activities that revolve around appropriate education and co-curricular activities for Modern Orthodox students," he emphasized.

"I think proximity often encourages participation," Dr. Davis continued. "This is especially or particularly true if these activities afford our students enhanced opportunities to participate in developing, running, and engaging in meaningful developmental and educational activities. Everything I heard about ATARA and their plans led me to believe that their conference met these goals."

Adina Schwartz (SCW '08) participated in the conference. "I chose to go because I'm very much interested in theater and Orthodox Jewish women being involved in theater," she explained.

Her favorite part of the event was "meeting people who were like-minded and similar-minded to me. I networked a lot, and met a lot of great people who are interested in the same things I am."

Schwartz attended the luncheon, which featured a panel of women who discussed different initiatives in the performing arts that are specifically geared toward Jewish women, such as Kol Isha Radio, the Binah School, a Jewish performing arts school opening in Pennsylvania, and Girls Night On, an open mike night held in Teaneck. Additionally, Schwartz took the scriptwriting and improvisation classes and attended the concert in the evening after the master classes.

While she was pleased overall with the event, Schwartz feels that there is still a dearth of similar events and classes.

"There aren't many classes for already observant women to learn different theatrical skills, like acting, like directing, or lighting," she observed. "[Such classes in other places] are often inappropriate. I don't think that one day is enough. It created awareness and put a lot of people who feel the same way in one room, and Sunday night was really nice, and had performances with really talented women. But there's still frustration."

## ITS Computer Upgrades Both Help and Hinder

BY YAEL WOLYNETZ

In a continuing effort to advance technology on campus, the Yeshiva University Department of Information Technological Services (ITS) has upgraded the school computer system, a task which was completed over the summer.

While the upgrades were deemed necessary by ITS, these changes have been the source of much confusion and frustration for students and faculty alike.

According to Dr. Tom Oleszczuk, director of Academic Services for ITS, the computers in the different labs in the school are upgraded every year.

"We have done the 245 Lexington lab in classroom 418, and are planning on two more labs on the 3rd floor this January," Oleszczuk reported.

Tracing the recent progress, he pointed out that last year the science labs were upgraded, while this year the general labs are being improved.

The entire process included purchasing "up-to-date, powerful PCs from Dell and using the old Dells for spare parts to save the university money," Oleszczuk stated. He also touched on the major expansion of multimedia equipment to every classroom, which has included new PCs, projectors, DVDs, sound systems, and network connections. He noted that upgrades have been implemented in a very efficient manner.

"We schedule these upgrades on the various campuses at different times, around the academic calendar

to avoid disrupting student usage," he commented. "The process is now highly efficient and the most difficult part is the lifting of the hardware!"

Oleszczuk proudly asserted that "in the area of lab PCs, we are comparable to or more up-to-date than other New York schools." Nonetheless, he acknowledged that "the only area where we are behind is in having Macs, which we plan later in the year to pilot in a lab on Beren and one on Wilf. This pilot will involve a row of Macs in an already existing general lab."

"The University tries to provide modern facilities and services for the best education of the students possible," continued Oleszczuk. "Faculty need the latest software, and always request the newest Microsoft Office version to use in their courses. In this area, we try to respond to faculty requests as soon as possible."

"While I understand that the upgrades were for a good purpose, it is still an annoyance," said Daniella Ulmer (SSSB '08). "I started working on a project in school and e-mailed it to myself, and when I got home, the attachment wouldn't open. I was very frustrated."

Acknowledging the compatibility difficulties, Oleszczuk explained that many students encounter such problems because their own laptops are not programmed with Microsoft 2007. He said that his staff is working to see if the labs can be configured to automatically save to the older 97-2003 file format for Micro-

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## YU President Hosts Town Hall Meeting at Beren

BY YAEL WOLYNETZ

On Wednesday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, YU President Richard M. Joel addressed a crowd of SCW students, faculty, and administration at the bi-annual Town Hall Meeting held in Levy Lobby of 215 Lexington Avenue.

Before opening up the forum to students for questions, President Joel discussed a number of issues important to both the YU community at large and specifically to the Beren campus. He began his speech with his famous line, "I work for you," reaffirming his commitment to making improvements to better both the quality of education and the overall college experience. Adding that his job is affected "by the degree to which I hear from you," President Joel encouraged the women to be in touch with him, to offer complaints, concerns, and general feedback. He also urged students to establish a partnership with his office.

Touching on the recent construction efforts for the fall semester, President Joel expressed his sat-

isfaction with the newly renovated 245 Lexington Avenue, noting that it stands out like a "torch" among the adjacent buildings in the evening.

parable accommodations after they graduate.

Commending the women for their involvement both on cam-



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President Joel speaks with students at Town Hall Meeting

He also noted the expansions on campus, specifically the new dormitory on 35<sup>th</sup> Street, which he proclaimed as so luxurious that students will have a hard time finding com-

pus and in the Jewish community, President Joel mentioned a number of leadership roles that YU students assume, including positions on both SCW and SSSB student coun-

cils, Shabbat enhancement committees, Darfur action groups, various CJF initiatives, and the recent Medical Ethics Conference.

He spoke about YU's drop in the Middle States Commission on Higher Education from 44<sup>th</sup> to 52<sup>nd</sup> place, putting the university outside of the "top 50" for the first time in years. President Joel explained that one of the factors causing the decline was a weaker peer assessment score and promised to do his utmost to increase the school's ranking in the future. He articulated his intention of hiring trained advisors to focus on specific areas within the university which are in need of improvement. Moreover, he revealed that he is working extensively on a business plan with his trustees to generate financial contributions to allow for continued growth on campus.

When the floor was opened for students' questions, hands quickly ascended, as many women were eager to address the president.

Jaimie Fogel (SCW '08) asked about the possibility of a potential schedule change to imitate

the system on the Wilf campus, creating a structure of Judaic studies in the morning and secular classes in the afternoon. Fogel expressed displeasure that students are often forced to choose between an intensive Judaic studies course and a secular course required for their major that is offered only in the early morning time slot.

In response, President Joel acknowledged the difficulty of the situation, joking that the only plan would be to "expand the 24 hour day." He added that in order to allow for such flexibility, it might be necessary to offer more classes on Fridays, expanding the school week from four days to five.

On a somewhat similar note, Gila Kletnik (SCW '10) asked if YU as an institution was doing enough to encourage women's participation in various initiatives within the framework of halakha. As an example, she expressed her dissatisfaction at YU's refusal to sponsor a

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## Center for Jewish Law Opens at Cardozo

BY MICHAL GOLAN

Yeshiva has established a new university-wide, inter-disciplinary institute, the Center for Jewish Law and Contemporary Civilization (CJL) at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law. The center unites scholars and academics of varying backgrounds, fields, and law specialties, in the study of the interaction of halakha, culture, and secular legal theory.

Efforts to create the center were spearheaded by Suzanne Stone, a law professor at Cardozo and director of the program. Other staff members include Assistant Director Ari Mermelstein, a graduate of Yeshiva College (YC) and NYU School of Law, and Research Director Menachem Butler, another YC alumnus. The position of Senior Resident Rabbinical Scholar is being filled by Rabbi Ozer Glickman, a Rosh Yeshiva in the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS).

Funding for the CJL has come from Mr. Ron I. Shoshany, a major donor to Cardozo.

The CJL was founded to address the shortage of studies dealing with the interface between halakha and secular law and culture. The center intends to facilitate such discussions by employing a variety of methods and focuses.

One primary focus is to engage in a study of the Jewish legal system from a scholarly standpoint. The hope is that this will promote greater dialogue between the Jewish system and the broader academic community. Furthermore, the CJL hopes to stimulate discussion as to how Torah law can relate to the study of ethics, political theory, and culture, to be accomplished through an exploration of these areas as one interdisciplinary topic. Lastly, the CJL will hold conferences and colloquia for professionals, writers, and religious leaders.

These objectives differentiate the CJL from its predecessor, the Program in Jewish Law and Interdis-

ciplinary Studies (PJLIS), which was established at Cardozo in 2004. In an interview published in "YU Review," Stone relayed that the PJLIS had adopted a narrower purview regarding interdisciplinary studies, while the CJL has assumed a broader focus.

"[The CJL will] explore constitutional traditions, in order to compare religious and secular legal traditions, identify problems common to both, and investigate issues unique to religious law, comparing how different faith traditions resolve these," she said.

The center would also like to broaden its audience, reaching out to individuals from all disciplines, such as journalists, philosophers, and educators, in the attempt to "create a more informed Jewish citizenry."

Since its inception, the CJL has amassed many scholars of law and graduate students from a wide range of institutions, backgrounds, both Jews and non-Jews alike. Among the more notable members of the center's advisory board are Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Professor Alan Dershowitz of Harvard University, and Dr. Norman Lamm and Professor Haym Soloveitchik of Yeshiva.

Certain members of the YU undergraduate faculty have also lent their expertise to the CJL. These include Rabbi Shalom Carmy of the YC Judaic Studies department, Dr. Yaakov Elman of the YC Jewish history, literature and philosophy departments, and Dr. David Shatz of the SCW philosophy department.

The CJL's significance and potential impact are extensive. According to the CJL's website, the center will "bring the perspective of Jewish law to bear on burning issues, such as the development of democratic institutions, civil society, toleration, and the role of religion in the public square," and will bring about an "exchange of ideas among members of different traditions, both political and religious, on issues of contemporary concern."

## Business School to Expand

Continued from front page

"Too bad we can't turn those floors into elevators," she remarked. "This school really needs more of them! Realistically, I think it would be helpful to use some of that space for a bigger computer lab, since the ones in that building are so small."

Dean Bacon partially agreed with Hack's suggestions.

"The needs I perceive are more faculty office space so they do not have to share, making it easier on them and the students who meet with them," she said. "Also, we will definitely create more classroom space that should be tailored to the size of the classes occupying them. Some smaller sized classrooms for a more intimate class setting, and larger ones

to accommodate the very large classes we have."

Dean Bacon also hopes that the new space will promote a sense of community.

"I will try to put all the faculty of the same department together to further build a sense of community within the faculty and students of the same major," she pledged. "I would also like to see little lounges in those areas; a nice place for students and faculty to meet and discuss."

When asked if any student input will be considered, Dean Bacon answered with a passionate, "absolutely." "We're barely starting but we definitely need to know what the students think they need," she said.

For Rosengarten, the expansion prospect is particularly exciting.

"It's new and upbeat, and the fact that we have space over the next couple of years can only mean that the place will get better and become more comfortable for everyone," he said.

Dean Bacon also has high expectations for the future.

"It's an exciting time," she added. "I'm very thankful for where we are today. Our campus is in great shape, but we are always looking to the future."

## YU Upgrades Computer System

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soft Word and Excel. This means that when a document or spreadsheet is saved, it will be usable in older versions.

When asked about the new printing system in the labs, Oleszczuk revealed that YU had been having problems with the printing vendor, Copico, especially in servicing

the photocopy machines in the libraries, which usually involved delays in repairs and subsequent downtime.

"The decision was made to end their contract, and to introduce a more integrated printing system allowing students to use their Academic Computing allocation on YULIS PCs and photocopy machines in the library," he added.

Oleszczuk also noted that stu-

dents have adjusted to the new system despite the fact that it requires more input from an individual student to get something printed. The upside of the system is that it is less likely that paper will be wasted.

"It has gotten to the point that I wish I had a printer in my dorm room," said Chani Greenwald (SCW '08). "It seems like any time I need to print something urgently, there is a malfunction in the computer lab."

"It's a good thing professors themselves are frustrated with the new system," said Eta Neiman (SCW '08). "Otherwise, they wouldn't believe such a lame excuse as 'the printer doesn't work.'"

Hadassa Rubinstein (SCW '08) had no complaints about the new system. "I was always running out of printing pages," she said. "Now with the rollover, it is so much easier."

"There have been times during the new system's introduction when printing has not been as smooth as it should," Oleszczuk admitted. "We have been working closely with the OCS Company to resolve these implementation problems as they have arisen."



SARAH MEDVED/THE OBSERVER

Students utilize new technology in third floor computer lab

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## Town Hall Meeting

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women's megillah reading, which is permissible according to many leading *poskim* (halakhic authorities).

In response, President Joel explained that YU "has a bold position, but not a suicidal one." He maintained that as an academic institution, there are no boundaries restraining women's learning at Stern, and that SCW will continue to offer women the most rigorous classes in halakha, Tanakh, and Talmud. Nevertheless, the school "seeks to avoid conflict" on issues that are deeply controversial. He added that it would be impossible to reach a consensus about the issue even among the audi-

ence seated in Levy Lobby. Nonetheless, the president did acknowledge that halakha is dynamic and it is impossible to know what steps will be made in the future.

TAC President Laura Shuman (SCW '08) inquired about the university's reasons for inviting Rabbi Amar, the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, who she had felt made insulting comments about women's roles during his recent visit to Stern. After apologizing to the students who were offended, President Joel explained that the decision to bring Rabbi Amar to campus was intended "to educate him and help build a cultural connection." Arguing that a university is much more than

just "text and context," President Joel felt that YU, as a leading Jewish institution in New York, had a significant role to play in showing Rabbi Amar what Orthodoxy is like in the United States.

On a lighter note, when asked how to encourage male participation in school events held on the Beren campus, President Joel laughingly answered, "Here is a headline for The Observer: 'Guys are dumb!'" The president pointed to the culture of night seder as well as to the men's longer hours as contributing factors to this phenomenon. "Women are more mature; guys are more of a challenge to motivate," he added.



# FEATURES

## Extracurricular Involvement Divided Between On and Off Campus, Women Report

BY SHAYNA HOENIG

On Monday, November 19, YU and the National Council of Synagogue Youth (NCSY) co-sponsored a dinner for students affiliated with both the university and the Jewish outreach organization. The event was organized by YU International Director of Recruitment and Outreach, Rabbi Ari Solomont, Presidential Fellow Marc Fein (YC '07), NCSY Assistant Director of Special Programs Eliana Rudolph, NCSY International Director Rabbi Steve Burg, and YU President Richard M. Joel.

Though such joint events of the university and certain external Jewish organizations do occur on occasion, they are more of a rarity than the norm.

Given students' tightly budgeted schedules, most undergraduates opt to devote time to one primary Jewish extracurricular activi-

advisors for the organization.

Similarly, while there are at least two major on-campus shabbatonim as well as weekly learning programs sponsored by Yachad, an organization servicing the developmentally disabled, activities do not occur on a daily basis at SCW. Staten Island Junior Yachad Coordinator Yedida Singer (SCW '08) explained that she was involved in the organization before she even arrived at Stern.

"I know how Yachad works and I don't feel like there is that type of special needs opportunity in Stern," she said. For her, the venue of combined leadership and chesed was critical, but unavailable through any student organization at SCW.

However, others felt it was more worthwhile to contribute to on-campus initiatives, emphasizing the importance of creating a greater sense of community, both for them-



Courtesy of YU Productions

Rabbi Jacob J. Schachter, senior scholar at the CJF, addresses YU NCSY advisors

ty, choosing to participate in either an on-campus effort, or in an initiative outside of the university community. The Observer interviewed a host of women from SCW to ascertain the reasons behind such decisions.

Most students cited the uniqueness of the off-campus initiative in which they are involved as a motivating factor. "There is no forum, at least on a high school level, to do outreach in Stern," explained Yael Aeder (SCW '08), an advisor for New York NCSY.

Last year's TAC secretary Erin Cooper (SCW '08) concurred. While Cooper is not a member of the committee's current board, she is still active on the Stern campus as a coordinator for the Torah Learning Network (TLN) program for high school students. However, she admits that she is not involved to the same degree as she was in the past, simply because of time constraints.

"[While I] loved planning activities and it was an incredible opportunity and experience to work with TAC...time-wise I couldn't commit to both NCSY and Stern and I feel more of an obligation to give back to the NCSY community," she said.

According to Fein, approximately 120 SCW students serve as

selves and for others.

"Getting involved on campus enriched my experience here," explained Reena Gottesman (SCW '08), "I started enjoying college once I got involved."

SCWSC President Rena Wisen (SCW '08) commented similarly. "NCSY, Yachad, and so many organizations off campus are worthy organizations to volunteer and work for, [but] it's also important to get involved on campus."

"One of the greatest benefits of coming to Stern is being part of the YU community, specifically the Stern community," she continued. "If you get involved in on-campus programming, you help strengthen the community here and make it even better and more positive for everyone."

"I think that we are at a period in the development of Stern where we are creating a stronger community," added TAC Vice President Jaimie Fogel (SCW '08). "I want to be part of it, part of all the developments happening in Stern."

Aeder countered that while she is happy at the college, she

Continued on page 17

## The General Assembly: Reflections on Jewish Identity and Social Justice

BY SHLOMIT COHEN

I was recently privileged to participate in the CJF's student delegation to the General Assembly (GA) of Jewish Federations, held from November 11 to 13 in Nashville, Tennessee. Thousands of Jewish communal leaders from all around the world came together to learn from one another, network, and formulate new understandings about our future as a people.

The title of this year's conference was "one people, one destiny" and it could not have been more appropriate. The experience of joining Jews from literally every walk of life can only be described as a modern day *kibbutz galuyot* (gathering of the exiles). The opportunity to step outside of the YU community and meet Jews from very different backgrounds who have all dedicated their lives to the continuity of Am Yisrael affected me in a profound way. Even if we perceive Judaism at its fullest to include a commitment to halakha and Torah observance, we have to appreciate the diversity within Am Yisrael, to understand why and how other Jews connect to Judaism, and to celebrate the passion that those inside and outside of the Orthodox community contribute to who we are as a people.

But the single most valuable aspect of the GA was that it forced every individual present to grapple with fundamental questions about Jewish identity, including the definition of people-hood, the role of Israel, how to create a more inclusive

community, the parameters of compromise, and how to deal with Jewish values outside of the framework of halakha. Although we did not have the answers to all of these questions, the value was in the dialogue that ensued. The true beauty lay in the refining of ideas, the exposure to new ways of approaching our Judaism, and the recognition that each member of Am Yisrael brings value and insight to the table. As British Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks explained in his commentary on Parshat Vayeitzei, "Those who wish to learn to listen to God must learn to listen to other people."

My experience at the GA reflects one of the core values of the Social Justice Society (SJS): the belief that debate and dialogue are the means through which to expand and challenge our understanding of the world, and that this process is inherently valuable. Confronting real questions both within our community and the larger world are crucial if we expect to be active and contributing members of society. We have to deal with issues such as gay rights and women who are becoming increasingly frustrated at the lack of opportunity to participate in communal settings, because our inability to address these difficult issues will lead to members of our community abandoning their heritage to seek acceptance or recognition elsewhere.

The recognition of these realities is a painful one but Yaakov only became Yisrael "*ki sarita im Elokim*

*v'im anashim v'tuchal*," because he struggled with the Divine and Man and overcame. Our history and our heritage demand that we engage in this struggle but even more so, that we consider both "*Elokim*," the Divine, and "*anashim*," our fellow man, in the process. There are no easy answers but the goal of SJS is to initiate the conversation and to offer educational programs that inspire grassroots activism.

It is in this light that SJS, together with the Torah Activities Council, is developing a Social Justice shiur series. Once a month, we will tackle contemporary topics and study them from a political, sociological and Torah perspective through speakers, text study, and discussions. Beyond providing a forum for education, this series will emphasize the central role that social justice plays in a life of Torah observance and the importance of approaching these issues from the lens of Torah. Rabbi Menachem Leibtag explains that *tzedeq u'mishpat* (justice) is not simply another commandment in the Torah; it is at the essence of our service to God and it is what defines us as a nation.

One of the phrases repeated over and over at the GA was "*lo alecha hamlacha ligmor v'lo atah ben chorin l'hibatel mimenah*": although we are not obligated to finish the work, we are not free to desist from it either. As we develop who we are and how we relate to the world, we have to keep this responsibility at the forefront of our hearts and minds.

## Public School Students Diversify, Thrive at SCW

Continued from front page

shiva students at secular colleges."

Rabbi Solomont explained that much of the recruiting is done through organizations specializing in outreach, such as NCSY (National Council of Synagogue Youth), JSU (Jewish Student Union), and also some community kollels. These outreach programs partner with YU in reinforcing what the students have already learned through their involvement, and by encouraging them to continue exploring their Jewish identities. Both YU and the outreach groups have a vested interest in seeing the success of these public school students as they continue on the path towards discovering more about Judaism and Torah.

"I wanted to go to Stern so I could further my Jewish education," said Phillips. Before coming to Stern, Phillips attended Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois. Throughout high school, she was a member of NCSY's regional board and ran a JSU chapter at her school, where she organized different events such as falafel-making and group discussions about upcoming Jewish holidays.

"YU is a good Jewish school in a good location," Phillips continued, explaining her decision to attend. Following in the footsteps of her older sister, Charlotte (SCW '06), she also chose to come here, especially when she learned of the creation of the Basic Jewish Studies program, which did not exist when Charlotte was an undergraduate.

"YU tries to recruit, just it's not possible to reach every public school student through channels like NCSY," she added. "It's better for the school if they have more students from public schools, people with more diverse backgrounds and opinions. You'll have people who are experiencing things for the first time in their lives, as opposed to those who went to day schools all their life."

Shera Sonenberg (SCW '11) from Albany, NY, also came to YU through her involvement with NCSY. "I went to NCSY events and kept in touch with advisors who went to Stern and I became interested in coming," she recounted.

Rabbi Solomont said that one of the recruiters' goals is to expand the university's population by attracting students from more diverse back-

grounds, and who, if not for their efforts, might otherwise not have enrolled. "We know where the Modern Orthodox kids in day schools are, and now we need to work with people who know where the public school students are," he elaborated.

He referred to these outreach organizations as "entry points" where students who may be a suitable match for YU are then targeted in specific venues. For example, they have events like "Latte and Learn" where Rabbi Solomont goes to Starbucks with a group of students and uses conversations on Jewish topics as springboards for larger discussions about college opportunities with appropriate candidates.

Rabbi Solomont travels all over the United States, from the West Coast to Florida, and even to communities in New York.

"One way to empower these organizations and create a partnership with them is to let them know that they can play a role in getting their students to YU," Rabbi Solo-

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## Public School Students

Continued from page 8

mont said. "If you recognize students that you feel will come and would belong in an institution such as YU, you nominate them for some type of scholarship."

Over the last few years, through the creation of the Basic Jewish Studies track at SCW, and the parallel Mechina program at Yeshiva College, YU has attempted to mainstream these students into the Jewish environment of the college. "We offer them university level courses at an intro level," continued Rabbi Solomont. "President Joel has made the Basic Jewish Studies program and the concept of a Mechina program a priority."

"It's easier to get the students here," he continued. "What is more challenging is making them feel

part of the community. The program won't succeed unless they feel comfortable here."

This year, the Basic Jewish Studies track boasts an enrollment of 14 women, the largest group since its inception. The program is directed by Mrs. Shoshana Schechter, who teaches some of the classes along with Rabbi Lawrence Hajioff. Students often view the two professors as role models and as a result, have fostered close relationships with them.

"The girls in the [Basic Jewish Studies] program are happy," Rabbi Solomont asserted. "They have created their own community within a community."

Several women confirmed the validity of this statement. "I love the program," affirmed Cheryl Noll (SCW '11), who attended Edgemont High School in Scarsdale,

NY. "We just had our first big shabbaton with Mrs. Schechter and Rabbi Hajioff, and it was the first time I ever observed Shabbat for real. It was amazing and I felt like I was on cloud nine."

"The whole group became friends and we really melded together," she added.

"All the teachers are really incredible," enthused Monika Lalezarzadeh (SCW '11), from Great Neck, NY. "They accommodate those of us who know nothing, and they invite us into their homes. I've never had that before, coming from [Great Neck North] public school, and it was a nice surprise."

Students also enjoy the courses and feel that they gain a lot from what is offered. "I was interested in getting a greater Jewish education in a Jewish atmosphere, and the classes

here are on a good level," remarked Sonenberg. "Even though it's for people who don't have background in Judaic studies, they don't dumb it down."

But not everyone is completely satisfied with the Basic Jewish Studies program. "They try to type-cast us, and say that since I'm a public school student, I must not know much," countered Phillips. "People like Mrs. Schechter try to reach out and they know what they're doing, but they need to make sure they are making the right judgment for students."

Concerted efforts are made towards giving personal attention to these students, who are recruited on a case-by-case basis. Each one is treated as an individual with different fears and hesitations, which recruiters attempt to allay before the women arrive on campus.

"There are a lot of misconceptions out there and it's a challenge to address them," observed Rabbi Solomont. "It's just a lack of knowledge."

While some of the public school students have never heard of YU prior to their involvement with NCSY, others perceive the university as a completely sheltered, very traditionally Jewish environment, lacking in religious and general diversity.

"I was misinformed before I came here, and I was scared to come," admitted Noll. "But I have not met anybody who has been anything but welcoming and kind. Everybody here

has been so unbelievably nice, the opposite of what I expected."

Many NCSY advisors who are undergraduates or alumni of YU are also involved in proactively encouraging public school students attend the university. But other incoming students enrolled without having any prior exposure through various outreach mediums.

Lalezarzadeh was affiliated with YU through scientific research that she conducted at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine during her high school summers. "I wanted to learn more about ethics in biology," she explained. "I knew that ethics stemmed from Torah and I knew YU would be a place where I could combine my interests in Torah and biology and learn about both."

Regardless of what motivated them to come here, the majority of women hailing from public schools say they are happy with their decisions to attend the university and are confident that other students from similar educational backgrounds will follow in their footsteps.

"There is a lot of interest in the school," observed Phillips. "There will definitely be more people here over the years, especially since the school is working on recruitment. I would definitely encourage my public school friends to apply."

Lalezarzadeh concurred. "I have already recommended Stern to some of my friends and told them to come," she said.

## GPATS Students Hail from Near and Far

Continued from front page

and we never learned Rashi script, she explained. "I could read Hebrew, but could not understand it too well."

After high school, Hardy built up her learning skills gradually. She took a year off from medical school to travel to Israel, where she learned primarily at Midreshet Rachel, but also spent time at Nishmat, She'arim, and Sha'arei Tzedek Hospital's medical ethics program.

"The first time I saw a gemara was at Sha'arei Tzedek," said Hardy. "I slowly developed my skills, and when I went home to finish up medical school, I kept to a set learning schedule to develop the skills even further." Eventually, she began giving shiurim to adults in Sydney.

At the time, Hardy knew that YU existed and that they had both male and female Modern Orthodox colleges, but she did not know much more about the university's programs. On a visit to the United States in the spring of 2006, Hardy found out about GPATS, and later decided to join.

"I am enjoying GPATS thoroughly," Hardy remarked. Although she initially worried that her background in learning was not on par with those of the other women, she said she can already see a marked improvement in her skills.

"The program provides a great education to enable me to fill in the gaps in my learning," she observed.

Ultimately, Hardy hopes to further her experience in the medical field, and is interested in merging her passion for Torah with her love of medicine by becoming involved in adult education, specifically in the area of Jewish medical ethics.

Though Hardy is the only woman in the program with an MD under her belt and from halfway across the world, she is not the only woman who hopes that GPATS will allow her to strengthen her abilities. Sarah Greenberg, who was raised in Pittsburgh and graduated from Yale University in 2007, heard about GPATS from a teacher at Nishmat, an institute for women's learning located in Jerusalem, where Greenberg

studied for a year during college. She and her husband wish to make aliyah and aim to teach halakha to middle and high school girls.

Greenberg explained that she contacted Nefesh B'nefesh to find out whether advancing her knowledge and skills in gemara and halakha, as well as obtaining a Master's degree in Education would be enough to make her marketable in the very competitive field of *chumch* (Judaic education) in Israel.

"They told me that right now I would be very marketable since more and more girls' schools are adding gemara to their curriculums and are specifically looking for women to teach the classes," said Greenberg. With those goals in mind, GPATS is a great opportunity for Greenberg, since she will not only build her skills in the program, but will also receive free tuition to YU's Azrieli Graduate School for Jewish Education to work towards her degree.

Greenberg is happy with what she has found so far at GPATS. "I like the intellectual rigor of the program and the halakhic commitment," she commented. "Those two aspects come hand in hand here, and, from my personal experience, it is hard to find a place with that balance. My brain is always working and the respect for the chachamim (sages) and sources is maintained."

Greenberg considers herself fortunate to live at this moment in history, expressing that it is "exciting to be here now. Ten years ago this didn't exist, and now the younger generation doesn't know a world without a women's beit midrash. This shows real success."

Tali Fuss, who graduated from The Cooper Union in 2006 and previously studied at the Stella K. Abraham Beit Midrash for Women, also known as Migdal Oz, differs from Hardy and Greenberg in that she does not see GPATS as a venue to prepare for a career in teaching. Rather, she enrolled for non-professional reasons, for the sake of furthering her own personal learning.

"I plan to get a job in engineering after finishing my Masters at Cooper," Fuss explained. "I truly believe that one can be in the workforce

and learn too."

Fuss feels that men should not be the only ones who balance both a career and intense Torah learning. "I saw GPATS as the end all and be all of women's advanced learning, so I wanted to be part of it," she added.

When she was an undergraduate at Cooper, Fuss was a frequent visitor to the SCW beit midrash, learning regularly in order to maintain her advanced skills. Fuss admitted that she envied the Stern students for their ability to take gemara and halakha classes and thereby progress in their learning. Looking back, Fuss realized that she was in fact progressing in her learning as well, and that GPATS is only helping her further.

Even students who graduated from Stern feel that GPATS is filling a void in their learning that they couldn't satisfy as undergraduates. Shoshana (Fruchter) Samuels (SCW '07), who is originally from Brooklyn and now lives in Washington Heights, majored in Judaic studies and took advanced gemara every semester, as well as several advanced halakha courses taught by Rabbi Moshe Kahn.

"Preparing for these courses was really difficult for me and my *chavruta* (study partner), because of schedule differences and time constraints due to other courses," Samuels explained. "In the undergraduate courses there is little official seder time, whereas in GPATS we have three and a half hours to learn a *sugia* (section of gemara) in preparation for an hour shiur. For me the difference is unbelievable."

Like Rabbi Hain, Samuels sees the diversity in GPATS as a very positive aspect of the program. "It is awesome to see women from all different universities and backgrounds devote themselves to two years of intensive learning," she observed. "The first thing I tell people about my experience so far at GPATS is that my *chavruta* is a doctor from Australia," she says.

"Because of the personal differences, each student brings something to the table and to the learning in our beit midrash," she concluded.

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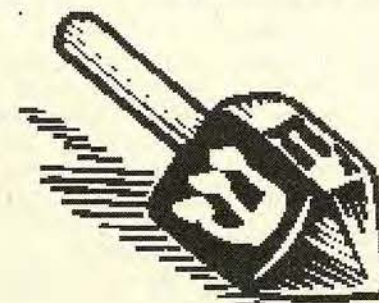
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# ISRAEL

## Israeli Cinema Debuts in NYC

BY NAVA BILLET

The days and nights of October 23 to November 8 were filled with humus, pickles, rowdy teenagers, Ultra-Orthodox Jews, and Russian dancers. All were in attendance, featured in original films of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Israel Film Festival. The place that accommodated them all: the Clearview Cinema on 62<sup>nd</sup> Street and Broadway.

The film festival is an annual event that attracts New Yorkers and tourists, Jews and non-Jews alike. Aside from the New York City screenings, the film festival visits the cities of Los Angeles and Miami as well. However, of the 50,000 tickets sold in all three cities, close to 19,000 were sold in NYC, making it this year's most successful turnout.

There were four movies that were box-office hits and sold out every showing: "Sweet Mud," "Aviva My Love," "Noodle," and "Three Mothers." These films were in such high demand that additional screenings were added both in the early morning hours as well as late at night. Even though there was no formal advertisement for the impromptu screenings, the theater was packed for these shows as well. Viewers attribute the box office success to the high quality of the films produced, as well as to people's interest in Israeli culture.

The films feature a broad range of genres, dealing with social values, economic challenges, religious questions, and historical controversy, in both entertainment and documentary form. Meir Fenigstein, the founder and executive director

of the Israel Film Festival, in an exclusive interview with *The Observer* was asked to comment on the surge in "social struggle" films in Israel's culture.

Fenigstein responded, "Social issues are not a new trend. It's what people want to know. Israel used to make films about the army and Arab-Israeli relationships...[Today] people want to see good films that evoke emotion." It is the dual nature of the films—both entertaining and informative—which certainly makes them so intriguing and attractive.

"Aviva My Love," specifically, falls into the genre of social related films that is currently very popular among the Israeli public. These films often focus on an individual family, accentuating each of the member's dealings with personal and interpersonal dilemmas. "Aviva My Love" is a close-up, illuminating a family's struggle with poverty, unemployment, miscommunication, and mutual aspirations.

In contrast to the contemporary humanitarian struggles that plague Israel's society today, the producer fills the background of the film with serene, panoramic glimpses of Tiberias, Tel Aviv, and other locations, as the viewer travels with the main character, Aviva, on her frequent trips between the cities, on the wide-windowed Egged bus.

Chava Zakharevich (SCW '09) and several other Stern students who attended the film festival all agreed that many of the minuscule details of the film are what made them feel a strong connection to the



characters' customs, culture, and lifestyle.

"For me the movie was about seeing Israel in the small things, the bittersweet juxtapositions of half-eaten humus sandwiches, Moroccan

jokes, and the painful realities of living within a familial and social framework," Zakharevich reflected.

It is comments such as these that the Avi Chai Foundation hoped to elicit from viewers when it sponsored

a day dedicated to "Jewish Identity" on Monday, October 29. For two years running, the Avi Chai Foundation screens films whose production they've facilitated in the Israel Film Festival in NYC. The films are produced in Israel for the diverse Israeli population, geared toward bridging the gap between Israeli Jews of different affiliations.

The films, created and widely acclaimed in Israel, are now being made available to the American Jewish community through Avi Chai's initiative. Avi Chai Director of Communications Deena Fuchs explained that there is a concern of a widening gap between the American Jewish community and Israeli Jews. It is Avi Chai's mission, according to Fuchs, to unite these two groups through "common human and Jewish themes that cross continents."

Indeed, the 22<sup>nd</sup> Israel Film Festival did attract a diverse crowd as people of all religions and nationalities flocked to the Clearview Cinema. The films were made accessible to Hebrew speakers and those who weren't familiar with the language through the addition of English subtitles. Some Israeli bystanders commented that reading the subtitles really detracts from the authenticity of Israeli idioms, satirical jargon, and infamous chutzpah. However, non-Hebrew speakers were certainly appreciative that they were able to get a glimpse into Israeli culture and society and felt comfortable in a theater that accommodated their needs.

## Calling for a Cause

BY ERIT STERLING

On November 1, 2007, the Yeshiva University Public Action Committee (YUPAC) held a phone-a-thon, in which students contacted their district representatives to thank them for signing the Iran Sanctions Enabling Act. The program, which was co-sponsored by SCWSC and YSU, enabled undergraduates to show gratitude to Congress for their continuing effort in the battle against terrorism, in which the United States and the State of Israel are allies.

The Iran Sanctions Enabling Act was introduced in Congress on May 15, 2007 by Representatives Barney Frank and Tom Lantos and Senator Barack Obama. It requires the United States government to publish a list of companies investing large sums of money in the Iranian energy industry every six months. This list is intended to censor the Iranian government. The censorship prevents state and local governments from investing in companies that sponsor terrorism and develop nuclear weapons in Iran. The bill was passed in the House of Representatives on July 31, 2007.

The phone-a-thon event presented students with an easy and accessible opportunity to show state representatives their approval for the newly sanctioned bill. Without stepping foot off campus grounds, students were able to communicate their views to state representatives through the routine task of a telephone call.

"We thought it was an important way to show students that by doing something easy, such as picking up the phone, they can make an important contribution," said Yael Wolynetz (SCW '08), co-president of YUPAC.

A continuous flow of students visited the table in Levy Lobby, between classes or on the way to lunch.

The phone-a-thon drew a lot of positive feedback from students as well as representatives of Congress. "We got a really good response, and it's been really empowering and inspiring watching people actually take a moment to call," observed Liatte Tsarfati (SCW '11), a member of YUPAC who helped facilitate the phone calls. Tsarfati feels that people often verbalize support for Israel without taking action, and empha-

sized that, "it is very important to be active about it."

Students who participated in the phone-a-thon expressed a desire to take action in support of Israel.

"I think it is important for the Congresspeople to know that people care about Israel," said Rachel Spero (SCW '09), "and they will base decisions on that [knowledge that they have active supporters], and vote in favor of Israel so they won't jeopardize their [own] votes."

By calling individual members of Congress, students hoped to encourage future support of Israel, on a national and even global level.

"It's not just about the big gestures," commented Wolynetz. "Small things like this also make a difference. We want to empower students to show them that they have the ability [to make that difference]."

## Strikes in Israel Disrupt Learning

BY CHAYA CITRIN

Hebrew University's fall semester was set to begin October 20, 2007. One month later, however, students are still out of school, waiting for the ongoing professors' strike to come to an end. Israel's universities—including Bar Ilan, Ben Gurion, Hebrew, and the Technion—as well as the state's high schools are affected by the walkout. This semester's strike comes at the heels of last semester's six-week university student strike.

According to a report on November 14 by Haaretz correspondent Or Kashti, striking high school teachers are bargaining with the government for a salary increase, a reduction in class size, and an increase in teaching hours. The Secondary School Teachers Association (SSTA), the high school teachers' union, is negotiating on behalf of the teachers' interests. The Finance Ministry recently approved a 10 percent salary increase for all high school teachers, as per the SSTA's demands. Kashti reports, however, that "disputes remain over two of the union's other demands: reducing the number of

students per class and restoring classroom hours that were cut in previous years."

In the November 15 edition of *The Jerusalem Post*, Ehud Zion Waldoks reported that the Treasury Wage Director, Eli Cohen, agreed to give elementary and high school teachers a salary bonus equivalent to slightly more than one month's wages, two months before the bonus's scheduled release. While the negotiations and demonstrations persist, however, high school students begin their second month out of school.

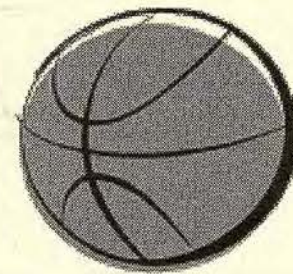
At the university level, the situation is complicated by the fact that only senior faculty are on strike. In a November 13 Haaretz article, Tamar Traubmann explained the professors' view of the circumstances: "Faculty members say they feel the public is indifferent to their strike. They note that the claims of the Finance Ministry and media reports branding them as parasites who teach six hours a week reveal a lack of understanding of their work. They say their research requires time for thinking and

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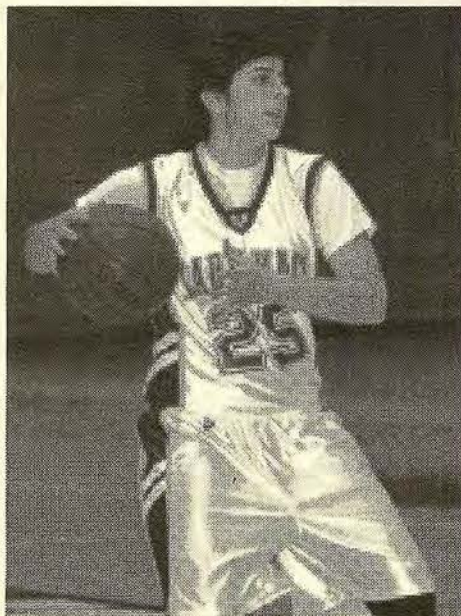
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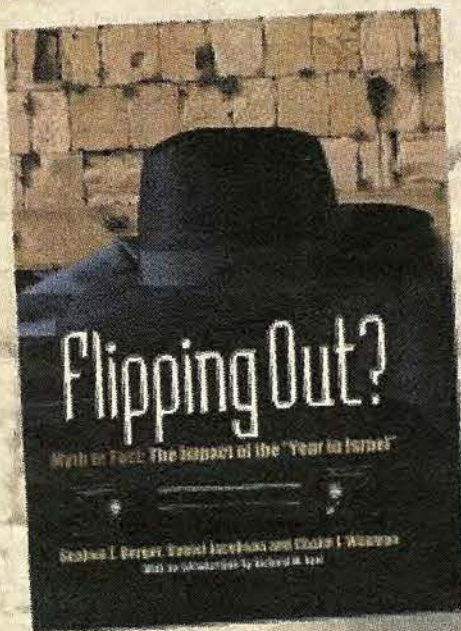


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- Who changes? How much do they change? And for how long does the change last?

*This book is based on extensive research, including a statistical study and lengthy interview process. Learn the facts and then explore the opinions.*

Yeshiva University President Richard M. Joel opens the book with an insightful introduction.

"This volume, based on copious research, and careful analysis, is inordinately well done, and will, I am sure, prove to be an invaluable resource for all of these audiences and more. Bravo!"

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# ARTS & CULTURE

## Hamlet: A Modern Interpretation

BY ALISA UNGAR-SARGON

On November 4, 2007, the women of the S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program were given the opportunity to attend a performance of "Hamlet" put on by the Wooster Group and directed by Elizabeth LeCompte. The experience was preceded by an interactive session led by Professor Richard Nochimson to remind students of the play's basic plotline and major critical approaches. The students were informed in advance that the production they were about to see would not be a conventional reenactment of the famed Shakespeare play. Nochimson's talk sketched out a basic summary of aspects from the original to look for in this avant-garde version.

Upon arriving at the Public Theater, students were confronted with a set consisting of a simple chair on wheels, along with some screens here and there. The back wall was covered with a life-size TV screen, which played a recording of John Gielgud's 1964 Broadway production of "Hamlet," starring Richard Burton. Scott Shepherd, who played Hamlet in the Wooster group's version, arrived on stage in a rather random assortment of clothing, including leather pants peeking out from

under baggy culottes. He sat down and began a one-sided conversation with the crowd, making amusing comments as he watched Gielgud's recording along with them. A few moments later he started to quote

So commenced the production, which was a baffling and complex visualization of Shakespeare's play. The actors proceeded to reenact the recorded production line by line, move by move—mimicking ev-

17 different angles, especially for the transition from stage to screen. This meant that the onscreen actors would suddenly appear to jump from one position to another when the cameras switched. The modern actors incor-

er, rolling the chair and table along with them in jerking motions.

The spectacle was greatly enhanced by the excessive special effects that slowly developed onscreen. The reel started off like any black-and-white movie, but right from the start when Shepherd (as Hamlet) began reciting lines, he would occasionally stop and make a quick request to fast-forward to a certain part. The screen would visibly do so as he continued reciting the parts he chose; and the movie seamlessly rejoined with him when the play button was pushed. This carried on throughout the performance, with cues from Claudius—brilliantly portrayed by Ari Fliakos—and other characters, consequently shortening the actual length of the play.

Additional special effects appeared toward the middle of the first act. The actors onscreen faded out at times, leaving behind a lone hand enacting ghostly gestures. As the play progressed, the figures continued to flicker in and out of sight, and eventually there were extensive periods of time when the screen was devoid of



COURTESY OF NYTIMES.COM

Scott Shepherd plays Hamlet in the Wooster Group production

the play alongside the characters onscreen, moving around the stage and matching the dramatizations of the actors exactly.

ery turn of the head and hand motion, and even echoing the onscreen characters' manner of speech. The Gielgud production had been filmed from

porated this feature into their live-action execution, creating a disconcerting sort of dance as they unceremoniously jumped from one spot to another.

Continued on page 18

## The Darjeeling Limited: A Movie Review

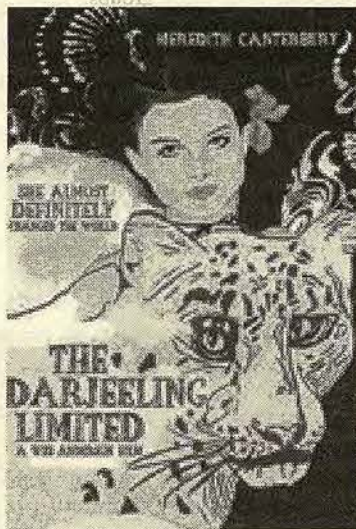
BY CLARA HERSH

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is missing something we used to have. The butcher no longer knows your name, the doctor doesn't make house calls, and movies that capture your attention with poignant acting and relatable characters seem almost extinct. Sensationalism has replaced the epic stories that used to be commonplace in classic movies. Wes Anderson's "The Darjeeling Limited" seems to go back to an age when directors and the movie industry alike truly cared for their art. Writers Anderson, Jason Schwartzman and Anderson's cousin, Roman Coppola, retreat back to familiar themes.

"The Darjeeling Limited" tells the story of the Whitman brothers, Francis, Peter, and Jack, who reunite on a train, the Darjeeling Limited, after a year of estrangement following their father's death. During the time on the train, each brother's story is slowly revealed. Francis (Owen Wilson), whose face is bandaged throughout the film, confesses that he was in a traffic accident. Peter (played by Adrien Brody, a rookie

to Anderson movies) is anxious about the birth of his first child, and Jack (Schwartzman), a short story writer, is devastated by his recent break-up with his girlfriend.

While using illegal Indian



Courtesy of LeversandPulleys.com

drugs, the brothers fight and make slow progress toward rekindling their ties to one another. The trip turns into

a spiritual journey and repairs old wounds; forced into close proximity, the Whitman brothers reconnect and resolve their trust issues. The brothers' train ride through India is not just a simple reunion, but a healing, emotionally-fulfilling experience. The three stop at many temples along the way, each of which is significant in healing a particular brother's emotional wounds. However, after a series of extenuating circumstances, including a poisonous snake on board, the brothers are kicked off the train. Francis then reveals that he originally intended to take his siblings to see their mother (Angelica Houston) at the monastery where she resides. The movie concludes with the brothers finally connecting through remembering their father's death and lamenting how their family has grown apart. Each brother realizes that family is what holds them together.

In "The Darjeeling Limited," Anderson tackles old themes of dysfunctional families similar to those in his previous film, "The Royal Tenenbaums." Anderson proves that true human connection makes for an enthralling story.

Lush, rural India is a perfect backdrop for the wandering brothers on their quest to attain spiritual enlightenment. The picturesque views of the Indian landscape captivate both the characters and the audience, while the exquisite cinematography is reminiscent of real photographs rather than a contrived movie set.

This is Anderson's fifth motion picture; he debuted with "Bottle Rocket" in 1996. Since then, he has honed his unique approach to filmmaking. Anderson's films are known for stylized shots that focus on patterns and symmetry. His scenery and backgrounds make abundant use of props that allow each scene to feel and look both beautiful and true. As in his other movies, Anderson focuses heavily on setting to demonstrate his themes. The close quarters of the train contrasts to the brothers' distant relationship to one another. Conversely, the place where the brothers are able to become closest is out in the wilderness. Only when each brother displays his independence is the group able to reconcile its differences.

Anderson's careful choice

of colors enhances the film's mood. "The Darjeeling Limited" features warm yellows, oranges and greens that contrast greatly with the emotionally gray, despairing brothers who are trying desperately to reconnect. This element reflects the immense success of Anderson's ability and technique. In his fifth feature length film, Anderson shows that he has already developed his personal style and advanced further in the art of filmmaking. He puts together an all-star cast, selecting actors who give life and pain to their characters, but still allows for the comedy that typifies his movies. He revisits old themes of repairing fragmented familial relationships, yet shows creativity with a new story and new characters. Anderson has been successful in his attempt to bring novelty back to our hum-drum movie-going experience.

Happy Chanukah to all of our readers!



## One and a Half Thumbs Up for Walk on Wall Street

BY AVIGAIL SOLOVEITCHIK

The Wall Street walking tour takes place rain or shine. As I walked down Broadway past Bowling Green, I saw the United States Custom House—where the tour begins—spread out in front of me. With wide curving stairs, flanked on each side by statues, the U.S. Custom House lends a quality of grandeur to downtown Manhattan.

Approximately 30 men and women, both tourists and native New Yorkers, congregated on the front steps. The tour guide handed out a pamphlet and a questionnaire for the attendees to answer. Noisy construction proceeded to my left, and a brilliant blue sky and tall buildings stretched above me. I sensed in that moment that the city of New York and its people and history were bound together.

As our tour guide began to speak, I had misgivings—her voice was not loud, she had no microphone, and the background noise made it difficult to hear. Yet, as we crowded

around her, I found that we did not have to strain too hard to catch her words. And they were words worth hearing. As we made our way from street to street, we grew increasingly more excited about suggestions we had to offer and information we received in return.

We began at Bowling Green. Its fence dates back to the 1760s, and the park itself is even older. It is a pleasant circular retreat; in its center, bright red flowers decorate the perimeter of a small fountain, and bushes frame the benches where people sit. A statue of George III on horseback used to stand here in the early 1770s. In 1776, upon hearing the Declaration of Independence read in City Hall, New Yorkers hastened to fell the statue. It was made into bullets, which are rumored to have killed 200 redcoats. This is one of the legends, impossible to verify, that glorifies New York City's history.

The tour guide told us other stories as well. For example, Stone Street was so named because it was the first paved street in New York

City. The rumor is that the wife of a brewer who lived on Stone Street refused to tolerate the dirt produced by traffic and therefore persuaded her husband to ensure that the street be paved.

Historical facts and icons are just as intriguing and rich in detail as legends are. Take, for instance, the 7,000 pound bronze statue of a bull that sits behind Bowling Green. One morning in 1989, roughly two years after the stock market crash of 1987, the bull appeared on Wall Street. The bull is the symbol of a rising market because it attacks from the bottom up. SoHo artist Arturo DeModica placed it there to remind everyone that although the stock market goes down, it also comes up. Following much commotion and media coverage, the bull was eventually moved to its current location. It is considered a New York attraction, and rubbing it is believed to generate financial good fortune.

As the tour guide continued to point out historic buildings lining Broadway, I noticed people still ad-

miring and photographing the Wall Street bull. My favorite aspect of the walking tour was seeing tourists and native New Yorkers taking an interest in this city, home to Ellis Island and the New York Stock Exchange. People came to discover, listen, observe, and participate.

A definite New York spirit was tangible that day. As we strolled down the streets of Lower Manhattan, the air hummed with industry and purpose. Moving from site to site, we had to be careful not to lose our way amidst all the businessmen and tourists populating the streets. We visited—among other places—Fraunces Tavern, 40<sup>th</sup> Wall Street (currently The Trump Building), the Morgan Bank, and Federal Hall.

Although we did not enter any of the buildings, we learned a lot by simply listening and observing. For example, the Morgan Bank still exhibits pockmarks from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a cart with dynamite exploded in front of it. Although J.P. Morgan was so wealthy that he bailed out the New York Stock Exchange, he

never had the damage to the Morgan Bank repaired; he said it was a testament to the building's strength. Today this building is part of a condominium complex for multi-millionaires.

The tour concluded at 1:30 p.m., several blocks north of Bowling Green. Standing on Trinity Place between Pine and Wall Streets, we thanked the tour guide and began to disperse.

I left with the tour pamphlet in hand and a new outlook on Lower Manhattan. In general, I do not particularly love walking tours. However, the Wall Street tour was enjoyable and informative—and, after all, it is free.

*The free, 90-minute Wall Street walking tour takes place every Thursday and Saturday at 12:00 p.m., rain or shine. It meets on the front steps of the United States Custom House, at 1 Bowling Green. For more information, visit <http://www.downtownny.com/walkingtour/> and <http://www.bigonion.com/information/partnerships.html>.*

## Battle of the Bands Draws Large Crowd on Beren Campus

BY PEREL SKIER

Fellow headbangers, take heart—rock and roll lives on at Yeshiva University.

Thursday night's Battle of the Bands (VI, for those of you who are counting) witnessed its share of poor tuning, technical difficulties and crude musicianship, but it also featured something past Battles have lacked: raw, unabashed rock star pride. Gone, for the most part, were the timid and humble Blue Fringe scholars of old; in their place, amping, drum-slammings, lighter-waving bringers of soul.

To be fair, you knew you weren't in Eichlers' anymore when Rug Burn took the stage at the beginning of the night. In a black and slimy-green T-shirt and a deep atonal growl, bassist Amitai Glaser led his crew through a metallic rendition of "From the Strong Came Sweet," an original tune anchored by ominous guitars and spiraling solos. It was a gutsy move for an event that typically features softer fare, particularly as a first act, but give them credit—while the faces in the audience may have seemed more bewildered than delighted, they were inarguably spellbound. There was no murmured undercurrent during Rug Burn's reign, and the group even managed to hold the crowd's attention through a dusty, mournful ballad. It is a testament to the band's magnetism that when the lead guitarist dragged a lighter in a slow arc above his head, more than a few flames flickered in response from the seats below.

The Jon Lamm Jamm lost some of that interest with an unimpressive—and less-than-in-tune—first number, an average nasal-voiced pop-punk affair. They didn't look to get much better with their tentatively-introduced second song, about "how

things in the world aren't perfect and we're going to change them." Yet the stumpy irreverence of the tune's chorus revealed the band's surprising capacity for catchiness, and they seemed to draw confidence from the audience's head-bobbing, leaning into a long, country-fried jam that ended on a triumphant crash of cymbals.

Lacking in no confidence whatsoever was The Return, a less subtle teen rock outfit whose yelping vocals and ho-hum power chords

ly compensate for the fact that they were, in essence, a self-described Blue Fringe cover band, but there was a certain glamour in their closing "Thank you, St. Louis!" that only added to the night's rock-star feel.

There are, however, many kinds of rock stars; perhaps you prefer the sort that take themselves with grave severity. Matching jeans and t-shirts? Village headgear and pointy-looking guitars? Power-point slide shows of hand-drawn artwork depict-

two-song professional recordings by Jake Antelis Productions; still, pretension kept them at something of a distance from the audience.

Perhaps it's not surprising then that the experienced Yaakov Chessed scored the loudest applause—and the first-place award of opening at the YU Chanukah concert—mostly by eschewing gimmickry. Through layers of cascading drums and abbreviated, lush acoustic chords, Yaakov Chessed fashioned a connective simplicity. They didn't jump or strut, and their music, heir to the gold-standard Blue Fringe, followed safely in the footsteps of radio-friendly alternative bands like the Goo Goo Dolls; but like both of those groups, Yaakov Chessed conveyed emotional sincerity and even a touch of melancholy with their full, rich sound, tamer and yet more satiating than the preceding acts.

The only true holdover from the spirit of Battles past was Ta Shma, solitary singer-songwriter Yakov Block, whose hesitation and fussiness served as a kind of self-sabotage. Stalling for more than twenty minutes over an unfamiliar peddle, thereby forcing uneven emcees Eitan Esan and Josh Balderman to reach even deeper into their pocket of pickup line jokes, was almost a crime; interrupting the first song after four chords to explain how it should have sounded with superior equipment was inexcusable. What made these disruptions worse was that Block had the audience rooting for him from the beginning, clapping the beat to his rough streetcorner-blues and gorgeous scatting to create an atmosphere of hushed awe and quiet empathy. It was a moment of rapture, and it could have been more if Block had not inexplicably stopped the music to embark on a lengthy apology for it.

On the whole, however, this BBY year's crop of musicians knew how to wield a stage, and it showed. The Battle of the Bands has never had problems filling an auditorium—at the event's start the Schottenstein Cultural Center was crammed to the gills with students of all stripes, clogging the aisles and even clumping up behind the partitioning wall which divides the upper seating from the lower—but in past years that crowd has thinned considerably by the halfway mark. Nor have there ever been as many students from other colleges and communities as there seemed to be this time around. Yet Thursday night saw a diverse body of students, many familiar but as many not, shrieking and chilling till the very end, loving every antic, every feigned swoop from the stage.

Well, maybe not every antic. Rock and roll is unpolished and by definition a little hit or miss, but while the emcees had a few solid skits—a woeful acoustic ballad about demanding Stern girls was so popular they trotted it out at least twice—many of their later riffing crossed a line between edgy and uncomfortable. The YU Dance Team fared a little better with their "halftime show," an unbeatably bizarre mix of shapeless yet spirited shuffling and wince-worthy breakdancing to tunes like Weird Al Yankovic's "White and Nerdy," sometimes in Pink Power Ranger guise, and screams resounded long after they bowed their humble good nights.

Of course, as Balderman noted, perhaps the loudest cheers of all went to the free gear he tossed into the crowd between songs, leading him to entreat, "Please, I know you guys are animals, but be civil to the sweatshirts!"

To those about to rock—we salute you.



Courtesy of yu.edu

Student musicians perform for a full house at Schottenstein Cultural Center

could have been boring if the band hadn't been more intent on showmanship than song craft. Sporting a yellow-caution-tape guitar strap that foiled several dashing leaps across the stage, The Return exhibited a restless rock-and-roll energy, cavalierly tossing drumsticks and indulging in the famous sink-to-your-knees-and-play-from-the-floor shtick. Of course, all the pogo jumping and amp-climbing in the world couldn't complete-

ing apocalyptic landscapes and disturbing religious paraphernalia? Second-place winners Avodah drew a standing ovation and a couple of metal horns for their suave blend of collegiate eclecticism, songs that featured "Whoa-o-o-o!" choruses and polished, retro guitar work reminiscent of The Strokes' jukebox rock and The Mars Volta's jazzy expansiveness at the same time. A good, if cool, performance, and worthy of the



# SCIENCE & HEALTH

## Stern Women Showcase Discoveries at Poster Competition

BY OLIVIA MATHIAS

Students, judges, and spectators gathered on Tuesday, October 30, as the undergraduate women of SCW put their summer research to the test at the annual Poster Competition.

The event, held in Koch Auditorium, resembled a more sophisticated science fair. Each research project was clearly presented on a large poster board with diagrams and charts displaying the students' experimental data.

The judges, who were all SCW science professors, walked around to each station and critiqued the students. "What we are looking for is how clearly the information is presented and how well the student knows her research," explained Dr. Chaya Rapp, SCW chemistry professor and a judge at the Poster Competition. "You could have a student who has all of her research laid out on her poster but doesn't really know what she's talking about."

Over 20 projects were presented, including research in the fields of biology, chemistry, and physics. The best project was chosen from each field of science and the winners will go on to present their poster on April 7, 2008 at the Spring National Meeting of the American Chemical Society. At the meeting, the winners will present their work while participants, mainly students and scientists, will come to view the posters, talk to the presenters, and learn about their work.

"There are poster sessions for undergraduate students all over the U.S.," explained Dr. Lea Blau, SCW chemistry professor and organizer of the competition. "Usually more than 1,000 undergraduates attend those sessions."

Not all of the students presenting on October 30 spent their summers in labs at SCW or Albert Einstein College of Medicine (AECOM). Shana Maikhor, (SCW '09), went home to Venezuela to research the fatal disease, malaria. In her study, she discovered that the symptoms of ma-

laria are so fast-spreading and fatal that it is almost impossible to cap it. "Because of this, it is more worthwhile to research means of prevention than how to treat it," she explained.

However, students like Maikhor, who go elsewhere to research, were a minority at the Poster Competition. Most of the participants were



Devorah Stechler/The Observer

SCW Senior Chani Schonbrun presents her research

part of YU Students Undergraduate Research Program (SURP) and performed their research through the Roth Program at AECOM. Other presenters worked through the SCW program, researching in the labs in the science building at 245 Lexington Avenue. The women spent six to eight weeks in the laboratories and were provided with stipends and on-campus housing.

SURP and SCW research students did not all choose their own research. They were assigned work by various professors and PhDs, but for the most part, they worked individually in the labs.

"The research I was given was actually kind of ironic because last year I was also assigned cancer research," said prospective medical school student, Rachel Yamnick (SCW '08). "Last year I studied the beginning stages of cancer and this

summer I did the last [stages]."

Yamnick researched through the Roth Program at Einstein. Her project, entitled "Examination of the Ability of SDF-1 and HG to trigger the EGF/CSF-1 Paracrine Loop and Include Breast Cancer Cell Invasion In Vitro," examined how and why cancerous cells metastasize.

A few of the other students were lucky enough to collaborate, avoiding the loneliness of spending six to eight weeks working solo. Abby Feldman (SCW '08) and Carole Benichou (SCW '09) spent their summer researching with Dr. Margarita Vigodner at SCW to try to discover a correlation between male infertility, sperm malfunction, and heat.

The Poster Competition has come a long way since it began. "In the 1980s there was limited undergraduate participation in the meetings," said Dr. Blau. Instead of posters, students gave oral presentations and winners were declared.

This year's winners included Elana Clark (SCW '08) and Abby Atlas (SCW '08) for the biology section, Sara Guigui (SCW '08) for the chemistry and biochemistry section, and Frieda Dukesz (SCW '08) for the physics section.

## Health Center Vaccinates Against Flu Virus

BY MIRIAM MERZEL

With the onset of winter, YU has resumed its usual practice of offering flu vaccinations for all of its students, staff, and faculty. The shots are available at a reduced price of \$20 and are being administered in the health centers of its midtown and uptown campuses.

"For years Yeshiva University has offered the flu vaccine to its students on both the Beren and Wilf campuses through the Student Health Centers," said Dr. Chaim Nissel, associate dean of students. "This is the second year that this service is being offered to faculty and staff as well."

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a virus that spreads through the nose and throat. Its symptoms include fever, sore throat, chills, fatigue, cough, headache, and muscle aches. Although they can last up to three weeks, these symptoms generally persist for a few days and range from mild to severe. Severe symptoms can lead to pneumonia and result in hospitalization. Each year around 226,000 people are hospitalized and 26,000 people die as a result of the flu.

The influenza vaccine protects people from being infected by the virus. Each year, different strains of the flu are more prevalent, and the vaccines are therefore redesigned yearly to target those strains. Each vaccine contains three influenza viruses: one A (H3N2) virus, one A (H1N1) virus, and one B virus. Most cases of the flu occur in January or February, so it is recommended to get the flu vaccine in October or November, although it will still be effective if received in January. People with severe allergies to eggs or any vaccine components should consult with a doctor before receiving it. Additionally, people who are ill should wait until they recover to get the vaccine.

The vaccine becomes effective two weeks after it is inject-

ed. Anyone who does not want to risk contracting or spreading the flu should receive the vaccine, but it is recommended particularly for people with respiratory, immune, muscle, or nerve disorders, as well as young children, pregnant women, adults over age 50, and healthcare providers. Vaccination is also highly recommended for those living in dormitories or other crowded conditions, like the women at SCW.

Contrary to popular belief, getting the flu vaccine does not give one the flu. The vaccine is an inactivated form of the virus and cannot result in illness. One might experience mild side effects, such as redness or soreness, at the site of the vaccine or mild fever and aches that go away after a day or two. Like any medicine, a very small number of people can experience serious side effects due to an allergic reaction, but this is extremely rare.

"So far about 40 women have come in to receive the flu vaccine," reported Mrs. Mary Little, a physician's assistant at the Beren Campus Health Center. "Last year I had to urge the women to come and get the vaccine. Then there was a shortage and everyone wanted it! This year they are coming on their own and we have plenty of vaccines in stock." She added that several faculty members have also made their way over to the health center to receive the vaccine.

"Living in a dormitory, viruses can spread quickly," Mrs. Little elaborated. "All it takes is for one person to sneeze into her hand, not wash it, and hold onto the banister walking down the stairs to spread it."

She stressed that students, in addition to getting the vaccine, should take other preventative measures by washing hands regularly and refraining from touching the face and its surrounding areas.

## SCW Hosts Tri-Annual Blood Drive

BY ABBY ATAS

On Monday, December 3, 2007, the Beren campus will host its second blood drive of the semester. In conjunction with the New York Blood Center (NYBC), the Stern College Blood Drive Committee organizes three to four blood drives each school year to help contribute to the vast amount of blood required to help patients in the vicinity.

SCW senior Alyse Malc (SCW '08), education major and head of the Blood Drive Committee, said that in the past, blood collection at the college has been "very successful."

Malc reported that at the last drive, which took place in the Ivry Student Center of Schottenstein Residence Hall, approximately 60 students came to donate blood, 40 of whom were qualified to do so.

Each pint that a student donates saves more than one life. When the components of blood are separated, each pint of blood can potentially save three lives. In fact, blood donations are used to help 4.5 million Americans each year. Recipients include cancer patients, burn victims, newborn babies, transplant patients, and many others.

The NYBC needs close to

2,000 donors a day to meet the transfusion needs of patients in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area. However, according to the center, only 2% of qualified donors actually roll up their sleeves to contribute.

The upcoming drive will be slightly different from the previous drives at Stern. The Yeshiva University Social Justice Society (SJS), a student organization whose mission is to "bring a new sense of awareness and activism to our campus," according to President Shlomit Cohen (SCW '08), will be joining forces with the Blood Drive Committee to promote AIDS awareness.

The blood drive will be held just two days after World AIDS Day, held annually on the first of December. Therefore, noted Cohen, the SJS "thought [the blood drive] would be a great opportunity to spread awareness about AIDS and the devastation it has caused internationally." The society will have tables set up with literature about the effects of the illness worldwide and specifically within the Jewish community. SJS members will also be available to talk to students about how to get involved in the fight against AIDS.

The blood drive on December 3 will also allow students to get in-

involved in *tikkun olam* (improving the world) in more than one way. As Naama Levin (SSSB '08) pointed out, "It's important to donate specifically at the blood drives in Stern because it reflects well on our institution."

Malc agreed, adding that donating blood not only "saves lives" but is also a "big mitzvah."

When asked why she chooses to give blood at the drives held at Beren, Alyssa Rottenstreich (SCW '08) commented, "For many college students, time is very limited." Not having to travel to an off-campus blood center "made all the difference," she said.



## Students and Faculty Collaborate on Biology Research

BY LORIEL SLOBODOKIN

At Stern College for Women (SCW), many of the professors in the biology department conduct their own laboratory research, contributing to scientific knowledge in their specialized fields. For numerous years, this research has also successfully interested students, who have joined onto faculty teams and have attained hands-on experience with the science they have learned in the classroom.

Drs. Harvey Babich, Alyssa Schuck, and Harriet Zuckerbraun worked together to investigate the pro-health effects of polyphenols on normal and cancerous cells from the human oral cavity. Polyphenols are natural components of various foods such as teas, blueberries, and red wine. Recently, the group has demonstrated that purified polyphenols from black tea, called theaflavins, are more toxic to cancer cells than to normal cells. Polyphenols kill cells by releasing hydrogen peroxide, thereby allowing for a state called oxidative stress. Therefore, black tea and green tea have anti-sarcomatous properties; cells which are malignant die when challenged with tea, while normal

cells survive. Previous clinical research has shown that precancerous lesions in the oral cavity of cigarette smokers were eliminated when the patients stopped smoking and then consumed black tea. The studies of these three professors corroborated this data. The team will soon be leaving the study of tea in chemoprevention and will evaluate other nutraceuticals as anticarcinogens.

The faculty's research incorporated the talents of SCW undergraduates. After being trained in the basic methods of handling human cells in culture, the students became part of the research team. "They progress from being students learning techniques, to individuals with whom concepts and ideas can be discussed," commented Dr. Babich.

The research that included SCW students also "promotes a more independent mode of learning" for the women, observed Dr. Schuck. Stern College provides the additional advantage of offering a stipend and complementary summer housing for those who are interested in conducting research with the professors over the summer.

"I gained so much in just one

summer that has given me the basis on which to further my research career," said Emily Liebling (SCW '10). Liebling's research partner during the summer, Reena Gottesman (SCW '09), also remarked that "this summer's fantastic opportunity gave me the ability to apply what I learned in my biology classes to the actual research I was doing."

Dr. Jeffrey Weisberg also incorporated a component of tea into his experiments, which dealt with the treatment of human cancers. EGCG, a green tea extract, kills sensitive tumor cells in a similar fashion to some forms of radiation therapy. EGCG elevates cellular levels of reactive oxygen species, which attack the DNA and cause single and double strand breaks. Eventually, the DNA breakage overwhelms the repair mechanisms of the cell and leads to apoptosis (programmed cell death). Dr. Weisberg is trying to determine where in the apoptotic cascade the message is being changed in resistant tumor cells. If he is able to pinpoint the change, he may be able to bring about improved therapy for resistant cancers.

Dr. Weisberg has included stu-

dents in his research project as well. Elana Clark (SCW '08) is currently working with him as a continuation of her summer internship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

"Even though I did not have any formal research experience, Dr. Weisberg was responsive to all of my questions," Clark stated. "I was able to develop a lasting relationship with my mentor [Weisberg]." Clark was also the winner of this year's research poster presentation competition, in which she presented her research to the science faculty of SCW.

Dr. Margarita Vigodner investigated the topic of spermatogenic failure. Infertility affects one in every six couples who are trying to conceive. In at least half of all cases of infertility, a male factor is the contributing cause. This means that about 10% of all of the men in the United States who are attempting to conceive suffer from infertility. In a significant number of cases, the cause for spermatogenic failures is unknown.

To help explain the process, researchers are focusing on small ubiquitin-related modifiers (SUMO), a family of ubiquitin-related proteins implicated in a variety of cel-

lular events. The preliminary studies of Dr. Vigodner revealed important pathways involving the regulation of human spermatogenesis that might be disrupted in infertile patients. She is currently focusing on characterizing the role of SUMO proteins in both germ and somatic testicular cells. Dr. Vigodner's aims include the understanding of general mechanisms of SUMO-mediated transcriptional modulation, posttranslational effects of SUMO proteins on diverse physiological functions, and how the normal process of spermatogenesis is disrupted in pathogenic conditions.

Students have been involved in Dr. Vigodner's research throughout the year. This past summer, Abby Feldman (SCW '08) assisted Dr. Vigodner with her research at SCW. Feldman expressed her satisfaction with working with Dr. Vigodner, and remarked, "I was empowered to not be afraid of the lab, working on my own and making mistakes."

*This article is the first in a three-part series detailing ongoing faculty-student scientific research at SCW.*

## Ba'er Miriam Alum Defends Seminary

*Continued from page 3*

pletely separate and should be treated as such.

The next reason given, in my opinion, is the truest one. Ba'er Miriam received bad publicity. The school was badmouthed by a few disillusioned students and such comments reached parents, high schools, and eventually YU. I don't know ex-

actly what kinds of things were said specifically, except for the ridiculous claim that "administrators in Ba'er Miriam said mean things about YU." Throughout all my interactions with members of Ba'er Miriam's faculty and administration, I never once heard anyone disparage Yeshiva University. The same holds true for my fellow Ba'er Miriam alumnae. State-

ments must have been misconstrued and numerous misunderstandings must have snowballed into a dramatic fallout.

According to the YU administration, there are four requirements that every seminary and yeshiva needs to meet to remain on the joint program. Let's examine each of these in turn.

The first one is that the seminary must send enough students to Stern so that it is worth the university's while to keep it on the program. Ba'er Miriam is not one of the largest seminaries, but it does send a considerable number of students to Stern. Many of the students who end up at Stern had never even contemplated YU before Ba'er Miriam encouraged them to go. Additionally, Ba'er Miriam alumnae have assumed active roles in contributing to the Stern community, counting among them last year's TAC vice president, senior class vice president, and a host of others involved with the CJF.

The second requirement mentioned was that the program of study offered at the seminary must be of a rigorous nature, on par with that of the university's courses. I would respond by asserting that I engaged in my most challenging learning at Ba'er Miriam, which has allowed me to take the advanced level courses at Stern. I think that most women who attended Ba'er Miriam end up registering for either intermediate or advanced level Judaic studies courses here.

The third stated criterion is for the seminary to have a similar hashkafa to YU, and as illustrated above, Ba'er Miriam meets this requirement.

The fourth is to be able to work well with YU on an administrative level. This, as explained earlier, should no longer be seen as an issue. Furthermore, the administration of Ba'er Miriam did recognize the need for greater organization and recently hired someone to act as their liaison to YU.

In terms of the bad press Ba'er Miriam has received, there is no way to take it back. It reminds me of the parable of feathers being dispersed in the wind and the impossible job of gathering them up again. The mission

now is to substitute the unfounded negative attacks with the many positive attributes to which Ba'er Miriam truly lays claim.

In truth, it should be known that Ba'er Miriam is an outstanding institution. It is the only seminary run by a woman, giving the students the rare opportunity to see a female in an administrative leadership capacity. I also learned a tremendous amount while I was there. I took classes mainly in halakha, because that's what I love, but I also learned Tanakh, Jewish philosophy, history, and much about the land of Israel.

My personal experience with Ba'er Miriam has been only positive. The school offered me so much, enabling me to work on my character traits, grow in my spirituality, and find role models for life. I formed lasting relationships with a wide variety of teachers, and continue to stay in touch with them. Ba'er Miriam only treated me with respect. Its faculty and administration prepared me for life and helped lay the groundwork for my Jewish development. The seminary embodies so many of the beliefs espoused by Yeshiva University.

It would be a real shame for Ba'er Miriam to lose students because they are no longer on the joint YU Israel program. It would be a pity for women to miss out on the unique perspective Ba'er Miriam offers.

But it will also be to the detriment of YU to lose potential students who will now have less of an incentive to attend, as they will not receive credit for their year of study in Israel. But even worse, the university will deprive itself of the unique perspectives and impacts such women can contribute to and make on the undergraduate community. Such a result would be unfortunate for both parties involved.

## Orthodox Women Entertain

*Continued from page 4*

problem lies not in Judaism, but in Jewish society.

In a world where theater, film, and music are often corrupted by violent themes and lewd messages, it is easy to see these creative fields themselves as dangerous. Add to this view of art media, the complicated laws of *kol isha* (not being thorough in my definition, this term refers to the prohibition for men to listen to women sing) and *tzniut* (modesty), and the result is that women see the expression of their talents as improper and thus forbidden. We women, by over-simplifying halakha and ignoring the potential good that can come from theater, brand and stigmatize ourselves.

But of course there are appropriate ways of using theater and allowing women to perform. At the AT-ARA convention, the film shown on November 10 and the night of performances on November 11 demonstrated that women can act and sing within halakhic parameters. The performers maintained a sense of modesty and even holiness, in everything from the subject matter to the outfits that they wore. Additionally, the audience was all-women, which alleviated many of the halakhic complications. The whole event enabled me to see a future for the struggling but tal-

ented Orthodox women out there who desperately long to articulate their essence through the stage.

There is a possibility of a future for drama at Stern College as well. While Stern has quite a ways to go in expanding the theater department, improvements have been made. The building of the Schottenstein Cultural Center, made possible by a generous contribution by the Schottenstein family, is a beautiful venue for Stern performances, as well as other great Jewish performers (it has held concerts by Avraham Fried, Dudu Fisher, and Evan and Jaron, to name a few). The reinstatement of Stern College plays, due to the growing interest shown by Stern students, allows women to act in front of a larger audience of both men and women. Most importantly, the biggest improvement Stern has made is the hiring of Reuven Russell as innovative theater director and professor of theater and speech. His mission, goal, and driving desire is to help talented Stern women find "kosher" ways to express themselves. He even pushes us to write our own material. Also, as Vice President of the Stern College Drama Society (SCDS), I appreciate Dean Braun's incredible support of SCDS. She, too, is constantly trying to help us Orthodox women find our voice.

In order for Stern and Yeshiva University to provide us with more opportunities to perform, our fellow students must show their support for the SCDS. The way to do this is to attend SCDS events. For example, check out the workshops taught by Reuven Russell every Tuesday night in 215 Lexington from 7:00-8:00 pm, and share in the laughter and learning of working with a professional actor. Or, come cheer for your friends in Showcase, this year performing the hilarious "Little Shop of Horrors." The musical, which will be playing Sunday night, December 16, and Monday night, December 17, is expertly directed by Sharona Motkin and is produced by Dana Adler. Another way to support theater at Stern is to try out for the play next semester. Who knows? Maybe you will find your secret calling on stage.

The important thing is to demonstrate to the deans of Yeshiva University and to the larger community that not only are there powerful and talented Orthodox women who want to be heard, but an equally important group of caring people who will listen. The time is ripe to release the inner talents that have been foaming under the bottle cap for far too long. Let us all raise our voices together in an eruption of self-expression tempered by talent and *tzniut*.



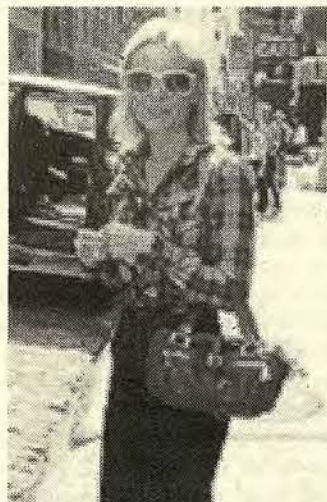
# FASHION & STYLE

## Trendspotter: Top Five Trends for Winter

BY EFRAT OKRENT

### \*\* Cozy Grandpa Knits

Just another reason why we love our grandparents! Some of us may not have the good fortune of being able to sneak authentic knits from our grandfathers. Luckily however, many designers such as Richard Chai are doing a fabulous job at copying the comfy look. To get the look: try to keep the rest of your outfit slim, choosing A-line and pencil skirts or skinny jeans. A solid color usually works best with these warm and fuzzy sweaters, and tying a belt around the sweater can add shape and dimension to the look. These sweaters can either be worn unbuttoned or closed.



Courtesy of People.com

### \*\* Berets

This signature Parisian piece is hitting the streets of New York, and you don't need to be a painter or mime to pull it off! These winter must-haves not only look cute but do a great job at protecting your head from harsh winds and rainy days

in the city. To get the look: place a beret slightly below the crown of your head, keeping a few pieces of hair in front. Middle parts or side sweeps are the ideal way to fix your hair. Usually, the further back the hat rests on your head, the less chance you have of looking outdated. Since over-ac-



Courtesy of People.com

cessorizing can result in looking a bit clownish, keep the rest of your outfit classic. It is best to choose a bold color for your beret and have the rest of your ensemble follow smooth, sleek lines.

### \*\* Classic Trench Coat

We all remember that tear jerking scene at the end of "Break-

fast at Tiffany's." Aside from the gorgeous guy, the eye-catcher in the scene was Audrey's fabulous rain coat! As the temperature plummets, we want to stay warm, dry, and most importantly, uber-chic with the help of a trendy trench! Be sure to choose a coat that does not conceal your figure and a length that flatters your personal height. After all, just because it rains, it doesn't mean you have to be swimming in the fabric.

### \*\* Plaid Shirts

No, not Burberry; we're talking vintage plaid shirts! This laid back look is great for those quick shopping runs to Soho and is virtually effortless. To get the look: try a nearby vintage shop for the super-soft flannel button downs which come in a variety of colors and patterns. Pair them with denim in a dark shade. Regular fans of the lumberjack look include Jennifer Aniston, Kate Bosworth, and Ashley Olsen.

### \*\* Navy Blue Nail Polish

This trend is for the risk takers out there, but when worn correctly can make you the belle of the ball! To get the look, be sure to wear undertones of gold and bronze (gold jewelry complements the hue quite nicely) and try to incorporate hints of the dark shade into your outfit. For optimal shine, try OPI's Russian Navy, a favorite of Sarah Michelle Gellar and Eva Mendes, to indulge your cuticles in liquid velvet—because after all, a true fashionista must be fashion conscious from head to toenails.

## Essay: Personal Style

BY CHANA FILLER

In a world where it seems like we are all just trying to fit in, where do we stand out? Our clothing provides an outlet for our inner selves to shine. How we present ourselves is a reflection of how we feel. When we are tired and stressed, a sweatshirt may be our choice of dress. Yet ideally we tend to choose something we feel most accurately represents us.

We all possess a signature style. Whether you're a J. Crew prepster or a designer diva, your choice of attire and accoutrements speaks volumes about who you are and what you adore.

However, our personal style is not just about what we wear or how we style our hair. Rather, it includes an amalgam of unique variables. From our choice of shoes to,

more significantly, our values and opinions, we are all distinct from one another. It is important that we take note of these differences and appreciate them. We must respect the things that distinguish us from one another, and simultaneously make everything that comes our way our own. At times we may be dressed just like our neighbor, but that does not negate our individuality.

Whether you "Choos" to wear sky high heels ala Jimmy or traipse around in ballet flats may only be a testament to the stamina of your feet. Yet, in fashion, as in life, it is important to experiment. To dip our toes into uncharted waters and see for ourselves how it feels. It may be difficult to sail off on our own, but by doing so we only deepen our character. We will discover new aspects of ourselves and gain a more profound per-

spective on the world around us.

So this winter when those ubiquitous Ugg-ly boots come out of the closet, and your toes are sufficiently warm, don't lose sight of those free flip-flopped feet. We may be all bundled up, but underneath all the layers, our inner self remains. Will we suppress it and conform? Or will we let it shine through?

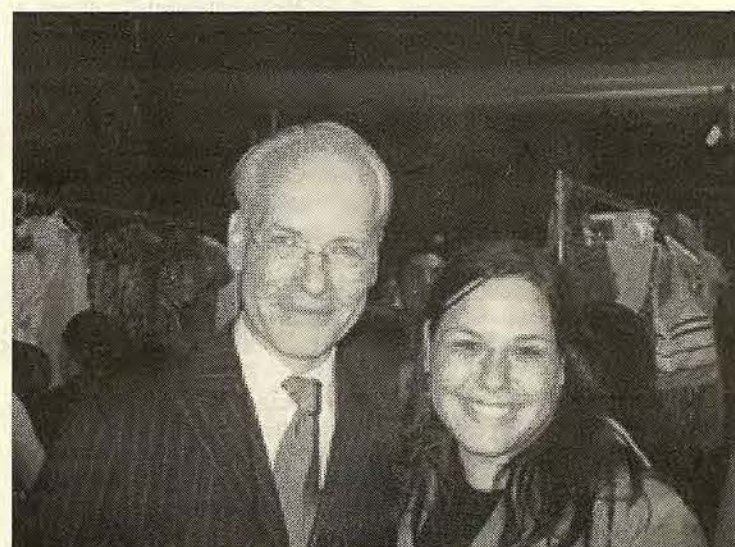
The addition of a bright beret or a multi-hued scarf to your repertoire may signify that you are trying something new on for size. Despite the cold, you are broadening your horizons and opening yourself up to another perspective. You will stand out of the crowd of down coats and exclude a sense of individual pride that not even the freezing temperatures can bundle away.

## Industry Insider: A Fashion Expert Shares Some Sound Advice

BY DEVORAH ROSENZWEIG

When I was a freshman at SCW, there was no such thing as a major in fashion marketing. With the help of some classmates who graduated this past semester, the fashion marketing major was created and has since become increasingly popular. Now, as students walk through the halls of Stern and Sy Syms, they

work, and make a good impression. Collect business cards and follow up with emails. This advice might sound trivial, and you've probably heard it before, but it works. You don't have to follow Michael Scott from "The Office"—fruit baskets are not necessary and please leave Dwight Shrutte's three resumes at home. But remember, it is imperative to master the in-



Courtesy of Deborah Rosenzweig

Industry Insider Deborah Rosenzweig with Project Runway's Tim Gunn

don't have to look far to find a friend who can lend some advice and insight about the fashion industry. Recent alumnae have embarked on careers at many impressive companies such as J. Crew, IMG Fashion, Bloomingdales, and Saks.

As anyone attempting to break into the industry knows, internships and the experiences they afford are extremely important in landing the position of your dreams. Ladies, there is no internship that is beneath you. Each one will help build your resume and provide invaluable knowledge and contacts.

My first internship was at a popular menswear label. You may think, "What do I know about men's fashion? Certainly not enough to obtain a job in the industry, right?" Wrong. The internship created a springboard for future positions, and four years and an impressive list of industry contacts later, I can wholeheartedly credit my successes back to that company. Since then I have attended and worked at six consecutive Fashion Week seasons, chatted with Zac Posen, met models, had drinks with the guys from "Queer Eye," and jumped full throttle into an industry that most people only dream of breaking into.

So how can you get your foot in the door? Scour websites such as Craigslist and Monster. Speak with the Career Development Center, and join networking websites such as LinkedIn. I cannot stress how important it is to meet new people, net-

work, and you should already have confidence in the knowledge that you were chosen for the opportunity to meet someone. Our university has resources to help you learn interview skills. Use them!

Once you have been given the chance to actually step into the offices of Marc Jacobs, Macy's, or Betsey Johnson, take everything in. You have been invited to meet important people, so make that lasting impression, grab those business cards, and send the ever-important thank you letter. These contacts will help you in the future when you feel as though you have exhausted all your options.

During one season of Fashion Week, I became very close with one of my fellow volunteers. At the time, he had graduated, was still looking for a position, and knew that he would have a better chance if he moved to New York. Shortly after his move, he secured an internship at one of the hippest, most well known fashion designers of today. Within six months they had hired him full time, and he is now the designer's personal assistant. Had he allowed himself to become discouraged, he would never have gotten that far.

I must stress that you should not feel dejected. You may send your resume to 75 different companies and only get five interviews, but that is no reflection of your capabilities! With persistence and perseverance, you too can land your dream job.



## Where is the Passion?

Continued from page 5

One might argue that it is impossible for young people to maintain such highly charged emotions once their daily routines are not occupied in the same way, brimming with Torah study and thought-provoking discussions. But I think that argument is wildly incorrect. Yes, the nature of one's life activities changes, but that is no excuse to cease personal development and inhibit passionate living, fueling an intense prayer experience. Why should it be surprising if a person, three years after his or her Israel experience, is still able to consistently evoke heartfelt and intense prayers? If we find such phenomena alarming and unusual, there must be something wrong with the observer, not the observed.

Rav Soloveitchik speaks about this at length in his collection of essays on prayer entitled "Wor-

ship of the Heart." He explains that a person is always in a state of tzara (distress) and therefore always has an intense need to call out to God and ask Him to help resolve his existential confusions. By virtue of man's inherent intelligence and capacity for thought, his prayers have natural fuel for intensity. "Man is always in need because he is always in crisis and distress," the Rav states. Man undergoes change in order to explore his limitations and his perceptions of both himself and the external world. If we each lived up to the presumptions of the Rav, our tefillot would be appropriately intense and thoughtful on a continual basis.

Torah is, among many things, a discipline, a lifestyle choice. The term eved Hashem (servant of God) was not chosen at random; being a servant requires rigorous work and effort. Sometimes that effort is exhausting, but if we do not put forth

that effort, as in any other human relationship, the relationship with God becomes stale and unexciting. Do we expect to stay close to a friend who we never ask to lunch or visit or call? Of course not. So why do we expect things to be different with God? Without the required effort and toil, we are left with a passionless Judaism that has no chance of survival in the modern world.

We all have a little ba'al or ba'alat teshuva inside of us. At some point in our lives we have experienced the pure excitement that accompanies investing our energies into something new and fresh. The challenge for any Jew is to constantly keep his or her self invigorated. Passion is not only for the newly inducted, rather, it is a vital ingredient of committed Jewish living. It is our responsibility to find where we have hidden those deep springs of energy inside ourselves.



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## Extracurricular Motivations

Continued from page 8

doesn't feel the need "to get involved on a more global level."

"I think I can contribute more outside of Stern," she clarified.

Cooper agreed: "I love Stern but there are many people who are more driven or better suited for getting involved here."

This feeling seems to be relatively widespread, as the undergraduate women tend to shy away from assuming visible leadership roles on campus. Last spring's student elections saw many races go uncontested, including that of SCWSC president. Only 10 percent of the student body is involved in some extracurricular capacity through SCWSC, TAC,

and SSSBSC.

However, this percentage does not include women participating in Residence Life, Stern College Dramatics Society productions such as "Showcase," publications such as "Kol Hamevaser," or in other separate clubs like SURGE (Student Undergraduate Research Group Exchange). Moreover, events held on

campus are generally well-attended, demonstrating a degree of community interest and support.

Wiesen noted that heightened attendance was an encouraging sign, and a first step in translating regular participation into active leadership. "One of the things we'd really like to work on in Stern is even greater school pride and school uni-

ty," added Wiesen. "If more people would be more involved in what goes on, on campus, they will feel prouder of the campus community they will help create here and then they won't feel the need to find a community off campus."

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## The Power of Instant Messenger

*Continued from page 5*

I view my online conversations as the second and perhaps more important part of my education. These conversations allow me to access another person's point of view; they provide me with a window into his or her world. For some, it is easier to tell the truth in writing; for others, it is harder, as there is more of an opportunity to self-edit and check oneself. I find that I am most frequently in contact with those who would find it difficult to speak in person, often because there is no opportunity to properly express themselves. There are very few people who are comfortable with starting a conversation by asking, "What is important to you? How would you define your *hashkafa* (outlook)? If you had three wishes, what would you wish for? What do you want most in the world?" In person this is not generally done. So many people would like to share their answers but feel like the time is never right when we are actually speaking; the conversation moves too quickly and soon we are discussing a completely different topic.

Those critical of the cell phone, Facebook, AIM and the like lament the channeling of relationships and friendships into seemingly cold technological media. They wish that children would act as they used to, go outdoors and have some good clean fun with their friends. They wish people would spend time togeth-

er in a real sense, physically meeting up to do something interesting or otherwise exciting. I think these people forget the very real function that AIM serves. While it is important to spend time with other people, it is also important to learn about them, to learn what matters most to them. And that is something that can sometimes only take place in a virtual, online reality, a safe and controlled space where the words are all that matter.

I have learned about people's loves, hopes, and dreams via Instant Messenger, learned about what they want most and what they fear most. I have received helpful advice, links to interesting articles, been the victim of people's warped sense of humor, engaged in cheerful banter and serious discussion. I have been comforted, helped, inspired, and uplifted by the words my friends have shared with me, have encountered ideas that are new to me and encourage me to think more about topics I might once have dismissed. I have been privy to new and engaging points of view. I have been humbled.

For me, AIM is not a time wasting mechanism. My time is put to good use. Perhaps the best use possible.

My teachers teach me in class and my friends teach me outside of class.

And so, as I click on the little red speech bubble, I look forward to the second part of my education.

## Hamlet Revitalized

*Continued from page 12*

people. The present-day actors continued their imitations, though, as they echoed the invisible actors.

At select but brief times, specific pieces of clothing onscreen were tinted with the color of the garment worn by their present-day onstage counterparts. Guildenstern's red period coat and Gertrude's colored, contemporary sweater were both illuminated for a few short moments. Claudius's prayer soliloquy in the second act also employed this luminescent technique, though in quite a different way; as Claudius spoke, the onscreen Claudius slowly faded, but his eyes remained behind, glowing eerily in electric blue until he concluded his passionate plea.

Interestingly, the same inspired actress, Kate Valk, portrayed both Gertrude and Ophelia. Though most of the actors played multiple roles over the course of the play, this not-so-subtle commentary by the directors of this production seemed too blatant to be considered artistic. Perhaps in this day and age Hamlet and Gertrude's Oedipal relationship is too understated to be grasped by the audience to the supervisors' satisfaction, but the audacity of placing the same player in both roles is practically obscene.

The overall appearance of the play, intended to recall the 1964 experience, attempted to convey a relaxed, rehearsal-like atmosphere. On those grounds, there were modern references sprinkled throughout, with

abstract images on television screens and sporadic bursts of rock music. Laertes (played by Casey Spooner) twice burst into musical ballad, speaking to or about Ophelia. The intermission ended shockingly with an earsplitting outpouring of clashing instruments. While the audience was frequently reminded of this contemporary overtone, the play itself ended less loudly with gradual static overcoming the last lines and the vision of the Norwegians. The lights dimmed, leaving a lasting impression that conveyed one of Hamlet's themes, that of the futility of man, crushed by his own passivity.

The playbill of the show contained a Program Note—always useful when dealing with the experimental and speculative—that explained the procedure leading to the Wooster Group's innovation. Apparently the 1964 film was created with the intention to shape a circumstance where live theater was being viewed concurrently in several different locations, crafting a new mode of art, involving names like Theatrofilm and Electronovision. Their intention in this performance was to "reverse the process...like an archeologist inferring a temple from a collection of ruins." However, the best way to sum up the play comes from the Wooster Group's own mission statement: "Channeling the ghost of the legendary 1964 performance, we descend into a kind of madness, intentionally replacing our own spirit with the spirit of another."

## Shul Donates Funds

*Continued from front page*

the southern section of the Bronx, is now the center for Judaism in that part of the city. It thrives as young people move there with their children. As a result of the change in demographics, Morris Park Hebrew Center is just one of many congregations in the North Bronx that has been forced to close.

"Even though it's sad that our synagogue is closing, we're very glad that the money from the shul building is going to worthy causes such as Stern College and Magen David Adom, among other worthwhile charitable organizations," Grumer said.

According to Grumer, an endowment fund will be established with the donation. This means that the \$200,000 will be placed in a bank account, and the interest accumulated will be used for scholarship money for students in need of financial aid.

Grumer added that the synagogue's *sifrei Torah* (Torah scrolls) and *sefarim* (books) were donated to organizations in need.

"The important things in the synagogue went to the right places," said Grumer. "We're just trying to do the right thing."

## Israeli Strike

*Continued from page 10*

study, time that in the past was theirs, no questions asked, but that is now considered a luxury. The veteran academic elite also feel embattled, in the face of the mushrooming number of colleges, which they feel are siphoning off resources that would otherwise be theirs."

The strike's effect on university students varies greatly, depending on whether or not students are taking classes taught by senior faculty members this semester. Classes taught by other professors are still in session. According to Traubmann's article, the National Student Union, representative of Israeli university students, has recently called for university presidents to refund students' tuition for classes that have been cancelled or may be cancelled as more professors choose to strike.

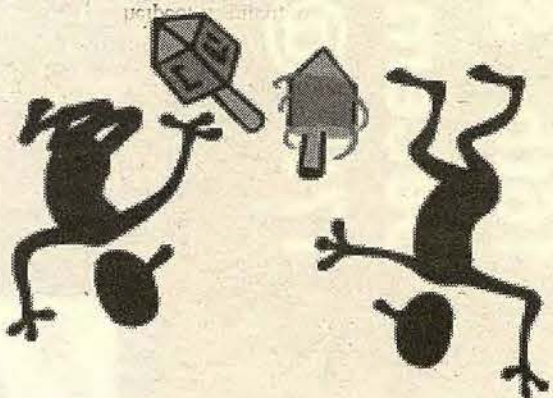
Batsheva Waltuch, a former SCW student and currently in her first year at Bar Ilan University, explained that although only one of her professors is on strike, like all students, she will be affected by the strike if it goes on long enough to warrant extending the semester. She also remarked that fellow students are upset that their tuition is going to waste as their professors refuse to teach. The irony in the matter is that one of the main goals in last summer's student strike was to battle the tuition hike in the Israeli universities. With the breakout of the professor's strike, students are once again fearful of the loss of their tuition savings.

Rimone Rabinovitch, another former SCW student, is currently studying in Hebrew University's Mechina program, a one-year pre-university program for overseas students. Rabinovitch commented that although her program's classes are still in session, the rest of the Hebrew University campus is desolate. She commented that picketing teachers and protests on the Ben Yehuda thoroughfare have become a routine and familiar sight.

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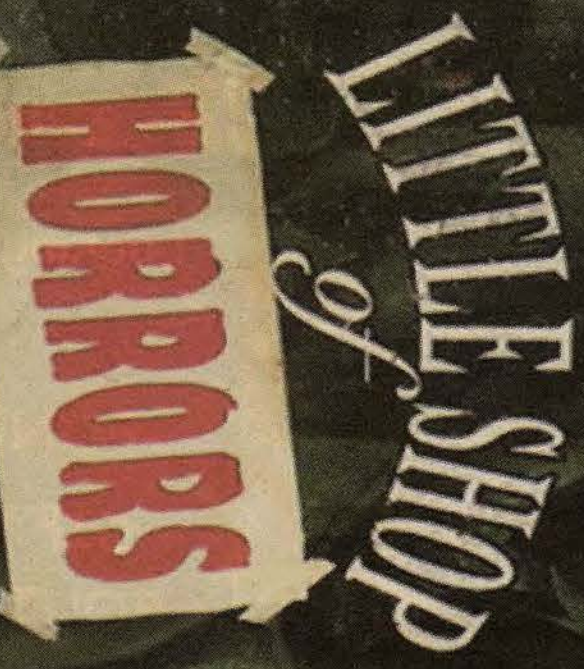
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