



# The Yeshiva University OBSERVER

April 2008/ Nisan 5768

Volume LIII Issue 7

## University to Mandate Health Coverage for All Students

BY MOLLIE SHARFMAN

Yeshiva University has approved a new mandatory health insurance policy, requiring all students to have coverage by the fall 2008 semester. "We are really bringing Yeshiva University into the community standard of healthcare and all of our students now can get the care that they need without worrying," said University Dean of Students Victor Schwartz, adding that "over 90 percent of universities have a similar requirement."

The decision to implement the policy came as a result of several important considerations, especially the rising cost of medical care. Members of Residence Life had notified the administration that many students lacked insurance and resultantly, did not receive the care they needed.

With the change in procedure, the university will feel more confident that students take care of themselves and seek proper medical attention when needed.

Dean Schwartz outlined the practical ramifications of the new



Courtesy of YU Productions

University Dean of Students  
Victor Schwartz

policy. Students already covered under their parents' health insurance plans will remain unaffected, but those without coverage will have

Continued on page 7

## New Jewish Studies BA/MA to Offer Courses in Fall '08

BY SARA LEFKOVITZ

Stern College for Women's new Master's Program in Biblical and Talmudic Interpretation will offer two advanced Tanakh courses in the fall 2008 semester, announced Rabbi Ephraim Kanarfogel, chairman of the Rebecca Ivry Department of Jewish Studies. The first, "Sefer Daniel," will be taught by Dr. Michelle Levine and the second, "Methods of P'shat," by Dr. Naomi Grunhaus.

Although enrollment for the program will not officially commence until the fall of 2009, the college will allow undergraduates interested in pursuing a joint BA/MA degree to get a head start on their future coursework, earning graduate credit for their efforts.

"The MA program is starting now, but the first occupants are people in the BA/MA program," explained Rabbi Kanarfogel. "The Master's came through quickly and we thought, 'Why don't we put Stern students into the driver's seat?'"

The new graduate program is the first ever to be offered by the college. The degree will consist of 30 credits, 12 of which can be attained at the undergraduate level. While

students will be required to take courses in both Bible and Talmud, they will have the option of concentrating in one of the two disciplines.

According to Rabbi Kanarfogel, the program holds appeal for two main reasons: its single-sex composition and beit midrash component.

"We wanted to provide a master's in high-level Jewish studies for women to develop their own level of education," he said. "We're giving students more of the best of Stern College for Women, but at a graduate level."

The fall 2008 courses will be structured accordingly, involving increased preparation, a larger number of papers, and beit midrash study. Both classes will be open to seniors, while juniors will be limited to one offering per semester.

For the present, the phase-in for BA/MA students can only be accomplished for the Tanakh track of the program. Technicalities concerning the funding of the Graduate Program in Advanced Talmudic Studies (GPATS), currently covered by the Avichai Foundation, pre-

Continued on page 8

## SLC Reinstates Defunct Academic Senate on Beren Campus

BY TALIA ROSENBERG

The Student Life Committee (SLC) on the Beren Campus is currently in the midst of directing efforts to reinstate the defunct Academic Senate, which has not met for a number of years.

SLC President Etana Zack (SCW '09) explained that while she and her committee "attempt to advocate for improvements to campus life, there is no existing forum for students to bring academic issues to the attention of the administration and faculty."

"Academic concerns are often raised in the Town Hall meetings, which leaves little opportunity for real follow-up," said Zack.

The Academic Senate will

address issues relating to the Office of the Dean, the Registrar, Academic Advisement, and other academic departments. While the new senate intends to model itself on its predecessor, there are plans to significantly revise the original constitution. The senate will include faculty members from various disciplines as well as students from each class year.

SCW Dean Karen Bacon recalled that the former Academic Senate "was a very valuable forum for discussion of academic concerns and initiatives." However, it eventually stopped convening as student life issues began to overtake academic ones in priority. In the final months of the association's existence, there were hardly any items on the agenda at all.

In the absence of the senate in these interim years, students have handled academic queries by approaching faculty within their respective majors or by setting up private meetings with the Dean's Office. In addition, many departments within Stern College meet once a semester with majoring students to discuss course offerings and address concerns.

Dean Bacon cites the recent creation of a formal midterm schedule and midterm period, as well as the intensive Tanakh Beit Midrash Program, as examples of student proposals that have been successfully enacted in the absence of the

Continued on next page 8

## Sans Seminary, SCW Freshmen Forge Unique Identities

BY JACKIE FAST

The women who arrive at Stern College for Women (SCW) straight out of high school comprise the class often dubbed with the somewhat redundant moniker "real freshmen." With the majority of students in their age group headed to Israel after graduation, freshmen at SCW are often

men are scarce is less true than it used to be. Suri Wigder (SCW '11), who came to SCW from Bnos Bracha of Karlin-Stolin in Boro Park, remarked: "As the year goes on, I keep on meeting people who are freshmen who I've never met or seen before."

The size of the freshman class has risen with the across-the-board increase in enrollment. According

Time on Campus (FTOC) students.

"There have been some years when the proportion has been off, like in 2002 after 9/11, when a larger percentage of students came directly on campus and didn't go to Israel, but the trends remain steady over multiple-year periods regardless of the variations from year to year," Fisher explained. "What we've seen over the past decade or so is incremental, steady growth."

This year, of the 329 FTOCs on the Beren Campus, roughly 65 are freshmen that have entered the university directly from high school. Fisher added that the number of freshmen on the Beren and Wilf campuses is nearly identical.

Demographically, students who enter SCW as freshmen come from one of two main recruitment sources. Some of them are international students, as the majority of students from abroad do not study in Israel before coming to Stern. Many

Continued on page 12



Shayna Hoenig/The Observer

Freshmen Shira Alenick and Sara Ben Ze'ev converse in their Brookdale dorm room

perceived to be somewhat of a rarity.

"When I introduce myself to people, a lot of times the person will do a double take and say, 'Wait—are you a real freshman?'" explained Melissa Bart (SCW '11), a graduate of Yeshiva University High School for Girls.

But as it turns out, the number of freshmen on campus has been growing steadily over the past few years. The notion that 'real' fresh-

men to YU Director of Enrollment Management Dr. John Fisher, students who choose not to participate in the S. Daniel Abraham Israel Program comprise about 20 percent of the overall undergraduate population, a percentage that has been consistent for a number of years. As a result, the number of entering freshmen remains virtually in proportion with the total number of First

### INSIDE:

|                     |    |
|---------------------|----|
| Town Hall Meeting   | 6  |
| Academic Advisement | 10 |
| Aliyah Fair         | 13 |
| "Odd Couple" Review | 15 |
| SSSB Fashion Show   | 19 |



# STAFF EDITORIALS

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

Sara Lefkowitz  
**Editor-in-Chief**

Shayna Hoenig  
**Managing Editor**

Jackie Fast  
 Ruthie Goldstein  
 Sarah Medved  
**Copy Editor**

Racheli Davies  
 Ariana Denenberg  
**Layout Editors**

Adina Schwartz  
**Opinions Editor**

Yael Wolynetz  
**News Editor**

Esther Baruh  
**Features Editor**

Nava Billet  
**Israel Editor**

Olivia Wiznitzer  
**Arts & Culture Editor**

Nili Seleski  
**Science & Health Editor**

Chana Filler  
**Fashion Editor**

*The Observer is published monthly during the academic year by the Stern College for Women Student Council. The staff of the Observer retains the right to choose newspaper content and to determine the priority of stories. While unsigned editorials represent the views of The Observer's editorial board, all opinions expressed in signed editorials, columns, letters and cartoons, are the opinions of the writers or artists and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Observer, Stern College for Women, its student body, faculty or administration.*



## Maddeningly Futile Tests (MFTs)

The exit exams at Yeshiva University, more commonly known as the MFTs (Major Field Tests) are unfortunately treated as little more than a joke. While students expend effort in studying and preparing for the test, desiring to do well in the area of their major, the current system does not enable them to successfully demonstrate their knowledge or expertise.

There are many obstacles on the path to success. First, the proctors themselves are often not proficient in the subject area they are meant to oversee, and when students

have questions about the test, they are of little to no help. At other times, proctors are seemingly misinformed of the rules and allowances specific to each MFT, giving over incorrect instructions which can seriously affect a student's score. One woman was inappropriately denied scrap paper for her MFT in economics, while Jewish studies majors were not told that they could use a Tanakh during their exams. These are just two case studies in poor MFT administration.

The tests themselves, in content and form, are problematic

as well. They are invariably old and outdated, hand-me-downs from years ago, with some still sporting typewritten font. For some majors, the exams are drafted by an external source and do not test students on the knowledge they have actually acquired at this institution.

We need to standardize our own procedures before we resort to outside standardized tests. Graduating seniors should not have to experience this much needless frustration, especially if they are willing to invest the time and effort to prepare

for the exam. This matter requires a measure of serious inquiry if Stern intends to handle its academic affairs competently and professionally.

## All Quiet on the Beren Front

In light of the recent student council elections, it is important to note the amazing contributions of the exiting cadre of undergraduate representatives on the Beren campus. They have created an estimable model of understated leadership, emphasizing the collective good over individual agendas.

This year's leaders have managed to remain vocal on issues of importance to their own respective organizations while working

well with each other. Through courteous and professional means, they listen and learn from one another, determining to collaborate in the advancement of programs to benefit the students here. In fact, several initiatives have been jointly run and sponsored by all three councils, most notably, the tremendously successful Beren campus YUnite shabbaton.

The activity on campus, with respect to events, lectures, and activities, has been unprecedented. Not

only have the programs been wide-ranging, but the crowds they have attracted have been equally diverse. Simply put, there has been something for everyone, allowing the councils to serve as an effective means of drawing women together in forming a more unified, cohesive community.

It is this relatively peaceful, connected network of savvy leaders that typifies the Beren leadership experience. It is a pleasure to interact with such mature and dedicated

women, and we only hope that those newly elected to these positions will continue to follow their lead. The absence of in-fighting on our campus is one of our greatest assets.

## The Portrait of a Lady

The last few weeks at Yeshiva University have provided an unprecedented outlet for female talent and creativity. The YU Arts Festival and the Sy Syms School of Business fashion show served as premier venues at which the women of the Beren campus could openly express themselves, without having to compromise on halakha.

The Observer has run columns on this issue before, as it is one that pertains specifically to our readership. There are many women

who feel that they must sacrifice their creative abilities for the sake of modesty. Whether at the Chorale Ensemble, Classy Couture for a Cause, or "The Odd Couple," this was their one night to shine.

Students donned designer clothing which they do not normally permit themselves to wear. They allowed themselves to be admired for their own beauty and took pride in strutting down the lighted runway as fashion models.

Members of the Chorale En-

semble had a private venue, in the back lounge of Schottenstein Residence Hall, to raise their voices in song. The performers reached high notes and high achievements in their women's only performance. Meanwhile, the Stern College Dramatics Society added some comic relief to a busy semester. It provided a stage for women to play alternative roles comfortably among peers.

The Observer staff is glad to be part of a university that recognizes the need to cater to all fac-

ets of a woman, and to come up with creative opportunities to allow her entrance to even those worlds that might at first be denied her.

## Retraction

The Observer would like to apologize for an inaccuracy reported in the February issue concerning the inaccessibility of various administrators on the Wilf campus. The said editorial unfairly and incorrectly implicated the conduct of the university's consulting psychologist. The Observer sincerely regrets the error.

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



# Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

I really enjoyed reading the article, "Confronting Challenges, Pre-Meds Contemplate Career Choice" in the February issue of *The Observer*. In general, there is a stereotype of Stern as a college that simply breeds Jewish wives and mothers. I never accepted it, knowing several women currently studying at Stern, all of whom have their own career aspirations.

The article presented the dilemma that many women face when choosing their careers, which ultimately comes down to: "Should I be selfish, or selfless?" The fact that women face this dilemma head-on and are able to come to rational conclusions, proves that Stern is not just a finishing school, but rather an institution that allows women to make the right choices at the right times, giving them the opportunity to explore their futures. I commend all of you at *The Observer* for your hard work and dedication to Stern.

David Isser  
YC '09

To the Editor,

In her "Torah Learning for Women—A Lifestyle or a Hoax?" Jamie Fogel articulates important concerns about the long-term feasibility of women's Torah learning. She questions the logic of training young women to connect to Hashem daily, through tefillah and Torah study, when child rearing and other family responsibilities will probably force them to curtail most of these practices, leading to frustration and disappointment. While Jamie's point is well taken, I will advocate for the opposite perspective and explain the logic of the current educational system. At the same time, I can also offer some personal insights and reassurance.

To begin with, the problems you describe are not unique to women. Men face similar dilemmas and constraints. The yeshiva charts an ideal way of life, and you must figure out, just as men must, how to integrate Torah into your lives once you are no longer in a formal yeshiva setting. If you are to attain lofty goals, you will certainly need to make personal sacrifices, just as your male counterparts, as you forge your own, distinctive path through life. For some students, lofty aspirations appear unattainable, but other students mature into adults who far exceed the objectives their rabbis and teachers set for them while they were in yeshiva.

The educational system for women is also not as uniform as you portray it. If you will consider your choice of yeshivas in Israel as a model, you will realize that some seminaries place more emphasis on *avodat Hashem* (service of God) in practice while others emphasize textual learning. Some of you chose not to study in Israel at all. For those who studied in Israel, each of you chose a particular type of institution, and gravitated toward particular mentors in that institution. You cannot blame

the educational system for your choices, but you are certainly fortunate to have had numerous types of quality institutions from which to choose.

Even with the husband, job, and children that you anticipate, your family commitments probably will not be pressing forever. There is also no guarantee of all of these commitments, and you may have to work very hard to attain them. The educational system must take a long view, and sustain women in various situations and stages of life.

Raising children with Torah values is the actualization of all the Torah you learned, not a chore that conflicts with your *avodat Hashem*. It is the *la'asot* "[learning for the purpose of] doing" of your years in yeshiva, when you get a chance to put all that you learned into practice. The more Torah you absorb now, the better you will be able to infuse every day of your adult life with Torah values and perspectives. Our young men and women play a crucial role in shaping the next generation, and they must be properly educated to fill that role.

Some women I know choose to find their religious fulfillment mostly through their husbands and children's achievements. Others continue to engage in textual study even during their child-rearing years.

Gender roles are more flexible today than ever. Modern conveniences ease the child-rearing task and women use their *binah yeteirah* "abundance of intuition" to juggle the multiple demands on their time. You may have to be more disciplined and efficient than you are now, but if it is truly important to you, you will figure out how to keep learning. It will be easier to learn or daven on some days, in some months, and some years than in others. But that is no reason to abandon the goal of your own personal, religious growth.

Another factor to consider is that the motivation of your spouse and children may energize you, helping you achieve ambitions that seem impossible to you now. You will also find it easier to care for children when they are your own, even if you do not think of yourself today as someone who has a particular knack for kids.

In short, my advice to you would be not to worry too much now about the future of your religious ambitions. Cherish your years in a yeshiva setting and make the most of them. Trust that the thoughtful, careful education you received will stand you well through the trials and joys of adult life, and that you will somehow adjust and do justice both to your family, and to your own personal religious and other commitments. Let us not turn our backs on the great strides in Torah education for women, which have enhanced women's lives immeasurably.

We wish that all of you face the challenges Jamie describes, and trust that you will handle them with the spirit, perspective, and good judgment that your yeshiva education has afforded you.

Dr. Naomi Grunhaus  
Assistant Professor of Bible  
Stern College for Women

To the Editor,

I was bothered by the article "The Examined Life: Academic Bible at Stern," published in the January issue of *The Observer*. As someone who has spent her entire educational life studying Tanakh, I find it difficult to understand how someone could dismiss the intense amount of depth provided by the "traditional and medieval" commentators. Similarly, I cannot believe that anyone who truly comprehended and appreciated these sources would dare to say that people who accept the viewpoints of these gedolim merely "dance through life."

When choosing what Judaic Studies classes to register for, I came across classes entitled "Philosophy of the Rav," or "Modern Jewish Problems," classes in which names like Rav Moshe Feinstein and other contemporaries are dropped frequently. How could one be upset that there is no class which discusses a more contemporary and scholarly view concerning the Torah? That no one knows what the Documentary Hypothesis is?

It must be noted that the goal of Yeshiva University is to provide not only a college education, but a Yeshiva one as well. Not Hebrew school. Not Sunday school. It is impossible to accept the idea that YU is an Orthodox institution, but simultaneously reject the stance that it should only teach Orthodox viewpoints. There is an inherent contradiction in that belief system. The courses that the article's author proposes would only take away from the Orthodox aspect of the YU, making the institution appear more secular than it already might.

For a person to subscribe to what the Documentary Hypothesis actually says would be to deny the idea that the Torah is written by God. It would appear to me to

be a lot more convenient to accept the notion that four humans wrote the Torah, as opposed to accepting the concept that there is something greater than all of us that rules the world, and governs us all.

I cannot fathom how those of us who believe in the divinity of the Torah, even without studying it through the lens of someone who believes that "the Bible were the work of a human being," are the lazy ones. There is no reason to study the Torah as though it were written by a human being, simply because it wasn't. Through studying the commentaries, and allowing oneself to journey with the *meforshim* through the various intricacies of the Torah, one can maybe begin to understand just how important these commentators and their contributions are. Don't be so quick to assume that newer commentators know better.

As a student at YU, I would be surprised and upset to see professors teaching the Torah with commentaries, as though it was merely a text that ought to be read as a book. Perhaps people with such beliefs, who would like to take such classes, made the wrong choice in attending an Orthodox institution.

With regard to classes comparing Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, I am thoroughly confused by the author's proposals. During my class on the Second Temple Era, my teacher cited the four gospels when discussing the crucifixion, as well as in our conversations about early Christians and Jews. I'm sure history classes, as well as Jewish History classes, that cover any time period that concerns Christianity and Islam, would deal with these topics. Additionally, there are sefarim that deal with interactions between Jews and other nations, the *Vicuaach HaRam-*

ban as an example, as well as many other debates between rabbis and representatives of other religions.

What is wrong with learning about the differences between these religions from an Orthodox, halakhik point of view? Students know the basics; how would a further understanding of other theologies in any way make their lives more complete? Moreover, it seems almost inappropriate for an Orthodox institution to teach the theology behind other religions. An Orthodox yeshiva should teach Judaism, not Christianity and Islam.

With respect to Rav Breuer, I have heard that he is one of the top experts on chumash. Around 10 years ago, he wrote an article in "Megadim," a journal published by Yeshivat Har Etzion, stating that people had misinterpreted his ideas and words, taking them to levels he never approved of. It is a mistake then, to attribute the Documentary Hypothesis to Rav Breuer.

Lastly, Socrates did say that "the unexamined life is not worth living." However, who is to say that the lives of the majority of Stern women are unexamined? It is a bit narrow-minded to assume that the Stern populace is ignorant and mindless. I believe, however, that people know that there is another viewpoint to looking at Torah, but understand that the stand YU takes is the more appropriate one.

As for the people who have been categorized as lazy about their religion, suffering from "illusions and dreams," the people who apparently make up the majority of Stern, I am proud to be counted as one of them. Personally, I think that the time has come for "the minority who lead examined lives" to step outside the bubble that they have sheltered themselves within, and meet the rest of us.

Rachel Cohen  
SCW '10

## Choosing Life Amidst Death: One Writer's Reflections on the Merkaz HaRav Massacre

BY PEREL SKIER

What is there to do?

For all our divisions and our spite, we Jews have a tremendous capacity to suffer as one. Text messages leap from phone to phone like neurons, tingles down a national spine. Professors set down their chalk at the news and stand wordless. We choke up. We weep. We pray. We hug people we don't know, people we wouldn't sit next to, people we won't see again. Like one massive body, we absorb the shock and sway: eight boys, sons, brothers will never be me. They belong to us and we belong to them. For that moment we stand mourning them, in the dark, with our heads bowed and hoarse *Tehillim* on our lips, we all belong to each other.

But then the lights come on and the emotion dissipates. We walk back to our separate dorms to tackle different courses and unique challenges, and it is not so much a sense of closure as a need to get out of that horrible, helpless place, to grapple with things that we have the ability to fix, that pushes us so quickly from

the auditorium and the memories. Because for those boys—for those deaths—what is there to do? How can there ever be anything that can make right that kind of searing pain? You hear the descriptions over and over, and all the symbols of goodness and holiness are perverted and profaned. Gemaras and *tzitzit!* It's like a knife in the heart. You almost want to say to God, "Wasn't it bad enough on the busses? Do we need our faces rubbed in it?" Killed because you're Jewish. Not land, not politics. We are destroyed for the heritage we share—and it speaks to the untapped power of this heritage that it can envelope us so fully in grief.

But if you think about it too much it will smother you. You'd much prefer to talk proverbial *tachlis*. What's to be done? What is there to do?

Oddly—or perhaps not oddly, if you're acquainted with our national reputation—the bond of unity unravels here. We should level Gaza! No, we can't level Gaza, we can't end this with violence—we need to join the army! No, all we can do is pray...

We should start a fund, start a foundation, perform mitzvot in their name—protest outside the United Nations! We should learn from their example...

Let the pandemonium begin.

On one point everyone is in agreement: we shouldn't forget. We can never forget. Yet I think, somehow, the rage that follows almost makes that difficult. Everyone is suddenly devolved back into the components and factions that make us all intolerable: we hate the left-wingers for their inexplicable compassion towards the Palestinians who threaten Israel's security, but we are also appalled by the Kahanites who want to bomb the West Bank back to the Stone Age, and we really can't stand the ultra-Orthodox who consider a couple words of prayer an adequate response—everything builds and escalates. We're one people, but we have multiple-personality disorder, and we sure as anything aren't going to say "Good Shabbos" to you on the street.

Continued on page 9



## Stern University: School of Thought?

BY JAIMIE FOGEL

Hanging in the Apostolic Palace of the Vatican City is one of Raphael's most famous frescoes. "The School of Athens" depicts an imagined convocation of the world's greatest Greek philosophers and scientists. There are many different theories about the identity of the figures illustrated, but two of them are indisputably identifiable. In the direct center of the painting, Plato and his student Aristotle walk together in deep conversation, each figure clutching his greatest philosophical manifesto. Plato is speaking with his hand pointing upwards, alluding to his philosophy's belief in an ultimately truer metaphysical reality, and Aristotle's hand is pointing to the ground, alluding to his belief that knowledge is acquired through empirical observation. The two philosophers are surrounded by dozens of figures deep in thought—some look tormented and some jubilant. They have all convened in a massive hall to discuss and learn from one another, sharing their wisdom and theories in an effort to acquire knowledge and deepen their understanding of the world around them.

Will the halls of Stern ever resemble Raphael's scene? Is a center of thought and dialogue on the college's academic horizons? Admittedly, even in Ivy League universities, this idyllic scene does not mimic reality. Harvard likely has as much dialogue raging as it does fraternity parties. However, I have no doubt that there is more dialogue, more sharing of ideas purely for the sake of gained wisdom and knowledge, at those universities than at Stern.

There are wonderfully engaging class discussions taking place in the 245 and 215 Lexington buildings, and there are students sitting in the Beit Midrash until late at night, deep in discussion about philosophy, spiritual growth, and contemporary challenges to Modern Orthodoxy. This dialogue does exist, but it is

the lonely minority in the discussions that go on here. More often, students can be overheard sharing their thoughts on the latest fashion trends and last night's date. Both are natural topics of conversation over a chicken dinner, but certainly not the best thoughts our minds can produce. And so I ask, is a genuine academic, thought-filled environment a possibility in Stern College's future?

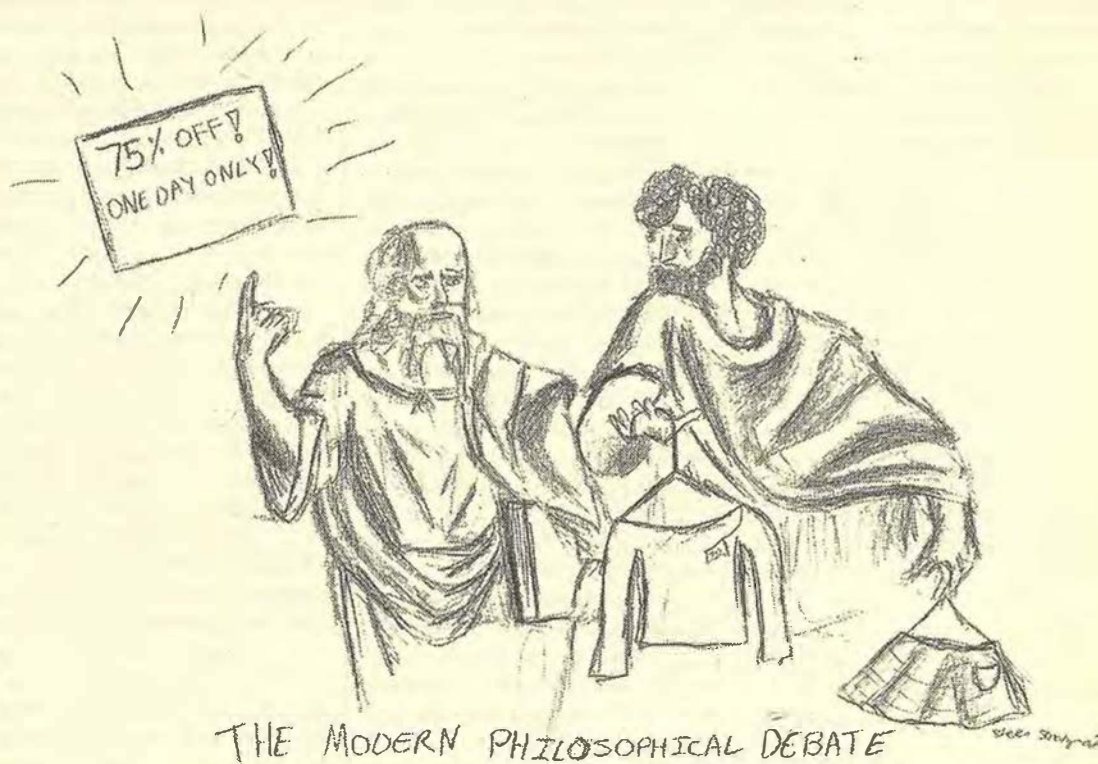
I would argue that it is. On February 26, in Koch Auditorium, the seeds for this reality were sown. The Yeshiva University Center for Ethics, in conjunction with the Israel Club, sponsored a dinner and discussion titled, "Agreeing to Disagree: Talking about Israel." The discussion was spring-boarded by brief comments from Rabbi Saul Berman and a member of the political science faculty, Professor Bryan Daves. The amount of times Israel was actually mentioned in the course of this evening could be counted on one hand. The event was advertised as an open forum to foster intelligent and open discussion about issues in the Middle East, but instead it became an open discussion about the concept of dialogue, and how to bring more dialogue and debate to our campus. Students stood up in their seats and passionately shared their conceptions of the challenges in creating this atmosphere at Stern. Yelling, frustration, and sparks of passion filled the auditorium. It was wonderful.

That evening, a somewhat depressing point became clear. Many of those who attended knew each other well, because they are the students who regularly engage in the types of discussions they want to proliferate in Stern. As one student described, "We are converting the converted." And so, I pointed out to the group that while the event was engaging and invigorating, it did not succeed in making this passion a ubiquitous element on campus. Instead, we were whining about the dearth of dialogue to the few who already care about its absence.

I suggested then, as I do now, that before worrying about fostering dialogue, we have to tackle a much more basic issue. This issue is one that precedes any possibility for development of academic dialogue:

is something that everyone can do, but not everyone does. If we first try to make thinking an exciting activity, possibly even more alluring than the two H&Ms on 34<sup>th</sup> Street, then maybe we can begin to think about

event. If Stern keeps trying to attract academically inclined students with its Honors Program and generous merit scholarships, then this passion for thinking and wisdom can develop a prominent niche in Stern.



getting people to think. The challenge of apathy and rote behavior faces every institution and any religion. But as an Orthodox college that prides itself on an ideology that can only successfully blossom through a life of deep thought and assessment, this goal becomes imperative for the survival of the institution, and on a more grand and dramatic scale, for the survival of Modern Orthodoxy. Thinking about our modes of thought and actions—and not just during a year or two spent in seminary after high school—must become a mainstay of everyone's lives. Thinking

turning our college into a university.

The word "university" is derived from the Latin phrase that means a "community of teachers and scholars." Stern has not yet developed into this type of community, but we are closer today than we ever were before. Koch Auditorium had at least 75 students present and engaged. Both professors said that the attendance exceeded their expectations and assured them that there had been improvement in the academic interest of the students in Stern. Fortunately, there was a fair showing of first-time-on-campus students at the

Stern can and needs to become a center for dialogue. An ever-increasing number of Jews are leaving Modern Orthodoxy for both the right and left. Now is the time to educate ourselves and to learn how to identify with this movement and the nuances of its complex ideology. Raphael's School of Athens was an imagined convocation of thinkers—but it is our job to turn that imaginary image hanging on the wall into a flourishing reality that will eventually flood every corner and hallway of this institution.

## Man in Search of God

BY OLIVIA WIZNITZER

There is a lot that is beautiful at Yeshiva University. There is so much that I enjoy here, so many people from whom I learn and whose company strengthens me, so many wonderful sights that I see every day. It is a pleasure to walk into Golan Heights and see men debating the proper blessings to make over certain items of food, or to ride the shuttle uptown only to hear students gladly discussing their classes here. And of course, there are elements of disagreement, of people who avidly don't support each others' views, but their disputes occur for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of God. And that too is a kind of beauty.

Except there are times when it is not so. These are the times when we are stung, or someone has hurt our pride, slighted us or otherwise mocked something that is deeply important to us. And so we respond spitefully or angrily and we

engage in a sort of battle, and we become entrenched in these feuds, unable to look at any claim outside the prism of the subjective box into which we have placed ourselves. And it is at this point of time that we forget God, if ever we knew Him.

For, why are we here? Is it not to quest for God, to search Him out and find Him, to create and forge a relationship with Him, to come ever closer to our Creator, striving to reach Him and to do His will?

What does it mean to be a Jew? Can one be a Jew without God? God is the one who created us; He is our source of blessing, the one to whom we turn in prayer. And yet, when it comes to the way we act in our everyday lives, although deeply involved in promoting the good and welfare of others, engaging with our community and otherwise reaching out to our world in a desire to make it better, it seems that we are able to forget God. And that is strange, considering that He is what we have in com-

mon, no matter the clothing we wear, the ideals to which we hold, the train of thought that we see as being ours. God is God, and He belongs to us all.

In *Sichot HaRan 7* by R' Nachman of Bréslov, we find a little of the way in which we may model our relationship to God. "You are children to God your Lord" is a verse in Deuteronomy 14:1. As children, R' Nachman explains, we are permitted to express our thoughts and troubles to God, in the same manner that a child speaks to his father. There is no person too evil to communicate with God; "Whether good or evil, you are always called his children" (Kiddushin 36a). And so that is one manner of searching out God, of striving to act as a child before his Father, awakening our hearts to love Him and speak to Him in this manner.

But that is far from the only way in which we may try to search out God. There is the idea expressed

Continued on page 9

## Re(search) and Ye Shall Find

BY LEA NEW

Over the course of my years at Stern, I've known many a panicked undergraduate with the same pressing problem: a paper had been assigned for a class, and the student had no idea where to begin doing the research. Learning researching skills has never been part of the curriculum at YU, and on the ground level it certainly shows. Students receive no formal education on doing research for their classes, and instead must develop their own way to get to the sources (after a few stressful early semesters). Their work then lacks the stamp of thorough research since there are inevitably some resources that students never discovered on their own.

The Yeshiva University Library is a subscriber to some of the most current scholarly research projects and academic journals, both in print and on the web. A detailed guide to Yeshiva University's archival collections can be perused on-

line. Additionally, if the YU Library doesn't have the book you need, its phenomenally expedient Interlibrary Loan system will have it for you within a day or two (and personally call to notify you of its arrival). All these resources can be easily accessed through networked computers at school or from any place remotely using the YU barcode on our student IDs. Energy and finances are invested in keeping our research materials at the cutting edge, yet most undergrads are entirely unaware of the services and information available that can not only enhance their work, but make it easier to do in the first place.

While many teachers offer excellent guidance to students unfamiliar with research in that field, some professors take it for granted that students know where to begin looking when they assign papers to the class. The fact is that students

Continued on page 8



## Prenups Preserve Women's Futures

BY RAQUEL AMRAM

In our Stern College environment, where, thank God, we are consistently sharing the joyous news of engagements and marriages, it can be difficult to conceive of divorce. When we do hear of tragic *agunah* (chained wife) cases, we cannot help but wonder—how could this come about? At one point the parties had loved each other. How could their marriage end on such bad terms, so much so that the husband wishes to ruin her life forever? When we see fairy tale endings in movies, we tend to envision that our lives will end up happily ever after. However, that undesirable and unthinkable alternative of an ugly divorce, is also possible.

The idea of a prenuptial agreement, which makes the *get* (halakhic divorce contract) legally binding in secular courts during divorce, is a brilliant innovation. As dictated by the Rabbinical Council of America, in June 1993, "Every member of the Rabbinical Council of America will utilize prenuptial agreements, which will aid in our community's efforts to guarantee that the *get* will not be used as a negotiating tool in divorce procedures." Basically, un-

der the legal system that the prenup enacts, it is stated that the husband is legally obligated to give his wife a *get* upon divorce. Since nowadays the *beit din* (halakhic court) cannot force the husband to give his wife a *get*, the prenuptial agreement provides a way to use the legal system and reap the benefits from it.

I had the merit of being introduced to the idea of prenuptial agreements by the leading force behind the movement, Rabbi Mordechai Willig. Rabbi Willig has drafted a recommended text to be used for prenups, which is approved by many other halakhic decisors. His approach to the issue uses halakha to defend the institution of a prenuptial agreement and rebuts potential criticisms of its halakhic validity. According to him, prenups are not merely halakhically permissible; they are crucially important.

There are several ways in which one can use the U.S. legal system while still abiding by halakha in Jewish marriages. First, a couple can translate their *ketubah* (marriage contract) into English and notarize it with witnesses. This will force the husband to pay the amount dictated in the *ketubah* after a divorce. However, since the monetary sum listed on a normal *ke-*

tubah amounts to nothing substantial, it does not solve the issue of *agunot*.

The prenuptial agreement is a second method of involving secular courts in Jewish marriage law. It states that once a husband and wife do not live together in the same house, the husband is obligated to pay her support every day. The monetary compensation should amount to 50,000 to 60,000 dollars per year, provided that the woman agrees to attend the hearings at the *beit din*. The arrangement of a legally enforceable requirement for the husband to pay the woman daily is meant to serve as an incentive for him to go to the *beit din*, in the hopes that once he is there, he can be convinced to cooperate with the divorce proceedings.

Rabbis who continue to oppose halakhic prenups raise four main objections.

First, they claim that the document is invalid if the husband does not know what he is signing. Supporters of the prenup counter this by explaining that it states in the *Shulkhan Arukh* that if a man claims that he doesn't know what is in the *ketubah*, the document is nonetheless valid. The same ruling should apply in this case. Another concern that detractors

of the prenup raise is the idea that signing an agreement will cause the couple to visit a secular court. However, this perceived issue could be avoided if the prenup states that the law will require the husband to attend a *beit din*. By not signing a prenuptial agreement, men have the power to turn their wives into *agunot*, because the law cannot compel them to go to *beit din*. Others who criticize the prenup assert that it will force the man to divorce his wife even if he doesn't want to do so. To this, supporters respond that that is exactly the goal of the prenup, and it is necessary to assert legal force in the case of an abusive husband who will withhold the *get* as a form of dominance and control.

Lastly, some contend that the prenup is inadvisable because it may invalidate the halakhic legality of the marriage. According to halakha, a couple may not get married if their marriage is predicated on a *tenai* (condition). Whether the prenup constitutes a fulfillment of the halakhic definition of a condition or not, is a matter of rabbinic dispute. Needless to say, for Rabbi Willig and dozens of other respected *poskim*, getting a prenup does not invalidate the status of the marriage that follows it.

In a similar vein, the main objection to prenuptial agreements—an objection that was definitely my initial reaction as a *sephardi*—is that it seems like an *ayin hara* (evil eye). Rabbi Willig assured me that this is not the case. On the contrary, by making it standard for every Jewish couple to sign a prenup, we will, as a community, prevent the issue of *agunot*. Even if we feel that signing a prenup is not necessary for our own particular marriage, by doing so anyway, we are helping to make it a common and acceptable practice. Prenuptial agreements will thus become more acceptable and the issue of *agunot* will be at least mitigated, if not prevented altogether.

In conclusion, even if we ourselves cannot picture getting a divorce, we can still understand the advantages that signing a prenup can generate. As many of us are dating and looking into marriage, this issue should become a priority. Various Rabbis are refusing to officiate wedding ceremonies if the prenup is not signed. We should similarly demand it.

## A Smile a Day



BY RENA WIESEN

One of the most amazing developments on campus this year has been the immense growth and strengthening of the Beren campus community. The efforts to enhance unity culminated beautifully with our first YUnite-Beren Style Shabbaton. Students have been getting to know each other and their diverse faculty and are continuing to develop new relationships with them. However, amidst all of these wonderful relationships, there is one integral part of our community that is often overlooked and ignored. The service personnel—including maintenance, facilities, housekeeping, and most obviously, security—are an underappreciated presence on campus.

Each day we pass these hard-working people as we enter school buildings, buy food in the cafeterias, and walk through the halls of each dorm. They work long hours, arriving early in the morning and leaving late at night. All day, they tirelessly ensure that our buildings and dorms are clean and safe, that we are served quickly and efficiently, and that all of our needs are taken care of.

Yet, how many of us stop or even turn our heads for two seconds to wish our security guards or cafeteria workers a good morning, pausing for a moment to say "hello" or "thank you"? How often are we too "busy," preferring instead to simply rush by without a second glance, grumbling if someone asks us to show ID, or

getting annoyed if someone is cleaning the lounge when we want to hang out? Worse, how many times do we leave a disgusting mess around the building, without thinking of who is stuck cleaning up the spilled drinks, the crumbs of food and the strewn papers? Imagine what a thankless, not to mention dirty, job this must be.

It's time to start appreciating all the hard work our service personnel do. The very least we can do is to smile as we pass by, demonstrating through this how much we appreciate their presence. Even better, let's take the initiative to say "hello." I am truly inspired by the women I see, both students and members of the administration, who make an effort to learn the names of each employee they encounter, and inquire about their well-being. Just this past week, one student with whom I was speaking stopped one of the housekeeping staff who was in our dorm hallway, introduced all of us, and complimented the woman on her hairstyle. This led to a few minutes of conversation, and at the end of it, the woman thanked us for schmoozing with her. In another instance, one of the heads of the facilities department told me how much he appreciates the students who stop and say hi to him, and how happy he is to see these students when they come back to visit and remember him. It was a shock to see the enormous impact of these small gestures.

We can all spare five seconds of our time, no matter how busy we are, to appreciate someone else and his or her hard work. Next time you enter a building, take a moment to greet the security guards. When you leave a room, clean up after yourself. At the end of the day, wish the staff good night. These small efforts cost you nothing, but make a huge difference in someone else's day.

Looking for Summer Plans?

Like working with Kids?

Want to have your nights  
and weekends free?

Then

**WESTCHESTER  
SUMMER DAY**

is perfect for you!

WSD is noted for successfully integrating positive Jewish values through a structure that is nurturing, motivating and creative and we need talented staff to help us achieve that goal

We are looking for:  
**Counselors  
Drama director  
Lifeguards  
Head Lifeguard**

Contact us anytime at  
914 698 8900 ext 153  
or email us at  
wsd@westchesterday.org

David Itzkovitz, Director  
Shirleya Gasner, Assistant Director





# NEWS

## Interdisciplinary Courses to Enrich SCW Science Curricula

BY Yael Wolynetz

In consonance with the restructuring of general education requirements, the Curriculum Review Committee of SCW has proposed the creation of a variety of interdisciplinary courses, to be implemented in the fall 2009 semester.

"The Curriculum Review Committee decided that we should re-imagine the science requirement for non-majors," said SCW Dean Karen Bacon. "What emerged was the proposal that we create both interdisciplinary science courses (one semester courses) as well as new semester courses within each science department," she added.

According to Dean Bacon, the hope is that "the combination of a semester of an interdisciplinary science course and a semester science course within a discipline would [eventually] constitute the new science requirement for non-majors."

Despite sounding hopeful about these new courses, Dean Bacon was quick to add that the plans are "still in the proposal stage and have not yet been approved by the faculty."

In their proposal for an introductory science course for all majors, Psychology Professor Robin Freyberg, Biology Professor Marina Holz, Chemistry Professor Evan Mintzer, and Physics Professor Anatoly Frenkel outlined the particulars of the new course series. While all professors were contacted by The Observer, only Dr. Frenkel was available for comment.

"Experiencing Science and Technology" is the name for one of these new requirements which includes two science courses, one of which is interdisciplinary, and a second one is in a specific discipline and is lab based," explained Frenkel. "All science departments will propose a variety of such second semester courses to cater to diverse interests of students and also to introduce modern trends in liberal arts education including cross-disciplinary courses as well as courses which are more closely addressing main problems that concern society."

The first of the two-part course series will offer a brief overview of each of the four scientific disciplines: physics, chemistry, biology, and psychology.

According to Frenkel, the "course will teach students the fundamentals of scientific methods and their applications."

As outlined in the proposal, the course will be organized into five categories, all of which will be connected by their focus on energy, a unifying theme running across each of the disciplines. The course's curriculum will "follow the natural complexity of scientific phenomena," progressing from individual objects to systems, and from organisms to societal interactions.

More specifically, the first unit of the course will deal with particle science, the second—molecular science, the third—cellular science,



Courtesy of YU Productions

Professor Anatoly Frenkel

the fourth—organism interaction, and the fifth—group interaction.

After completing the first course, students will then choose a specific discipline to study in greater depth. While the proposals for most of these secondary courses are still in the process of being devised, Frenkel provided a list of several "physics for non-majors" classes that he hopes will be offered. These include "Physics of the Human Body," "Physics of Music," "Scientific and Technological Challenges in the Modern Society," "Physics and Climate and Environment," "Physics in the Arts and Architecture," and "Physics of Sports."

While the pitch by the Curriculum Review Committee is the first interdisciplinary proposal to service the science departments of SCW, the English department will already be offering two such courses in the upcoming fall 2008.

One of the courses, entitled "Literature and Philosophy," will be taught by one of the new hires, Professor Kim Evan. The second, "Women, Culture and Society," will be given jointly by English Professor Carole Silver and History Professor Ellen Schrecker.

"Interdisciplinary courses acknowledge the fact that no discipline is an entity unto itself," remarked Professor Nora Nachumi, chair of the English department. "English and History and English and Philosophy, for example, are areas of study that have and continue to influence each other."

"To study material from an interdisciplinary perspective is thus to recognize a fundamental truth about the way knowledge is produced and understood," she added.

Nachumi pointed to two additional benefits of interdisciplinary courses. She felt that students who would not ordinarily take a course in a specific discipline but choose to because it was cross-listed with their major, "are exposed to ideas outside the normal range of the discipline in which they feel most comfortable." Moreover, when students with diverse educational backgrounds and knowledge enroll in an interdisciplinary course, the classroom "becomes a richer environment."

## President Informs and Answers Students at Town Hall Meeting

BY Yael Wolynetz

On March 26, President Richard M. Joel addressed a crowd of SCW students, faculty, and administration for the second time this year at a Town Hall Meeting held in Levy Lobby.

While the tenor of the forum was largely uneventful, students were informed of relevant news and in turn raised a host of issues involving academics, technology, and larger international concerns.

University Dean of Students Victor Schwartz introduced President Joel by comparing him to the 2008 presidential nominees. He remarked that this year's campaign has disappointed, as the nominees have failed to produce any catchy sound bytes; in contrast, the YU president continues to make headlines with memorable phrases like "ennoble and enable" and "big tent."

President Joel began his address by urging audience members to "feel safe" in asking ques-

tions at the end of his speech, adding how much he values the ability to have a "responsible conversation," with students, faculty, and members of the administration.

He expressed his satisfaction with the surge of exciting events on the Beren campus, in particular the recent "Beren YUnite Shabbaton." The President noted that since the shabbaton, the number of women who stay in each week for Shabbat has substantially increased. He smiled and added, "If you keep building, it will be wonderful."

President Joel joked that the women of SCW followed the YC tradition of not inviting him to the school-wide shabbaton. He claimed that "for a community-wide shabbaton, it is necessary to maintain a sense of normalcy," which is often undermined by his presence.

In keeping with the ongoing growth occurring throughout Yeshiva University, President Joel officially welcomed Mr. Andrew Lauer as the

## Hebrew Department Goes High Tech with Online Program

BY Michal Golan

Yeshiva University (YU) anticipates the addition of an interactive Hebrew language program to the yu.edu website in the upcoming fall semester. The newly devised program, initiated by SCW Hebrew Department Chair Dr. Zafira Lidovsky Cohen, will employ multi-sensory media to address the various learning styles and preferences of the student body, drawing from texts, pictures, videos, animations, and sounds.

Cohen is hopeful that the program will not only "increase [the student] involvement in class activities" but also enhance "their interest in the language, and consequently, their performance in this very essential subject matter."

Other features of the website include access to Hebrew newspapers, dictionaries, poems, and short stories. The Hebrew language faculty also plans to add PowerPoint presentations and sound bytes, to be used before and during class sessions. The professors will continually update the site with new materials and texts, giving students the benefit of more options of material to choose from.

"We believe that the sights and sounds our technology-enhanced curriculum will introduce to the classroom will add to students' interest in class materials," explained Cohen.

Hadassah Nemovicher, Hebrew technology expert, is serving as the consultant for the website's design and implementation. The ANGEL class management system will be used to incorporate the new program into the YU website.

Currently, the Hebrew courses offered at YU are limited to the classroom only. While professors use the means available to them in their lecture, such as poems, stories, and dialogue, the department has been

limited in the realm of technology. With the addition of the Hebrew language program to the YU website, the curriculum of the Hebrew department will undergo a transformation.

While students may be required to prepare for class and complete homework assignments via the website, some may choose to utilize its resources in their spare time.

"In the past few years, I've witnessed the growth of multimedia programs in other universities all through the USA and Israel and have discussed their benefits with my many colleagues around the world," noted Cohen. "I have also visited many institutions of higher learning and have been shown the many multimedia programs that other use to enhance their programs. With the introduction of multimedia centers in all of our classrooms at SCW, I have decided that the time has come for us to make use of this available equipment as well."

Cohen added that such technology has a "proven record of enhancing students' motivation and involvement in classroom activities," resulting from more stimulating lectures and more tools for demonstration, now at the disposal of instructors.

The Hebrew department at YU is confident that the upcoming program will assist students with verb conjugation, reading comprehension, vocabulary, and conversational Hebrew. It will address the varying needs of students at different levels of Hebrew fluency, helping them attain proficiency in the language.

"In short, computer technology is a well-recognized tool of demonstration, concentration, and interaction," concluded Cohen. "It is also a tool that allows students to manage their own learning beyond the classroom while fully supervised by their instructors."



Courtesy of YU Productions

President Joel speaks with Beren students after Town Hall Meeting

new vice president of Legal Affairs. He mentioned that Lauer comes to YU with experience as both a top attorney and as a Jewish community leader.

"He will run an in-house law

firm, dealing with areas of employment law and negligence," explained President Joel. The YU president urged

Continued on page 7



## Managing Crises, Martino Talks Safety with The Observer

BY HILLY KRIEGER

*The Observer sat down with Mr. William Martino to discuss the university's expanded attempts at emergency preparedness.*

**HK: What is your official title?**

**WM:** Director of Manhattan Campuses Housing Services. I was hired to this position last summer.

**HK: What are some of the tasks encompassed by this position?**

**WM:** In the summer, I was placed in charge of the renovation of over thirty apartments on the Wilf Campus that were to be used for married couple housing. We enhanced the living spaces and made them more habitable for those living there. The apartments are located in buildings on 182<sup>nd</sup> Street and 184<sup>th</sup> Street. However, the big project that I was charged with was to revamp housing administratively. In the last couple of months, we have created a better system to handle housing and the various issues that crop up in the realm of housing.

**HK: I understand that you have extensive experience in fire safety. How does that play a role at Yeshiva University?**

**WM:** I was a crisis manager at New York University, where I mostly dealt with issues relating to student health and safety. This role is somewhat different at YU, given that at NYU we would have about a hundred emergency transports of students to the ER for drug and alcohol problems every year. At Yeshiva, we don't have even a tenth of the problems as at NYU, but there are areas in need of improvement in the fire safety realm here. I am especially focusing on policy implementation and what we will and will not allow in the residence

halls to prevent fires. We are working to create consistency between the campuses on rules governing what is permitted in the rooms and what should be banned. There also seems to be some lack of student knowledge of fire protocol, responding to fire alarms, and evacuating a building quickly and safely.

**HK: How will you change the way fire drills are handled here?**

**WM:** Right now, security is in charge of conducting fire drills; however, I would like to involve the Office of Student Affairs in this also. They will be given responsibility to educate the Resident Assistants (RAs) and provide more details and comprehensive instructions to them. I work in an administrative capacity, as well as in conjunction with the Office of Student Affairs. I believe that fire safety should be a joint effort of both security services and the OSA.

**HK: When do you plan on implementing these new changes?**

**WM:** These plans should be in place by fall 2008. By then we hope to include more instructions in the student handbook about fire safety and what is expected of the students. We also hope to have the RAs discuss fire safety with those on their floors within the first week of school to explain that there will be fire drills and what the students need to do. I think students have been conditioned the wrong way in the way that they respond to fire drills. We need to work with those that have the most contact with the students, meaning the RAs, to better communicate the importance of fire safety and how the students react to a fire alarm. Right now, students respond to the PA system, but we need to recondition students to respond to the alarm.

## Names of New Stern Faculty Announced

BY SARA LEFKOVITZ

SCW Dean Karen Bacon has released the names of new faculty who have recently been hired for the college. There will be an addition of eight professors to five academic departments.

The English department has recruited four full-time faculty members. Kim Evans, who will teach 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature, received her doctorate at the State University of New York, Buffalo, where she is currently teaching. The second hire, Lee Manion, is a medievalist currently teaching at the University of Rhode Island and received his PhD from the University of Virginia. Matt Miller, who was both educated and teaches at the University of Iowa, will give courses on poetry. Linda Shires, an expert in Victorian literature, rounds out the group with a PhD from Princeton University. She cur-

rently teaches at Syracuse University.

The economics department has hired Patrycja Grzelnoska, who specializes in microeconomics and econometrics, from Williams College. Dr. Grzelnoska received her PhD from the University of Minnesota.

Lauren Harburger, who is teaching and completing her doctorate in psychology at Yale University, will join the SCW psychology department in the fall as well.

The SCW Jewish studies department has recruited Dr. Richard Hidary from New York University to teach Jewish history and Judaic studies.

Finally, Kira Adaricheva, who has taught most recently at Harold Washington College in Chicago, will give courses in mathematics at SCW. She received a PhD in physics and math from the Institute of Mathematics, Siberian Branch of Russian Academy of Sciences in Russia.

## YU Adopts Universal Health Insurance Policy

*Continued from front page*

access to a reduced-cost plan, made available through the university.

"The insurance plan that [YU] is using specializes in university health plans," reassured Dean Schwartz.

When students register for courses this fall, they will be asked about their current health insurance plans. If they have insurance, they will be asked to disclose all relevant information. If an American student has no private coverage, he or she will be directed to the academic health plan's website to subsequently purchase insurance. For international students, the insurance fee will be built into their tuition, unless they have acceptable U.S.-based coverage.

Associate Dean of Students Zeldra Braun spoke of the immediacy of the new requirement.

"There are many medical crises that have come about in the college that could have been averted if only the student had carried medical insurance," she explained. "For those students who are already insured, this requirement will force them to become aware and learn about their respective medical insurance."

Dean Braun is hopeful that the policy will help students take accountability for their own health, since lack of insurance will no longer be a legitimate excuse.

"The students of SCW are young women who need to be responsible for their own medical well-being. We have provided for them a Student Health Cen-

ter and they should not be afraid to use it," Dean Braun emphasized.

SCW Economics Chair Professor Dennis K. Hoover, who is currently teaching a course on health economics, offered his viewpoint.

"The new requirement that YU students have health insurance is at least partly based on the presumption that students without health insurance may not be able to afford appropriate medical treatments, and therefore their health will be compromised," Hoover noted.

The economics chair said the issue of health coverage loomed large, even on the national agenda.

"The requirement can be viewed from a broader national perspective, especially in the campaigns by Senator Hillary Clinton and Senator Barack Obama for the Democratic Party's nomination for President," he observed. "Health care is a major domestic issue largely because 47 million Americans (adults and children) currently have no health insurance at all. These 47 million Americans may be ineligible for Medicaid, the governmental health insurance program for low-income families. Most of these uninsured Americans can't afford health insurance, can't get it through their employer, or have existing or pre-existing chronic conditions and thus can't get insured by private health insurers at all."

"However, some of the uninsured can afford insurance, but they choose not to do so because they believe they won't get sick or hurt and thus won't need any sig-

nificant medical attention," Hoover continued. "The latter is a problem because it leads to private health insurers having an adverse selection of the population as subscribers, forcing premiums to higher levels, thereby making health insurance premiums even more unaffordable."

Student reactions were divided on the implementation of the new policy. "I think it is about time that the university was brought up to par on this issue," said Ally Wallin (SCW '08). "In its current state, the university is in an even more difficult position. To what degree are they responsible for a student who does not have insurance?" she continued. "I doubt that RAs would merely sit by and watch students suffer without forcing them to the hospitals."

"With the new policy, the issue is black and white. Not only will it be beneficial for students, but also for the university, especially RAs," Wallin opined.

Rachel Cohen (SCW '08) took a different stance. "While it might be more beneficial for the university, I cannot help but feel sensitive to the students who currently do not have health insurance plans and whose families cannot afford to purchase plans even at reduced rates," she remarked.

"The burden of tuition is great enough and this policy only contributes to the monetary pressure," Cohen added.

## President Joel Addresses Women at Town Hall Meeting

*Continued from page 6*

interested students to contact Lauer, who "will fashion time" to discuss career opportunities in the field of law.

President Joel also announced the appointment of Ms. Yvonne Ramirez as chief of Human Resources, expressing his confidence in her abilities "to bring YU's Human Resources to the next level."

The president then spoke about a new on-campus initiative that will heighten campus security and safety. He stressed that as a Jewish institution, "We are more visible recipients of anger, hatred and violence." Because "YU is one of the institutions on the terror watch list of the FBI," the university must "constantly look and revisit" this area of operations. Most recently, the university purchased a system called Alertfind to notify students in cases of emergency, through emails, text messages, and voicemails.

Upon completing his review of recent university developments, President Joel opened the floor to student questions. Chava Chaitovsky (SCW '08) expressed her disappointment with Stern's current Judaic studies requirements.

"There are very few academic caliber Bible classes," Chaitovsky said, adding that the way the curriculum is currently structured, there is no distinction between academic Bible classes and those taught from a more traditional approach.

In response, President Joel

noted that he "is a believer in academic Jewish studies" and that he feels that many courses at Stern reflect a "harmonization" of both traditional *mefarshim* (commentators) and academic scholarly interpretations. The president added that he "welcome[s] the formation of a serious committee of students" to look into this issue and make sure that SCW is "servicing its Judaic studies majors."

Continuing on the subject of academics, Abby Phillips (SCW '11) asked about the possibility of expanding the course offerings in various majors. President Joel responded that the university is "faced with different challenges for all three undergraduate colleges—SCW, YC, and SSSB—but there is a wholeness within the facilities." While pledging the university's commitment to hiring more full-time faculty, he acknowledged that the university is currently dealing with a significant budget deficit.

President Joel teased that while he is "glad there is an intellectual surplus," he has to cut down in other areas. "We need to balance the growth of the university, so that the school grows in a way to support all students equally."

Torah Activities Council (TAC) President Laura Shuman voiced her dissatisfaction with the absence of a representative from the Department of Communications on the Beren campus. "There are so many wonderful programs that take place on the Beren campus that people are not aware of," she said.

In response, President Joel claimed that "he can make bricks but cannot provide the straw," alluding to the fact that there simply isn't money to have full representation at Stern. Nonetheless, he asserted that people are aware of the programming occurring at SCW and that he "does not feel that Stern is a stepchild."

Osnat Rabinowitch (SCW '09) was curious about YU's stance on divestment from Darfur and wondered if the university is doing enough, as an institution, to protest the genocide.

President Joel replied that YU students have always been at the forefront of the rallies, and that the university has previously sent buses to rallies in Washington D.C. and in the New York City area. However, as president, he generally tries to avoid taking a public stance on political issues.

In his closing statements, President Joel discussed the importance of leadership in order to help better society at large. Alluding to the recent flare-up over Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Herschel Schachter's remarks on the division of Jerusalem, the president remarked that he has "more respect for people who face real problems and challenges and speak to leaders in hopes of finding a solution," than for those who simply complain.

President Joel urged the audience to "look for the best in people and not the worst," and to see "how we exercise responsibility within our community and the rest of America."



## Academic Senate

*Continued from front page*

Academic Senate, through interactions with faculty and administrators.

Nevertheless, several women have expressed interest in the reinstatement of the senate. Jamie Fogel (SCW '08) approached the Dean's Office earlier in the year to make the request.

"Although I have greatly appreciated and enjoyed my education here, I have been a bit unhappy with the academic standards of certain departments at Stern," she noted. "I wanted there to be a forum through which constructive criticism could be made in the presence of department administrators and faculty to try and improve the academic standards of their courses."

Fogel is hopeful that the new Academic Senate will begin by improving one department at a time and will thereby eventually raise the overall academic level of study in Stern.

Despite her acknowledgment of the senate's value in the past, Dean Bacon offered cautionary advice to

the Student Life Committee. "If the students do wish to create a new Senate, I think it would be wise to meet with some faculty leaders to establish guidelines both for agenda items and for processing those items," she said.

According to Zack, the SLC is in the process of reformulating the structure of the senate, dealing with questions of membership numbers and admission, whether by election or appointment, as well as faculty representation. She noted that the previous senate was managed very formally, rigidly regulated by a protocol handbook entitled, "Robert's Rules of Order Revised." A different tone has been proposed for the new model's proceedings.

"We think it's important that things don't get hung up on constitutional technicalities," remarked Zack. "We would like to create an environment in which students feel comfortable raising certain issues."

## Library Research

*Continued from page 4*

are achieving impressive intellectual feats despite having partial or absolutely no knowledge of the vast array of research materials offered by the university. But is this situation optimal? Don't we want to eliminate that initial feeling of "I'm lost!" when trying to navigate the resources for a research paper? Although it is commonly the freshmen who experience this kind of bewilderment, even the upperclassmen, managing to adapt somehow, only use the same limited resources out of habit. Don't we want better quality, well-researched work?

Officially, Stern students are trained to do research in the English Composition and Rhetoric course when they first get to school. While the English Comp course is rewarding in many respects, the scope of its research instruction is limited to

a number of online academic search engines, usually pertaining to English literature. Every major offered by Stern possesses its own distinct researching methods and materials that need to be taught to students in a structured environment. The departments must begin arranging research tutorials for students within their major. In the past year and half, only the Judaic Studies department has organized a tutorial of the library's rich online resources in Jewish studies research.

Crash courses in doing research shouldn't occur once papers have been assigned. Programs must be developed both by the Yeshiva University library and by each department to familiarize the students with researching techniques before the work actually begins. The anticipated result will be superior classwork and a better-educated student body.

## BA/MA Jewish Studies Courses

*Continued from front page*

clude undergraduates from earning graduate credit for their Talmud classes at SCW. The sponsorship is set to expire at the end of next year.

Nevertheless, the college will attempt to retroactively accommodate those studying Talmud as undergraduates, possibly through the administration of an exam. Rabbi Kanarfogel reassured that such students "won't have to start from scratch," when the Talmud track is officially integrated into the master's program in 2009.

Since the new Master's Program in Biblical and Talmudic Interpretation will be managed entirely by SCW, its faculty will be similarly employed by the college.

"Anybody teaching is Stern faculty," remarked Rabbi Kanarfo-

gel. "[We feel that] we can have it in-house, with very appropriate and qualified faculty. We're using our faculty in a very multifaceted way."

When asked whether the new program would divert women away from the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, Rabbi Kanarfogel answered in the negative. "Students looking for a traditional master's academic experience will go to Revel," he said. "My sense is that more options will lead to more interested students. We're selling this [SCW master's program] on uniqueness; it's the unique experience that has the appeal."

# Attend Summer Session in New York

Choose from four sessions beginning May 30 to August 7

## Queens College has it all

- Hundreds of undergraduate and graduate courses for academic credit
- A breezy, 77-acre campus on the highest point in Queens
- Cybercafés, free use of athletic facilities including a tennis center and olympic pool
- Interesting students from across the globe

For more information, a complete listing of summer courses and an online application form, please visit [www.qc.cuny.edu/summer\\_session](http://www.qc.cuny.edu/summer_session) or call 718-997-5890



Incoming Freshmen & Transfer Students are welcome for Summer 2008

QUEENS COLLEGE IS NY

## SEE THIS EMPTY SPACE?

# ADVERTISE IN THE FINAL ISSUE OF THE **OBSERVER!**

CONTACT  
SCWOBSERVER@  
GMAIL.COM



## Life Amidst Death

Continued from page 3

Don't get me wrong. If there is any way to fill a void of this size, I can't conceive of it. We deal with the outrage in our different ways, the only ways available to us, and we accomplish. We fix. We don't fix the unfixable, but we fix *something*. Hey, at least *something* is within our power to better. And I think that this is a good, healing reaction. It helps us to navigate the hurt and fear.

But watching the disparate reaction to what happened this March at Merkaz HaRav reminds me more than anything of a saying my mother has.

My community, for all that it's off in the American boondocks, is as fragmented as any, and my mother has noted how strange it is that as Jews, we have a tendency to characterize ourselves by our possessions: Are we the kind of Jews who have TVs or the kind of Jews who just have DVD players? The kind who wear black hats or streimels? Velvet yarmulkes or *kipot srugot*? Black skirts or jean skirts or no skirts?

Maybe it's easier to compartmentalize people this way. You're wearing a white shirt on a weekday, so you're not like me, you're not going to understand what composes my daily life and therefore not worth the

awkwardness. You've got an ipod and U.S. Keds, so you probably have nothing to say about gemara or the things I consider meaningful, so I won't nod when our eyes meet. Credible or not, we gravitate towards the people we expect will share our interests and values and away from those who seem at a glance not to, and to a certain extent that's a fact of life.

Yet we get so caught up in reading people, sifting for those worth the investment based on the scattered clues of their lifestyle, that sometimes I think we forget the ultimate humanity of the people we meet. You see your neighbor in the grocery store and think "No TV." You glance at the girl in the desk next to yours in class and think "Black Stockings." It's not a question of what makes them laugh, what frightens them, what they dream of becoming. People turn into hyphenated checklists. They become an answer to a yes-or-no question instead of a complex, multi-faceted individual, capable of more than one kind of experience, more than one kind of understanding.

So here's what I'm advocating. Bear with me—you've heard it before, and it's an easy thing for cynicism to dismiss. But I think if there's anything to be fixed, it's this, and it's

what it feels like to be connected to one another, that fixing is possible.

You can't do it for everyone, all the time; sometimes there's too many people, there's too much going on, and it's fair to acknowledge that. But when you're sitting in a classroom with fourteen students you've never said a word to, davening in a shul full of strangers, on the bus, waiting in line, whatever—challenge yourself to actually look at the people in front of you and see their vivid, human story, rather than the lifeless nametag you've assigned them. By the way, this applies to any kind of person and ethnicity. See a family man rushing to work on 47<sup>th</sup> Street to support his children rather than a chusid clinging to an antiquated streimel. Hear a girl excited and happy about her best friend's wedding rather than yet another intolerably-pitched cellular shriek. Be a part of your world, notice the web of people around you, and instead of distancing yourself in the myriad ways we all do—disdain, loneliness, incomprehension—think past the initial disclaimers that separate you. Choose to belong to this people, this world, in life.

We have suffered too much death to survive without each other.

## Man in Search of God

Continued from page 4

by the Rav, that of man's creative capacity. Man, explains Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, was placed on this earth in order to emulate his Creator. In "Halakhic Man" he writes, "When man, the crowning glory of the cosmos, approaches the world, he finds his task at hand—the task of creation. He must stand on guard over the pure, clear existence, repair the defects in the cosmos, and replenish the 'privation' in being. Man, the creature, is commanded to become a partner with the creator in the renewal of the cosmos; complete and ultimate creation—this is the deepest desire of the Jewish people" (105). And that is yet another way of searching out God, and striving to emulate Him and interact with Him.

God appears in many guises in the Bible. He is God who is angry, merciful or compassionate, a warrior and a shepherd, a king and a lover. There is so much beauty to God, and so many ways through which we can approach Him, and yet it seems that at times we are taught nothing of Him at all. We ignore God so that we might continue fighting in His name, we might continue arguing about foolish differences without considering the purpose and the reason behind this entire religion.

It is strange that this is so. We are taught so much within our schools, for those of us who have been enrolled in Jewish day schools, high schools and perhaps have attended seminaries as well. We are taught the commentaries on Tanakh, perhaps the commentators on the Gemara; we become very involved in trying to resolve contradictions between one place in the text and another; we are interested in technicalities and words, literary techniques and laws, and as we focus on these specifics we lose sight of the *reason* we are doing all this...and that is for God. And so it is that we are taught everything in our schools—except about God.

Is it that God is unknowable? To an extent, yes, that might be so. Maimonides argues that God can only be described through negatives; that it is incorrect and improper to ascribe any qualities to God—one can only say what He is not. Yet whether or not this is so, there is no question that we are meant to build a relation-

ship to and with God, a relationship that is fraught with contradiction, for at the same time that we are naught but a dust speck as compared to God of the Cosmos, we are also the most important person in the universe to God our Father, who cares about His children. And this is part of the greatness of God, for he is changeable enough to accommodate all of us, and to allow all of us to search Him out.

And so I think that in some way we must redirect our goals, not in any foolish sense of the word—I am not recommending the institution of a God 101 class—but simply within our own minds, hearts, and souls. The reason we are here is because of God, and our every action is committed for Him, in order to walk in His ways and to earn the title of His servant. And so it lies upon us to search God out, to strive to find Him, to search for Him and seek Him, to realize that no matter the method or the approach that is used, this is precisely what our brethren desire to do as well. We do it in very different ways and utilize very different methods, but in the end our role is the same—we are all children of God, and it is upon us all to find Him, and to live our lives by walking alongside Him, and desiring to know Him.

In "God in Search of Man," Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, "Religion must be an altar upon which the fire of the soul may be kindled in holiness." But it is impossible to bring up a sacrifice, let alone offer up one's soul, unless one understands to whom one sacrifices, and knows before whom one walks.

Let us then concentrate and redirect our focus to God; let us aspire to study and learn more of His aspects, character and nature, for we exist to search Him out; it is His pleasure to let us find Him. Let us walk with God, if we can. Let us hope to love Him totally and purely, so that we are suffused with desire, and our only wish is to be close to Him. I believe that were we to concentrate upon this goal for a time, it would of necessity lessen the in fighting between the different factions within this religion... and that could be nothing if not a greater sanctification of His name.

And so we might aid in bringing heaven down upon Earth, and allowing God to dwell in our midst once again.

### Fleetwood Synagogue (Mount Vernon NY) is recruiting community "kollel" couples

**\$10,000/year**

- Picturesque neighborhood between Riverdale and New Rochelle
- Warm, suburban "out of town" feel
- 22 minutes to midtown (Grand Central) via Metro North
- Gedalyah Berger, Rabbi

Duties include daily minyan, laying once per month, and community outreach.

This is a wonderful opportunity for young professionals or graduate/semikhah students to contribute to the Yiddishkeit in their community in a meaningful way.

Please email [rabbi@fleetwoodsynagogue.org](mailto:rabbi@fleetwoodsynagogue.org) to arrange a meeting on campus (either at Stern or YC,) or find Rabbi Berger in the mornings at the Muss Hall Beit Midrash.

See [www.fleetwoodsynagogue.org](http://www.fleetwoodsynagogue.org) for details about the community.

**HAVE OPINIONS TO  
VOICE?  
CONTACT  
SCWOBSERVER@  
GMAIL.COM**



# FEATURES

## Navigating the Collegiate Maze: Academic Advisement Examined

BY ESTHER BARUH

Journeying through the collegiate labyrinth of choosing a major and making career decisions is sometimes a complex and perplexing experience. In order to better navigate the process of designing a course schedule and understanding general and major requirements, undergraduates have the option of venturing to the 14<sup>th</sup> floor of 205 Lexington Avenue, home to the Office of Academic Advisement.

The mission of Academic Advisement is to assist students in developing an academic plan that maximizes their potential and takes advantage of resources available on campus. The undergraduate women were asked to evaluate their experiences with the department as part of a recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) distributed by the office of YU Provost Dr. Morton Lowengrub. The findings however, which are currently being analyzed by Director of Institutional Research Ariel Fishman, are not likely to be released to the student body.

In the absence of numerical data, The Observer conducted various interviews in an attempt to qualitatively assess the general sentiments on campus relating to Aca-

demical Advisement. Overall, students seem to have mixed feelings about the reception they receive there.

Lani Lederer (SCW '09), an English literature major with a minor in Judaic studies, said that her opinion of Academic Advisement is "mostly neutral, but slightly negative."

"I've gone to them for a junior check, and I got done what I needed to get done but they made me feel about two feet tall when I did that," she related. "The [advisor] who helped me...made me feel unintelligent. She expected me to know exactly what I was supposed to be doing, but I'd never had a junior check before, so I didn't know what I was supposed to be doing, and I just felt like I was inconveniencing them."

Other students corroborated Lederer's less-than-positive experiences. "I barely ever use Academic Advisement," recounted Daphne Davis (SCW '09), a biology major and Judaic studies minor. "The few times I've used Academic Advisement, they haven't been all that friendly. I don't get the sense that they really want to work with students to help them accomplish their goals." Davis cited

Continued on page 12

## The Kosher Conundrum: Relocated 2nd Avenue Deli Prompts Student Inquiries

BY ESTHER BARUH

Tucked into the façade of buildings lining East 33<sup>rd</sup> Street, a mere stone's throw from the revolving doors of the 215 Lexington Building on the Beren campus, is the historic Second Avenue Deli. Founded in 1954 on the corner of Second Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street, the deli moved to its new Murray Hill location after a 52-year run in the East Village.

The deli is currently under the ownership of Jeremy Liebewohl, nephew of the original founder of the deli, Abe Liebewohl. After Abe Liebewohl's death in 1996, his brother Jack took over managing the restaurant and kept the old-school charm of the deli going until January 2006, when a rent dispute forced the deli to close for almost two years. In December 2007, the deli reopened its doors in Midtown.

Robert Greenspan, general manager of the Second Avenue Deli, praised the diversity of customers that the deli draws. "Our target is basically any consumer who loves a great corned beef or pastrami sandwich," he asserted. "A great portion of our clientele is not Jewish."

He also likened the deli to the U.N. in terms of the various ethnicities of the employees of the restaurant.

"We have everybody working here, which is wonderful," he enthused.

Open seven days a week, the deli is open for business nearly 24 hours a day. Sunday through Thursday, the deli operates from 6

mashgiach ruchani of the Beren campus, listed two issues under consideration vis-à-vis the deli. First, the concern of the kashrut of *basar she'nisalem min ha'ayin*—meat that is unsealed and not under the supervi-



Olivia Witztzer/The Observer

Second Avenue Deli storefront on 33rd Street

a.m. until 2 a.m., and Friday and Saturday from 6 a.m. until 4 a.m.

Understanding the mechanics of the kashrut of the deli is imperative for the Stern College for Women community. "There's not a dairy product in the store. We use all kosher products," said Greenspan. "But we're not shomer Shabbos, so someone who is Orthodox wouldn't eat here. We're under the rabbinical supervision of Rabbi Israel M. Steinberg. He's in a few times a week and doesn't have a set schedule."

Greenspan listed Rabbi Steinberg's duties as mashgiach, which include checking all the products that enter the deli and the upstairs and downstairs kitchens, as well as verifying the bills. "The law states that as long as we're a kosher restaurant, the only supervision has to be the state agricultural inspector," elucidated Mr. Greenspan. "We take it a step further by having the rabbi there. There are customers who are kosher but not glatt kosher, and they feel a lot more comfortable knowing that we have a rabbi."

Rabbi Steinberg explained that his role is that of a "yotzei venichnas," a supervisor who is not on the restaurant's premises at all times, but rather comes and goes without a predetermined schedule. "I go as much as I can," he articulated. "I am in charge of making sure that whatever they eat is kosher according to the halacha."

The restaurant's practice of being open on Shabbat is made possible, according to Rabbi Steinberg, by the institution of a *shtar mechira*, which transfers ownership of the deli to a non-Jew every Friday and then is resold to the Jewish owner after Shabbat. Everything in the deli is sold with the exception of the *keilim* (utensils). The use of the *shtar mechira* has been in practice since the deli opened.

Rabbi Shlomo Hochberg,

because the restaurant does not employ a round-the-clock mashgiach. "Generally, meat has to be under Jewish, meaning frum, shomer Shabbos, jurisdiction unless it has *simanim* on it," explained Rabbi Hochberg. This means that unpackaged meat needs constant supervision to ensure that it is kosher, and "I don't think that you'll find any va'ad have a meat restaurant and not have hashgacha t'midis," Rabbi Hochberg theorized.

Secondly, the *shtar mechira* used by the deli is not a commonly accepted practice. "There is a notion of selling a business on Shabbos," noted Rabbi Hochberg. He pointed out that while such a procedure might work with, say, a medical practice, when it comes to an eatery, it is a different ballgame. "It's not accepted by any of the community hashgachas as valid to operate a business on Shabbos," Rabbi Hochberg continued.

Additionally, it is expected that there would be no mashgiach present on Shabbos to supervise the preparation of the food. Rabbi Hochberg clarified that because there is no way to tell where opened meat is supplied from, and since one cannot be positive that an unsupervised process of preparing the meat is completed in an halakhically acceptable manner, it is imperative to have constant supervision in a kosher meat eatery.

Michal Golan (SCW '08) related that her interest in the deli was piqued after hearing other students mention the restaurant, but upon entering the deli, she elected not to patronize it. "I didn't actually eat there, because when I got there I was looking around and it seemed kind of off," she recounted. "I didn't see any people wearing kippot. My sister called her friend who works for the OU and he told us not to eat there."

## Tikkun Olam through Social Justice

BY SHLOMIT COHEN

One of the most compelling and beautiful aspects of halakha is its ability to address the needs of both the nation and the individual simultaneously. Because the Torah allows for a multiplicity of views and paths within the halakhic framework, the halakha allows us the room to develop as individuals while remaining a cohesive and unified nation. It is precisely in these extra-halakhic issues that we have the most room to cultivate our sense of self. It is in these grey areas, where there is no definitive halakhic imperative, that we find room to develop a personal approach to Hashem, which will then inform our service of God and humanity.

An important example of this is found in the area of social justice. I am often asked to explain and justify the value of social justice from a halakhic perspective. These questions are common among Jews who grapple with the hierarchy of giving and the imperative to create a more just and equitable world.

Naturally, the first thing an observant Jew does is turn to the halakha to determine an appropriate course of action. After all, it is halakha that guides us in how to interact with the world, and it is our commitment to halakha that has allowed us to preserve our traditions and ensure continuity. However, al-

though there are extensive halakhic discussions regarding our obligation to care and provide for the Jewish community, the halakha does not really touch upon our collective responsibility for the global society.

Chief Rabbi of England Jonathan Sacks explains that the lack of halakhic literature about our responsibility to the broader world community does not detract from extra-communal social justice as a fundamental Torah value. On the contrary: many chapters in Tanakh are devoted to rebuking the Jewish people for their social justice shortcomings, and countless mitzvot come to redress society's inequalities. Rabbi Sacks explains that "the question [of collective responsibility] was not asked because it never arose," but not because Judaism does not value the notion of collective responsibility. Rather, the chief rabbi asserts that, "the inference I draw from the Bible as a whole is that the moral demands on humanity are universal."

So, while I do appreciate the desire to turn to the corpus of halakha to determine our course of action in concerns of social justice, I have a hard time when these questions are accompanied by the belief that halakha reflects the full range of Torah values and an expectation that there is a neat and clean answer readily available. The complexity of these issues demands that we respond with a comparable level of

sophistication and sensitivity. The philosophical and ethical imperatives of Judaism and humanity are drawn from sources that extend beyond our explicit halakhic obligations. There is unquestionably a moral imperative to engage in social justice that can be gleaned both from the sensitivity with which the Torah regards the larger world and from a basic responsibility that stems from living and interacting with the greater community.

In Judaism, the end of a cycle always provides an opportunity for reflection and evaluation. When I look back on this past year, the excitement and energy that the Stern campus has demonstrated in regards to social justice has been truly incredible. Our campus has created a forum to engage in social justice issues that affect the Jewish, New York, and global communities. From child soldiers in Uganda to agunot; from sex slaves in Israel to Tzedek Friday volunteer days in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Street Shul; from Habitat for Humanity to fair trade coffee, Stern College has embraced the opportunity to make an impact. What I find truly inspiring is that regardless of the way in which each individual chose to translate the value of social justice into action, we as a campus recognized and responded affirmatively to our responsibility to be *metaken* the world around us.

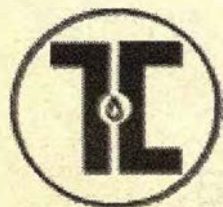


# Become a social worker Earn a Master of Social Work MSW Degree

Meet all academic requirements for the  
New York State LMSW and LCSW Licenses.



**Social Workers**  
Help starts here.



*Touro College is  
an equal opportunity  
institution.*

**CONTACT:**  
Dean Steven Huberman, Ph.D.  
**TOURO COLLEGE**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF**  
**SOCIAL WORK**  
New York, New York 10010  
1-877-MSW-TOURO  
[www.touro.edu/msw/](http://www.touro.edu/msw/)



## Life Amidst Death

Continued from page 3

Don't get me wrong. If there is any way to fill a void of this size, I can't conceive of it. We deal with the outrage in our different ways, the only ways available to us, and we accomplish. We fix. We don't fix the unfixable, but we fix *something*. Hey, at least *something* is within our power to better. And I think that this is a good, healing reaction. It helps us to navigate the hurt and fear.

But watching the disparate reaction to what happened this March at Merkaz HaRav reminds me more than anything of a saying my mother has.

My community, for all that it's off in the American boondocks, is as fragmented as any, and my mother has noted how strange it is that as Jews, we have a tendency to characterize ourselves by our possessions: Are we the kind of Jews who have TVs or the kind of Jews who just have DVD players? The kind who wear black hats or streimels? Velvet yarmulkes or *kipot srugot*? Black skirts or jean skirts or no skirts?

Maybe it's easier to compartmentalize people this way. You're wearing a white shirt on a weekday, so you're not like me, you're not going to understand what composes my daily life and therefore not worth the

awkwardness. You've got an ipod and U.S. Keds, so you probably have nothing to say about gemara or the things I consider meaningful, so I won't nod when our eyes meet. Credible or not, we gravitate towards the people we expect will share our interests and values and away from those who seem at a glance not to, and to a certain extent that's a fact of life.

Yet we get so caught up in reading people, sifting for those worth the investment based on the scattered clues of their lifestyle, that sometimes I think we forget the ultimate humanity of the people we meet. You see your neighbor in the grocery store and think "No TV." You glance at the girl in the desk next to yours in class and think "Black Stockings." It's not a question of what makes them laugh, what frightens them, what they dream of becoming. People turn into hyphenated checklists. They become an answer to a yes-or-no question instead of a complex, multi-faceted individual, capable of more than one kind of understanding.

So here's what I'm advocating. Bear with me—you've heard it before, and it's an easy thing for cynicism to dismiss. But I think if there's anything to be fixed, it's this, and it's

what it feels like to be connected to one another, that fixing is possible.

You can't do it for everyone, all the time; sometimes there's too many people, there's too much going on, and it's fair to acknowledge that. But when you're sitting in a classroom with fourteen students you've never said a word to, davening in a shul full of strangers, on the bus, waiting in line, whatever—challenge yourself to actually look at the people in front of you and see their vivid, human story, rather than the lifeless nametag you've assigned them. By the way, this applies to any kind of person and ethnicity. See a family man rushing to work on 47<sup>th</sup> Street to support his children rather than a chusid clinging to an antiquated streimel. Hear a girl excited and happy about her best friend's wedding rather than yet another intolerably-pitched cellular shriek. Be a part of your world, notice the web of people around you, and instead of distancing yourself in the myriad ways we all do—disdain, loneliness, incomprehension—think past the initial disclaimers that separate you. Choose to belong to this people, this world, in life.

We have suffered too much death to survive without each other.

## Man in Search of God

Continued from page 4

by the Rav, that of man's creative capacity. Man, explains Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, was placed on this earth in order to emulate his Creator. In "Halakhic Man" he writes, "When man, the crowning glory of the cosmos, approaches the world, he finds his task at hand—the task of creation. He must stand on guard over the pure, clear existence, repair the defects in the cosmos, and replenish the 'privation' in being. Man, the creature, is commanded to become a partner with the creator in the renewal of the cosmos; complete and ultimate creation—this is the deepest desire of the Jewish people" (105). And that is yet another way of searching out God, and striving to emulate Him and interact with Him.

God appears in many guises in the Bible. He is God who is angry, merciful or compassionate, a warrior and a shepherd, a king and a lover. There is so much beauty to God, and so many ways through which we can approach Him, and yet it seems that at times we are taught nothing of Him at all. We ignore God so that we might continue fighting in His name, we might continue arguing about foolish differences without considering the purpose and the reason behind this entire religion.

It is strange that this is so. We are taught so much within our schools, for those of us who have been enrolled in Jewish day schools, high schools and perhaps have attended seminaries as well. We are taught the commentaries on Tanakh, perhaps the commentators on the Gemara; we become very involved in trying to resolve contradictions between one place in the text and another; we are interested in technicalities and words, literary techniques and laws, and as we focus on these specifics we lose sight of the *reason* we are doing all this...and that is for God. And so it is that we are taught everything in our schools—except about God.

Is it that God is unknowable? To an extent, yes, that might be so. Maimonides argues that God can only be described through negatives; that it is incorrect and improper to ascribe any qualities to God—one can only say what He is not. Yet whether or not this is so, there is no question that we are meant to build a relation-

ship to and with God, a relationship that is fraught with contradiction, for at the same time that we are naught but a dust speck as compared to God of the Cosmos, we are also the most important person in the universe to God our Father, who cares about His children. And this is part of the greatness of God, for he is changeable enough to accommodate all of us, and to allow all of us to search Him out.

And so I think that in some way we must redirect our goals, not in any foolish sense of the word—I am not recommending the institution of a God 101 class—but simply within our own minds, hearts, and souls. The reason we are here is because of God, and our every action is committed for Him, in order to walk in His ways and to earn the title of His servant. And so it lies upon us to search God out, to strive to find Him, to search for Him and seek Him, to realize that no matter the method or the approach that is used, this is precisely what our brethren desire to do as well. We do it in very different ways and utilize very different methods, but in the end our role is the same—we are all children of God, and it is upon us all to find Him, and to live our lives by walking alongside Him, and desiring to know Him.

In "God in Search of Man," Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, "Religion must be an altar upon which the fire of the soul may be kindled in holiness." But it is impossible to bring up a sacrifice, let alone offer up one's soul, unless one understands to whom one sacrifices, and knows before whom one walks.

Let us then concentrate and redirect our focus to God; let us aspire to study and learn more of His aspects, character and nature, for we exist to search Him out; it is His pleasure to let us find Him. Let us walk with God, if we can. Let us hope to love Him totally and purely, so that we are suffused with desire, and our only wish is to be close to Him. I believe that were we to concentrate upon this goal for a time, it would of necessity lessen the in fighting between the different factions within this religion... and that could be nothing if not a greater sanctification of His name.

And so we might aid in bringing heaven down upon Earth, and allowing God to dwell in our midst once again.

### Fleetwood Synagogue (Mount Vernon NY) is recruiting community "kollel" couples

**\$10,000/year**

- Picturesque neighborhood between Riverdale and New Rochelle
- Warm, suburban "out of town" feel
- 22 minutes to midtown (Grand Central) via Metro North
- Gedalyah Berger, Rabbi

Duties include daily minyan, laying once per month, and community outreach.

This is a wonderful opportunity for young professionals or graduate/semikhah students to contribute to the Yiddishkeit in their community in a meaningful way.

Please email [rabbi@fleetwoodsynagogue.org](mailto:rabbi@fleetwoodsynagogue.org) to arrange a meeting on campus (either at Stern or YC,) or find Rabbi Berger in the mornings at the Muss Hall Beit Midrash.

See [www.fleetwoodsynagogue.org](http://www.fleetwoodsynagogue.org) for details about the community.

**HAVE OPINIONS TO  
VOICE?  
CONTACT  
SCWOBSERVER@  
GMAIL.COM**



# ISRAEL

## Despite Delays, Aliyah Fair Still Meets with Success

BY BATSHEVA LIPSCHITZ

Occurring four months later than last year's November event, the fourth annual Yeshiva University Aliyah Fair was held on Wednesday night, March 26. With over 250 YU students and representatives from eight Israel-related organizations present, Israel Club Vice President Rachel Aviv, (SCW '09) called the night "a major success."

Referring to this year's program as more of an "Israel fair" than an aliyah fair, Aviv explained that the intention was to attract a broad range of students. Aviv, working together with Avi Gilboa (YC '08), wanted to expand the agenda from presenting strictly aliyah-based content to encompassing many organizations related to Israel. The two began contacting organizations several months ago and decided to broaden the venue by inviting Israel advocacy groups as well.

In addition to hosting Nefesh B'Nefesh (NBN) and the Jewish Agency, this year's fair featured Stand With Us, an Israel education and advocacy organization, and the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), among others.

"A lot of people who came this year wouldn't have come to a regular aliyah fair, but they came to find out about summer opportunities, and how to become active on Israel's behalf," noted Gilboa. "These people like Israel, love Israel, but aren't necessarily thinking about aliyah, so we catered to them."

The two most popular booths throughout the night, NBN and the Jewish Agency, provided the necessary resources for those students who did in fact come to gain information about aliyah. Akiva Werber, senior shaliach (representative) of the Jewish Agency, stated that several students have already opened aliyah files and are in the process of making aliyah later this

year. "But," he added, "these students already made their plans; it's late in the year [to be having the aliyah fair]. This is absolutely a mistake. The fair should have been in September."

Werber attributes the comparatively fewer students in attendance this year to the lateness of the fair. "It's good they have one now, and it's important—but it's not the prime time."

Gilboa was pleased with the turnout from the Yeshiva and Stern College campuses and suggested that perhaps the decision to hold the fair in the spring semester was to accommodate the students who recently returned from learning in Israel for a year and half.

This scheduling change had a noticeable consequence, in that many students already have summer plans and can no longer enroll for the programs being offered.

Shiffy Staiman (SCW '10) spoke to the Jewish Agency about summer options. "They have all these

interesting programs and one is for internships for the summer, and they even help you find housing, and that's really convenient," she explained. "But, it's almost too late. If you want to do it, you have to apply right now."

However, Staiman said that the fair was still helpful to her in other ways. She plans to make aliyah after finishing school, and aliyah-related events provide her with better information and more confidence regarding her decision.

"Overall, I think they had a good selection of tables because they had things for people who are making aliyah more immediately and they can help you find jobs in Israel. But I'm not ready for that," continued Staiman. "I went to other booths and asked about making aliyah in the future. I'll always have different questions that need to be answered in terms of making aliyah, based on what I'm up to in life."

Staiman appreciated the

availability of Nefesh B'Nefesh at the fair, and their availability in general at YU. "I find that they've been accessible, which is great."

NBN also scheduled personal meetings with students on both undergraduate campuses, held later in the same week.

"We make you independent researchers," explained NBN Advisor Avi Silverman. "We give people information so they can be independent." He offered students a booklet and brochure about creating a social life in Israel, as well as a step-by-step guide for aliyah preparation.

"Most people we met tonight have been to [an] Israel learning [program] and aliyah is on their mind," Silverman remarked. "Most people want to come after undergrad to get a free Masters in Israel, which is terrific. They've also chapped

Continued on page 14

## Undergrads Address Situation in Sderot

BY LIAT SEGAL

On March 2, Stern College for Women (SCW) hosted an inter-campus event to fundraise and generate awareness about the danger-fraught situation in Sderot, Israel. Coordinated by Ayala Kurlander (SCW '10) and Max Saltzman (YC '09), the program was sponsored by TAC, SOY, the YU Israel Club, One Family Fund, and Hagshama.

Undergraduates from across the city attended, including eight students from Queens College, five from Baruch, and half a dozen from New York University. In total, approximately 200 students attended.

Noam Bedein, founder and director of the Sderot Media Center, addressed the attendees and informed them of the background and current state of affairs in Sderot. After his presentation, students were given the opportunity to decorate gifts and cards for the town's children.

The town of Sderot was established in 1951 and is currently populated by approximately 20,000 lower and middle class Israeli citizens. During the past seven years, more than 8,000 rockets have targeted the town, launched from Palestinian terrorist cells in Gaza. "Every single street, road, family... has experienced a rocket slam nearby," Bedein explained.

Using several video clips, Bedein demonstrated how Sderot residents run for cover from qassams (homemade mortar rockets) upon hearing the "tzeva adom" or "color red" alert blaring through loudspeakers all over town. From the moment the red alert is sounded, residents have a mere 15 seconds or fewer to find shelter. For this reason, Sderot inhabitants must take special preventative action, such as not wearing seatbelts while

driving so that they can exit their cars more quickly if necessary. Bedein described the difficult decisions with which parents are often faced when they hear the alert, such as "which child to grab first and protect?"

Through both his talk and multimedia presentation, Bedein portrayed the psychological damage that the current circumstances in Sderot inflict on people living there. Residents interviewed in the videos reported that many among them are now dealing with Post Traumatic

Stress Disorder (PTSD), often characterized by panic attacks, severe nightmares, bed-wetting, or even seizures. These symptoms appear among children and adults alike. The event enabled students to not only become aware of the situation in Sderot, but also allowed them to show solidarity with the town's residents. As Purim was fast approaching, the program arranged for students to use their creativity by designing and decorating brown paper bags for *mishloach manot* as well as greeting cards. The bags and cards were then transported to Israel, where yeshiva students abroad filled the bags with candy and sent them to children and elderly people in Sderot. The One Family Fund, a non-profit organization offering aid and relief to victims of terror in Israel, facilitated the distribution of the *mishloach manot*.

In addition, Ayelet Kahane

they can. I met a teenage girl—just a few years younger than us—she's afraid to shower alone, and she can't sleep alone. They're always afraid."

Although visiting Sderot is certainly the most effective way to gain an understanding of its current predicament, individuals like Bedein are attempting to promote greater awareness among people who cannot see it for themselves. His former hobby of photography turned into a life mission when he decided to found the Sderot Media Center three years

understanding of the crisis in Sderot. "[The event] creates more awareness and makes me want to do something," said Shira Deluty (SCW '10).

Tzvi Feifel (YC '11) felt similarly. "It's phenomenal just to see what they go through," he said. "This footage... gives a whole new perspective."

Another key goal of the event was to raise funds that would be channeled towards acquiring therapy for Sderot residents. One Family Fund was the agent for collecting and distributing the funds. Since the event, approximately \$6,430 has been raised.

However, the program at Stern was part of a much broader inter-collegiate effort. During the week of March 2, Jewish organizations and students at universities and high schools on the east coast held similar events on their campuses. These schools included Columbia University, Barnard College, Brooklyn College, Queens College, Johns Hopkins University, Brandeis University, Maryland University, Wellesley College, The Ramaz Upper and Middle Schools, Shulamith High School, The Frisch School, Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls, Park East Hebrew School, and the Stella K. Abraham High School for Girls. In addition, organizations including New York NCSY, HaShomer HaTzair, and Bnei Akiva also made strides to involve youths in the initiative. In total, over 2,250 *mishloach manot* bags were decorated and sent to Israel.

Students are encouraged to stay tuned for future events aimed at aiding Sderot residents. When asked what students could do in order to take action for the cause, Kurlander said, "The biggest and best thing they can do is raise money and raise awareness, tell everyone about the situation and tell them to spread the word."



Courtesy of Max Saltzman

Women decorate *mishloach manot* for residents of Sderot

Stress Disorder (PTSD), often characterized by panic attacks, severe nightmares, bed-wetting, or even seizures. These symptoms appear among children and adults alike.

The event enabled students to not only become aware of the situation in Sderot, but also allowed them to show solidarity with the town's residents. As Purim was fast ap-

proaching, the program arranged for students to use their creativity by designing and decorating brown paper bags for *mishloach manot* as well as greeting cards. The bags and cards were then transported to Israel, where yeshiva students abroad filled the bags with candy and sent them to children and elderly people in Sderot. The One Family Fund, a non-profit organization offering aid and relief to victims of terror in Israel, facilitated the distribution of the *mishloach manot*.

ago. The purpose of the program is to promote understanding of the crisis in Sderot by distributing photographs, videos, and written materials. "The Sderot Media Center presents the humanitarian crisis in Sderot," he explained. "We are not political."

Interviewed students felt that the presentation was effective in helping them to attain a stronger



## Essay: Students Reflect on Israel at 60

BY MIRIAM FARATCI

If you've ever spent a good half hour in Duane Reade trying to find the perfect birthday card for a friend, you know that finding the one that "tells it like you mean it" is a challenging task. The truth is that being a certain age means a different thing to every individual, so it is unfair to expect Hallmark to express one's personal feelings and wishes accurately.

Recently, finding myself in this frustrating situation, I resorted in desperation to searching through the "60s and Up" section with the hope of finding something humorous for my 17-year-old sister. This is what Hallmark has to say about turning sixty: "You've just turned 60...time to get Groovy!" "Looking fifty is great if you're sixty!" and "It's your special day...eat lots of cake."

In the coming month, the Yeshiva University (YU) community will be celebrating Israel's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, and needless to say, Stern women and Hallmark have very different ideas of what it means to be 60. For many students, Israel's sixtieth birthday is a significant milestone both quantitatively and qualitatively.

"Israel at 60" programs have been launched at college campuses and communities throughout the world, corresponding to increased celebrations and celebratory programs worldwide, but one must wonder: Is 60 really so different from 59?

"Israel is still relatively young compared to the US [but

it's no longer a baby country," said Yael Wolynetz (SCW '08). She expects that as Israel grows in age, it will become an even more independent and responsible member of the international community.

Iana Frankiel (SCW '10) added that Israel must continue developing and advancing as it has in recent years, but most importantly, that "Israel must continue to [serve as] a moral example for the world."

Conversely, Bina Westrich (SCW '10) is of the opinion that "Legally nothing has changed from 59 to 60... Israel is still young." She believes that Israel's independence, validity, and increased responsibilities are not dependent upon its age, but on its acceptance in the global arena. "Practically, nothing will change in the world's view of Israel," Westrich said, suggesting that Israel's more advanced age will not have any political significance.

Whether Israel's 60th birthday will make newspaper headlines or not, this milestone will certainly be celebrated at YU with a more exciting program than in previous years.

"[It is] an opportunity for reflection about what we, as the YU community, can do to support Israel," added Naomi Sharon (SCW '09).

For some, like Frankiel, Israel's sixtieth birthday is an opportunity to bring a heightened sense of pride and celebration to the broader community. "As a Jewish school, it is our responsibility not only to celebrate, but to spread our love, knowledge,

and pride with others," she explained.

Elana Goldberg (SCW '08), who plans to make aliyah in the summer, offered a slightly different opinion. One more year in Israel's history does not change the intensity of pride and celebration, she said. "Israel has always been a place of refuge—a place to call home. We have always had pride, no matter how old [Israel is]."

Although YU has been in existence longer than the State of Israel, its support for and celebration of Israel has always been a fundamental and unfaltering component of the university's identity.

Additionally, YU students see Israel's sixtieth birthday celebration as having a personal significance, outside of its political and national implications. According to Michal Grun (SCW '10), the anniversary is a time to reflect on the growth the country has experienced since its inception in 1948. "We came from nothing and we built ourselves up to

be an advanced country... I'm proud that we made it this far," she said.

On the other hand, Lani Lederer (SCW '09) sees this milestone as an encouraging message for the future, not only for the Jews living in Israel, but for the Jews of the Diaspora as well. "I feel a responsibility to make aliyah...to be the next generation living in Israel, teaching the next generation to appreciate the land...and to make sure that Israel has a 70<sup>th</sup>, 80<sup>th</sup>, and 90<sup>th</sup> Yom Ha'Atzma'ut," she declared.

In both cases, Israel's existence, both in the past as well as the future, is a tremendous accomplishment and source of pride.

Whether one views Israel's nationhood as "living a miracle" or now approaching "over the Hill," the past 60 years have presented the State of Israel with many struggles and challenges, as well as advancements and achievements. Israel, the sole practicing democracy in the

Middle East, has absorbed six million immigrants as citizens from over 70 different countries. It has become a global leader in the fields of science and technology, as its citizen population includes the inventors of Instant Message, the PillCam Capsul, and many other inventions which have taken the world to new, unimaginable places. Israel is also one of nine countries in the world to launch satellites into outer space. Israelis have won eight Nobel Prizes, along with Olympic medals in Judo, Windsurfing, and Kayaking. The Jewish homeland continues to develop and thrive like no other country in the world. As Mark Twain famously said, "The Greeks and Romans...are gone; other people have sprung up and held their torch high for a time but it burned out...the Jew saw them all... all other forces pass, but he remains."

## Terrorists Target Schoolchildren: Nothing New

BY HANNA L. GOLDEN

Terrorism, the use of methods of violence to intimidate others, tends to target anyone whose death will cause others to be fearful, striking military and civilian victims alike. As terrorism increases, many people become desensitized to the news of new attacks, and react to such news with nothing more than a passing sigh instead of with fear. However, the targeting of schoolchildren has yet to be considered the stuff of common cruelty, perhaps because striking those who are least able to defend themselves petrifies everyone, even the most desensitized members of our society, and even those whose job it is to defend civilians.

Israel has suffered many terrorist attacks targeting schoolchildren. One of the most deadly occurred on Israel Independence Day in 1974 in Ma'alot. Three members of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine held 85 children and teachers hostage. The highschoolers, from Tzfat, were on an excursion in Northern Israel with the youth organization Gadna, and had spent the night at the Ma'alot schoolhouse. The terrorists entered Israel from Lebanon and came armed with assault rifles and hand-grenades. As they overpowered the group, some students and teachers managed to escape through a second-story window. The remainder were gathered into one room and forced to stay there while their captors demanded that the Knesset release a number of Arabs held in Israeli jails.

The Knesset agreed to negotiate, but the terrorists refused to extend their deadline. Hours later, an IDF battalion attempted to free the captives. By the end of the operation, the terrorists killed 22 children before they were eventually killed themselves.

A few years earlier, in 1970, a school bus was attacked near Avivim in Northern Israel. The attackers crossed into Israel from the nearby border of Lebanon, and fired bazooka shells at the school bus as it followed



Courtesy of Wikipedia

Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav

its daily route. The bus crashed, and 12 people—including the bus driver—were killed in the assault, while 25 others were wounded. The terrorists, who belonged to the Syrian-sponsored group Saeka, were never caught.

More recently, in 2002, the Otniel Yeshiva for Youth, a yeshiva for students in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF), was attacked during a Shabbat meal. Two Palestinians entered the yeshiva, located in the West Bank, and fired on the students in the kitchen. One of the students in the kitchen locked the dining room door, preventing a massacre. Of the hundred students in the building, the four students working in the kitchen were killed, eight others injured, and the rest unharmed. Both of the attackers were killed by the IDF.

However, not all attacks go according to plan, as evidenced by the massacre planned for a high school in Kfar Etzion this past January. Two Palestinians broke into Mechor Chaim High School. Although most of the students at the Kfar Etzion high school were in the beit midrash (Torah study hall), the terrorists did not go straight there. Instead, they first entered the library, which is the next room over from the beit midrash, where the counselors were

meeting. When they tried to bully the counselors and threatened them with a knife and gun-facsimile, the counselors became suspicious despite the security guard uniform that the terrorists wore, and assaulted them. The two terrorists were shot dead, and the students were unharmed.

A month ago, students were again targeted by terrorists. At Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav, the charter yeshiva of the Religious Zionist movement in Jerusalem, a gunman forcibly entered the building and opened fire on young people learning in the beit midrash. The terrorist continued shooting until a passing IDF officer and an armed alumnus killed him. Eight students were killed in the shooting, many were injured, and the beit midrash, the center of the yeshiva, was wrecked.

The most recent terrorist massacre to target students, while shocking, is not a tactical innovation. For many years and around the world, terrorists have targeted the least guilty and most vulnerable elements of society. There have been several attacks of this nature in Israel alone. It is an old tactic, which seems to have become popular anew over the past several years.

## Aliyah Fair

Continued from page 13

[understood] the idea that they can network while learning—it's brilliant. That's the best way to do it."

Gilboa agreed about the benefits of making aliyah immediately after college. "I think everyone is going to go at their own time and their own pace, but the longer you wait, the more difficult it is to move. Life is just less complicated now. It's the in-between stage."

Yet others do not feel ready to move immediately. "I am not prepared to do it right now; we're probably talking a good five-year plan," stated Tamar Klein (SCW '09). "But, the aliyah fair was useful to give people of like-minded

attitudes an opportunity to meet."

One of the goals of the aliyah fair, according to both Gilboa and Aviv, was to get people talking about aliyah. As Aviv noted, "It's a good experience for those who were there. So many people walked out with a greater awareness. People were talking about aliyah. After going to an aliyah fair, people remember Israel and why they want to go, and then start talking about it again."

Werber said that his role at the fair was to help people pragmatically prepare for their move by exposing them to the different options available. He calls aliyah a "dream" and asserted that there is not a single "religious Jew [who] does not think about aliyah."

Stay tuned for  
Yom Ha'atzmaut at YU,  
as Israel celebrates  
its 60th year of  
statehood.

MAY 7th & 8th 2008



# ARTS & CULTURE

## Arts Festival Brings Talent and Culture to SCW and YC Undergrads

BY ALISA UNGAR-SARGON

The Yeshiva University Arts Festival, the annual student-run series of events, brought talent and culture to the otherwise unsuspecting masses from March 30 to April 14.

The festival, coordinated by Racheli Davies (SCW '08) and Elchanan Clingman (SSSB '08), covered all areas of fine art, imbuing the program with Jewish themes wherever possible. The schedule of events incorporated speakers, screenings, and hands-on workshops, most notably those in which the students themselves were featured as the main attraction, including the Art Gallery, Classical Concert, and Open Mic Night, in addition to the two undergraduate Dramatics Society productions.

"We wanted to use arts and culture as a way to enable people to display their talents within our community by creating venues for artists, musicians, and other creative talents," explained Davies. "Our aim was to create a better sense of belonging to a community by linking people together through their interests and involvement in different cultural activities."

The festival opened on March 30 with a performance by the jazz band Ha'Orot, coordinated by Reva Frankel (SCW '11). The group interwove various tunes with the poetry of Rav Kook to commemorate the deaths of the eight Mercaz HaRav students murdered last month in a terrorist attack.

The Art Gallery, coordinated by Davies along with Yitzy Feigenbaum (YC '09), Elisheva Eisenberg (SCW '08), and Yael

Zwanziger (SCW '09), ran for the first week of the festival, exhibiting the paintings, drawings, prints, and photographs of students.

The Student Classical Concert, organized by Aaron Wolf (YC '08), Reena Gottesman (SCW '08), and Eugenia Kitaevich (SCW '10), took place on April 6 and included the singing troupe YU A' Cappella for an extra Jewish flavor. Primarily devoted to musicians of the piano variety, the concert also featured violin, tuba, and cello players.

Open Mic Night, planned by David Sugarman (YC '11) occurred on April 2 and presented a forum for non-classical musicians, stand-up comedians, and any perturbed female vocalists that were barred from the halakhically-approved classical concert. Taking place adjacent to the Wilf campus in Dougie Doug's, the event was well attended and supported.

This year, the Arts Festival also joined forces with the YC and SCW Dramatics Societies. The Stern Dramatics Society's production of Neil Simon's female version of "The Odd Couple," directed by Reuven Russell, came at the beginning of the two-week festival, while the YC Dramatics Society's "Journey's End," directed by Lin Snider, was performed at its close.

The Arts Festival was founded by former YC Dean Norman Adler and former Assistant Dean Joyce Jesionowski, to be run yearly by students from both Wilf and Beren campuses. Events are mainly funded by the Office of the Dean on both undergraduate campuses.

## Cut: Slicing Through the Myths of Circumcision

BY OLIVIA WIZNITZER

Eliyahu Ungar-Sargon's new documentary, entitled "Cut," is brave in its scope and concept, exploring the possibly taboo topic of circumcision, whether it be practiced within Jewish circles or even by gentiles.

The success or failure of this film is determined by the way in which it is marketed. If "Cut" is meant to be a thorough examination of "the subject of male circumcision from a religious, scientific and ethical perspective," as the website suggests, it cannot succeed. This is partially due to the fact that the film is local to Chicago, and therefore rabbinical experts, ethicists and scientists outside of the Chicago area do not appear. A film that is so strictly limited cannot hope to have explored all opinions upon a matter. If, however, the purpose of the film is to document one man's struggle with the commandment of circumcision, it succeeds brilliantly.

What does one do when one's

personal morals and those dictated to us by God conflict? This is the question that is raised by Ungar-Sargon, who begins the film by stating, "To me, circumcision represents my lifelong struggle with the Jewish religion." His question is relevant to every thinking Jew, for there will always be times when one's emotions or reason conflict with the divine moral code. How does one then act? This topic has been raised with regard to the genocide we are to perpetrate upon Amalek, homosexuality, and is now being asked by Ungar-Sargon about circumcision.

The beauty of the film lies in its truly thoughtful nature. Ungar-Sargon desires to appeal to the logic and reason of others, and therefore determines to present ideas, rather than forcefully argue them. He wishes to represent all sources, and honestly speaks to many different kinds of people. Ungar-Sargon interviewed a wide assortment of individuals, ranging from Leonard B. Glick, author

## "Odd Couple" Wins Laughs at SCW

BY OLIVIA WIZNITZER

Based on the performance given on Opening Night, March 30.

Reuven Russell's rendition of Neil Simon's "The Odd Couple [Female Version]" opens to choppily spliced music, with the audience's attention focused more on the stark figures removing stage curtains than upon the actresses. Happily, lights illuminate an exotically colored and beautiful stage, bringing us back to 80s chic. Loud blues, greens, and yellows wage war upon the eyes while we note a contingent of women on the side, in what appears to be a weekly meeting. Their interest in the game at hand, Trivial Pursuit, is hardly believable. There is no energy, no vibrant and frenetic joy; the competition is demonstrated through more strident tones, and one even senses boredom.

All this changes upon the entrance of redheaded, loud and compelling Olive Madison, brilliantly played by Yaelle Frohlich. Yaelle's charged entrance brings vibrancy, energy and wit to the fore, as we discover that she is an incorrigible slob who offers her friends stale sandwiches and jawbreaking potato chips as refreshments. Olive's sloppy home, depicted through the careless way in which fabrics and clothes are scattered across the floor, is soon invaded by another friend, the hypochondriac cleanliness freak, Florence Unger (Aina Schwartz). Unger's marriage has ended, and she now seeks comfort and refuge at Olive's home, subsequently accepting an invitation to live there. Unfortunately, Olive and Florence make the worst possible couple imaginable.

Florence's character is a difficult one to portray, due to her being a hypochondriac, hysteric, and otherwise expressing a penchant for extreme situations. While Schwartz occasionally falls prey to overacting, or adopting a more melodramatic tone than necessary, her overall performance demonstrates a fine balance between making her character ridiculous and capturing the audience's sympathy. Florence's softer tones after being chastised, and her sad expression upon learning that Olive cannot deal with her anymore, are those that any woman might express upon having received some difficult news.

Manolo and Jesus Costazu-

of "Marked in Your Flesh: Circumcision from Ancient Judea to Modern America," and Marilyn Milos, the founder and director of NOCIRC, the National Organization of Circumcision Information Research Centers, to ethicists like Raja Halwani, and a man who stands outside of the University of Chicago Hospitals protesting the "violation of human rights law," as he believes circumcision "violates the right to body integrity."

Ungar-Sargon also makes sure to interview various religious authorities, including members of the

Orthodox, Modern Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements in his survey. All the rabbis agree that a child who is not circumcised is nevertheless a Jew and part of the covenant; they differ as to the centrality and importance of circumcision. Rabbi Hershy Worch, an Orthodox rabbi, explains that "it's a covenant. You either believe that God said to Abraham circumcise yourself and all of your children—you either believe that or else, nothing's true. There's no reason for circumcision. Rabbi Donni Aaron, a Reform Rabbi, states that

ela, portrayed by Dana Adler and Melissa Steiglitz, win the biggest laughs of the evening. Two Spanish brothers who are impeccably dressed, sporting handkerchiefs of gold and cream, they are Olive's remedy for the strained situation between herself and Florence. Their hilariously mangled English, incomprehensible Spanish adages and expressions, and exquisitely believable hair and makeup (thanks to DeeDee Klein) make them lovable and convincing. Adler and Steiglitz both sport excellent accents, which they are able to maintain throughout their roles.

Sylvie (Rebecca Grazi); Mickey (Tzivia Berow), Renee (Sarah Medved) and Vera (Deborah Wiseman) improve after the first scene, delightfully portraying a troupe of concerned, chatty

or anxious women upon whom one notes the effects of Florence and Olive's volatile relationship.

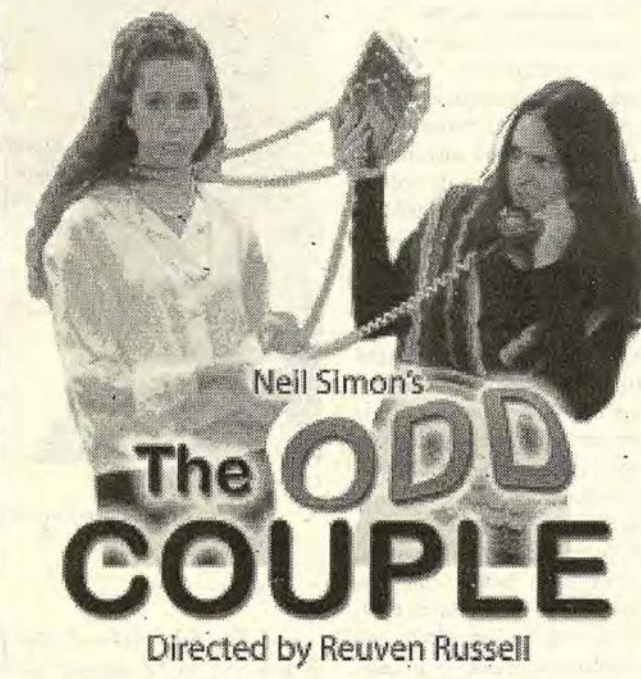
The play is a triumph for art director DeeDee Klein and props master Gabi Binstock. Exquisitely detailed tablecloths that glitter romantically, crystal goblets, intricately designed candleholders, charred turkeys and loud outfits of yellows, oranges, browns and purples prove no challenge to them. Also impressive are the efforts of Taz Mayerhoff, whose advertising expertise resulted in the attention-grabbing (if slightly misleading) playbill. (I waited for the telephone cord strangulation scene all night, but no dice.)

As the lady next to me said upon the play's conclusion, "It was fun, wasn't it?" Yes, I would have to agree that it was.

## PLAYBILL

GERALDINE SCHOTTENSTEIN CULTURAL CENTER

Stern College Dramatics Society presents



Courtesy of Taz Mayerhoff

she would inform people of the health benefits even if they do not believe in the religious aspect of the ritual.

Medical benefits, their existence and the lack thereof, are discussed within the context of the film; it seems that there are no true medical benefits, and being circumcised even causes a decrease in the amount of sexual pleasure one can experience.

Dr. Julian Ungar-Sargon, the filmmaker's father, personally keeps and believes in the mitzvah

Continued on page 16



## Connoisseurs Drink to Kosher

BY CLARA HERSH

To spit or not to spit? That was the question on everyone's mind at the 2008 Kosher Food and Wine Experience on February 21, hosted by the Royal Wine Corporation.

The Royal Wine Company, parent company to Kedem, has the monopoly in today's fine kosher wine market. Prior to the 1980s, kosher wines were notorious for their sticky, syrupy taste. The Royal Wine Corporation's aim: to reform the idea that the only kosher wine available is Manishevitz, which sells at about six dollars a pop and is most commonly compared to cough syrup.

The once-a-year experience aims to promote some of the most expensive kosher wines to patrons, connoisseurs, and distributors alike. The event, now in its second year, was held at the Puck building in Soho. Looking around the room, one noticed a multicolored collage of kippot and snoods, indicating diverse religious affiliation, alongside bareheaded attendees, all engaged in the kosher wine experience. Chinese food and sushi were available to complement the wine and other liquors. The patrons, who paid 100 dollars a ticket, were given a glass with which to sample the various wines from all over the world. Featured wines came from Israel, America, Chile, New Zealand, Australia, California, and even the historically acclaimed Bordeaux region in France.

Tasters came prepared with notebooks to record their favorite wines. They examined the color of the wine, swirled, tasted, and spit the liquid into buckets. For those outside the wine tasting circle, the spitting seemed somewhat vulgar, despite its being necessary. The tasting was followed by a charity auction for Herzog wines. Proceeds from the auction were given to Yeshiva Limudei Hashem—a Jewish center for special education.

Even with the overwhelmingly diverse crowd, all halakhic laws regarding wine were adhered to. Wine holds a special significance in

Judaism. It is meant to be used primarily for Kiddush on Shabbat. Thousands of years ago, pagans used wine for *avodah zara*, so there are strict halakhic laws to discourage Jews from doing the same. *Mevushal* (pasteurized or boiled) wine is the only wine a non-Jew can touch. Boiled wine was considered by pagans to be unfit for sacrificing to their gods, therefore creating a clear distinction between kosher and non-kosher wine.

more closely resembling a Purim *seudah*. But this merely demonstrates the success and fervor of the guests, eager to taste the plethora of kosher wines.

When asked about the success of the event, Simcha Karan, marketing supervisor of the Royal Wine Corporation responded: "The show exceeded all of our best estimates. We were pleased with the enthusiasm of the event. It shows us a sign that our wine show will be a premiere



Courtesy of Clara Hersh

Connoisseurs mingle at Kosher wine event

For this reason, each wine pourer had to be *shomer Shabbat*. Since there were non-Jews tasting at the wine show, after each tasting, the glass had to be rinsed with water. This was to ensure that in case the previous taste did not contain *mevushal* wine, no open wine bottles would be *yayin nesech*. Also, no open bottles were to be touched by anyone. There was a *mashgiach* supervising the activities and if any rules seemed to be broken, the wine was poured out immediately.

Over 600 guests were in attendance, including over 125 members of the press. However, after a few hours of sipping alcoholic beverages, the wine tasting denigrated into an affair

mainstay in the kosher wine world."

Overall, the kosher wine tasting show was sensational. The New York show followed a sister show in Oxnard, California two days earlier. The affair, now in its second year, seemed to exceed all of its previous accomplishments. It was successful not only because of the overwhelming attendance but also because it marked a milestone in the kosher wine community. Expensive kosher wines, a somewhat new concept, have been embraced by the Jewish community with open arms. We expect more strides to be made in high-end kosher wines and the Royal Wine Company to be on the forefront to provide them.

## Cut: Slicing Through the Myths of Circumcision

Continued from page 15

of *brit milah*, but states, "I hope that my children follow their heart's desire and soul's desire, that's my hope, wherever it may take them, however painful it is for me."

This film is not one that is meant for every Orthodox Jew, and there are those for whom it may raise more questions than answers. Ungar-Sargon's concluding line, "What does being Jewish mean to me? It means knowing when to be disobedient," is

too broad. How does one weigh one's own personal morality as opposed to that of God? In what cases does one have the right to disobedience? And if this is truly what he believes, where does one draw the line when it comes to picking and choosing the mitzvot that one plans to keep? Ungar-Sargon's conclusion is murky and unclear, a statement which seems profound but in truth is meaningless.

The filmmaker's attempt at fairly depicting each perspective upon a sensitive issue is impor-

tant, and in many ways successful. While his limited focus is problematic, and the film is about his personal journey rather than the subject of circumcision per se, it is still thought-provoking and therefore an important contribution to those wishing to truly understand what they do when they choose to keep God's laws.

For screenings and other information see: [www.cutthefilm.com](http://www.cutthefilm.com)

## Ensemble-in-Residence Quartet Debuts at YU Museum

BY ALISA UNGAR-SARGON

rie and employs chromatic harmonies.

Yeshiva University's Ensemble-in-Residence, Momenta Quartet, gave its first concert at the Center for Jewish History this month. With pieces from new romanticism to downtown music, the highlight of the evening was the premiere of "Kinesis," a composition of Stern's own assistant professor of music, Dr. David Glaser.

"When I proposed that YU have an ensemble-in-residence, I wanted us to start with a new ensemble of young and enthusiastic performers," Glaser said. "I had worked with Momenta Quartet already and thought they'd be the ideal group to inaugurate the program. As I had just written a piece for them (my String Quartet No. 2), I decided that I'd like to try something a bit different."

The highly competent Momenta Quartet involves two violins played by Miranda Cuckson and Annaliesa Place, a viola played by Stephanie Griffin, and a cello played by Joanne Lin. When the musicians performed, they were at one with their instruments, even while their bows and fingers mercilessly attacked the strings, flying from one extreme to the next. Somehow, they were able to look completely disoriented yet be entirely in control at the same moment.

For Dr. Glaser's piece, acclaimed guitarist Oren Fader was asked to take part as a guest artist. "The medium of guitar quintet is not new, there are pieces for this ensemble that go back to the early 1800s," commented Glaser. "Also, my new interest in playing viola da gamba has got me listening to lots

According to the program, "Kinesis" is another piece in a series of works taking its inspiration (and title) from art by Linda Plotkin. All of her pieces in this series contain a central element spiraling up from the bottom and folding over itself, creating a recurring vocabulary of gestural shapes and rhythms."

Glaser added to this, saying, "Linda Plotkin is my significant other, and we have talked about the similarities and differences between visual art and music. We have both, often informally, been working on ways of translating each other's work into our medium."

"We never try to directly translate each other's work but just try to find rough analogs for ideas of texture, repetition, color, rhythm and density," he continued.

Dr. Glaser is currently teaching Sense of Music, Composition, and a class on American composers. "If my music sounds American," Glaser opined, "I think I would point to the pulse and rhythm as distinguishing it from European or Asian music. As far as musical influences go...I started composing because I heard "Pierrot lunaire" by Arnold Schoenberg. I actually hated the piece at first, but felt that I needed to listen to it to know why I disliked it so. After a brief time I realized that this was point of entry into a new sonic world and it is now one of my favorite pieces."

Dr. Glaser named Mario Davidovsky at Columbia, Milton Babbitt, and Haydn as the most important influences on his music.

Other pieces played in the



Courtesy of YU Productions

Members of the Momenta Quartet perform at the Center for Jewish History

of English consort music from the Elizabethan era when a common ensemble was 4-6 gambas plus lute."

Composed between July 2007 and January 2008, the avant-garde "Kinesis" is arranged in three movements separated by two interludes. It alternates between treating the quintet as an entity and breaking it up into different groupings, and incorporates a guitar solo in the second interlude. The piece is at times ominous and ee-

concert included Ernest Bloch's inspirational "Prelude (Recueillement)," Ursula Mamlok's insistent "Two Bagatelles," Morton Feldman's methodical "Structures," John Zorn's intense "Kol Nidre," and Alfred Schnittke's dramatically harsh "String Quartet no. 2."

Special thanks are due to SCW Dean Karen Bacon for being the essential advocate in initiating the Ensemble-in-Residence program.



# SCIENCE & HEALTH

## SCW Bio Professor Wins Grant for Infertility Research

BY OLIVIA MATTHIAS

Dr. Margarita Vigodner, assistant professor of biology at SCW, has received the Young Clinical Scientist Award and a grant of \$300,000 from the Flight Attendant Medical Research Institute (FAMRI). Vigodner first heard about the opportunity from SCW Dean Karen Bacon, who encouraged her to apply for the prestigious award.

FAMRI funds research, both scientific and medical, designed to detect, prevent, treat, or cure diseases and medical conditions resulting from tobacco smoke exposure. Vigodner's project will focus specifically on how tobacco smoke in the environment affects male reproductive health.

"The purpose of the FAMRI Young Clinical Scientist Award (YCSA) Program is to help prepare and support new clinical investigators with a M.D. or Ph.D. as they begin their careers as independent researchers," explained Vigodner. "The program is limited to the development of young researchers in smoking-related disorders."

The funds from the grant will be used over a three-year period, in which Vigodner, along with two SCW undergraduate honors students, will build upon her earlier research dealing with male infertility and spermatogenesis. Vigodner has devoted 10 years to this area of study, including her doctoral work at Sackler Medical School in Tel Aviv, Israel.

"My expertise will be used in this current project to elucidate and to better understand the deleterious effects of environmental tobacco smoke on male reproductive health," she said.

Studies have proven that cigarette smoke is harmful to the female reproductive system, leading to decreased fecundity and fertility, but there is still much to be explored in how it affects male infertility. Vigodner plans to study the impact of secondhand smoke on spermatogenesis, using laboratory mice and advanced



Courtesy of Taz Mayerloff

Dr. Margarita Vigodner

methods of cell analysis, rather than older traditional techniques.

The two honors students who will assist in the project have not yet been chosen. Vigodner outlined her criteria of selection: "I will choose Independent Study students, usually from those who are very motivated, interested in research, have some time in their schedule, and took the Reproductive Biology course which I teach."

The SCW professor is very enthusiastic about the new endeavor. "My deep commitment to translated and medical research is supported by the strong belief that the problem of male infertility will be overcome in the foreseen future," she asserted.

In addition to the funding from FAMRI, Yeshiva University has provided Vigodner with funds for equipment, instrumentation, and consumables to jumpstart her research. She has also been supplied with laboratory space, computers, and printers.

Presently, Vigodner is also involved in research examining the role of proteins belonging to the SUMO (small ubiquitin-related modifiers) family in male infertility and testicular cancer.

## MES Explores Scientific, Halakhic Facets of Conjoined Twins

BY MIRIAM MERZEL

On Tuesday, March 18, the Yeshiva University Student Medical Ethics Society (MES), together with the Center for the Jewish Future, sponsored an event entitled "Separating Conjoined Twins in Jewish Law." The lecture, whose topic was chosen at an MES board meeting at the beginning of the semester, featured three speakers addressing different aspects of the debate on separating conjoined twins.

"We thought the topic of surgical separation of conjoined twins would be interesting, as well as having important halakhic ramifications, being that it touches on the topic of *rodef*, where one person is chasing another to kill him," explained Michael Plaut (YC '09), one of the event's organizers. Plaut and David Harari (YC '08) planned the program with the assistance of MES Co-President Aaron Kogut (YC '08) and Rabbi Dr. Edward Reichman.

Dr. Gerard Weinberg, professor of Clinical Pediatrics and professor of Clinical Surgery at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine (AECOM), lectured on the medical aspects concerning the separation of conjoined twins, having personally participated in such kinds of surgical procedures.

"Dr. Weinberg was very interesting, since he did one of the most recent and complicated surgeries on conjoined twins," commented Elana Clark (SCW '08).

Weinberg started off his presentation with a brief history of conjoined twins, which occur in only one out of 50,000 live births. There is a disagreement over the cause of the conjoining. Some argue that the condition occurs when a fertilized egg fails to completely split, while others attribute it to a fusion of the two groups of cells formed once the fertilized egg has already split. Most conjoined twins die in-utero, at birth, or within one day of birth. In the past, such twins were viewed



Courtesy of Michael Divito

MES Panelists Rabbi Daniel Feldman, Dr. Gerard Weinberg, and Dr. David Wasserman (left to right) speak on the topic of conjoined twin separation

as abnormal creatures, monsters and signs of God's displeasure, and were often displayed in freak shows.

The AECOM surgeon also described the different ways in which twins can be joined. He focused on craniopagus, a condition in which twins are joined at the skull. Separation surgeries are best done earlier in the lifespan of the twins, before they realize they are joined. The surgeries range in difficulty, changing according to the point of connection and the extent to which the twins' bodily systems are intertwined. Progress in medicine has allowed for a better success rate than before.

The second part of the program featured Dr. David Wasserman, director of research at the Center for Ethics at Yeshiva University. According to MES Co-President Chani Schonbrun (SCW '08), "The Center for Ethics had expressed an interest in playing a more active role in [the society's] events," and Wasserman was subsequently invited to speak.

Dr. Wasserman lectured on the topic from a secular viewpoint, focusing on issues such as conflicts between parents and health care pro-

viders, quantity versus quality of life, and the Anglo-American law prohibiting the sacrifice of one life in order to save another. He is the author of an article examining a case of conjoined twin separation, in which one of the patients would die instantaneously.

Rabbi Daniel Feldman, the third speaker, is a magid shiur in the Stone Beit Midrash Program (SBMP) and director of rabbinic research at the CJF. He discussed seven topics relevant in the analysis of the halakhic permissibility of separating conjoined twins. The crux of the issue lies in whether the twins are regarded as one or two individuals. If the subjects are considered to be one person, it is permitted to sacrifice a limb to save the entire body. Most halakhic authorities agree, however, that conjoined twins are considered two people. As a result, there are many more halakhic debates that appear, especially in regards to issues of murder.

Rabbi Feldman also praised the program's interdisciplinary nature, in its exploration of conjoined twins from three different perspectives: medical, ethical/legal, and halakhic.

Approximately 120 people attended, not all of whom were Yeshiva University students.

"A significant note about this event was the fact that participants not only came from SCW and YU, but also from the greater New York community," added Kogut.

who are experienced have to say," said Reena Gottesman (SCW '09). "Hearing the panel talk about family life and how they are able to maintain balance in their lives was very helpful."

## CDC Event Gives Students Glimpse into Physician Life

BY DANA FALECK

On Monday March 2, five well-established physicians convened to share their experiences as Orthodox medical professionals, contributing to a panel discussion entitled "A Day in the Life of a Physician."

The event was the second of three lectures comprising a new pre-professional series launched by the Career Development Center (CDC) and was co-sponsored by the Pre-med Club and the Office of Academic Advisement. Held at the Wilf Campus, the program was well-attended by both undergraduate men and women,

with not a free seat left in the room.

"The goal behind these events was twofold," explained Laurie Davis, director of counseling and programming for the CDC. "The first is to expose students who are unsure of their career path to career options, and the second is to provide further insight for those students who have already decided to pursue these careers."

The program began with a short introduction of each physician and a brief overview of his or her background. The panel included Dr. Gary Berger, director of the plastic surgery clinic at Montefiore Hospital, Dr. Jeffrey Farkas, director of Interventional

Neuroradiology at Maimonides Medical Center, Dr. Tzivia Moreen, a resident at Weill Cornell Medical College, Dr. Michael Muschel, member of the Hudson Heart Association in Cardiovascular Disease Critical Care and Internal Medicine, and Dr. Michael Schuller, vice chairman of the Department of Neurosurgery at North Shore University Hospital.

The physicians then addressed questions from the audience, relating their experiences in medical school, residency, and current professional lives. They also offered suggestions about choosing a specialty.

One of the main topics dis-

cussed was how each panelist, as an observant Jew, deals with the demands accompanying the life of a physician. The panelists spoke of some of the difficulties, giving advice on how to maneuver within the system, specifically regarding work on Shabbos.

The panelists also addressed how they balance family life with the responsibilities of a physician. Students were able to get a real feel for what life would be like should they continue on their paths to becoming practicing doctors.

"As a pre-med student applying to medical schools this coming year, it was good to hear what people



## Biology Club Raises Funds for Cancer Research

BY EMILY LIEBLING

Last month, the words "Candy sale for charity!" were heard throughout the lobby of Stern College for Women's 245 Lexington Avenue building. During the week of February 18, the Biology Club ran a fundraising event to benefit the St. Baldrick's Foundation, the world's largest volunteer-driven foundation for childhood cancer research.

The SCW community exhibited great generosity with their donations to the cause. At the end of the week, every last Hershey's candy bar was sold, amounting to \$300 in proceeds.

St. Baldrick's operation began on St. Patrick's Day, 1999 at an office party. The founders of St. Baldrick's, Tim Kenny, John Bender, and Enda McDonnell, jumpstarted the organization by transforming the party into a fundraising event. At the soiree, McDonnell volunteered to shave his head for donations, reflecting the many children who lose their hair during cancer treatment. The stunt raised

\$104,000 and McDonnell's example exploded into a hugely popular trend. Eight years since that fateful day, over 46,000 volunteers have become "shavees," raising a total of \$33 million. Thirteen research fellowships have been granted and \$60 million endowed to 230 research institutions to attempt to find a cure for the disease that is the cause of the largest percentage of childhood deaths in the United States and Canada.

The Stern Biology Club's involvement in the St. Baldrick's Foundation began with one of SCW's own faculty members. While reading about a specific type of cancer called sarcoma for her own research, Dr. Marina Holz, Biology Club faculty advisor and professor, was amazed to see that the disease affects only one percent of adults, but is attributed to 20% of all childhood cancers. In addition, sarcomas do not respond well to chemotherapy, are therefore particularly hard to treat, and all the more devastating.

"While gathering information, I came across the St. Baldrick's

website and got inspired by their message," explained Holz. "We often hear about other type of cancers that affect mainly adults, such as breast, lung and prostate, and I wanted to raise awareness and contributions toward childhood cancer research."

The candy sale volunteers expressed similar sentiments, indicating that creating awareness is crucial. "I had a friend who shaved his head for St. Baldrick's, so I had already heard of the organization," said Nava Bilet (SCW '09). Cancer research is always a great cause, so if I could help by sitting at a table and selling candy, then that's my little effort that I'm only too happy to contribute."

The Biology Club acknowledged the efforts of Dr. Holz and the 13 volunteers, in addition to the club's board, who helped plan, organize, and work for the candy sale.

To get involved with the St. Baldrick's Foundation, please visit the organization's website at [www.stbaldricks.org](http://www.stbaldricks.org).

## The Chemistry Club: All About Lipids

BY TEHILLA RAVIV

On April 7, Stern College for Women's Dr. Evan Mintzer gave a lecture to the Chemistry Society on his research: "The Biophysics of Lipids and Membranes and The Effects of Oxysterols." While the topic sounds interesting, it is also quite complicated. To better understand Dr. Mintzer's research and its importance, the biological significance of lipids must be understood.

The category of lipids includes a large variety of biological molecules including fats, oils, cholesterol, and triglycerides. The only property these molecules have in common is that they are hydrophobic, literally "water hating" or water repellent. Lipids may have a bad reputation for causing an increase in weight, but they are actually quite important in body functionality.

Biological lipids are used mainly to store energy, provide structural support, and behave as signal molecules. So while an excess of lipids in a diet is unhealthy, a deficiency can cause serious problems. For example, a deficiency in cholesterol, an integral part of the cell membrane, can cause cellular dysfunction, since the fluidity of the cell membrane is not regulated properly. Steroids, which are derived from cholesterol, also play a large role as precursors to many essential hormones in the body, including hormones involved in the suppression of inflammation. Recent research has even linked cholesterol levels to the activity levels of GTPase, which is involved in receptor mediated signal transduction in a cell.

Dr. Mintzer's research focuses mainly on lipids in the cell membrane and their interactions. The cell membrane is made up of a dual layer of phospholipids. The non-polar lipid portion is pointed inwards to create a hydrophobic core, while the charged phosphate "heads" create a polar exterior. Dispersed throughout the

membrane are cholesterol molecules, proteins, and many other molecules. Many of these proteins behave as receptors of hormones and neurotransmitters. Other proteins behave as channels, allowing large polar molecules, which cannot easily traverse the hydrophobic space created by the phospholipids, a means of entering and exiting the cell. Dr. Mintzer's research examines the general protein-lipid interaction and may be helpful in understanding their behavior in the phospholipids bi-layer of a cell.

Oxysterols, another integral lipid in the human body, is a product of the oxidation of cholesterol and low-density lipids and is sometimes referred to as "oxygenated cholesterol." Their importance relies on the fact that they can pass through a cell membrane and the blood-brain barrier faster than cholesterol and therefore can be used to monitor cholesterol turnover. They have also been found to have connections to atherosclerosis (inflammation of the arteries), apoptosis (cell death), inflammation, immunosuppression, and the development of gallstones.

Atherosclerosis, chronic inflammatory response of the arterial blood vessels, is one of the most serious consequences of oxysterol production, as it often leads to heart attack. It is due, to a great extent, to the accumulation of macrophage white blood cells (immune cells that engulf invaders). The macrophages cannot function properly when fats, cholesterol, and cholesterol derivatives (oxysterols) are not removed efficiently by high-density lipoproteins (HDL), proteins that carry lipids. This ultimately leads to the build up of plaque, and is commonly called the "hardening of the arteries." While high-density lipoproteins are essential for the prevention of this disease, their closely-named cousin, low-density lipoprotein (LDL), is often cited as the cause. When LDLs, or more commonly "bad cholesterol,"

get through to the arteries in an oxidized form, macrophages are sent to destroy them by the immune system. However, the macrophages cannot process LDLs in an oxidized form and therefore rupture, allowing the oxidized LDLs to build up into plaque.

Dr. Mintzer's research on oxysterols focuses on understanding how these naturally produced molecules can contribute to such harmful conditions like atherosclerosis. "If his research is successful in finding the mechanism by which oxysterols cause harm," explains Lorie Solodokin (SCW '10), a student who has done research with Dr. Mintzer, "a great deal of medical advances in the way of treating cholesterol problems will be possible. Perhaps, in years from now, based on Dr. Mintzer's research, drugs to proactively prevent arterial hardening [which can lead to a heart attack] may be developed."



The following men have failed, to date, to deliver a document of Jewish divorce to their wives:

**Joseph Aday** – Anaheim, CA

**Jacob Binson** – Montreal, Canada

**Yossi Davis** – Brooklyn, NY

**Yona Gelernter** – Crown Heights, NY

**Martin Geller** – Brooklyn, NY

**Zisha Grossman** – Brooklyn, NY

**Ariel Hacoheh** – Brooklyn, NY

**Meir Kin** – Los Angeles, CA

**Efim Kolominsky** – Cleveland, OH

**Leroy Krantz** – Brooklyn, NY

**Gal Levenstein** – Brooklyn, NY

**Menachem Lowy** – Passaic, NJ

**Sandy Milgraum** – Highland Park, NJ

**Efraim Ohana** – Baltimore, MD

**Samuel Rosenbloom** – Baltimore, MD

**Danny Zadok** – Tarzana, CA

Documents of their recalcitrance from recognized Jewish courts are available upon request.

*An agunah (the plural of which is agunot) is a woman who is no longer in a functional marriage and whose husband cannot or will not give her a Jewish divorce (in Hebrew: get). Leading psychologists have stated that the withholding of a get is a form of domestic abuse.*

*The Jewish community is encouraged to provide support to agunot and persuade these men to appear and comply with a recognized Jewish court to adjudicate outstanding issues of divorce.*

**Congratulations  
to the  
Beren Campus  
on its  
Recyclemania  
Victory!**



# FASHION & STYLE

## Classy Couture for a Cause

BY ILANA SUSSMAN

On April 8, the Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) Fashion Marketing Club held their 2<sup>nd</sup> annual fashion show, dubbed "Classy Couture for a Cause." Proceeds from ticket sales were donated to Sharsheret, a national organization providing support for Jewish women with breast cancer.

The fabulous transformation of Koch auditorium, with its lights, music, and runway, excited all those who entered. Light refreshments, Hard Candy gift bags, and sparkling grape juice were distributed as the audience of women settled in their seats, anticipating the show.

Chana Filler, president of the Fashion Marketing Club, first introduced Eillene Leistner, executive Director of Sharsheret. Leistner spoke briefly about the organization and how it links young women together in their fight against breast cancer. Her presentation was followed by a brief video depicting Sharsheret's involvement in the Susan G. Komen Race for The Cure.

The 25 student models then took centerstage, parading down the runway in couture women's wear by award-winning designer Vicki Soble. With avant-garde hairstyles done up by DeeDee Klein, and dramatic makeup applied by Vivian Donath, the models were well equipped to strut their stuff.

The first model, Hadassa Rubinstein, came out with charisma and class, setting the bar high for the rest of the show. What came next was an amazing display of de-

sign. From charming tweed shifts to flowing gowns, the audience could not take its eyes off the runway. As the show went on the audible, excited cheers and applause coming

with beautifully beaded, capped lace sleeves. Ying and yang never looked so good! Gabrielle Hess, in navy chiffon, wowed with every stride. With a few winks from the glamorous Marisa



Courtesy of Michelle Schuster

SSSB Senior Penny Pazornick models a classy suit

from friends, family, and peers, affirmed that they clearly loved what they saw. Fearless and flawless models got down to basics and kicked off their shoes so as not to remove focus from the fantastic frocks.

Daniella Ulmer Greenspan and Michelle Laufer both modeled stunning black evening gowns. To contrast, Leora Novick came down the runway in a delicate ivory satin dress

Galbut in her mid calf spaghetti strap dress, and a wave here and there from the golden-clad princess Tamar Robinson, the audience was sold.

As the show neared its end, the models were applauded down the runway as they walked out in a single file line each linked one to the next. It was symbolic of what the night was really all about: linking those in need of support.

## Spotlight on Project Runway

BY ALIZA E. BERKOWITZ

Project Runway is a television show about emerging designers all competing for prize money and notoriety, which will enable them to launch their careers. Every episode presents these designers with a new challenge. At times the contenders may be required to use unconventional materials for their designs, such as Hershey's candy products. In other instances, they may be charged with reinterpreting a classic, like their own version of Levis 501 denim. Each week the cast puts on a fashion show replete with models, hair, makeup, and accessories. The model paired with the winning designer earns a spread in Elle magazine.

Season four of Project Runway was all about clothing. The challenges ranged from prom dresses to avant-garde creations to ensembles for World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) divas. This worked out well for winner Christian Siriano, whose designs were fierce and dramatic. The youngest winner in Project Runway history, Christian was

surprisingly nervous throughout the two-part finale, but after winning, his confidence returned. He plans on using his prize money to showcase his designs next season.

The funky 21-year-old was also chosen as the fan favorite on the reunion show. Personally, I thought he was a bit cocky at times, but he does have an incredible ability to turn out a fabulous garment in just one day.

All the designers really stepped it up a notch at their fashion week debut. The judges were overwhelmed with this season's impressive array of talent. Jillian, with amazing knits, Rami, exhibiting unbelievable evening dresses, and Christian, with a great cohesive collection, exceeded expectations. Guest judge Victoria Beckham even requested to wear Christian's designs. In an interview after the show, Christian acknowledged that the clothes he sent down the runway were not the most wearable. He promised that his next collection would improve in that regard.

The show is also a great advertising and promotional opportunity. The accessory wall is provided

by bluefly.com, and all the models are made-up by L'Oréal Paris and TRESemme. But what really makes the show fabulous is its host, Heidi Klum. Her supermodel good looks combined with her sparkling personality and fun accent make her the perfect MC. Her wardrobe alone makes the show worth watching.

This season she looked absolutely radiant, and along with that came a tougher attitude towards the contestants. The other judges, Michael Kors and Nina Garcia, pulled their weight, always having positive and constructive remarks for the designers. The show overall is a wonderful way to get a glimpse into the fashion world. Project Runway is now casting for next season, so budding designers, what are you waiting for?

## Industry Insider: Modern Bride Magazine

BY CHANA FILLER

I fetched tea, coffee, chocolate, bagels, and Tasti-D-Lite for my editors and water for their plants. I sorted mail, organized file cabinets, stuffed envelopes and prepared shipments. These requisite intern tasks come with the territory, but are negligible in the scheme of my overall experience at Modern Bride Magazine.

As an intern in the magazine's fashion department, I attended weekly staff meetings, and assisted at photo shoots and model castings. I was in contact with renowned designers and their PR liaisons. Each day I sat in the beauty and fashion closets, flanked by beautiful gowns and every lotion and potion imaginable. I gained a rare insider's view into the production of a magazine and an invaluable introduction to the editorial culture.

While preparing for an upcoming shoot, I requested samples and tracked their arrival. In the office, I would unpack and hang them so the editors could decide on pieces to present to the editor-in-chief at the run-through. One day I personally went to Vera Wang's headquarters to pick up a dress just so it could be there in time for our deadline. Once the pieces were approved, they were packed into trunks and sent to the studio.

At the shoot, I, along with the other interns, would unpack the trunks, steam the apparel, and organize all the pieces and accessories so they were readily available for the editors when they styled the models. Once all the photos were taken and the editors satisfied, we packed everything up and sent it back to the office. The next day it all had to be returned to the designers. Oftentimes we would joke that after all that packing, taping, and labeling we did, we were well equipped to work for UPS.

Once all the details were arranged and the shoot wrapped, invoices had to be dealt with and releases were sent out for signatures. I reviewed the invoices and handed them off to the managing editor for payment. I faxed releases multiple times in order to verify the use of the



models' pictures in the magazine. Additionally, credit information had to be obtained. I would contact the designers for a brief description and style name of each piece that was shot, as well as where the reader would be able to find it. This is a free form of advertising, so the designers were pleased to hear they had made the final cut.

I was directly involved, albeit behind the scenes, in the production of the magazine. The creative energy was amazing, and the atmosphere dynamic with a multitude of characters. The office gossip proved to be hysterical, and there were times I felt I was playing a role in a contemporary sitcom.

This fabulous experience taught me that interpersonal skills are the key to success. It is essential to be well-connected in the industry and to know how to confidently and politely ask any designer for a sample of their product, even if they may not respond in kind. I learned that every magazine has a target audience just like any other marketing operation. The fashion department must ensure that the pieces featured represent the taste of a Modern-Bride reader. As such, luxurious couture gowns are not featured often, since the readership of this magazine appreciates fashion on a budget. At first glance the industry may seem frivolous, but upon further reflection, I found that just like any venture, it's a business that takes a lot of savvy in which to succeed. After interning at Modern Bride, I will never look at a magazine the same way again.

Are you an  
industry insider?  
Share your story  
in the final issue of  
The Observer

Contact [scwobserver@  
gmail.com](mailto:scwobserver@gmail.com)



# WOMEN'S SUMMER BEIT MIDRASH IN TEANECK, NJ

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY  
CENTER FOR THE JEWISH FUTURE

JULY 7 - JULY 31

Rosh Beit Midrash: Rabbi Moshe Kahn

- Text Intensive Talmud and Tanach Sedarim
- Stimulating Elective Offerings in the Afternoon
- Learn b'chavruta with women in the Teaneck community
- Create and implement programs with community youth
- Fellows will receive a stipend of \$800

APPLICATION DEADLINE: APRIL 28TH

## apply today.



To obtain an application or for more information, please contact Daphna Secunda @ (917) 843-4327 or [dfishma2@yu.edu](mailto:dfishma2@yu.edu) or visit the Center for the Jewish Future Storefront