



THE YESHIVA UNIVERSITY OBSERVER

THE OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF STERN COLLEGE AND THE SY SYMS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

NEW CURRICULUM TO SHAPE SCW CORE AND GENERAL STUDIES

ESTHER BARUH

A new curriculum for general and Judaic studies requirements at Stern College for Women (SCW), scheduled to take effect in Fall 2009, was voted into place by the institution's faculty during the summer. The curriculum was finalized after an intensive two-year design process, and reflects the goal of the SCW administration and faculty of equipping students with the knowledge and thought processes necessary to properly confront the changes of the 21st century. An implementation committee, composed of professors representing various departments of SCW, will be working during the course of the 2008-2009 academic year to modify or create classes to suit the terms of the new curriculum.

The committee includes the professors and administrators who served as designers as well as two additional professors. "[The new curriculum] is to expose all students to ideas and modes of thinking that the faculty believe are important, regardless of the student's major," emphasized Dean Karen Bacon. "It's another way of sticking to the liberal arts tradition."

When the curriculum moves into place, SCW students who started school before Fall 2009 will have the option to either continue their studies using the structure of the old curriculum or to switch to the newer model.

The new curriculum designed for general education requirements has eight subdivisions, up from the current version's five. The first of these subdivisions is called Modes of Expression, and includes three courses: Composition and Rhetoric (which is slated to



DEAN BACON PAGES THROUGH CURRICULUM REVIEW DOCUMENTS

be restructured), a writing intensive course within each major and Public Speaking. The writing intensive course is not an actual writing course, but rather a class within every major that has a heavy writing component.

The second section, Systems of Thought in Philosophy and the Social Sciences, will require two theory-based classes in the disciplines of education, philosophy, psychology, economics, political science, sociology or history. These classes will attempt to explain how social scientists identify problems, dissect them and develop hypotheses for solutions. "[The implementation committee is] going to identify courses where a system of thought that affects the entire discipline is the thread that runs through the entire course," expanded Dean Bacon.

Interpreting Literature and the Arts is the third subdivision. This

one will consist of three courses in art history, English, music or a foreign language that is above the elementary level, not including Hebrew.

Unlike the current model, where students are limited in which classes they may take to fulfill the requirements of the different paragraphs, the new curriculum allows students to take as many classes in their preferred subject in order to fulfill the subdivision's requirements. For example, a student may take three courses in art history to meet the criteria of the "Interpreting" section, and does not have to take classes in English, music or a foreign language in addition to art history, if she so chooses. Dean Bacon explained the reason for this change: "We reduced some of the limitations with the belief that all these courses are valuable."

Two courses in Contemporary U.S. and Global Perspectives

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JUDAIC STUDIES DIRECTOR ELECTED TO PRESTIGIOUS AAJR SOCIETY

OLIVIA WIZNITZER

The American Academy for Jewish Research (AAJR) has inducted Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Kanarfogel, director of the Rebecca Ivry Department of Jewish Studies at Stern College for Women (SCW) and professor of Jewish History, into its famed society. The oldest organization of Judaic scholars in North America, members of the Academy come from among the most prestigious universities in the country after being elected to the society by their fellow academics. Rabbi Dr. Kanarfogel joins other members of Yeshiva University's faculty at AAJR, including such prominent figures as Rabbi Dr. Haym Soloveitchik.

"The American Academy of Jewish Research is an organization that recognizes and supports the academic achievements of the most distinguished scholars of Jewish studies in the country," remarked Rabbi Kanarfogel. "I am more than humbled to have been elected to its ranks, which include a number of my teachers and mentors as well."

AAJR's mission is to merge the knowledge and expertise of scholars of Judaic studies throughout North America through biennial Fellows retreats. AAJR also encourages scholarship in a broad sense through

awarding refereed book prizes to first-time academic authors, running seminars for promising graduate students, or otherwise funding and organizing conferences and sessions that allow notable scholars to share their research with an interested audience.

Rabbi Kanarfogel's interest in Jewish history goes back to his time spent at Yeshiva University High School and Yeshiva College. "Throughout [my education], I had the privilege of studying with rabbim and teachers who were outstanding talmidei hachamim with broad intellectual interests, tremendous textual knowledge and understanding, and remarkable powers of analysis," he remarked. "To the extent that I can transmit or 'give back' any of these things to my own students, undergraduate or graduate, I am very grateful, since I have accumulated a wonderful academic 'debt' that I can never fully repay."

Rabbi Kanarfogel is also excited to take advantage of regular opportunities to present and discuss his theories and ideas about the intellectual and social history of Ashkenazic Jewry with the larger international academic community, as that makes his work all the

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NEW CHAVRUTOT PROGRAM PIONEERS AT LINCOLN SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

ILANA RAUCH



LINCOLN SQUARE SYNAGOGUE
EXTERIOR OF THE LINCOLN SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

The Lincoln Square Synagogue, in an attempt to perpetuate the community benefits of an Israel-based kollel which cannot meet this year, is currently in the process of selecting students from Yeshiva University to learn individually with its congregants. The Upper West Side Jews that make up this community are accustomed to high quality Torah learning and inspiration, and when the need

to search", according to Ruvan Cohen, the president of the LSS.

The synagogue contacted the Center for Jewish Life to recruit men and women to a fledgling chavruta partnership between the students and congregants. Students were asked to submit resumes and applications, and the interviewing process to choose the participants has just begun. Cohen is looking for students who can continue to "enhance the ability for

the [LSS's] diverse membership to learn and participate in the mitzvah of Talmud Torah in a way that they are going to feel is appropriate to them." Students would need to be prepared to explore an expansive breadth of topics with their individual chavrutot in order to provide the sort of program the LSS has come to expect. "We've had classes in Divrei HaYamim, the *teshuvos* [responsa] of R' Moshe Feinstein, in Gemara and other books of Tanakh, and in Rambam," Cohen recalls. Complex Jewish ideas and philosophies are a staple in the halls of the synagogue, and the YU recruits would need the expertise and energy to tackle such topics.

Involving women in the program was a given for Cohen, since many of the congregants enthusiastic about the program have been women. Stern's involvement in this venture

will certainly be appreciated and vital in serving the learning needs of the female congregants. "We think there's going to be a greater demand that comes about from having both men and women chavrutot within the community," he says. Stern students, then, will have an exciting role in the formation and development of this project.

The topics for the individual lessons will be up to the particular chavrutot. "What the topics are are very fluid and that's the exciting thing on both sides," says Cohen. "This is not repeating a shiur that they heard; this is learning together with somebody."

Philip Moskowitz of the Center for Jewish Life is one of the coordinators for the program, and is happy to the response to the initiative on behalf of Yeshiva University. "We have received an overwhelming number of applications from YU and Stern students. It's clear they are enthusiastic about the opportunity to

interact with communities and continue to grow as Jewish leaders."

Students who are selected for the project can expect to be set up to learn with congregants anywhere from 12 years old to the late 90s, and equipped with as little background as a basic beginner to those who are deeply learned talmidei chachamim.

The program meets on Mondays and Wednesdays from 8-10 pm at the Lincoln Square Synagogue, and will be matched up by the Beit Midrash coordinator, who will also serve as a part of a chavruta pair. "We hope to contribute, through this program, to CJF's greater vision to provide opportunities for our students to be actively involved in leadership opportunities by engaging in adult education and communal life," Moskowitz explained. "We have worked with LSS in the past and we look forward to doing so in the future."

THOUGHTS OF STUDENT LEADERS

THE YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

THE VALUE OF RESPECT

SCW PRESIDENT, SIVAN KEREM



After spending the summer with 35 fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds, I began to realize that there is one very important concept that is lacking in our society. We may have all grown up hearing the oldies song "R.E.S.P.E.C.T."

by Aretha Franklin, but old is exactly what the title of the song has become. Nowadays, respect is something that can only be found in past generations; it is no longer guaranteed, but has become something that has to be earned. However, here at Stern College, this shouldn't be the case. And as I make my way through the revolving doors at Stern College, fostering respect for the people we encounter every day is the first goal that I want to strive to achieve, and want my peers to strive for, inside of Stern's doors.

As you look inside the lobby of Stern College, there are plenty of different types of girls walking around: the girl wearing a button-down shirt and pleated skirt with nude tights and flats, the girl in black leggings and a cute oversized shirt, the girl in the cardigan and flowing tank top over a jean pencil skirt. And immediately, at first glance, each girl is assessed and categorized based entirely on the way she dresses. Instead of focusing on a girl's personality, each of us judges her, decides what kind of person she is and whether we are even going to talk to her based only on what she is wearing. But, inside of Stern College, why should any student feel as if she is being judged by other students?

Upon entering Stern, I think it is crucial that each and every one of us put aside the judging of our peers' attire and remember that everyone has chosen to attend Stern College for a reason. Although we may not know the specific reason behind each girl's choice to attend Stern, we must all remember that each of us shares the common thread of our Judaism as the cornerstone for our presence at Stern. If each of us can have the proper respect and tolerance that we owe to our peers, regardless of what they're wearing, what nationality they are, what seminary they went to and why they have decided to attend Stern, this upcoming year at Stern can be bettered tremendously. Walking into Stern without judging those around us will not only help build unity among the Stern Community, but among the entire Jewish Community as well.

Therefore, as we begin a new school year here at Stern, I ask each of you to take this opportunity to meet some of the incredible girls that make up our vibrant community. As difficult as it may be, attempt to speak with someone with whom you would normally never speak, respect the person as an individual, and try to understand their views. You never know what you can learn from them and what they can learn from you.

THE IMPERATIVE OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE

SOCIAL JUSTICE PRESIDENT, SHLOMIT COHEN



This past summer, among many other things, I served as an advisor on an NCSY touring camp in Israel. Some of the NCSY-ers expressed interest in setting up a learning group on a daily basis and together we decided to focus on the halakhot and philosophical underpinnings of *shnat shemita*, the sabbatical year. On a practical level this was significant in terms of what and how to eat in Israel. However, on a deeper plane, this provided us with the unique opportunity to explore a mitzvah that is dependent on the land of Israel, which highlighted the centrality that Eretz Yisrael plays in our lives.

During one of our discussions, a camper asked me why I felt so passionately about the mitzvah of *shemita*. The question caught me off guard and got me thinking. Why do I, a modern day urban dweller feel so passionately about a mitzvah which is largely limited to the agricultural realm, especially at a time when its effect can be mitigated by an array of heterim? I realized that I love *shemita* because of its essence, which contains many of the fundamental values that guide our lives. Let me explain.

The Torah spells out three of the most compelling aspects of the sabbatical year – that it is a year dedicated to God, a period of rest for the land, and a time wherein our produce becomes *hefker* or ownerless, so that the poor of the land can be provided for¹. Additionally, the halakha of *shemitat kesafim* or the dissolution of debts plays an important role in redressing social inequalities. Moreover, *shemita* reminds us that God is the supreme landlord and provider. At the same time, though, God entrusts us to nurture the land and the environment and of course, to care for each other. *Shemita* cuts through the complexity and confusion of life and leaves in its place a comfortingly simple message; our relationship to God, to our nation, and to our land is a dynamic one. And, each element depends on and enriches the next, without which the wholeness of our service disintegrates.

Although all of *shemita*'s components are significant, it is the last factor, that of basic human needs that is particularly relevant because it is one of the only ways that *shemita* applies even in the Diaspora. This is because the mandate to release financial obligations applies outside of Israel as well.

Our imperative to create a just and equitable society extends to every aspect of life; are expected to approach the world with a sensitive heart and an open hand. But before we can effect true and sustainable change we must examine the root causes of various injustices and deal with the most fundamental aspects of inequality: poverty. Poverty is not only one of the most damaging realities in our country and our world, but at the most immediate level it is the

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HALAKHIC JUDAISM

EDITOR IN CHIEF, OLIVIA WIZNITZER



We live in a world where we compartmentalize *halakha*, which we generally conceive of as

being laws. What kind of laws? Why, the laws of Shabbat, in which case I may not strike a match on that day, or the laws of honoring one's father and mother, of giving charity, of keeping holidays. We think of *halakha* as a realm unto itself, in part because that is doubtless the way it was presented to us in elementary school and high school. One had *Chumash* [Bible] class, *Navi* [Prophets] class, *Machshava* [Jewish Philosophy] class, and *Dinim* [laws] or *halakha* class. We learned to think of *halakha* as being separate because it was portrayed as separate. To each class was its own particular subject. One learned tales from the Bible in *Chumash* class, stories of our kings and leaders in *Prophets*, different perspectives and ways of relating to Judaism in *Machshava* and cut-and-dried laws in *Dinim*. It is no wonder that we learned to think of *halakha* as separate.

Yet it is not separate. In fact, the current divisions that we make in terms of ideology are immaterial in terms of the greater perspective, and God's greater vision. All that God desires is that we keep His laws, by which He means *halakha*. To keep His laws and walk in His ways, in everything that we do, not simply in ensuring that the food that we eat is kosher and the way that we are dressed conforms to a standard of modesty. For Judaism is a way of life that encompasses every moment of one's day; every breath, every thought is governed by *halakha*. This is something that is difficult for many to understand, despite the fact that the Rav himself writes about it in his classic "Halakhic Man."

The Rav explains that when "halakhic man approaches reality, he comes with his Torah, given to him from Sinai, in his hand. He orients himself to the world by means of fixed statutes and firm principles. An entire corpus of precepts and laws guide him along the path leading to existence" (Soloveitchik 19). He continues by stating that when "halakhic man comes across a spring bubbling quietly, he already possesses a fixed, a priori relationship with this real phenomenon: the complex of laws regarding the halakhic construct of a spring" (Soloveitchik 20).

How many of us can claim to see the world from such a perspective? For halakhic man, the entire world is composed of instruments of God's pleasure. To look at a tree is to see the different possibilities for mitzvot that can be performed with the bark of that tree, its leaves, the blessings that can be recited over it. To walk through the earth is to look at everything from the perspective of its spiritual function. But most of all, it is to understand that *halakha* is not simply a realm that applies to the physical, but to the spiritual as well.

In "The Rav: The World of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik" by Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff, the Rav tells over a story of a famous philanthropist, Jacob Schiff, who visited Yeshivat Rabbi Isaac Elchanan and was less than impressed to find students learning about the laws of kashering, declaring that he did "not support religious institutions that were interested in the stomach" (Rakeffet-Rothkoff 235). The Rav then went on to explain that it follows reason that one begins by educating the stomach, for it is a question of succession- if one can learn to control his body and his physical desires, he may then proceed to learn how to control his mind. "If you start with the mind you will fail; if you start with the body you might succeed" (Rakeffet-Rothkoff 235), he stated.

What is clear is that the Rav

believed there was a mandate to control the mind, and to guard it. *Halakha* does not merely apply to the physical realm and one's actions, but also to one's thoughts, to everything that one does. What is one permitted to think? What is one permitted to read? What are the rules of governing the mind in accordance to *halakha*? We might immediately jump up and deplore such a question, believing it to be a cruel stop to the avenue of intellectual inquiry. However, no one ever denied that such stops existed along the path.

In Rabbi Shalom Carmy's article, "The Nature of Inquiry: A Common Sense Perspective," published in "The Torah U-Madda Journal," he agrees with Rabbi Parnes that "a program of free inquiry cannot be deemed kosher merely because the inquirer is not seeking to forsake Torah" (Carmy 46). This is not to say that there is a need, or a way, to create a binding stricture of what is permitted and what is forbidden to read, as it is necessary to take into account the learning, intention and the personality that composes the person who desires to read certain works. There are those who are capable of reading and comprehending, and those who lack the skills that will allow them to understand sufficiently, and for whom it might be better to avoid such works until they are ready for them.

What is clear, however, on all accounts, is that *halakha* is something which encompasses the physical realm and the spiritual realm, the body and the mind. To be a Jew is to participate in halakhic Judaism, and the only question is whether one is doing something that is correct according to the tenets of *halakha* and God's will, or whether one is deviating from it. To this end, all categorizations and ideologies of Jews are exhausting and immaterial. There is no such thing, truly, as the Modern Orthodox Jew, the Haredi Jew, the Reform, Conservative or Reconstructionist Jew. We find these labels easy and therefore use them where applicable, but in truth

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NEWS

NEW CURRICULUM TO SHAPE SCW CORE AND GENERAL STUDIES

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are the fourth requirement. These courses will address contemporary issues in economics, history and political science. This subdivision differs from the Systems of Thought section in that the former is based on the theory that drives these sciences, whereas Contemporary Perspectives concentrates on modern problems.

The Science and Technology section of the general requirements will be a departure from the current system of one year of required science classes. Under the new system, non-science majors will take two science courses over the course of a year. One course will be interdisciplinary within the sciences and the second will be in a specific discipline and lab-based. Fetal pig dissection will no longer be required. Dean Bacon cautioned that the new science structure may not be ready for implementation in Fall 2009, citing a complex implementation process.

Students will be required to take one Quantitative Skills course. "We hired a new mathematician, revealed Dean Bacon. "We will spend this year developing some kind of mathematical reasoning course that is practical." Physical Education remains a two-course requirement, but the last subdivision of the general studies requirements, electives, is expanded to a four-course structure. However, unlike the current curriculum, elective courses can include classes in one's major. "We would like students to invest in what matters most to them," said Dean Bacon. "Students would like to intensify their majors. It's not about restricting you, but

about encouraging students to make the most of their time on campus."

The Judaic studies CORE structure is changing as well. Students will still be required to take six semesters of CORE plus fourteen additional Judaic studies credits, but there will be a reduction in credit earned for study in Israel - a maximum credit number of 27 will replace the current one of 36. This means that students who study in Israel after high school will be earning the equivalent amount of credit as students who elect to come to SCW as freshmen. Additionally, administrators have created more leeway in the distribution requirements: under the new curriculum, students will be required to take a 15-credit minimum in both Bible and Judaic Studies, down two credits from the current 17-credit minimum.

Hebrew classes were also modified, with the addition of more intermediate-level classes. Hebrew 1105-1108 replaces Hebrew 1203-1204, which will serve to make the transition between beginner and advanced Hebrew smoother.

Dr. Cynthia Wachtell, a professor in the English Department and director of the S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program at SCW, was a member of the design committee for the new curriculum. "I think that we all were very interested in the outcomes: what skills, what knowledge did we wish to impart to the students, what categories of knowledge, and working backwards from that," she explained. "We were thinking in terms of goals - what did we want our students to have at the start of

the 21st century. Often, we worked backwards from the desired goals to figure out what sort of curriculum would help our students rise to that knowledge." Dr. Wachtell noted that the very specific demographic of the SCW student body was a major factor in designing the curriculum. She pointed out that since a large percentage of the student body spends their freshman year abroad, there is less exploratory time in college to test the waters of different disciplines. The new curriculum is meant to help students have that broader range of classes within the time frame that students spend on campus.

The implementation committee has its first meeting scheduled for September 16, 2008.

"This revision is long overdue, since the current curriculum is seriously out of date and does not, I feel, offer SCW students the broad liberal arts education they deserve and that students at comparable institutions now receive," declared Dr. Ellen Schrecker, professor of history at SCW and member of the implementation committee. "Students at SCW - as elsewhere - need to develop skills of critical reasoning and clear writing. They also should be introduced to some of the different approaches that scholars and scientists are using to understand human society and the physical world, as well as to the aesthetic responses of individual men and women to their world and its complexities. I am very pleased that SCW is finally going to be revising its curriculum."

SCW ENGLISH DEPARTMENT EXPANDS ITS RANKS

ESTY ROLLHAUS

The start of the Fall 2008 semester marks an overhaul of the Stern College for Women (SCW) English department. With reassessments of curricula in the works, plans for supplementary English lectures and workshops and four new hires slated to begin teaching this fall, the department, under the leadership of Dr. Nora Nachumi, is experiencing a new flow of energy. "As a department, we're going to be very active in terms of thinking about our curriculum, our relationship to the student body outside of the classroom, and about our place in the university as a whole," described Dr. Nachumi.

The department has many projects in place to revamp itself on the structural level. Students can expect changes in the requirements for English literature, communications, and creative writing majors. Dr. Joy Ladin will also be supervising a redesign of the English Composition and Rhetoric curriculum.

Outside of the classroom, the department plans to take a more active role in promoting literary involvement by organizing a reading group for interested students, mentoring a book club for students new to the campus, and supporting a student-run literary journal. A second venture start-

ing this semester is the department's initiative to benefit from its location amidst a thriving literary hub by inviting New York writers to lecture at the Beren campus. Additionally, the English division hopes to continue to foster close ties with its counterparts at Yeshiva College in order to engage in a mutually beneficial dialogue to strengthen both departments.

The overhauling of the department is also being implemented with an expansion of the English faculty. Following an extensive hiring process, the English department has added four new professors to its roster.

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"It's another way for people to voice their concerns after they've already gone through the normal channels," confirmed Amanda Grace, Director of Internal Audit.

The installation of the hotline is part of a growing national trend to increase transparency among non-profit and private institutions. This trend follows the movement in public firms in promoting transparency, a development that came about as a result of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 after fraud scandals hit the nation. Grace explained that the hotline is also part of the guidelines issued by National Association of College and University Business Officers.

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AZRIELI INITIATIVES BRIDGES GRAD SCHOOL INNOVATION WITH DAY SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE

ESTHER BARUH

The Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education recently unveiled its Institute for University-School Partnership, a movement that is meant to strengthen education in Modern Orthodox schools nationwide, as well as provide the Azrieli community with on-the-ground research opportunities. Headed by Dr. Scott Goldberg, the initiative enables schools throughout North America to connect to discussions on various issues that affect Modern Orthodox education, to streamline teacher training, and to improve social dynamics within schools.

"A decision was made by the university, with the vision of President [Richard Joel] to align the work that the university was doing with day schools with Azrieli, which itself was going through a transformation and renewal," explained Goldberg. "We're literally taking what knowledge exists and resides at the grad school and bringing it to the day schools."

Prior to the formation of the Institute, Yeshiva University's (YU) main venue of reaching out to day schools was through the Association of Modern Orthodox Day Schools (AMODS). AMODS was a component of the Max Stern Division of Community Services, and then moved under the auspices of the Center for the Jewish Future. "The university for years has viewed itself as responsible for supporting day schools in some capacity," asserted Goldberg. "[AMODS] served a purpose, but it didn't necessary meet the needs of day schools in terms of bringing them to the next level."

Following the dissolution of AMODS, the Institute for University-School Partnership was formed. "The Institute is YU's new attempt to best service schools," described Shari Shanin, assistant to the director of the Institute.

The Institute utilizes the talents of the Azrieli faculty members and channels them towards various programs. Prior to the formation of the Institute, members of the faculty had often acted as consultants with different day schools, but on an individual basis, noted Goldberg. They didn't operate in what Goldberg termed as a "strategic way of improving day schools more globally." With the formation of the Institute, day schools throughout the country can take advantage of the development and research going on at Azrieli. Additionally, the Institute serves as a dialogue venue between schools, enabling schools to assist each other in developing and strengthening educational programs.

Azrieli benefits from this partnership as well: Azrieli faculty members who implement the programs of the Institute are able to stay abreast of what issues face day schools throughout the country. This knowledge can then be transmitted to their own classrooms, empowering the graduate students with an

up-to-date understanding of what they will encounter if they choose to enter the day school workforce.

Goldberg likened Azrieli's Institute to the model at Yale University, the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, where Yale faculty and New Haven public school teachers collaborate to develop curricula and strengthen the educational environment. Similarly, the Research Partnership for New York City Schools, founded by a professor at New York University's Steinhardt School, is an educational partnership between top New York City educational researchers and the students in its public schools.

The Azrieli partnership, however, differs in its ability to affect schools nationwide. "We can reach out beyond the metro New York area," pointed out Goldberg.

This partnership is achieved with a connection to the Institute on either of two levels. The more basic relationship consists of continuing education opportunities for teachers and schools. This is made up of two components: Communities of Practice and the Global Learning Initiative.

"Communities of Practice, or CoPs, is our venue of convening educators with common interests to discuss different issues in Jewish Education," expanded Shanin. "The CoPs consist of a monthly conference call, an active message board, a website with materials and an outgrowth of a conference." The aspects of education examined by the CoPs include issues in Modern Orthodox education, Israel guidance counselors, and student activities, among others. The Global Learning Initiative is an interactive media that allows

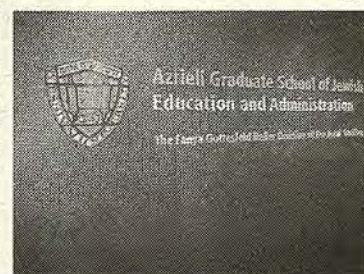
for educators throughout the country to connect to each other and the Institute via videoconferencing of various lectures and workshops.

The Institute's more intensive connection with day schools is accomplished through larger projects that work directly with specific schools. Some projects include a bully prevention program, supervision of instruction and a Hebrew language reading assessment tool.

Last year, there were 175 schools that connected through the basic venue and 35 schools that enlisted the help of the more intensive projects. This year, there are several hundred schools in the basic program and 50-60 schools on the more intensive track. "In terms of who works with the schools, it really depends on the project," said Shanin. "The different faculty members of Azrieli are the key players in offering expertise to the schools."

Another function of the Institute for University-School Partnership is that of the teaching fellowship. "The fellowship involves recruiting graduates to one of two models: Giveback - students are sent back to their high schools for a one year fellowship in which we provide training,

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THE OBSERVER
AZRIELI REACHES BEYOND ITS WALLS TO IMPACT DAY SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE

COMPLIANCE HOTLINE PROMOTES CAMPUS TRANSPARENCY

ESTHER BARUH

Yeshiva University (YU) is increasing its effort to promote university-wide transparency with the installation of a new compliance hotline at the beginning of August. The hotline, which is run by an independent third party that reports to YU's Committee of Internal Audit, will serve as another outlet for bringing serious, previously unaddressed complaints to the fore.

Generally, when a student, faculty or staff member encounters a problem in the YU environs, he or she should direct the issue to a proper authority, such as Human Resources or the department in which

FEATURES

FIVE YEARS AT YU: INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT JOEL

The Observer: What is your greatest accomplishment within the past five years?

President Joel: I think my greatest accomplishment has been the transformation of the culture at YU. We now focus on ennobling and enabling- and that must be the lynchpin of Torah u'Madda. We are proud to be part of an institution-inspired educational environment. To have accomplished this great feat, we have been blessed with dedicated administration, serious academics, an environment that challenges the student, and a constellation of schools that make up a great Jewish university. YU is led by a group of professors and lay people, who really have to focus on doing majestically important work.

O: Culture is a vague word- what do you mean by the word culture?

P: I am referring to communal culture. *Yahadut* [Judaism] teaches that "I" and "we" have to go together. One of the great lessons of Judaism is that the individual is of paramount importance. If there had been ten *tzaddikim* [righteous people] in Sodom, it would not have been destroyed. You must find a life that works for you as a *bat Torah*. Find your individual passions and strengths and use them to contribute to a *kehilah kedosha* [holy community.] The studies that Dr. Davis has done, and the satisfaction surveys that Ariel Fishman conducts are just a few examples of initiatives that are truly enhancing our institution. We shall never cease to strive for excellence, and so there are still

many more things that we wish to accomplish, but our current achievements still serve us with a strong sense of satisfaction and joy.

O: How do you differ from the Presidents who came before you, such as Chancellor Lamm?

P: I never say: "What did they do that I don't want to do?" I sit in this position because Norman Lamm spent 27 years ensuring our present reality. He was a president of a different time and a different place, and hence the needs, challenges

and styles of 2008 are different. In order for YU to go forward, it needed vision and an implementation strategy and so I needed to articulate that vision, one that was in no way my own or a consensus, but a collective vision. Dr. Revel, Dr. Belkin, and Dr. Lamm represented a whole community's instincts and passions, and a community needed to be built on those foundations. I am like the hands-on CEO, trying to shape the direction of an institution without being a micromanager. Given the

tenure of the Presidents before my time, I had to look at my accepting the Presidency as the beginning of the next *era*. There was a time when universities were led by faculty, and people would get up and serve as President for a few years and then step down. That is no longer the case. Now, presidents are more proactive, and I knew that I had a responsibility to the Jewish community. I knew that I had to push a Reset button in order to reevaluate ourselves, and articulate what our purposes and pas-

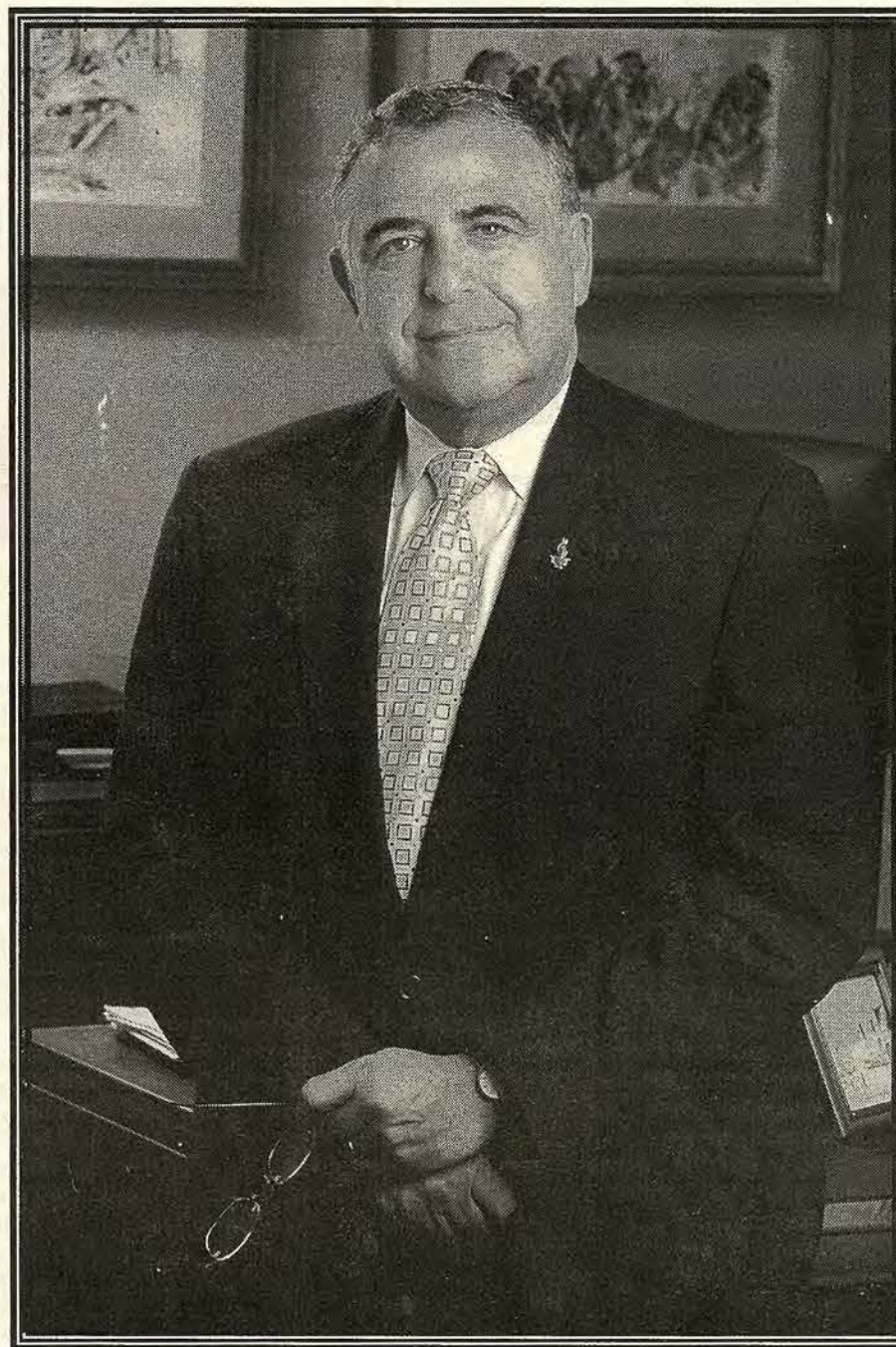
sions are. I knew we had to invite new conversation and forge new partnerships.

In my Investiture Address, I discussed four pillars: Excellence, Nobility, Community and Israel. Each element plays a different role in the undergraduate schools and the larger schools. YU has to be something of a university without walls. There are hundreds of alumni communities, which continue to fulfill our purpose. They are comprised of rabbis, educators, and lay leaders who provide the intellectual fuel. This fuel began with a unique culture, inspiring faculty, and embracing liberal arts and the absolute clarity of Torah and Torah values. From this foundation, we build communities.

O: Why did you decide to become the President of Yeshiva University? What motivated you to go into Jewish education?

P: The simple answer I give people is that my wife made me do it, but I know that that is not the whole story.

I have grown up being in love with my God, my people, and their story. I am certain that my decision was largely based on where I come from. *Yiddishkeit* [Judaism] is central to what I am and what I am doing. I was always going to be a lawyer and fix the world- and I was a lawyer. I did informal education with youth groups, using my accordion. I got involved in youth programs, and began to volunteer. I was bit with the bug and had some skills from helping in an informal environment. I never thought about that as a profession. I was an



YU PRODUCTIONS

PRESIDENT JOEL

FEATURES

FIVE YEARS AT YU: INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT JOEL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

assistant district attorney, but I was also a youth director. I wasn't a Rabbi, or a social worker. This is why I make so much of the idea of *lay kodesh* and *klei kodesh*- because I see myself as *lay kodesh*. I love young people and I love education; they are the most important commodity for tomorrow. I taught Hebrew school and fell into education when Dr. Lamm brought me to Cardozo as Associate Dean- Professor of Law. I was not a scholar and I wasn't on the road to tenure. I was a professor and loved the power of education, though it was always my intention to return to law. There were some people looking at Hillel, and I was an out of the box choice. I said no; it wasn't my world, but Esther said yes; you have something to give, to do, and there it is- I can't offer what I do as any kind of good career planning. So I had some success in Hillel- a lot because of the other people around me, and the one thing I knew to be the absolute truth was that I would never become the President of YU.

And then God exercised a macabre sense of humor.

O: What's your favorite flavor of ice cream?

P: Chocolate

O: What's your favorite candy bar?

P: Candy bar is a bad word because I'm supposed to be on a diet, but Nestle Crunch.

O: What's your favorite book?

P: The Torah, of course! I like historical novels and junk fiction- Baldacci's books, as well as historical

novels- I just read a book about President Lincoln and his cabinet entitled "A Team of Rivals." It's a great book on leadership and history, written by a Pulitzer Prize winning author. I have very little free time, so I have some learning *sedarim* [sessions] when I can. My staff keeps me up on periodicals, and I read Newsweek, and The New York Times. I try to have at least one heavy book to read- I read Obama's "The Audacity of Hope." I like some diversion, political fiction. There's a book by Stephen Carter, "New England White"- it's a murder mystery about a college president.

O: That strikes home.

P: Yeah, you bet!

O: What's your favorite movie?

P: I won't say "The Ten Commandments"...you mean, other than "Shrek?" I would say "Inherit the Wind," a beautiful movie about the Scopes-Monkey trial, with Fredric March and Spencer Tracy. There are lots of movies that have meant something to me; I'd have to get back to you on that.

O: Especially with the recent release of "The Dark Knight," who is your favorite superhero?

P: The Rav! Actually, I can't think of any other. The problem with some superheroes is that they're dark- we're living in a time where we look for clay feet. It's an aspect of cynicism within the movies. I don't want to give into that- You're a superhero; you have to be.

O: What was the best piece

of advice you ever got?

P: The best advice I got was the advice to marry Esther-from Dr. Abe Stern, the Director of YU's Youth Bureau, urging me to make that happen. All kinds of advice from my parents.

O: What advice would you give to the undergraduates of Stern College/ Yeshiva College?

P: To savor their lives, to dream dreams and to build their world on Torah.

O: What was your favorite class in college as an undergraduate?

P: My favorite class in college...I took a course while at NYU on Romantic Literature that I absolutely loved because I find English Romantic poetry kind of opens my soul- I'm a big fan of Wordsworth. Also, I was an only child; my father died when I was young -but I am the luckiest person I know. My parents were gone at a young age but that's not *chutz min hat-eva* [out of the ordinary.] I need and want to care, to be a romanticist with depth and color in life

O: We all have people whom we are friends with and those who are our enemies, and we look for certain character traits in people with whom we are inclined to be friends as opposed to our enemies. What are some character traits that would disincite you from being someone's friend?

P: I don't think I have enemies, and if I have them, I don't want them!

Narcissism is something which is not attractive to me, as well as deceptiveness. I generally don't admire people who are

zealots.

O: Zealots? One could see zealousness as a good trait?

P: Well, this is on a personal level. I'm less likely to be friends with a person who possesses that particular trait. I'm a kind of integrated soul and I like color more than black and white. I appreciate people who are broader, as opposed to single-issue people.

I don't like cynics- I welcome skeptics. I think Oscar Wilde once said that a cynic is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.

O: Would you classify yourself as an idealist?

P: Unfortunately, yes.

O: Why unfortunately?

P: Because you're more vulnerable. There is a quote from Don Quixote de la Mancha: "Madness is seeing the world as it is, and not as it ought to be."

O: What would you like to accomplish in the future/ how would you like to move forward with Yeshiva?

P: We look year to year but it is also important to look at a continuum. We are building a sense of *kavod ha'briyot* [respect for all creatures], a world of possibilities, a culture of investment, and indispensable *bnai* and *bnot Torah*. We are at a phase now where we want to capitalize and fine-tune enabling and ennobling. This will be a year where exciting initiatives make YU better known in broader circles- empowering the best people. We are lucky to have exceptional educational faculty and administrators to work

their magic and invite the broad Jewish community to continue to support our work. We want to make them aware of the excitement and value- we need more scholarship money, academic chairs, more programs, and more involvement in the broader community. We need investors in the purposes of YU.

O: What is your personal hashkafa (which does not have to be synonymous with the YU hashkafa, if there is one, as there are so many different kinds of people here?)

P: Look, I think I'm a student of YU and of the Yeshiva. I guess if you'd ask me and my family about the hashkafic view of our life, we would say that our life is based on the foundation stone of Torah. Rabbi Teitz wrote a book entitled "Learn Torah, Love Torah, Live Torah," a symbol for the idea that Torah is the foundation of life but we also have a mandate given from God to inspire, to live lives of purpose, meaning and joy. The world should be ours, including the world of knowledge. We have to think to ourselves: After my time here is done, will I have done something more than taking in oxygen and giving out carbon dioxide? Will I have given something to the world?

O: Do you have a personal Rabbi, Rosh Yeshiva, or person to whom you would turn for guidance?

P: My Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Norman Lamm.

O: I'm not sure if I should ask you this or perhaps someone else, but what is a typical day in the life of President Joel like?

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

FEATURES

PERSPECTIVES ON PRESIDENT JOEL

OLIVIA WIZNITZER

In his five years at the helm of Yeshiva University, President Joel has incurred both the wrath and favor of many. Ushered in with Tehillim rallies and people praying for his dismissal, he has weathered the storm and remains here today. Faculty and students have a range of perspectives about him, and note his different accomplishments or the ways in which they would like him to improve the implementation of his vision.

Dr. Hillel Davis, Vice President of University Life, places the focus on communication, explaining that President Joel has created a system where different departments and faculty members are in dialogue with one another rather than ignoring each other, or focusing on advancing their own institution to the exclusion of others. He explains that, "When I first came to this university, my impression is that it was an organization that was too siloed, and therefore we were not able to communicate properly. As a result, it was too easy for people who needed answers or were trying to solve problems to get bounced back and forth without any sense of accountability."

President Joel's genius lies in his focus on the positive and his interest in the point of commonality between all people, including his staff. He also strives to be available to all, whether students or faculty. Dr. Davis explains that "he has demonstrated, to a fault, accessibility." His attractive charisma allows many to feel comfortable with him. A long-time member of the Stern College for Women faculty corroborated that statement, explaining that "All I can say about President Joel is-he's great. He has vision, he implements quickly, and his ideas are exciting. He's warm and accessible."

Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Cohen, Professor of Bible and Associate Dean of Bernard Revel Graduate School, also feels very positively about President Joel. "He inspires the faculty to give their all and makes people feel good about being a part of YU. His finger's on the pulse of the university at every level, whether it be students, faculty or administration."

However, the students have mixed feelings. Adina Brizel (SCW '10) explained that she likes

the way that President Joel is "always mixing with the students" and notes that "anyone could pick him out of a crowd, because he is well known to us." However, she feels that his town hall meetings are "too self-congratulatory and not really places to raise new ideas."

A Yeshiva College student who requested to remain anonymous remarked that while Joel seems like a "genuinely nice person interested in helping everyone out, he needs to change the bureaucracy YU has become under his leadership to something of a more positive and student-friendly nature." He also noted that Joel should "spend more time thinking about how to lower tuition costs and less time with the CJF [Center for the Jewish Future]."

Simcha Gross (YC '10) believes that it is premature to judge President Joel. There are several ways in which he thinks President Joel can improve the caliber of the student experience at Yeshiva University. One way is for President Joel to "bring his Hillel resume to YU, making Shabbatot something worthwhile and exciting," resulting in "ending the pandering to the upper learning program" and including everyone in social venues. "People should feel proud to say they go to YU, not mumble under their breath so it sounds like NYU," he said.

A member of the Jewish Studies faculty at SCW, who declined to be quoted by name, agreed that student criticisms were valid but noted that students lack a perspective of what the leadership was like before President Joel revitalized it. "While there remains much for President Joel to do, it's very clear that his style is quite different from that of his predecessor and he is capable of bringing YU to a new level of excellence," he said.

Chief of Staff Josh Joseph agrees, stating, "The surveys signify change at the school- students are more confident in their decision to come to YU and leave our institution with a greater sense of pride and accomplishment."

"There is a charisma about President Joel that is very attractive, real, and honest," he explains. "He shows genuine concern for people around him, and I think that people sense that their leadership cares about them very deeply."



THE OBSERVER

THE SEAT OF POWER IN YESHIVA UNIVERSITY. THIS IS PRESIDENT JOEL'S DESK



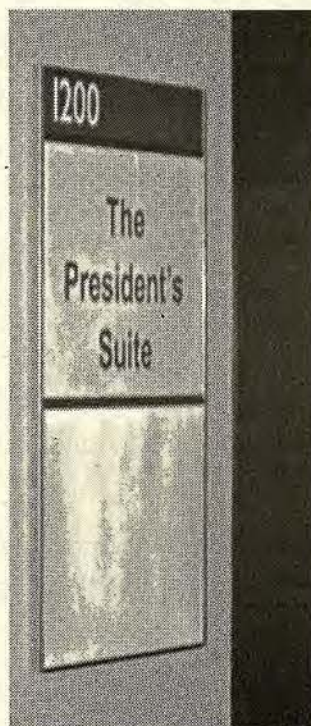
THE OBSERVER

MAN OF LA MANCHA: A MUSICAL PRESIDENT JOEL PARTICULARLY LIKES. HE AGREES WITH THE SENTIMENTS OF DON QUIXOTE, WHO BELIEVES IT IS MAD TO SEE THE WORLD AS IT IS RATHER THAN AS IT SHOULD BE



THE OBSERVER

YU RIETS LOGO: THIS IMAGE IS PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED ON THE 12TH FLOOR, ON THE WAY TO THE PRESIDENT'S SUITE



THE OBSERVER

THIS IS THE ENTRANCE TO THE PRESIDENT'S SUITE, AND THUS TO PRESIDENT JOEL'S DOMAIN



THE OBSERVER

SITUATED ON PRESIDENT JOEL'S DESK. THIS QUOTE FROM GENESIS 18:27 RECALLS ABRAHAM PRAYING ON BEHALF OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH, AS HE STATES THAT HE HAS BEGUN TO SPEAK, BUT IS MADE OF MERE DUST AND ASHES

FEATURES

INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT JOEL

P: You can ask Cyndy Phelps, my Executive Assistant, or Josh Joseph, my Chief of Staff, about this. A typical day in the life of President Joel... very busy- too busy. It's consumed by meetings, individuals, and groups, opportunities to participate in student events, working with lay people, being involved with public events, and dinners. This leaves very little time for learning. It's my fault, but I am somewhat overprogrammed, and can't be at my most effective that way.

I meet with my Cabinet every two weeks, and with my Executive Cabinet every week. I also have regular meetings with different trustees, and meetings of the Council of Deans. I try to be available to people- to wander the campus, encounter students, and learn from them. I have not yet had time to teach and would very

much love to do so. There's a good deal of travel involved as well- recruitment in Israel and the like.

O: What would you like to teach?

P: I would love to teach a political science course on the American Presidency, educational leadership, and the Jewish community. I liked what I taught in Cardozo. I taught Professional Ethics for seven years.

O: What's your understanding of Torah U'Madda- should there be a synthesis or not between the two? The Rav states there should not be a synthesis, for instance-

P: I don't think the Rav said the goal is not to have a complete synthesis. I do believe, from my perspective, and I'm a layman- that we should go forth and embrace ideas. I certainly think that fortified with

Torah, you see life through a different lens, full of wonderful ideas and ideals. I use the term "integrated life" rather than synthesis. We should aspire to *shleimut* [wholeness] integrating into your life the foundations of Torah. The words "harmonious existence" were used by Dr. Belkin. If you take a look at the appendix to Rabbi Rakeffet's biography of Dr. Revel, or any of his nine or ten commencement speeches, he talks about a very integrated worldview. We're all influenced by the Rambam. Nobody questions that his core was Torah, but last I looked, he was a doctor.

O: The murmurs against your Presidency when you were inaugurated five years ago- why do you feel that they have died down?

P: I thought it was just because I was getting hard of hearing!

I think that at the beginning of my Presidency, there was a sense of uncertainty, but a lot of hope. People see a wonderful space for them to be all they can be. They will make an enormous investment in Yeshiva because of that much higher level of satisfaction. People are used to me now, and I hope people enjoy partnering with me on a great adventure.

I believe that those who had concerns came to know me better, and upon realizing the nature of my goals and ideals, were reassured.

Why do you think it is?

O: I think in part because people get used to what they can't change.

P: I hope not- I hope people don't feel they simply can't change things. I hope people always want to make it better. Yes, there are certain rules.

For example, this is not going to be a coeducational institution and some people need to get used to that. We are not going to be more lax in halakha. If they thought Torah wasn't going to be our defining enterprise- they'd better get used to that.

O: Is there a moment you can remember that you were proud to be a Jew- or when you were proudest to be a Jew?

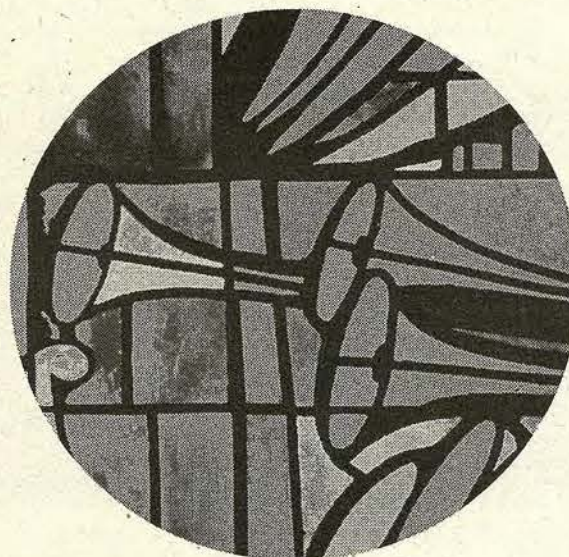
P: I think it recurs annually at *Neilah* when we stand together and say *Shema* and *Hashem Hu Ha'elokim*. I think it reflects our self-evaluation and that we are partners with Hashem in building the world.

I have the *zechus* [merit] of usually being the *Shaliach Tzibur* - I am never more filled with joy, hope and awe than then, and I like joy, hope and awe.

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FEATURES

HASHKAFA

TEXTS PLAY FORMATIVE ROLE IN STUDENT OUTLOOK

OLIVIA WIZNITZER

We live in an age of texts. The written word is predominant, whether it is accessed through books, manuscripts, newspapers or the Internet. Indeed, as Rabbi Dr. Haym Soloveitchik asserts in his essay, "Rupture and Reconstruction," we live in an age which boasts the "new and controlling role that texts now play in contemporary religious life." Under such circumstances, especially with the plethora of English translations of sefarim [religious works] and texts now available, it seems logical to assume that the religious college student looks for guidance and direction from books, in lieu of or in addition to Rabbis, scholars and sages.

In that case, what are the works that impact students at Yeshiva University? What is it that our student body is reading, and what do they find within these books? Having asked which sefarim and texts impacted students to inform their worldview or hashkafa, aside from the Torah itself, I received a dizzying array of answers, ranging from Maimonides' "Moreh Nevukhim" to "Essential Essays on Judaism" by Eliezer Berkovits.

Ben Greenfield (YC '10), who credited "If You Were God," "Halakhic Man," "The Magic

Touch" and "Leaves of Faith," among other works, as influencing his philosophical outlook on Judaism, explained that "If You Were God" affected him because it "was my first Jewish book to not take Judaism for granted. Judaism was its conclusion, not its assumption." Greenfield appreciated this new outlook, which differed from the perspective he had formerly received in school.

Matt Williams (YC '10), who cited "The Handbook of Jewish Thought II" and "Eye of a Needle" as important to his worldview, noted that "they were there when my teachers were not." He explained, "Most of the Jewish Studies teachers I've had never focused on belief, philosophical truth, or paths to service. For them it was a given, something that was a pre-req for stepping into the classroom. Nowadays, I think relegating that to pre-req is a serious mistake, especially considering the average level of observance of Modern Orthodox college students."

The most frequent responses included mention of "Leaves of Faith" by Rav Aharon Lichtenstein, "Halakhic Man" by Rabbi Jo-

seph B. Soloveitchik and works by Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks.

Sarah Medved (SCW '10) is in that camp, having stated that "Halakhic Man" has both informed my worldview and provided me with continual inspiration. In particular, the idea that we approach the world with the Torah in hand, that we view all of

life through the lens of Halakha, is essential to my outlook. Halakha should permeate every aspect of life; there is no area that it does not address. It does not shy away from even the most sensitive and private topics, it uplifts and makes sacred even the most mundane."

Adina Brizel (SCW '10) is a Lichtenstein fan, but also makes use of older texts, citing "Emunah U' Bitachon [Faith and Trust]" by the Chazon Ish as a favorite, alongside "The Collected Letters of Rav Hirsch." She also ventures to a different side of the rabbinic sphere when including "Emes L'Yaakov," Rav Yaakov Kaminetzsky's commentary on the parsha [weekly Torah portion] in her list.

An SCW student who requested to remain anonymous stated that her "favorite sefer of all time" is "Chovos HaTalmidim [A Student's Obligation]" written by the Piacezna Rebbe."

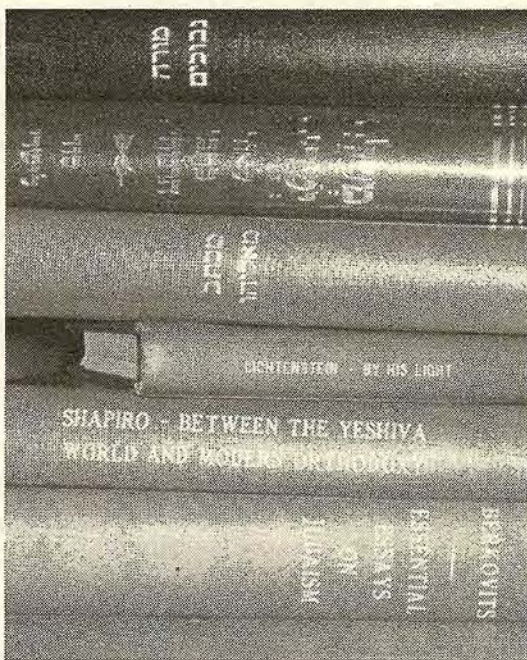
Yaelle Frohlich (SCW '10)

finds "Michtav M'Eliyahu [Strive for Truth] very motivating because "Rav Dessler cites fantastic things from so many different places." Interestingly, she too appreciates the works of the Piacezna Rebbe, specifically "Aish Kodesh [Sacred Fire]."

Yair Shahak (YC '09) explained that "the commentaries of Rashbam and Ibn Ezra on Tanakh, "Moreh Nevukhim," R' Emden's autobiography, and "Maggid Mesharim," the secret diary of R. Yosef Karo," have affected his hashkafa. "I practice a mostly rational-based Judaism," he states, "but I fully acknowledge and believe in the existence of the supernatural."

Avi Amsalem (YC '09) was impacted by "The Science of God" and "The Dignity of Difference." "I really liked Shroeder's interpretation of "holy" to be an "identifiable control group set apart against which the flow of history can be compared." As Jews it is our mission to make contributions to society while still maintaining a separate identity as emissaries of God. This balance is something that I have been struggling with since I got to Yeshiva."

The range of works and



VARIOUS TEXTS IMPACT THE HASHKAFOT OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, RANGING FROM MAIMONIDES' "MOREH NEVUKHIM" TO "ESSENTIAL ESSAYS ON JUDAISM" BY ELIEZER BERKOVITS

THE OBSERVER

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

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PROFESSOR PROFILES

EVERYTHING IS ILLUMINATED: PROFESSOR MIRYAM BRAND

PEREL SKIER

Whether she's delving into archaic prayer books from Qumran or defining sin through Biblical analogies, you can count on adjunct professor Miryam Brand to be up to something interesting and a little unusual. Her knowledge of everything tangential is seemingly boundless. Wonder what's for dinner in the Bangkok night markets? Curious about the origins of a certain tradition or minhag? This avid, twinkle-eyed Bible specialist makes you feel like you've been there and lived through it. Her fascination with culture, language, history, religion—really everything—is palpable.

Take the latest book she's picked up: "The Yiddish Policeman's Union," by Michael Chabon. "It's always interesting to me how people automatically think differently in different languages," Brand says. She describes the book's premise, in which Jews are granted a temporary reserve in Alaska rather than Israel after the Holocaust, as a genuine taste of Yiddish culture at long last. The novel conveys a sense of old Jewish thought patterns that intrigue her. "Everyone's supposedly speaking Yiddish," she explains. "Sometimes the characters will say things where

they don't really make sense, like 'Woe is me!' But when you translate it back to 'Vey iz mir!'..." She pauses significantly. "You have this culture embedded in a language that you don't always realize. It's a lot of fun."

Brand has always had a taste for languages, however. She's the kind of professor who occasionally scribbles on the board in Sanskrit. And her study, of Jewish tongues and communities alike, goes way back. Degrees she's gone for: Masters in Bible from University of Haifa, doctorate in Bible and Late Antiquity from New York University. Classes she's taught, at Stern College for Women and the Tanach Yom Iyun: Dead Sea Scrolls, Biblical Concept of Sin, Biblical Interpretation in the Second Temple Period. For Brand, history and Torah fuse into a compellingly rich tapestry. "When I learn Tanach, that's one of the ways I connect with G-d," she says. "It involves me intellectually, but I also see tremendous beauty and interest in Tanach."

Yet she is equally riveted by the surviving documents of Jews living in the Second Temple's shadow. "It's just a fascinating time," Brand says. "Everything we take for granted

today was pretty much up in the air. Certain beliefs that we think are an obvious part of Judaism, certain ideas about *halakha* [law], were things that people were arguing about." Especially seditious, she notes, were the *kulas*—the leniencies we now rely upon daily. "People were like, 'How can you do this? This is so obviously not what G-d wants,'" she explains. "There were just so many different groups of Jews trying so honestly to do what they think is right." That sincerity and confusion are aspects modern and ancient Judaism probably have in common. Yet our ancestors would probably be surprised by our evolving national identity: "Shabbat, *kehila* [community], some form of *kashrut*—those were basic beliefs that defined Jews in those days and don't anymore. Certain things they took for granted are up in the air today."

You might think, with Brand's sweet spot for old tomes, that she would prefer an academic life. But she finds her subjects too exciting not to share. "I really value that connection with people," she admits, laughing. "And it's true what people say. You really don't know something till you've taught it, and you really

do learn from your students." Brand notes that SCW's unique atmosphere better allows for the proverbial 'meeting of the minds' between herself, as an instructor of Biblical studies, and her students, than other universities. Here's how she explains her own mindset: "[SCW] is that whole combination of Torah U'Madda, learning and intellectual striving with real Judaism, real belief. That honest belief in wisdom, knowledge and a fear of G-d is very central to [SCW] and my life."

That's one of Brand's beliefs. But she has others. Ranking high on the importance scale, for instance, is her definition of a fun hike: "I like easy hikes, i.e., hikes where there's no point where I think, 'Oh no, if I slip here I'm going to die.'" In her off-time Brand's done her share of trekking around archeological sites; she most recently visited Qumran, the home of the Dead Sea sect whose scrolls have fueled countless debates about what Judaism was really like in the Second Temple era. And then of course there is her occasional conference in Bangkok. "If you want to see some place where idol worship is alive and well, that one's really interesting," Brand recounts with

amusement. She describes shrines that mimic the architectural style of the public buildings or private homes they're intended to protect. The cuisine also takes some getting used to. "Once I was in a night market and I saw someone buying what looked like a bag of toasted scorpions for a snack," she says. "It just shows you how different a culture can be."

Students who take Brand's Bible course in Minor Prophets this semester will come to appreciate how different our own once was—and the surprising extent to which it wasn't. "I'd like to get both a literary and historical perspective, to see what's going on in terms of Am Yisroel at the point where each sefer takes place," Brand explains. She names the questions she asks of every Biblical work: "Why do the prophets' words have the force that they have? What situation are they responding to in terms of our nation's history? What ideas are they trying to get across?" It's an approach that examines the spiritual and practical inflections of the words in almost any context you can think of. And, knowing Brand, that will make for some illuminating—and unusual—discussion.

EMPOWERED JEWISH WOMEN

CJF INTRODUCES SHAYNA GOLDBERG, YOETZET HALAKHA

GAVRIELLA LERNER

The Center for the Jewish Future has created an initiative to encourage more female students to pursue active roles in the Modern Orthodox community. Entitled "The Women's Leadership Fellowship," this semester-long program introduces students to women who hold leadership positions within the community. The women then discuss their roles and responsibilities. During each weekly two-hour session, an invited guest tries to convey a sense of their position to the students, bolstering their own experiences with relevant articles. They also form discussion groups about women's leadership in the Modern Orthodox community and how students can achieve these positions.

Shayna Goldberg, a *yoetzet halakha* [law advisor] from Teaneck, was invited to speak at the Women's Leadership Fellowship during an April 2008 session. The part-time halakha teacher at Ma'ayanot High School for Girls first encountered the idea that women could be trained as experts in *hilkhot nidda* [family purity laws] in eleventh grade. Rabbanit Chana Henkin, the founder of Nishmat, The Jerusalem Center for Advanced Jewish Study for Women,

expressed her wish for female nidda experts to Goldberg's mother. "I love learning on an advanced level, but I was also interested in relationship counseling," Goldberg explains. "I thought this would be a great way to integrate the two. When I first heard of the idea, I thought to myself, gee, I really hope that happens."

Fortunately for Goldberg, and for observant Jewish women the world over, Henkin's dream became a reality. Today, Nishmat, a *midrasha* [institute] in Jerusalem known for providing highly advanced classes in Talmud and halakha for women, runs a two-year program of intensive halakhic study to train women to become "yoatzot halakha," law advisors—particularly regarding the laws of nidda, which govern relations between married couples based on the menstrual cycle. "Rabbanit Henkin asked community Rabbis about how many questions they typically got regarding Shabbos, kashrut, and niddah," says Goldberg, "and the volume of nidda questions was far lower. Rabbanit Henkin realized that it was impossible that in a major area of Halakha, not so many questions were coming up; they very likely were coming up, but weren't getting asked. It was a problem that needed to be addressed."

Yoatzot halakha train for

two years in Nishmat's Keren Ariel program in Israel. According to Nishmat's website, the students of this program spend over 1000 hours studying the laws of nidda in depth through the Talmud, Shulchan Arukh, and various other ancient halakhic texts. They learn about various women's health issues as well. Upon completion of the program, these yoatzot, with their knowledge and expertise, are equipped to discuss the halakhic ramifications of many complicated issues—both intimate and medical—with women who may otherwise feel uncomfortable discussing such details with a Rabbi. Yoatzot are not *poskim* [halakhic decisors] as their website makes clear, but they do offer a comfortable forum for women to discuss issues, get rabbinically-approved answers, and become more knowledgeable about keeping the laws of nidda.

Although the purpose of the yoatzot is to provide a comfortable alternative to discussing intimacy with a rabbi, Goldberg, who meets with women face to face in shul several times a month and fields over 600 phone calls a year in this area, was pleasantly surprised to discover how much more she is able to accomplish. "I thought I was just going to be filling this gap that needed to be filled, to take some of the unpleasantness out of asking nidda questions,"

she said. "I've been surprised that a big part of the job is not so much answering questions, but the educational part. So many women have been married for years, and they have either not been properly educated, or they didn't understand things." She adds, "It's extremely gratifying how much I can help and educate. Every call I get, I use that as an opportunity to teach a better approach to this area in halakha for the rest of her life. It's not just about the comfort."

Keeping the laws of nidda can be a balancing act, which is why it is crucial that women ask questions when they need to. Obviously, given the gravity of these particular laws, nobody wants to be overly lenient. However, many women lacking the proper knowledge and not wanting to bring up the question choose to err on the side of caution: stringency. Goldberg discussed how this could be just as disastrous, if not more so, than being too lenient: "There was this post-menopausal woman I spoke with who had had issues for years, but never went to ask her rabbi because she didn't feel comfortable, so she just always went the stricter way," said Goldberg sadly. "She started crying and said that she has two children, and she had always wanted more. She now realized that had she asked at the time, rather than just being stringent,

she might have had more children. That was very scary to confront."

Goldberg downplayed the leadership aspect of her work. "I was never in it for the role in the community, I just love to learn on a high level, and with my mom being a teacher and my dad being a rabbi, I always saw the difference each individual can make in someone's life." She greatly encourages anyone who has the will and the ability to pursue this job, which need not be full-time. "If you can get to Israel for two years to go through the program, it's really worth it to pursue. There is such a big need for this." Goldberg greatly emphasizes that it's not about having a public role, but about contributing to the betterment of the Jewish community: "It's a wonderful opportunity to give back to your community, and in general, if you can be in a leadership role, and help people increase their *yirat shamayim* [fear of Heaven] and *shmirat hamitzvot* [fulfillment of the laws] in the community, and in a way that women can feel positive about it, it is a tremendously important and fulfilling goal."

Students interested in the program's spring 2009 session will be able to fill out applications in the near future. The program last ran in spring 2008.

OPINIONS

FLIPPING OUT ON THE 21 BUS

CHAYA CITRIN

I had been spacing out-enjoying the air conditioning on the 21 bus, a welcome relief from the stifling Jerusalem heat-when I was interrupted by a friend's whispered question: "Did you see that guy? The one who just got on?" I had been pretty oblivious to the stream of people boarding the bus, but now looking around at my fellow passengers, I figured that whoever had attracted my friend's notice was probably an especially drunk yeshiva guy (this story takes place on Purim) or someone equally sketchy. "I'm talking about the guy in black, carrying the gym bag," continued my friend. "He's sitting on the left, a couple of rows ahead. I think he may be a terrorist. We should get off the bus." And so that's how I found myself walking for 25 minutes in the

blistering heat to the *Tachana Merkazit*, the Jerusalem Central Bus Station.

Our bus-ride-turned-hike happened on the last day of *Purim Meshulash*, Jerusalem's three-day Purim marathon. The terrorist attack at Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav that left eight students dead had occurred a mere two-and-a-half weeks earlier. In fact, our walk took us right past the yeshiva's building. During our walk, my friends and I were still on edge, frightened by the noise of firecrackers (and there were lots set off during Purim) and worried by the sound of ambulance sirens. Thank God, my friend's suspicions that day were unwarranted, but our caution and racial profiling were not. Before I came to Israel, I was wary of the practice, having considered it mildly prejudiced at best, racist at worst. Yet in Israel, I

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NOT ALWAYS AS IT APPEARS: SHOMER NEGIAH, CULTURE, AND YU

DANA ADLER

Jumping to conclusions is not a new problem, nor is it endemic to the Jewish community. We all make judgments of others, many of which are based on outward appearances. However, awareness is the key to avoiding the mistake of making incorrect assumptions. One area in which many of us need to be made more aware is in the cultural department.

Cultural differences are abundant on the Beren campus. With many international students come many rich, new, and interesting customs. Among these are the ways that people greet one another. Allow me to share a story with you. One Friday night, I was hanging out with a friend in the Schottenstein lobby. She pointed out that one of the guys was cute. I happened to know him. He's a very sweet guy, an international student, who I

see frequently learning with others and participating wholeheartedly in all the Shabbat activities. One of his female friends walked into the room, and gave him a kiss on both cheeks. He smiled back in greeting and then casually continued his conversation. My friend shrugged and said, "Oh well, there goes that idea. He's not frum." While I understood her point, I felt her immediate judgment of him and his commitment to Judaism was unwarranted. I cannot argue about the halakhic ramifications of his actions, as that is not my area of expertise. However, it is important for people to understand that this situation, where the man passively accepted a platonic kiss rather than embarrassing or otherwise hurting the feelings of his female friend, is no different from shaking the hand of a member of the opposite sex who clearly does

not adhere to the strictest standards of *shomer negiah* [not touching a member of the opposite sex] in order to avoid causing him or her embarrassment. The problem is that in our Western culture, a kiss has certain symbolic and erotic connotations that a handshake does not. To judge another through the narrow lens of our own culture, however, is to judge unfairly and unfavorably. I vainly attempted to explain this to my friend, telling her that accepting a kiss on the cheek did not mean that the guy was not frum. Rather, he was merely trying to be as polite as possible. I then explained that a kiss on the cheek is the accepted "handshake" in many other cultures, especially Latin ones.

Raquel Amram (SCW '11), who hails from Venezuela, expounds upon an interesting concept, stating that "There is an idea that many Ash-

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GOING GREEN FOR GOD:

JEWES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

RIVKAH ROGAWSKI

Over the past year, Americans have been seized by a passion for all things green. Galvanized by rising gas prices and fatalistic warnings from the scientific community, environmentalism has expanded from the sphere of vegans, tree-huggers and ex-presidential candidates, now entering the public consciousness. Companies like Target and Ford are portraying themselves as organic and green in order to lure consumers. The Democratic Party is holding the first eco-friendly political convention, complete with enforced recycling and organic cotton souvenirs. Amidst this fervor, I find myself wondering what

my responsibility is as an Orthodox Jew. What does the Torah hashkafa [Jewish philosophical perspective] have to say about environmentalism?

The environmentalist community propagates a doomsday approach to the future, describing melting polar ice caps and enormous landfills. However, I find it hard to believe that God, who creates the world anew every moment, would allow humans to trash His world. The Jew's knee-jerk reaction when faced with bad news is to place his trust in God; therefore, buying into these predictions seems like a rejection of years of *bitachon* [trust] and *emunah* [faith]. The obvious response is that God gave hu-

man beings *bechirah*, free choice, which should extend to the decision to pollute the Earth. However, why should all of mankind suffer for the mistakes that are made by a few? Moreover, many people are merely unconscious of their environmentally poor choices, and it does not seem appropriate to punish thoughtlessness with the collapse of our planet.

However, what of those who are aware of environmental issues, and wish to keep our world healthy? There are several concepts in Judaism that are compatible with environmentalism. Firstly, there is that of *Bal Tashchis* [wasting without cause]—nowadays a mitzvah that apparently extends from throwing out canned corn to the cover of the can itself. Does *Bal Tashchis* include an obligation to recycle rather than dis-



GOOGLE IMAGES

IS GOING GREEN A JEWISH OBLIGATION?

card? The mitzvah has its source in a prohibition against cutting down fruit trees, which implies environmentalist efforts to prevent forests from being destroyed. *Tzaar baalei chaim* [causing undue pain to animals] is another important mitzvah, and we are even required to feed our livestock before

ourselves. Through heedless consumption of the planet's resources, our society destroys the habitats of countless species. Endangering these animals through damming up rivers and destroying rainforests certainly causes *tzaar baalei chaim*.

Finally, the Torah advocates taking responsibility for one's actions, providing many examples throughout Tanakh to illustrate the importance of accountability. The mitzvah of *maakeh* requires a person with a dangerous roof to enclose it, and if one's ox gores another person, then one is required to compensate the injured party. Such personal responsibility logically extends to considering the ramifications of living in a consumer society that is slowly destroying its natural resources.

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THE MACHINE IS ALIVE AND WELL

MIRIAM GERSTEIN

When people think of Chicago, Al Capone often comes to mind. The gangster was instrumental in turning the city into a hotbed of crime in the 1920s. He used the power and money from his illegal liquor business to gain control of the Midwestern city

both by attacking rival gangs, as in the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, and by bribing Chicago's mayor, Illinois' governor, and an Illinois senator.

It has been a long time since Capone or any other organized crime syndicate has ruled Chicago. Yet, Chicago and Illinois are as corrupt as ever, with the Corporate Crime Reporter ranking Illinois as the sixth most corrupt state in the United States!

Little has truly changed since the days when Capone ruled Chicago. Capone may be seen as a "bad guy" now, but, in his day, he was actually very popular amongst the people. During the Depression years, he used his money to set up well-stocked soup kitchens to feed the hungry. The shadier aspects of his life were largely hidden from the public. If people

were aware of how he made his money, they mostly overlooked it because he did so much good for them.

Today, when Chicagoans and other Illinois natives hear of another scandal involving one of their many politicians, they tend to shake their heads sadly and then



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OBAMA- LEADING US TO A "CAPONE AMERICA"?



GOOGLE IMAGES

go on with their lives. After all, their streets are cleaned regularly, and their garbage disappears on time. Grievances are generally forgiven in light of how smoothly life runs otherwise.

Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich, for example, is a frequent subject of Illinois scandal. Blagojevich was the U.S. Representative for the fifth Congressional district, which includes part of Chicago,

for several years. In October 2006, federal officials indicted Tony Rezko, a Chicagoan and a Blagojevich fundraiser, for seeking kickbacks from businesses that wanted contracts or approval from state boards. During the trial, it was revealed that Blagojevich, who campaigned on the promise that he would reform Illinois politics, approved of the plan. So much for reform!

Another politician of interest is Chicago's mayor, Richard M. Daley. He has been the mayor since 1989 and has been linked with a number of rather shady occurrences. For example, in March 2003, Daley issued a secret order to demolish a Chicago airport. He organized the bulldozing of Meigs Field, a small lakefront airport, without seeking the approval of the Chicago City Council or of the Federal Aviation Administration. In 2004, the Chicago Sun-Times uncovered a scandal involving private trucks hired by the city. During their \$50 per hour shifts, the trucks did little work and often remained idle. Many of the

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YU: THE HOME FOR WHICH I'VE BEEN SEARCHING

TZVI FEIFEL

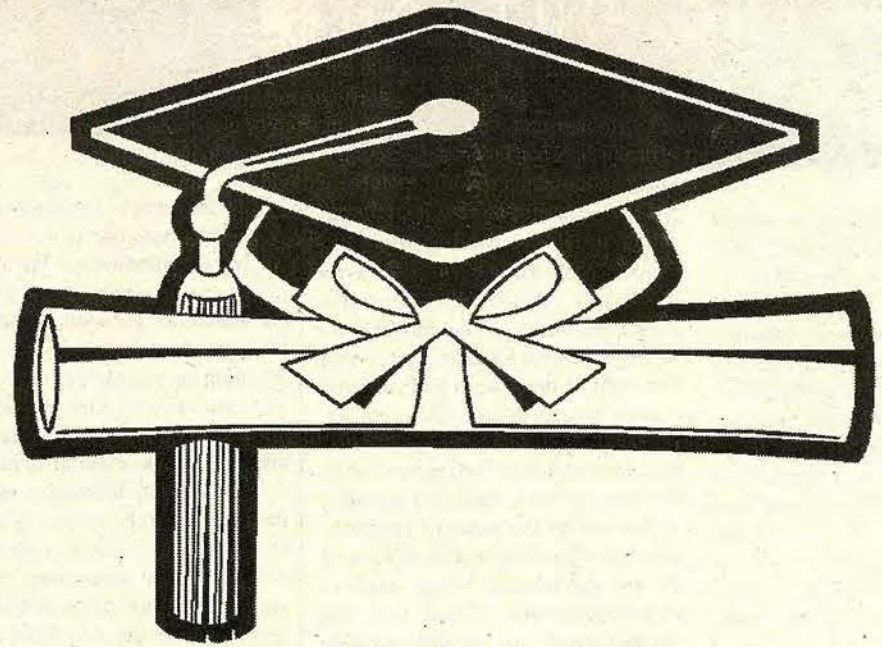
I still find it hard to believe that I've already finished my first year of college, even if I do have hundreds of empty Starbucks Doubleshot cans and many marked up essays to prove it. I mean, wasn't it just last month that I was nervously entering high school for the first time, a mere two weeks ago that I was finally graduating and preparing to head off to Israel for a year of concentrated study at Yeshivat Har Etzion (more commonly known as Gush), and just yesterday that I was winning my first fencing bout for the YU Macs? Well, if it seems that way, it's for one reason: time flies when you're having fun.

Simply put, I love YU; indeed, I truly love everything about it. Ok, well, maybe not everything. For example, the fact that the Wilf campus still does not have wireless internet admittedly kind of bothers me. I'm not particularly fond of the exorbitant food prices in the cafeteria either,

no matter how "necessary" they are. And don't even get me started regarding the library's nonexistent operating hours. However, despite these few things, and perhaps a few more, my love for YU has never been stronger.

At this point, I'm sure you're all wondering why I so greatly love YU and what exactly about the institution I find so appealing and so uniquely special. The answer is simple: as an institution, YU has afforded me more opportunities than I could have ever hoped for. First and foremost, the mere fact that I am able to study advanced levels of both Torah and secular studies on the same campus is an amazing opportunity, regardless of whether or not you believe that an actual synthesis between the two can and should take place. And thus far, my experience has shown me the excellent compatibility of such a combination; through proper time management, neither areas of study must compromise on their quality.

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COMMENCEMENT 2009

THURSDAY, MAY 14 • 11AM
THE WAMU THEATER
MADISON SQUARE GARDEN

IN ORDER TO RECEIVE YOUR TICKETS AND CAP AND GOWN, WE WOULD APPRECIATE IF YOU WOULD FILE FOR GRADUATION WITH THE REGISTRAR ON YOUR CAMPUS. PLEASE FILE ASAP SO THAT YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND AND MARCH IN YOUR GRADUATION CEREMONY.

OPINIONS

FLIPPING OUT ON THE 21 BUS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

became a chronic racial profiler. Profiling became a casual occupation, which I would most frequently practice while attempting to hail a cab.

Before heading to Israel for my own year of study in seminary, I had seen lots of people come back from theirs "flipped out," or to put it politely, spiritually uplifted. I didn't imagine that I would come back flipped out politically, but that's what happened. I set off as a liberal-minded, pro-peace process American. I turned into a pro-settlement Israeli wannabe.

My metamorphosis hasn't been complete, though. I'm having trouble accepting the anti-Arab sentiments that my Israeli peers embrace. For instance, this year has been *Shemita*, the final year of a seven-year cycle governing the agricultural activity in the land of Israel. The Torah prohibits farmers from profiting from the land's produce during *Shemita*. While I expected *Shemita* to merely be cause for limiting my vegetable intake (and it was), it turned out to be the subject of political controversy. While Barack Obama grumbled over the rising cost of arugula, every time I shopped for vegetables in the *shuk* [market] (which was not too often, I'm ashamed to report), I involuntarily took a political stance. Would I buy *yivul nochri* [produce grown

by gentiles] or *heter mechira*? *Yivul nochri* is grown within the halakhic boundaries of Israel, but by Arabs; therefore, according to most halakhic authorities, it is not subject to any restrictions posed by *Shemita*. *Heter mechira* is a halakhic dispensation, which is similar to the sale of *chametz* [leaven]. Under *heter mechira*, Jewish farmers sell their land to non-Jews and then work the land and sell their produce for profit. *Heter mechira* is the subject of debate regarding its halakhic legitimacy. *Yivul nochri* is the subject of a political one.

Many people reject *yivul nochri* on principle since its sale benefits Arabs. This viewpoint, which to many people is axiomatic, seems un-Jewish to me. I hope we all know that not all Arabs are terrorists, support terrorism, or are even anti-Semites. Yet, many of us reject all Arabs altogether on the aforementioned grounds. Are we being racist?

One cause of racism is ignorance. Because of our limited to nonexistent interaction with Arabs, many of us make assumptions about Arabs as a group based on the little information that we have. For the most part, all I know about Arabs is based on my personal experiences with them or the way in which they are portrayed in the media. Firsthand, I've felt the threat of terrorism. As for the

media, Arabs are portrayed as people who are downtrodden and abused by Israel. Recently, I learned a bit more when reading "Finding Nouf," a novel by Zoe Ferraris that depicts life in contemporary Saudi Arabia. I was surprised to feel a sense of identification with the protagonist, Nayir al-Sharqi. A young Palestinian in his twenties, he encounters similar issues to those his Orthodox Jewish counterparts face. He deals with his own *shidduch* crisis, feels uncomfortable around members of the opposite sex, and is plagued with concern over what others think and say about him. Reading his story, although fictionalized, made me realize how similar Jews and Arabs really are.

So I have a proposition. Let's create a dialogue with our moderate Arab peers. Let's discuss some of the issues-not necessarily the big ones like the Palestinian-Israeli conflict or Iran's nuclear aspirations. Rather, let's talk about what we have in common, and let's try to understand each other. Not only could we create a *kiddush Hashem* [sanctification of God's name], but we could come to better appreciate Rabbi Akiva's famous statement (Avot, Chapter III): "*chaviv adam sheh'nivra b'tzelem*"-beloved is man, for he was created in the image of God.

ing jobs to insiders like Stroger might not bother me so much if he could actually be trusted. In his February 6, 2007 blog entry, Stroger asserted, "I am doing my best to keep from raising your taxes" (www.toddstroger.blogspot.com). He obviously did not try too hard, because, upon noticing that he did not have enough money to fund his \$3 billion budget, he promptly raised the Cook County Sales tax by one percentage point. Now, anyone who lives in Chicago has to pay a sales tax of 10.25%, the highest sales tax in the nation!

You may be wondering what this has to do with you. If you do not live in Chicago, the scandals and broken promises of Blagojevich, Daley and Stroger do not really apply to you. What these politicians do cannot possibly interest you.

But they should! While they are all local politicians, Barack Obama is not. Since he is campaigning to be the President of the United States, you might want to know about his involvement with the Chicago political machine.

Obama's political career began when he was elected to represent the 13th District, which includes Chicago's South Side, in the Illinois State Senate. Since then, he has supported politicians with the most dubious credentials. He supported the reelection of Blagojevich in 2006, endorsed Mayor Daley when he ran for a sixth term in 2007, and supported Todd Stroger's bid for Cook County Board president. Furthermore, Obama has been found to be in connection with Tony Rezko, who was found guilty of 16 of the 24 counts against him. Obama knew Rezko well enough to offer him a property adjacent to his own. Rezko then sold a strip of his land to Obama. It seems to me that Obama is well positioned in Chicago's political machine.

Am I unfairly condemning Obama? Perhaps. However, I think that being aware of his political connections should make us pause before we readily believe his claim of bringing change to Washington. Remember Blagojevich's campaign promise?

Coming from Chicago makes me naturally suspicious of Illinois politicians. It is going to take an awful lot to convince me that Obama is different. I do not want to find myself living in a "Capone America," where we shrug off scandals because we have been provided with national health care.

YU: THE HOME FOR WHICH I'VE BEEN SEARCHING

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This goal of combining Torah and secular studies is one that YU wants its students to accomplish off campus as well, and they are true to their rhetoric. Thanks to the Yeshiva College Honors Program, I, along with thirteen other students, had the remarkable privilege of spending two phenomenal weeks in Italy. The trip, undoubtedly, was one of the greatest experiences of my life. I mean, think about it: I got to spend two weeks in Italy with amazing classmates and teachers, all while learning about fascinating subjects. I saw some of the most amazing architecture in the world, thousands of astounding pieces of art, and I got to read fantastic literature, all while being able to ex-

plore a foreign culture in the beautiful country of Italy. And aside from the top-notch education and high spirits that YU readily supplied, the provided accommodations for our religious needs were perhaps the most unique aspect of the trip. Such an opportunity, for any religious Jew, could not have happened in any other school.

Regarding the education itself, I have no complaints whatsoever. And before any of you shout at me that I either haven't taken any hard courses, that my standards are too low, that I'm dumb, or that I've simply been skipping classes, you may be assured that I take my studies very seriously. In all honesty, I haven't taken a single course with which I haven't been more or less completely satisfied. I have found them to be rigorous, demanding, insightful, broadening, most certainly exhausting, and all very interesting. Many of you may be laughing now, thinking of your own, less peachy experiences. Indeed, they are not completely foreign to me. Yes, I have heard my friends' complaints regarding their teachers' inability to speak English. And yes, I have heard stories of teachers who practically give away 'A's for free. Well, I guess I'm fortunate to have never experienced such mediocrity. And whether it's God's way of telling me that I'm taking the right classes, or simply luck, the point is that I have nothing but good things to say regarding my personal classroom experiences.

And the list keeps going. I love the fact that in YU I have the opportunity to not only fence, but also start against top schools and fencers. And while our fencing record doesn't necessarily reflect so well on YU, I couldn't be happier! Another positive aspect about the school is its size. Being a relatively small institution, it's fairly easy for students to really build a strong relationship with their teachers. In fact, some of my favorite moments from last year were the numerous one-on-one chats with my esteemed rabbeim and professors. I have gained a tremendous amount from those conversations, and in a larger school such opportunities would probably evade me. And I haven't even mentioned the wonderful camaraderie. I truthfully have some of the greatest friends here (many of whom I only met in YU), and they constantly challenge me, through discussions and arguments, to better understand and more clearly articulate my views and opinions. I am free to bounce newly discovered ideas off them, and they are free to do the same in return. Most of all, however, my friends are always there for me if ever I need help. That's something you can't buy. That's something YU has provided me.

In short, YU is awesome, from the amazing rabbeim and professors to the angry people in the registrar's office, from the unremitting intellectual vigor to the unrelenting homework. The wonderful opportunities provided daily are something I will forever be grateful for. And yes, I am aware that not everyone is as fond of YU as I am; perhaps their experiences truly have differed from mine. If so, that's truly unfortunate, and definitely I'm sorry to hear it. The point, nonetheless, is that I love YU. I have been given so much, and will forever be grateful. I can honestly say that I feel at home at YU. Can you?



THE JERUSALEM CENTRAL BUS STATION, WHERE CITRIN AND A FRIEND WALKED AFTER DISEMBARKING FROM THE 21 BUS

NOT ALWAYS AS IT APPEARS: SHOMER NEGIAH, CULTURE, AND YU

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kenazi *poskim* [halakhic decisors] talk about called "regilut" or the idea that when you're used to something and it is not sexually arousing, it is therefore not recommended, but allowed within certain frameworks." Accordingly, although kissing a member of the opposite sex on the cheek in greeting is not within the framework of "being shomer," it is better to do so rather than offend him or her by refusing to do so. Amram clarifies that she strictly adheres to the restric-

tions of *shomer negiah* and that she explains to someone who she will see again that she would rather not touch when greeting each other. However, she explains that in the case of someone who she will not meet again, it is easier to just be polite and accept the greeting rather than to explain "being shomer." This is not an attempt to skirt the issue; indeed, she believes that as Jews, our behavioral guidelines are clearly laid out in Torah. The challenge we face is in remaining sensitive not only to halakha but to cultural norms and people's feelings, as well.

THE MACHINE IS ALIVE AND WELL

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truck owners had connections with the mob or with city employees or had paid bribes in order to get hired.

Even before becoming president of Cook County, the county in which Chicago is located, Todd Stroger has been involved in various scandals. His father, John Stroger, served as the Cook County Board President until he suffered a stroke during the 2006 election season. Todd Stroger was basically handed his father's job when he was chosen to run in the election in his father's place and to be the interim Board President. Giv-

ARTS & CULTURE

THE KOOZA JOURNEY

ALISA UNGAR-SARGON

While circuses usually have a reputation to target an audience comprised mostly of children – and adults with a childish tendency – the Cirque du Soleil company has never subscribed to the standard set by its predecessors. An homage to the human body and much of its hidden capabilities, this brand of circus combines the regular ingredients with an unparalleled artistry, made to utterly transcend its genre. Every show is eccentric, mysterious, breathtakingly stunning, and above all, entertaining. From family style to the Vegas erotica, each tells its own story to a captivated audience.

Kooza, which played in Chi-

cago this past summer, is the story of a young clown known as The Innocent, and his journey into maturity. Led by the enigmatic Trickster, he travels through a magical world in order to develop into his true person. Dominating the larger-than-life stage are characters with individual personalities, illuminated against the backdrop of the castle in The Trickster's world.

The first act opens with The Innocent attempting to fly his kite. As he tries and fails to send it air bound, a deliveryman approaches him with a large package, containing The Trickster. After a few moments of bobbing in his box, he jumps out of his restraints to an inhuman height and lands before The Innocent. He dramatically flourishes his



MAC IMAGES
AT CIRQUE DU SOLEIL, A YOUNG CLOWN KNOWN AS "THE TRICKSTER" CAPTIVATES

sparkling wand to unveil the at the back of the stage, as well as the blustering king of fools, his musical band, and his army of smiling, Arabian-clad acrobats (whose sub-par dancing is cleverly understated next to their unearthly tumbling). The Trickster, ever-present, lurks in the background when he is not center-stage, while The Innocent anxiously attempts to stay out of the way of the acts that follow: Three golden contortionists pose on a revolving stage, bending into themselves; one of them even runs circles around her own torso. A punk rocker trapeze artist swings back and forth over the audience, spinning through the air in triples and quads. A lovestruck unicyclist rolls his partner around his

neck, and then waltzes with her on the pedals. The awkward king and his two cronies make potty jokes at the audience and at their volunteers as they clumsily perform quality magic. Four male acrobats cycle across two tightropes. In the intricacies and confusion that follow, The Innocent manages to acquire The Trickster's magic wand just before the lights go down.

The second act gets significantly darker as The Innocent takes control of the magic. Imitating The Trickster's wand brandishing, he subsequently finds himself surrounded by Tim Burton-esque skeletal figures led by a grim reaper, rattling their bones and shifting along the stage. What follows is an incongruous cabaret act, the singing voice-over an-

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THE SEARCH COMMITTEE FAILS TO FIND THE TRUTH

OLIVIA WIZNITZER

In "The Search Committee," Rabbi Marc Angel explores dangerous territory. Grappling with the mine-ridden terrain of Orthodox Judaism, Angel attempts to compare and contrast Modern Orthodoxy with its Haredi counterpart. The overarching message must be that of nuance, and one must wonder whether he can succeed at so difficult a task. While his book sadly suffers from the flaws of generalization and stereotyping, it is a significant first effort that will allow others to follow in his path.



GOOGLE IMAGES
"THE SEARCH COMMITTEE," A NOVEL BY RABBI MARC ANGEL

"The Search Committee" documents the ideological struggle between two individuals, the Haredi Rav Shimshon Grossman and the Modern Orthodox Rav David Mercado. Struggling to succeed the late Rav Yosef Grossman, Shimshon's father, as head of Yeshivas Lita, the

two offer extremely different perspectives in terms of their views on education, the pursuit of knowledge and their personal lives. A search committee has convened to appoint the next Rosh Yeshiva, and the two contenders must present themselves and explain why they are the best option. Others, including wealthy donors and students, argue for or against their case as well.

As with any work of this nature, the novel falls prey to depicting extremes rather than nuanced people. Since the characters are symbols, they take the form of philosophical constructs rather than human beings. The rabbis are not placed on equal footing. The Modern Orthodox Rabbi is married to a *geir* [convert] who is a college graduate and does not cover her hair, and the implication is that the Haredi world would not be as welcoming of *geirim*. The Haredi Rabbi is portrayed as overly aggres-

sive and firmly mired in his backward beliefs. He lacks the articulate, relatively soft-spoken demeanor of Mercado. However, Mercado goes too far with his questions and search for innovation within the boundaries of the law. Angel depicts one interchange in which there is a Talmud portion dealing with a discussion about a chicken whom the *shochet* [ritual slaughterer] killed, which strangely did not seem to have a heart. The Talmud cites two opinions of two sages: either the *shochet* had mistakenly dropped the heart, or perhaps the heart was very small and so he could not find it. The other rabbi stated that it is possible that God created the chicken without a heart. It is at this point that Mercado laughs because, "I thought it ridiculous to suggest that the chicken had been created without a heart. Obviously the heart was simply lost or misidentified by the *shochet*" (Angel 31).

Mercado's laughing at a Talmudic text is hardly supported by

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LIBERATED AT THE LIBERACE MUSEUM

YAELE FROHLICH

If you find yourself in Las Vegas and are able to tear yourself away from the Strip, an hour or two at the "Liberace Plaza" strip mall housing the Liberace Museum, dedicated to the life of famously flamboyant pianist and Las Vegas showman Liberace (1919-1987), is imperative. The attraction is a charming and fun tribute to Liberace's outrageous fashion, good-humored excess and exceptional musical capabilities.

The first section of the museum presents a succinct biography of the surname-touting entertainer, complete with photographs of his French horn-playing Italian father and Polish mother, a timeline of his nearly 50-year career encompassing a Las Vegas show, film, a television series, four books, sold-out performances across America, the self-initiated nickname "Mr. Showmanship," and a plethora of

interesting facts—for example, that Liberace was named the world's fastest pianist in 1953 by Ripley's Believe It Or Not for playing 6,000 notes in 2 minutes; that with the opening of his show in 1955 he became the highest earning performer in Las Vegas; and that the Liberace Museum was opened by none other than Liberace himself in 1979 and helps fund the Liberace Foundation for the Performing and Creative Arts, a scholarship foundation.

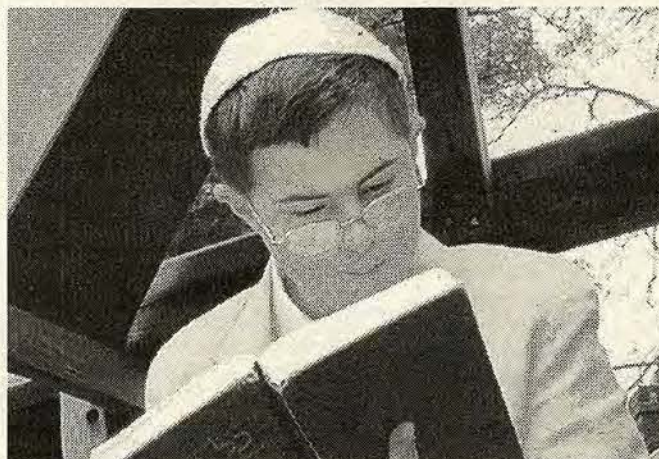
The length of one wall of the room boasts eight lavishly decorated cars (inside and out), most of which Liberace used at some point to make his usual grand entrance onto the Vegas stage. In addition to a star-spangled Rolls Royce—Liberace had to obtain the company's permission to paint the vehicle red, white and blue—there is an English taxi that Liberace kept as a

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THE POWER OF PRAYING WITH LIOR

ILANA RAUCH

Jews have never treated children with disabilities in quite the same way as the rest of the world. While ancient Spartans, Romans, and others killed children who were unhealthy, the Jewish people have always had the tradition of cherishing human life and possibility. Contemporary organizations such as HASC (Hebrew Academy for Special Children) recruit large numbers of Jewish volunteers to nurture and educate Jewish children born with special needs, and many children benefit from the special attention Judaism places on their spiritual potential. The first week of August this summer, the Cinema Village hosted a screening of the documentary "Praying With Lior". The story of a



GOOGLE IMAGES
LIOR IN THE PLAYGROUND IN HIS BACKYARD, SINGING THE SHEMONEH ESREI WITH UNSHAKEABLE CONCENTRATION

high-functioning Jewish boy with Down's syndrome preparing for his Bar Mitzvah, the film traces his early years with archive footage, from singing and praying with his mother, a Reconstructionist rabbi who passed away from breast cancer when he was young, to his teenage years, during which he maintained his mother's passion for community and prayer. For Lior to receive such warmth and support from his community and family despite his disability is a profound testament to the Jewish value system, and his individual journey in spirituality serves to illustrate eloquently the purity of the individual that transcends mental capabilities.

The director, Ilana Trachtman, got the idea for the film when she was listening to Lior Liebling pray at a Rosh Hashana retreat in New York state. Lior's sincerity

and effortless connection with the liturgy inspired Trachtman to step outside of her accustomed realm of television advertising and into the unknowns of independent filmmaking. She spent over three years editing the 200 hours of footage that she shot: candid moments in the Liebling home, Lior's school, Lior's synagogue, and some interviews with Lior and the people who came in contact with him regularly. The result was a remarkably unbiased tour in the life of a very extraordinary child, free of externally imposed values or lessons. It would have been easy for a filmmaker to didactically inform the viewer that this boy is holy, angelic, or fits a particular role. Instead, the film presents the complete picture of a lively, social, religious, and grieving boy approaching a special mile-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

ISRAEL

NEFESH B'NEFESH CONVENTION BLOGS ON

BATYA MATLA HERZBERG

In a unique and unprecedented step, Nefesh B'Nefesh (NBN) sponsored the First Jewish International Bloggers Convention this August in Jerusalem. Nefesh B'Nefesh is an organization founded in 2002 committed to "revitaliz[ing] Aliyah and to substantially increas[ing] the number of future olim by removing the financial, professional and logistical obstacles that prevent many individuals from actualizing their dreams," according to its mission statement.

The itinerary of the evening convention included an introduction by Benzi Klugant, the Marketing & Communications Manager for Nefesh B'Nefesh, a panel discussion with Jewish bloggers on the topic "Taking JBloggging to the next level: Increasing your Readership, Reach and Influence," a keynote address by Zavi Apfelbaum, the Director of Brand Management of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, about "Branding Israel - From Vision to Reality," and a comedy performance. The well-known bloggers who were featured in the panel discussions included Rabbi Gil Student of Hirhurim, David Bogner of the Treppenwitz blog, Jameel from Jameel at the Muqata.

Special guest Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu, former Prime Minister of Israel, also gave a presentation.

The question that begs an answer here is: What is the connection between aliyah and the Jewish Blogosphere? "What NBN is doing is helping the bloggers realize that they are 'virtual shlichim' (messengers) and have a tremendous influence on people who are considering aliyah," explained David Bogner. Rabbi Gil Student considered the unifying aspect of JBloggging, stating that "it is much easier to make a major life decision when you know you are not alone." He further commented on "NBN's understanding of the changing dynamics of how people communicate," thus justifying NBN's decision to reach people through this "most effective and relevant" manner. Jameel of the Muqata pointed out that there is a qualitative difference between the virtual and real worlds. This "market savvy" decision of NBN will "be a perfect opportunity for bloggers to inject some reality into the rather virtual experience of the JBlogosphere." Thus, this convention is expected to explicate, unify, and inspire, or at least discuss how this can be accomplished in the JBlogosphere.

Engaging the Jewish world via blog, as opposed to any other media, has distinct advantages, particularly when it comes to discussing aliyah. "The view of Israel one gets from [a] blog is not filtered or over idealized," enabling a reader to "construct a more accurate picture of what it is like" to live in Israel, said Bogner. Similarly, the anonymity sometimes associated with the blogosphere in general allows for candid statements that might otherwise



JACOB RICHMAN
FORMER PRIME MINISTER "BIBI" NETANYAHU
SPEAKS AT THE NEFESH B'NEFESH INTERNATIONAL BLOGGER CONVENTION

be left out of the mainstream media. Additionally, blogs provide a discussion, not a didactic forum: "Many people want to discuss issues and not just be told what other people think," explained Student. Particularly for such weighty decisions as aliyah,

facilitating conversation is critical.

Another JBlog aspect discussed at great length, one indirectly related to aliyah, is Jewish unity. An anonymous SCW blogger stated, "Also, it offers a chance to gain the perspectives of people outside of your everyday circle, often people who are different than those you'd generally interact with." Stern blogger "Erachet" bemoaned the fact that "good communication is something that the Jewish community really lacks, which is perhaps why there is so much judging and misunderstanding between different hashkafic groups." She described how blogging may serve as a panacea to this problem. "Blogging in general is an excellent way to express yourself to the world and really allows the average person on the street to finally be heard," she said. Jaimie Fogel, a SCW graduate ('08), recent olah, and new-born blogger agreed, stating that "blogging is a great way to increase communication between diverse groups of Jews. It encourages dialogue and discourse which...would not otherwise take place if it were face-to-face..."

Perel Skier (SCW '09), in relation to blogging about personal lives, added "it helps us to understand

other Jews with more compassion and more context - and I think that kind of blogging bridges divides which have arisen from years of stereotypes and misconceptions between different Jewish communities." In other words, while blogging about political or religious issues is important, often it is an individual's amusing anecdote or serious personal story that may help people relate on a level that transcends ideology. "Erachet" connected this crucial topic to aliyah, stating "living in the land is one part, but living as a single nation is vital too," and then put it succinctly: "communication leads to understanding."

It is astounding that NBN committed so much time, energy, and funding to a virtual communication phenomenon that became popular only during the past five years. This speaks to the potential of blogging, particularly of the JBlogosphere, which, according to Stephen Leavitt of WebAds (the company that organized the convention for NBN) "is made up of the most interested, interesting, and active online members of the Jewish world from all sides of the spectrum." NBN has truly kept up with the times in this effort to influence Jewish media.

THE PRICE OF LOVING LIFE:

REFLECTIONS ON AN UNEQUAL EXCHANGE

NAVA BILLET

Once again, this summer was not uneventful for the State of Israel. Recent summers have brought disengagement from Gaza Strip (2005), kidnapping of soldiers patrolling Israel's borders (2006), war with Lebanon (2006), and now a prisoner exchange agreement (2008). It is the second prisoner exchange transaction with Lebanon in four years, the last one having been in January 2004.

The last time there was prisoner exchange one live Israeli businessman (Elchanan Tannenbaum) was exchanged for approximately 430 enemy prisoners. At the time, Saul Singer, a writer for the Jerusalem Post wrote about his mixed feelings on the exchange. After all, among the returnees to Lebanon was Anwar Yassin, who had murdered



ELDAD REGEV WIKIPEDIA

Saul's brother, Alex, and two other Israeli soldiers (Ronen Weisman and Oren Kamil) while they patrolled the Israeli-Lebanese border on September 5, 1987.

Singer wrote some thoughts about the prisoner exchange deal

at the time: "The surprise introduction of a personal element has not helped crystallize my muddled views on the deal. A pundit's job is to make tricky cost-benefit analyses, but even before I knew Alex's killer was in the mix, my calculator had short-circuited" ("Interesting Times: Life is Many Things," Jerusalem Post 1/29/04). Singer questions the equivalence of a trade where a killer is "worth on the order 1/400th of one Israeli's freedom."

This idea is not a new one; it is a concept that is cited by Jewish sages of the Talmud. The rabbis warn not to spend an exorbitant price on Jews in captivity because the great benefit to the enemy encourages them to further kidnap Jews. Indeed, Jews, and Israelis, more specifically, place a high value on life. Singer further points out that "To our enemies, this is our precise weakness and their chief asset... Can a society that loves life beat one that celebrates death?"

This summer, these exact issues and questions were raised once again when the Israeli government decided to make a deal with Lebanon. The outcome of the transaction: the bodies of two dead Israeli soldiers were returned to their families, their land, and their graves. Eldad Regev and Ehud (Udi) Goldwasser were captured prior to the Second Lebanon War, the summer of 2006. The likelihood that they were alive when captured is slim. Their IDF armored vehicle had been at-

tacked; 3 of their comrades in arms had been killed. Not taken captive by the enemy, rather, their bodies were rescued by Israeli forces.

However, on July 16, 2008, the Israeli government gave over five live terrorists (four of whom were Hezbollah members captured in the 2006 Lebanon War) and 199 deceased captives (both Lebanese and Palestinian) in exchange for the bodies of two Israeli boys, absent two years from Israeli life, but always on people's minds and in their hearts. Among the live Lebanese prisoners returned was a well known murderer, Samir Kuntar. He is infamous for a baseless act of quadruple murder which he committed at the age of 16 in 1979. Among his victims, Danny Haran of Nahariya was shot and killed at close range. Subsequently, Haran's four year old daughter, Einat, was murdered when Kuntar smashed her head onto a nearby rock with the butt of his rifle.

Undoubtedly, Israelis ask themselves whether it is worthwhile to return live terrorists for dead bodies. Daniel Gordis asks on his blog, "So, in the face of all the good arguments about how no self-respecting country trades almost two hundred dead bodies and several living terrorists including Samir Kuntar for two soldiers who were almost certainly dead, how does one justify this decision? Wasn't it certainly a mistake?" Gordis thinks it was a mistake worth making. He is concerned about the morale of the Israeli soldier, who "wants to know that though he lives in a country that asks its kids to do everything, to commit everything, that country also knows that it owes them

everything in return. And getting them home - no matter what has happened to them - is part of that."

The issues that arise in the face of prisoner exchanges with terrorist organizations are vast and formidable. Does the interest of society come ahead of the interest of individuals? Does Israel and Judaism's value for life and the human body allow for murderers to be released to once again wreak havoc on its people? Perhaps the release of certain prisoners will lead to more unnecessary killings and deaths. Do these dealings lead to more kidnappings since terrorists see Israel will trade so many for so few? There is a famous story of the Maharam from Rothenberg, Germany, a great sage who was taken captive for an exorbitant ransom in Europe in the 13th century. He did not allow his community to pay the fee for his release for fear that it would encourage Jewish enemies to make a practice of abducting rabbis for ransom.

In the case of this summer's prisoner exchange, when Israelis were willing to give over live terrorists for dead bodies, it teaches the enemy a negative lesson: there is no need to keep Israeli prisoners alive. Israel bargains for its dead as it would for its live soldiers and citizens. This does not bode well for the status of Gilad Shalit, who was definitely captured alive in Gaza in June 2006.

Additionally, the recent cabinet decision (August 17, 2008) to

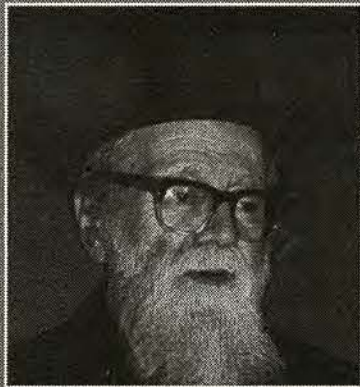
release 200 Palestinian Authority (PA) prisoners in an act of goodwill brings prisoner exchange to a new level. Israel releases prisoners and makes no demands in return. The Jerusalem Post reports that MKs from opposition parties such as Binyamin Netanyahu of Likud, Eli Yishai of Labor, Yisrael Hasson of Yisrael Beitenu, and Eli Gabai of the National religious Party are strongly opposed to this decision ("Prisoner Release Faces Wide-Spread Criticism," Jerusalem Post 8/17/2008). This decision will also impact any negotiations Israel would consider having with Hamas in regard to the return of Gilad Shalit.

Alex Singer, whose murderer was released in the 2004, wrote a letter to an American friend while he was in officer's school and stated, "Life is many things. It is fragile, beautiful, full of opportunity to create and to improve our world. But it is also short. To kill, in the most extreme cases, can be just. There are more important things than one life" (Alex: Building a Life, letter dated August 14, 1986). Israeli soldiers are taught that there are situations where the safety of its citizens is dependent on the death of others; at times the life taken must be that of the terrorist (as Alex seems to imply) and sometimes their own life must be sacrificed. Alex's brother Saul Singer emphasized, "Alex loved life, but he was willing to die to save lives." This concept is famously quoted by Golda Meir, who once said, "We [Israel] will have peace with the Arabs when they [the Arabs] love their children more than they hate us [Israel]."



EHUD GOLDWASSER WIKIPEDIA

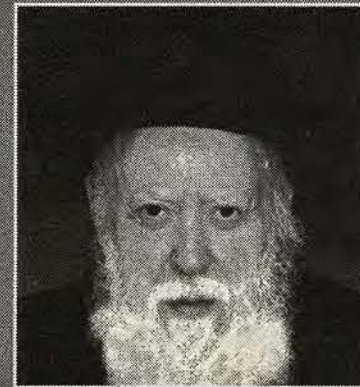
What do these rabbis have in common?



Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli z"l
Former Dayan, Chief Rabbinate of Israel



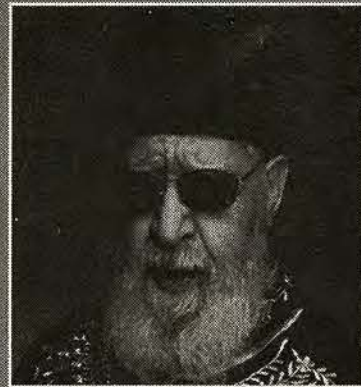
Rabbi Dovid Shloosh
Chief Rabbi of Netanya



Rabbi Avraham Shapira z"l
Former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel



Rabbi Shlomo Amar
Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel



Rabbi Ovadya Yosef
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel



Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu
Former Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel

They all agree that brain-stem death is halachic death even though the heart is still beating – and support organ donation!

Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg

“In my opinion, even a Torah observant Jew can sign an organ donor card on the condition that [the donation of organs] be done under the guidance of a competent halachic authority, and preferably the name of the rabbi should be specified.”

HaNa'aseh VeHanishma, Volume 29, May/June 2008

Register for your organ donor card from the Halachic Organ Donor Society either on-line at www.hods.org or by calling 212-213-5087

HOD
Halachic Organ Donor
SOCIETY



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ISRAEL

YU STUDENTS FORGE EMOTIONAL CONNECTION WITH ISRAELI TEENS

SAHAR ZAGHI

This summer, during the months of July and August, twenty college students, both men and women, gathered from different universities to teach, inspire, and empower Israeli high school students from disadvantaged communities in Israel. The American participants were chosen from a pool of approximately 100 applicants. The advantage to enlisting college students in the effort is to "bring a fresh perspective to informal education which is exciting for all involved," stated program co-director Aliza Abrams.

The program, Counterpoint Israel 2008, was sponsored by Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future (CJF). Counterpoint Israel combines leadership and activism training. Preparatory study seminars focused on the socio-economic challenges in Israel, and focused on interaction with youth at risk. The counselors learned methods of facilitation geared toward both engaging and affecting this specific teenage population. Following these discussions, students split up into two groups and created a three-week summer camp for children from low income families in development towns. The camps were based in Yerucham and Dimona, two growing development towns in Southern Israel.

English language education was an integral part of the camp curriculum. Increased exposure to the English language allows these teens to excel in matriculation exams and to advance within Israeli society. Counselors also benefited, as English language sessions allowed for a more intimate environment and an opportunity for meaningful dialogue. Campers were eager to learn English and often took the initiative to ask counselors for new words that would improve their vocabulary. During the sessions, they shared struggles of growing up in their

particular community, having their dreams and futures continuously challenged by societal limitations. Counselors expressed their vote of confidence in the teens, and aided them in their personal struggles.

Three weeks of creativity and fun culminated in a special closing event, to which all the parents of campers were invited to attend. Artwork and fashion pieces were displayed; dance, song, and capoeira (martial art) shows were performed. It was a night full of celebration and appreciation of hard work and talent. Many parents discovered their children boasted

talents of which they had been unaware. The night ended with trophies awarded to campers who had displayed exceptional skills or improvement during the course of the summer. One award was given to a camper who had previously been part of a group nicknamed "the fearsome foursome" for their recklessness and violence during camp. This boy was living proof of the ability of love and understanding to break down barriers. Shosh Balk (SCW '10), Dimona Counselor, remarked, "Unbelievable as it is, we have managed to reach even those campers who

seemed totally unreachable."

Counterpoint Israel 2008 was comprised of these mini-miracle-moments; relationships without any ulterior motives changed lives. The pure intention of creating a connection was all it took to reach the toughest campers. In that respect, counselor Shiffy Staiman (SCW '10) remarks that, "the whole experience in Yerucham was a success because I was not only able to forge a connection with teenagers, but I was able to bridge a gap between groups of people coming from totally different places...The tokens of admiration and thanks, in form of cards and chocolate, that the children gave to my co-counselors and myself on the last day of summer camp, proved that our staff had made a significant impression on these children's lives."

Both the counselors and the campers learned the invaluable lesson that head counselor, Deborah Anstandig described so profoundly: "the simple beauty of the universal communication that needs no words—the power of the smile". A sense of mutual respect developed on both sides: for the counselors because of their genuine and tangible concern and for the teenagers because of their will to rise beyond the challenges they faced.

The bonds formed between the counselors and the campers now transcend the distance dividing them, a true form of *ahavat chinam*, unconditional love between Jews.



COUNTERPOINT ISRAEL PROGRAM CAMPERS & STUDENTS

COUNTERPOINT ISRAEL 2008

ERADICATING WORLD MEDIA BIAS AGAINST ISRAEL

OLIVIA MATHIAS

The first day on the job at The Israel Project (TIP), the ten Media Fellows were being prepped before delving into a summer of research, writing, and event planning in Jerusalem. "The State of Israel is engaged in a perpetual two-front war: the defensive war fought on the ground and the communications war fought via the media," explained the senior advisors. "Both are of equal struggle and importance for the State's existence and well-being."

The Israel Project is a non-profit NGO that works with foreign journalists and other media based in Israel to be sure that reporters are provided with the all of the information they need to write an unbiased, comprehensive report back to their home news outlets, and thereby improve Israel's public image. These nine-weeks of strategic communications training and learning from vari-

ous academics and communications experts from the Office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other media professionals in Israel provided a taste of what it means to be fully engaged in the field of communications. Such is a feat like no other in a country of such exceptional dynamism.

In just nine-weeks there was more than enough excitement to keep the Media Fellows busy writing press releases, backgrounders, and organizing media events. Among the many newsworthy undertakings covered this summer, some of the most important were the prisoner exchange of soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev for the Lebanese terrorist-murderer, Samir Kuntar, the cease-fire agreement between Hamas and Israel, the latest form of terrorism: tractor attacks, and presidential candidate Barack Obama's visit to the Holy Land.

Hard news coverage in Israel is abundant, as there is always something newsworthy happening (hence the reason why over 700 journalists are constantly stationed in Israel at one time, more journalists per capita than any place in the world); however, it is unfortunate that most of what is featured in the media about Israel is saturated in negativity. When this is the only glimpse of Israel that is offered to the world, to be truly objective is impossible.

A grave challenge that Israel faces now is strengthening its public image. As public opinion polls have shown in the past, the image of Israel to the rest of the world must be vigorously defended and protected. With increasing anti-Semitism and Iranian president Ahmadinejad's continuous threats to Israel's legitimacy and right to exist (as Iran becomes a nuclear state this is

even more frightening), it is crucial that Israel have support and understanding from the rest of the world.

The Israel Project taught its fellows that it is an exhausting and endless battle to get the adversaries of the State of Israel to completely understand the situation on the ground, and that the world media will never fully free itself of bias. One can argue a side incessantly but in the end the key to gaining international support via the media is to come from a more human angle—perpetrating encouraging and constructive messages and promoting everything that is so great about Israel.

For example, an article featured in The New York Times on July 20, 2008, entitled "Seizing the Day in Tel Aviv," took a positive approach, making mention of Israeli natives frequenting the beaches of Tel Aviv, or as the author called it,

"the capital of Mediterranean cool."

There is definitely more than enough subjects for journalists to get their hands on besides bloodshed and battle.

This year Israel was one of the only countries that was left largely unscathed by the global economic downturn. It is a country whose technology sector is so strong that it's being called "Silicon Wadi."

Right alongside reporting the daily conflicts, journalists have the ability to shape the public image of Israel. The fight against anti-Israel bias in the media is never-ending. However, if it is possible to show the rest of the world the message of peace and coexistence that Israel stands behind via more bottom-up methods like recognizing shared values and appealing to popular interests, then perhaps the face of Israel can be converted to a more amiable one.

SCIENCE

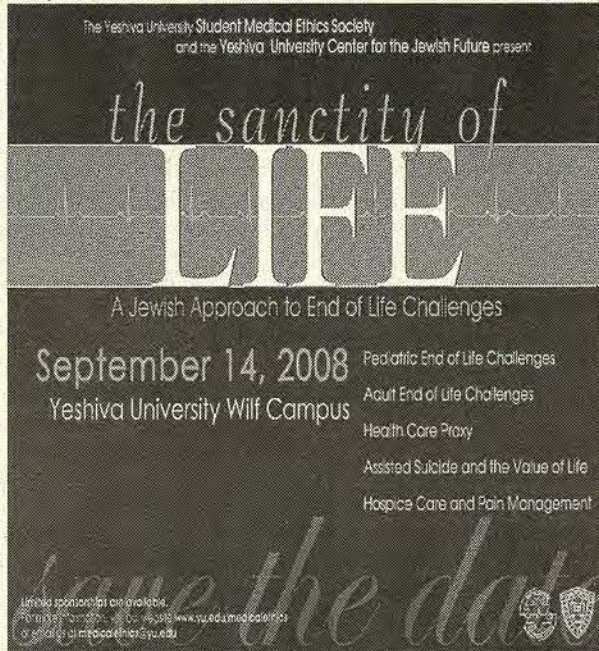
UPCOMING THIRD ANNUAL MES CONFERENCE:
THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

MIRIAM MERZEL

The beginning of the new school year means different things to different people. To the members of the Yeshiva University Student Medical Ethics Society (MES), it means beginning to see the fruits of their summer labor. MES is a student run organization which aims to educate and inform the students of Yeshiva University about the relationship between current medical issues and halakha. Founded in the fall of 2005 with the help of the Center for the Jewish Future (CJF), it continues to work closely

with that organization. Although the target audience of MES is its YU constituency, all of its programming is

open to members of the general community. MES is interested in broadening the intellectual horizons of not only college students, but the entire Jewish community, in its quest to understand the intricate relationship between medical ethics and halakha. The dedicated students who run MES work under the mentorship of Rabbi Kenneth Brander of the CJF, Rabbi Dr. Edward Reichman, and Dr. Fred Rosner. These are rabbis and doctors who are in the field and whose expertise lies in the ethical and halakhic applications of medicine on a regular basis.



FLYER FOR THE UPCOMING MES CONFERENCE

NEW MICROSCOPE "SHEDS LIGHT"
WITHOUT A LENS

EMILY LIEBLING

Many students and scientists have grown up looking at the world through a microscope. This indispensable tool unites investigators around the globe, allowing infinitesimally small objects to be viewed by the human eye. As we live in an age in which technology progresses almost as quickly as time itself, it comes as no surprise that the most basic of scientific instruments has finally been updated from the axiomatic "PC" to the "Mac". The California Institute of Technology has developed a new species of microscope: one that magnifies without the use of lenses. These new prototypes have resolution capacities of up to 0.8 micrometers (10-6 meter). The mechanism by which the microscope works is deceptively simple. Light is shone onto a narrow, liquid-carrying channel. Under this channel is a layer of metal, such as gold or

aluminum, containing several holes, or apertures, only three micrometers in width. The light passes through the holes onto a series of sensor pixels that are anchored onto a semiconductor chip. Some of the light is prevented from passing through the apertures by floating bodies that glide over them. The amount of light received by the pixels is, thereby, limited. With this light, the pixels generate an image of the object using the variations in light intensity across the many apertures. Just as the notion of Velcro was conceived from tiny brambles that ruthlessly clung to dog's fur, the inspiration for this lens-less microscope was anything but conventional. Study leader and Caltech bioengineer, Changhui Yang, gained his inspiration from "floaters", or aggregates of dead cells and debris that float in front of the retina and cloud vision; they are visible when staring at uniform sources of light. This phenomenon is more prevalent in the elderly

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STERN IN THE
SUMMER: EXPERIENCES
IN A SCIENCE LAB

GRACE CHARLES

Summer - a time for beaches, fun, flip-flops, and... research, if you're a science major, that is. Many of us science majors at Stern choose to spend some of the summer conducting laboratory research. This summer, I did my research under the direction of Dr. Evan Mintzer, a professor of organic chemistry and biochemistry here at Stern. Dr. Mintzer researches fats, molecules that are vital to every single one of our cells, yet at the same time are capable of causing life-threatening health problems, such as heart attacks. My experiments this summer utilized lipid monolayers (single layers of fat molecules) in order to analyze the interactions between oxidized cholesterol and other lipids present in the cell membrane. My experience at Stern was quite enriching; not only did I learn the science behind my own personal project, but I also gained a deeper understanding of the meaning of research in the scientific community. The chemistry laboratories are located on the fifth floor of the science wing. I was usually the only student working on the floor, and I appreciated the quiet and relaxed atmosphere. Some other members of the faculty were present, preparing for their classes and working on other projects. We had some interesting conversations, and I enjoyed hearing about what they had been doing over the summer.

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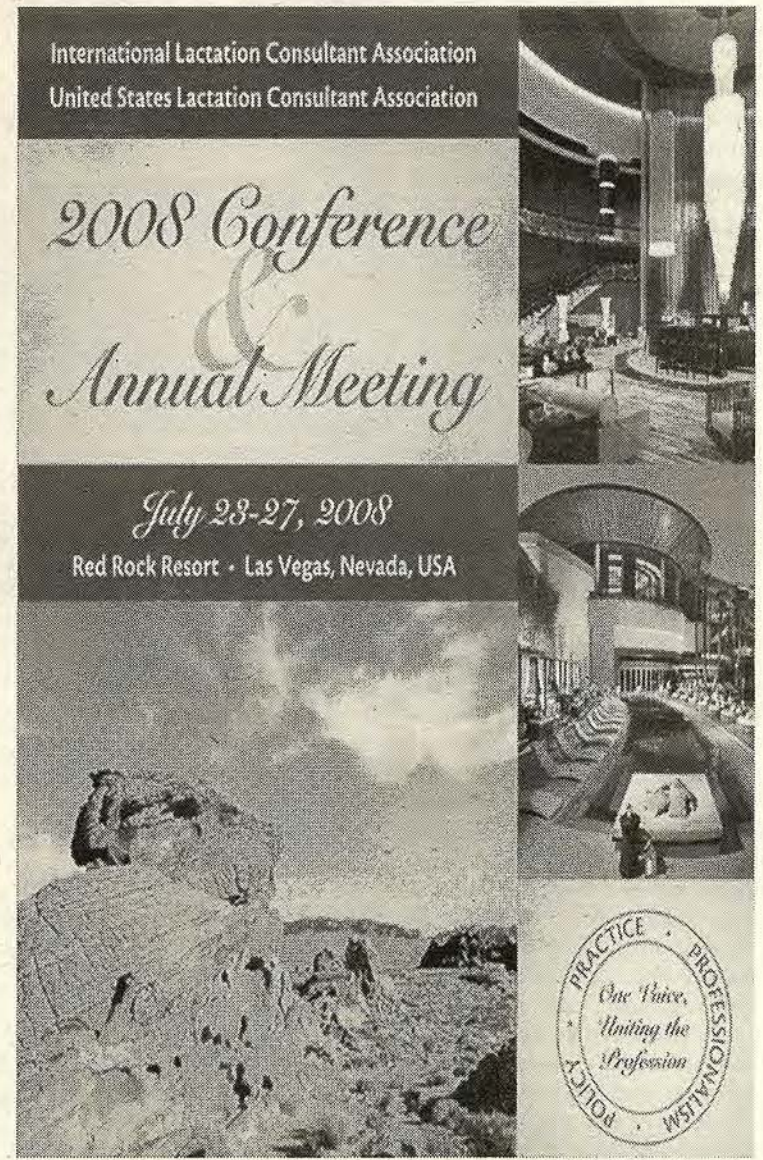
ILCA CONFERENCE REVIEWED: THE
BENEFITS OF NURSING

YAELE FROHLICH

This year's annual International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA) conference drew over 750 lactation professionals to Las Vegas from July 23 to 27. Featuring over sixty lectures about the clinical practice of lactation consulting and breastfeeding advocacy as well as the societal, economic, and political implications of breastfeeding, the conference was an opportunity for participants to improve their skills, network, and peruse dozens of booths displaying everything from breast pumps, books, and milk supply-boosting medications to innovative baby slings and t-shirts reading "Real Men go to Breastfeeding Conferences." According to their official website, International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs) are "health care professionals who specialize in the clinical management of breastfeeding and have demonstrated their competence to practice by passing an internationally recognized criterion-reference examination." Lactation consultants have their background in a variety of fields, including (but not limited to) nursing, medicine, psychology, speech pathology, occupational therapy and physiotherapy—some even got their start as La Leche League Leaders—and those attending the conference hailed from countries such as Australia, Canada, Ireland, Israel, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom, in addition to the United States. Chele Marmet, a Los Angeles expert on special circumstance breastfeeding, helped found the lactation

consulting profession by designing its first training and degree programs, and is proud of her contribution. "I know I could die tomorrow," she said in an interview, "and mothers and babies worldwide would benefit from the work that I've been permitted to do." The passion and sense of purpose among conference participants was palpable, and it's no wonder; breastfeeding increases babies' IQ and dramatically reduces the incidence of infections of the respiratory system, ear and gastro-intestinal tract, as well as autoimmune disease such as allergies and asthma. Breastfed babies are also less prone to early onset type I diabetes, obesity and other medical conditions. Women who breastfeed significantly reduce their risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, osteoporosis and other illnesses. Dr. Julie Smith of Australian National University, who spoke about the economics of breastfeeding, estimated the annual tax of breastfeeding-preventable infant diseases on the United States health care system at \$4.4 billion. Breast milk, food and medicine in one, is rich in lactocytes and immunity-boosting leukocytes, containing ten cells per microliter after six months. Colostrum, the precursor to breast milk, contains 3430 cells per microliter—close to 3 million cells per drop—2140 of which are immune cells. In 2006, Perth molecular biologist Dr. Mark Cregan and his team at the University of Western Australia identified another cellular component of human milk: putative mammary stem cells. Cregan spoke about his

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19



ILCA

THE 2008 INTERNATIONAL LACTATION CONSULTATION ASSOCIATION (ILCA) CONFERENCE TOOK PLACE IN LAS VEGAS

MES CONFERENCE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

The board members of MES represent the varied student voices of YU. Part of their role includes recommending topics or ideas upon which to run sessions or hold programs and conferences. "They are the creative juices of MES," said Avi Amsalem (YC '09), MES co-president. "They represent a broad spectrum of interests and sensitivity to the different student types and interests."

MES runs several events each year including an info-session on genetic screening along with proper referral to different testing centers, a bone marrow drive, several lectures on contemporary medical issues, a shabbaton for SCW and YC students at AECOM, and the annual Medical Ethics Conference. This year's conference, "The Sanctity of Life: A Jewish Approach to End of Life Challenges," is the third annual conference and will be taking place September 14, 2008.

"This is a very important topic," said Avi Amsalem, "even if it is not the most comfortable to discuss." He notes that the topic is relevant to everybody, as anyone could find himself in a situation where he is involved in end-of-life care for a friend or relative, and will need to know how to go about it.

Rifka Weider (SCW '09), MES co-president added, "It is important to make students aware of such issues and show that these issues are very applicable to life. The goals of our programs are to educate students, rabbis, and lay people, and help society and the community in general."

The conference will be divided into two parts. The first part will address adult end of life issues. After a discussion about the overarching issues involved in adult end of life care, there will be five breakout sessions on the topics of healthcare proxy/DNR, assisted suicide, making end of life medical decisions, organ donation, and a question and answer session for rabbis. The second part of the conference will deal with pediatric end of life issues. It will focus on the halakhic and ethical differences between adults and children, as well as the psychosocial implications.

The speakers who will be addressing these topics are all experts in the fields of halakha and medicine. Doctors will discuss the medical issues regarding end of life care, while rabbinic authorities will discuss the issues from a halakhic perspective. Leading the first plenary, "Moments that Matter," are Rabbi Dr. Richard Weiss, Dr. Beth Popp, Dr. Tia Powell, and Rav Tendler. The second plenary, entitled "Who Decides and What to Say," will be led by Dr. Howard Apfel, Rabbi Kenneth Brander, Rabbi Hershel Billet, Dr. Alexander Okun, Rabbi Simcha Scholar, and Rabbi Mordechai Willig.

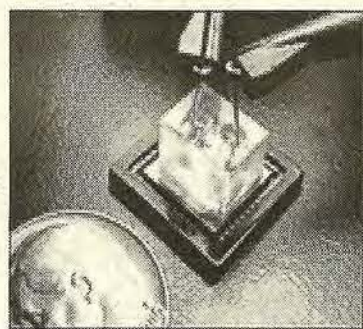
Planning the conference has been a long and intricate process, beginning at the end of the spring semester and lasting the duration of the summer.

NEW MICROSCOPE "SHEDS LIGHT" WITHOUT A LENS

and in those with conditions such as myopia, or near-sightedness.

Lenses are generally used in microscopes to magnify objects, but are easily broken and not conducive to portability. As the new microscope uses only a semiconductor chip, it can be taken anywhere and examine many samples simultaneously, features that have enormous potential in diagnosis. Functions include the detection of blood parasites, such as those that cause malaria. Cancer cells in the blood of cancer patients can be seen as well, which will alert physicians that a tumor is metastasizing, or spreading to other organs. Blood samples can be scanned directly, as opposed to the current method of collecting the cells on membranes and fixing them onto microscope slides.

Though the lens-less wonder has yet to become a staple in laboratories, the transition may soon be up and coming. One cannot help but marvel at the exponential rate of technological advancement when devices such as these come into being. The new microscope may even encourage a new generation of the curious to look at the world through a "new lens".



THIS LENSELESS MICROSCOPE MAY SOON BE A SCIENTIFIC STAPLE IN LABORATORIES

ILCA CONFERENCE REVIEWED: THE BENEFITS OF NURSING

work at the conference, and while he attended his team determined that the putative stem cells are clonogenic—they not only look like stem cells, they act like them. The discovery may have major implications in the field of stem cell biology, as breast milk could serve as a plentiful, ethical and non-invasive source of stem cells. "Let's see a formula company put stem cells in their products," he quipped.

Oregan is confident that stem cells in breast milk provide advantages to babies of which we are yet unaware. "I really believe," he stated, "that these stem cells are part of the... benefits that breast milk provides."

Breastfeeding also encourages bonding between mother and infant, skin-to-skin contact immediately after birth being especially important to the relationship. Dr. Keren Epstein-Gilboa, an Israeli-Canadian developmental psychologist who nursed her own daughter until age four, identifies what she terms a "sensitive family style" in breastfeeding families, in which the mother responds to the unique "cues" of her baby, learning the signs of hunger and emotions and gaining confidence and sensitivity to the child's needs along the way. She added that other family members also learn to interact

SCIENCE

sensitively with one another by observing the mother-baby relationship.

Only rarely (for example, if the mother is undergoing chemotherapy or—in first world countries—has HIV) is breastfeeding contraindicated. Most medications are compatible with breastfeeding, yet many women are erroneously advised to wean when medication is prescribed.

Additionally, most breastfeeding problems can be solved. Women not producing enough milk can be counseled on how to increase their milk supply, and Montreal lactation consultant Lenore Goldfarb along with Toronto pediatrician Dr. Jack Newman developed a protocol for inducing lactation in women who have not given birth, enabling Goldfarb to nurse her surrogacy-born son. Goldfarb has also succeeded in inducing lactation in individuals who have undergone gender reassignment surgery.

The World Health Organization recommends that children be breastfed exclusively for the first six months of life and continue to nurse until at least age two.

In the United States, the breastfeeding initiation rate is 72.9%. By one month, 51.2% of babies are being exclusively breastfed, and the number drops to 13.9% by six months—a statistic that falls far short of the national objective of 50% by 2010.

British Columbian lactation consultant Karyn-grace Clarke identifies the current system's lack of ongoing support for mothers as the root of the problem. Although resources are initially available to pregnant and post-partum women without effort, by four months most mothers' support systems have shifted from health care professionals to family and friends who are not necessarily able to offer constructive and consistent help, and women must actively seek health care providers themselves. "How dare we tell mothers that they have to breastfeed for 6 months," she asked, "and then give them nothing?" Clarke also recognized that some women deal with pre-existing psychological or physiological issues that hinder breastfeeding, and stressed the importance of lactation consultants building a trusting relationship with clients. "If we understood these things [individual barriers to breastfeeding]," she emphasized, "we wouldn't have women weaning too early; we'd have women reaching their goals." Clarke's vision of a Lactation Management Model would make a lactation consultant available to every woman from the third trimester of pregnancy until the child's weaning. Although she admits that it may take twenty years to evolve, she hopes to eventually get the plan covered by public health care.

Newman also pinpoints the biggest challenge facing today's breastfeeding mothers as lack of support. "There are many physicians that don't think breastfeeding is of any importance," he said. "...And in hospitals there are a lot of doctors and nurses who don't have the first idea about helping women breastfeed." Mothers in need of breastfeeding support and information can be put in touch with a lactation consultant through ILCA. Additionally, La Leche League peer support groups offer women the opportunity to learn about breastfeeding and parenting

through 24-hour telephone support, a lending library and monthly meetings led by specially-trained, experienced volunteer mothers.

La Leche League, like ILCA, operates around the world, and boasts members of all ethnicities and religions. "There are a lot of from Christians...many Muslims...and there are a lot of from Jews," said Margot Mann, an Australian lactation consultant now based in New York, of the La Leche groups she has seen.

Newman and Epstein-Gilboa maintain that Jewish women resemble the general population in terms of breastfeeding knowledge. However, Newman and Marmet have observed that some orthodox Jewish women decide to wean prematurely in order to get pregnant again; exclusive breastfeeding is as effective a contraceptive as the pill for the first six months of life, providing that the infant has unlimited, unrestricted access to the breast, does not skip any feeds at the breast (i.e. does not sleep through the night) or use a soother. Breastfeeding is the most widely used method of contraception, more than all other methods combined, but in developed countries is never recommended as a method of birth control due to cultural mother-infant separations during the day and lack of mother-infant co-sleeping.

Breastfeeding is discussed in Jewish texts. Arthur I. Eidelman describes the positive impact of Jewish culture on breastfeeding rates among the orthodox in his article in "Breastfeeding Medicine" Volume 1, Number 1, and notes that the Talmud puts minimum nursing length at two years. Yevamot 12B even discourages a widow from remarriage if she has a baby under 21 months, lest she get pregnant, lose her milk supply and become unable to nourish her existing child. Additionally, according to tradition, biblical figures such as Isaac, Moses and Samuel were also breastfed for two years or more.

Halakha also plays a role in nursing in Jewish circles. For example, pumping milk on Shabbat is the subject of an intricate discussion.

Whether in the global community or the smaller Jewish community, it is clear that breastfeeding is a viable option for all, beneficial in both ways we comprehend and ways which have yet to be determined. It is certainly something that a mother should consider when determining how to best care for her newborn baby.

STERN IN THE SUMMER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

In the lab, Dr. Mintzer generally worked in his office while I used his equipment to run experiments. He often left his office in order to direct me on my work and to see the results I had achieved. Most of my work I ran in triplicate, which means I repeated each section of the experiment at least three times. The accuracy of my results was important to me, so I was careful to be precise in my measurements and to use pure solutions. Since I ran my trials in triplicate, I was able to see the payoff of my careful attention to detail. It was very rewarding to get three results that are close to or even exactly the same as one another. Likewise, of course, it can be particularly disheartening when the results

do not coincide. In such instances the immediate thoughts that flew through my mind were those of self-criticism. I tried to think of ways in which I could have somehow caused the errors, for example, through making a faulty measurement or by not setting the computer parameters correctly.

Sometimes, it was just that, an erroneous action on my part. However, one understanding I gained during my work this past summer was that research involves a lot of unknowns. We often don't know what we're going to find or how some little, as yet unknown feature of the experiment may be mischievously messing with our results. The continuous need to redo, retry, and even to recreate the procedure for parts of the experiments were all an inherent part of the research process. Note that 'research' literally means to search again and again and again (re- again; search- looking thoroughly in order to find something).

While insubordinate results can be cause for distress, they also create intrigue. In fact, one of my favorite parts of research was when Dr. Mintzer and I sat down to discuss the possible causes of troublesome data. Dirt in the water? Fluctuating temperatures? Unaccounted for evaporation? Who knows, maybe even a truck driving by outside caused vibrations, which shook the lipid monolayers, which... The number of possibilities can seem overwhelming, at the least. But it was fun to sit and brainstorm ways in which to improve our experiment and to then act on those ideas. For instance, we added an organic filter to one of the water purifiers in order to improve water quality and added a heater to control ambient temperatures. I looked forward to the new ideas we would come up with in order to further improve the experiment.

At times, Dr. Mintzer called upon his colleagues for their insights into our results. He asked for advice from some notable scientists, and I was surprised time and again by how kind, humble, and truly helpful these people were. One time, for instance, a man in England who deals with lipid monolayers finished his day at work and decided to stay late to help us. Via webcam, he patiently showed us one of his experiment trials. I was impressed by his demeanor and attitude, even more so than the specifics of his procedure. His kindness demonstrated the positive and altruistic attitude many of the members of the scientific community whom we contacted exhibit.

This leads me to a realization I made over the course of the summer. It is the fact that we are all working together. An idealistic and hopeful community, we as scientists work with one another to discover knowledge that will improve the state of humanity. Progress is the result of asking questions and seeking answers. Every bit of research - even when the results are not the ones for which we hoped - is another step forward for science. The research process connects us with the scientists of the past, present, and future, and allows us to use our collective knowledge to change the world.

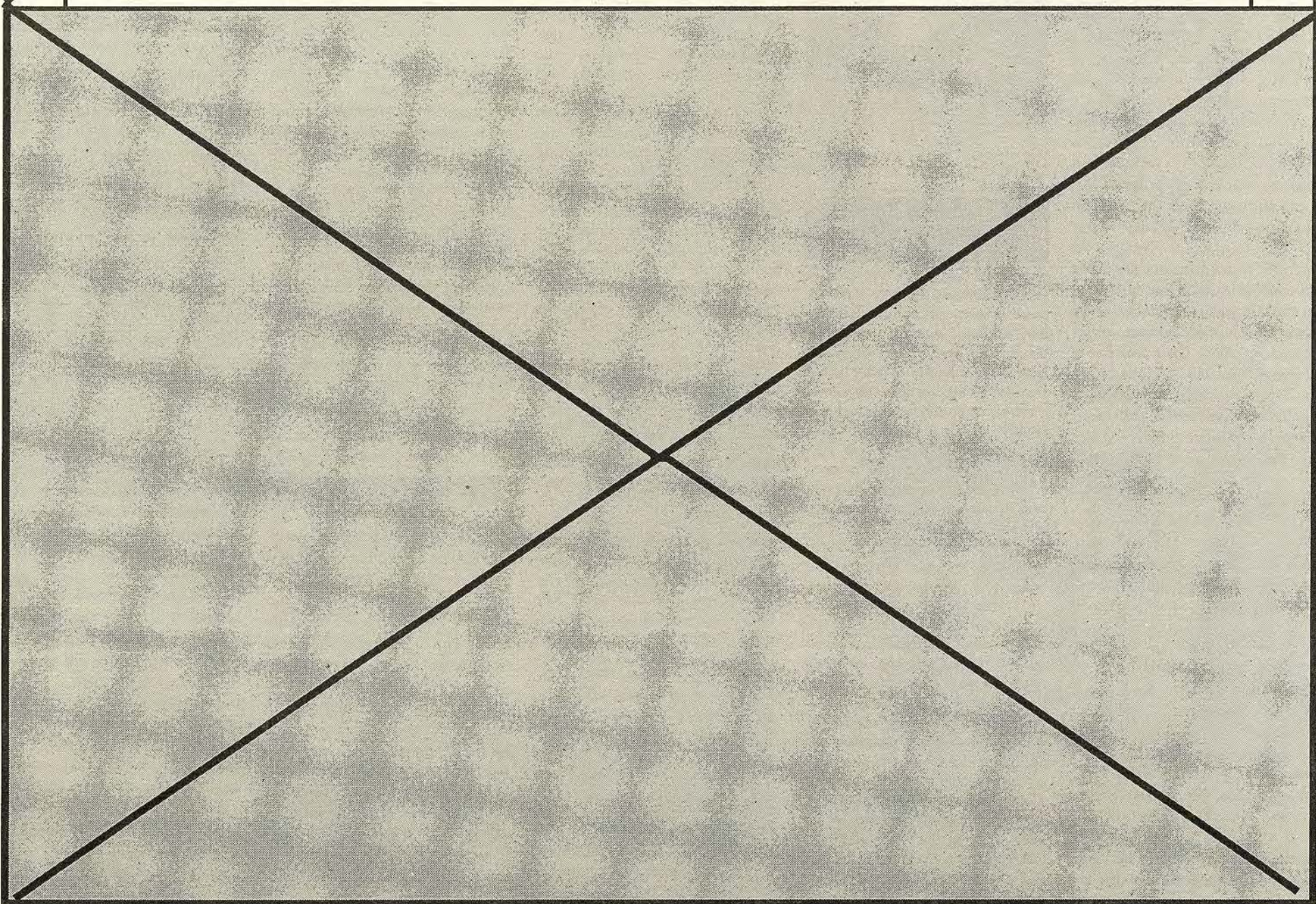


Dear Students,

Welcome back! Here's wishing you an exciting and productive 2008-2009 fall semester. If you are interested in acting as Business Manager, Photography Editor, or simply contributing to The Observer, please contact us at SCWobserver@gmail.com.



Good luck with all your classes!



GOING GREEN FOR GOD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Well, if the Torah morally obligates me to be ecologically conscious, how far does this extend? There is a great difference between recycling soda cans or contributing five dollars to Greenpeace and installing costly solar panes, buying hybrid cars, or purchasing locally grown produce. Due to their large families and all-encompassing religious lifestyles, many Orthodox Jews cannot handle the financial and time commitments that environmentally conscious choices like these necessitate. However, I fully believe that taking simple steps to reduce one's consumption is not only compatible with, but is even espoused by the Torah. One can use CFL light bulbs, recycle used papers and containers, turn off the water while soaping up in the shower, and buy Energy Star appliances—to name just a few easy “green” activities. A particular project that I would like to see implemented at Stern is the planting of a rooftop vegetable garden, which would provide insulation and convert carbon dioxide to oxygen—not to mention that it would yield delicious produce. Not only can one feel good about taking these actions, one can even do them with the *kavanah* [intention] of serving God.

THE KOOZA JOURNEY

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nouncing that their purpose is purely to entertain. Two underworld muscle men climb into a giant seesaw-like contraption with circles at the ends, in which they run, jump, and fly as they balance each other inside and outside the metal circles. A juggler with energy of drug-induced proportions gratifyingly catches every one of the plethora of objects that he sends into the air. A pursued clown climbs into a suitcase for a costume change and then performs slight of hand on an unsuspecting volunteer. The acrobats bring their own seesaw to propel each other into the air, alternately landing on shoulders and stilts. A Chinese acrobat climbs the customary fifteen or so chairs to balance at the top of the stack on a single hand.

By the end, The Innocent has undergone his transformation and has fully matured. The king bequeaths his crown to him, and he is left alone, waving to the characters of The Trickster's world as they retreat into the castle, veiled and hidden once again. He sends his kite upwards, and as it lifts effortlessly into the rafters, he lets out a giggle; surprised at first, then progressively more satisfied as the light fades out.

Delightful and unexpected, the two hours and twenty minutes are constructed of unadulterated entertainment. The performers are quite close to perfection—always a plus—and though some sections clearly bear an Americanized stamp (see the aforementioned potty humor), the playful passion that permeates the show with a charming genuineness makes up for any shortcomings that might arise.

HALAKHIC JUDAISM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

the only kind of Jew who exists is one who is within the bounds of halakha, and alternatively, one who is not.

The idea of ideologies on a whole is peculiar. What is the Modern Orthodox ideology? There are many who will attempt to explain it by citing physical trappings, such as the kippah [skullcap] one wears, its pro-Israel stance, or the fact that one desires to advance in the area of secular studies. If these are all firmly supported halakhic stances, though, then the categorization is arbitrary. Why choose these factors by which to define oneself? Shall I create a title for myself because I keep *yoshon* (not eating any new grain before the Omer offering on the 16th of Nisan), do not support the current State of Israel, and eat *kitniyos* [legumes] on Pesach? These and these are both halakhic stances; it is within my right and the purview of the law to eat kitniyos on Pesach if I am part of the Sephardi tradition and to refrain from doing so if I am Ashkenaz. The same applies with any other halakhic stance; for example, there are those who support the current State of Israel and those who do not, and there is precedent for both views within our literature and texts. The defining factor for all of us, for the way in which we see each other, perceive one another, relate to one another, and describe ourselves, lies in whether or not we keep halakha, and in nothing more than that.

Living halakhic Judaism is

an art form which has been lost by many of us today. I know that I do not look at everything from the perspective of what its true function is within the realm of Torah law, nor do I consistently think of the reasons that allow me to act upon my desire, rather than determining I can do so simply because I wish to. But I think to live that way is to live beautifully, to always be involved in one's commitment to God and to our religion, to master what we want in favor of what is allowed us, and to advance in every way that is permitted, for the glorification of God's name and to develop our own selves. I do not say that such a charge is easy, for it is not; it is never easy to believe that there are truly limits—that I cannot eat everything I wish, that I cannot explore every thought, that I may not be a purist always. But this is the focus of much of our literature, of the quest to surrender our minds and hearts to God, to offer him everything of us which is most precious, and to do what is difficult. The focus is to live by God's words and to die by them, not to attempt to twist them to support whatever view it is we would like them to support. In accepting, or striving to accept, being governed by the laws of halakha (which indeed, are vast, and leave room for much discussion and interpretation by many sages and rabbis), and acknowledging that there are others who interpret these laws more accurately than me, I truly do accept the yoke of God upon me, and understand what it means to live as a Jew.

THE POWER OF PRAYING WITH LIOR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

stone in his life. A particularly enjoyable part is when two congregants in Lior's synagogue with different interpretations of Lior and his presence are juxtaposed intriguingly. An enthusiastic man deigns Lior a sort of Rebbe in awe of his spirituality and is happy to follow him in prayer. A woman interviewed immediately after said she “wants to offer an alternative to the spiritual genius” viewing of Lior, and instead presents him as a very social boy who always sees shining, loving faces when engaged in prayer and traditional melodies.

Understanding Lior involves insight into his natural spiritual predilections and the powerful nature of his family life. The film captures both dynamics beautifully and thoroughly. Lior's family situation is a focus throughout the documentary, and Trachtman does well, clearly portraying each family member's unique struggles and challenges relating to Lior. Perhaps most intriguing are the struggles of Lior's stepmother, who is faced with the challenges of raising a Down's syndrome child and succeeding someone irreplaceable and inimitable. Lior's older sister said her stepmother Lynne is “so different from [her] mother” in personality and approach to mothering that it made it very difficult for the Liebling children.

The intense love Lior receives at home from all his family members

shaped him into the sociable, loving young man he has become, and his mother's enthusiasm for the deeply spiritual steered him toward his all-important relationship with G-d and ritual. One of the most lasting and impressionable scenes is when Lior is alone on the playground in his backyard, beautifully singing the *shemoneh esrei* with unshakable concentration. The powerful image is at once inspiring and uplifting, and remains long after the film comes to an end.

HASHKafa TEXTS PLAY FORMATIVE ROLE IN STUDENT OUTLOOK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

texts cited hint to the varied nature of Yeshiva's student body, and prove that people find their inspiration in very different places. Whether it be in traditional sefarim or modern additions to the canon, students look for what is stirring, uplifting, and of value to their own personal lives when deciding which texts inform their Jewish outlook.

THE SEARCH COMMITTEE FAILS TO FIND THE TRUTH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

philosophical Modern Orthodoxy, in which Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik clearly states that one must support and believe the words of Chazal. If this is meant to be a depiction of the Modern Orthodox scholar, it is a poor one.

All of the statements in the book require further elaboration and explanation. In an impassioned address, Rav Mercado explains, “I would like this yeshiva to be a bastion of intellectual freedom. I want students to think, to ask questions, to search for truth. I want them to know not only Torah and Talmud, but the wisdom of the nations as well. I know that my own Torah knowledge has been powerfully strengthened by my worldly studies. We want our students to be exposed to art and science, to world literature and music” (Angel 37). This is an entire philosophical approach that has been argued by countless people in countless climes. Everyone gives a different reason for permitting secular studies, and everyone agrees that there are borders, though they may differ as to the parameters. For Mercado to claim that every student should be taught secular studies simply because he himself has been “powerfully strengthened” by them is ridiculous.

To make matters worse, Angel documents the disputes between the contenders as revolving around petty matters. In one spiteful dialogue, Mrs. Leah Grossman, the Haredi contender's wife, takes Mrs. Sultana Mercado to task, not because she breaks halakha, but simply because she despises her. “She is an outsider. I have heard plenty of things about her background, but I naturally keep these things to myself. I am not

a gossip or slanderer. But I can assure you—knowing what I know—that she doesn't belong here and has never belonged here” (Angel 45), she states. This is not a critique of Sultana's value system; if anything, it is a portrayal of Leah Grossman's character—in which she comes across as a snide, haughty and intolerant person.

To write this work properly, Angel would have to depict two evenly-matched characters, both soft-spoken, both sweet, both gentle and willing to listen, and have them explain, according to halakha, the ways in which their views differ. They would be respectful of one another, and stand before the search committee eager to defend their points of view rather than simply slander their opponent. Currently, the novel is simply an excuse for those with differing views to hurl insults at one another, claiming that each party violates halakha without offering any sources or otherwise supporting that contention. Indeed, it does us in the Orthodox realm a disservice, for what if one were to read it as an introduction to the Haredi-Modern Orthodox debate? What impression would be offered up of our community and of our contentions with one another? Surely it is not all a matter of what we feel to be true; surely we believe we are right for more reasons than simply because we would like ourselves to be. And hence, this novel falls short, for while it superficially deals with the debate, it does not say anything of substance. Angel does not explain the reason behind the differing views; he only demonstrates that these views exist. While it is an important first work in this genre, ultimately, “The Search Committee” fails to find the truth.

LIBERATED AT THE LIBERACE MUSEUM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

souvenir from his travels and occasionally used to pick up friends from the airport, and a sparkly, Barbie-pink creation that Liberace drove to the museum's inauguration. This wing of the museum also features a room of 18 pianos from Liberace's personal collection of over 300, including a grand on which George Gershwin composed many of his pieces, and America's oldest known piano, dated 1788, which served as its original owners' dining room table and desk as well as musical instrument.

The second half of the museum is located across the parking lot and contains selections from Liberace's wardrobe and jewelry collection. Among the most exotic outfits: a pink, turkey feather robe and a full-length, monkey fur coat. Behind glass glimmer dozens of the pianist's rings, the heavier ones flashing several hundred diamonds each, presented to him by Queen Elizabeth II, the Australian government and other notables. (Somehow, Liberace's fingers managed

to multitask playing piano and wearing the expensive gifts.) A rotating encasement shows off a \$50,000 teacup poodle-sized crystal given to Liberace by an Austrian jewelry firm. The only disappointment—if it can be called that—is that anyone wishing to play the shimmering grand concert piano holding Liberace's signature candelabra in the center of the room must first sign a declaration of having been musically trained; in other words, you have to be good to get near the thing.

After passing through an adjoining display of some of Liberace's furniture, visitors have the opportunity to watch a video about Liberace's life or explore the gift shop, where rhinestones and piano designs dominate t-shirts, shot-glasses and other memorabilia.

All in all, the Liberace Museum promises to be a dose of nostalgia for Liberace's fans, and a source of intrigue for those who only first hear his name at the entrance.

**Free
Admission**

OZ

CONGREGATION OHAB ZEDEK

Teshuva in Tanach

A Day of Learning in Preparation for Rosh Hashana
Sunday, September 21st 2008

8:00 AM Shacharit Followed by Breakfast **9:15 AM** Opening Remarks Rabbi Allen Schwartz

9:30 AM



Rabbi Allen Schwartz
The Teshuva of Dovid HaMelech as Seen
Through the Prism of Tehillim



Rabbi Shalom Carmy
'Lest They See with Their Eyes': The Inevitability
of Repentance in the Torah & Isaiah 6

10:30 AM



Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot
Parshat Ha-Teshuva In Netzavim: The
National Dimension of Repentance



Mrs. Elana Stein Hain
Forgive Me Father: The Psychology of
Confession

11:30 AM



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
On The Road To Repentance: The
'Challenge' of the Later Prophets

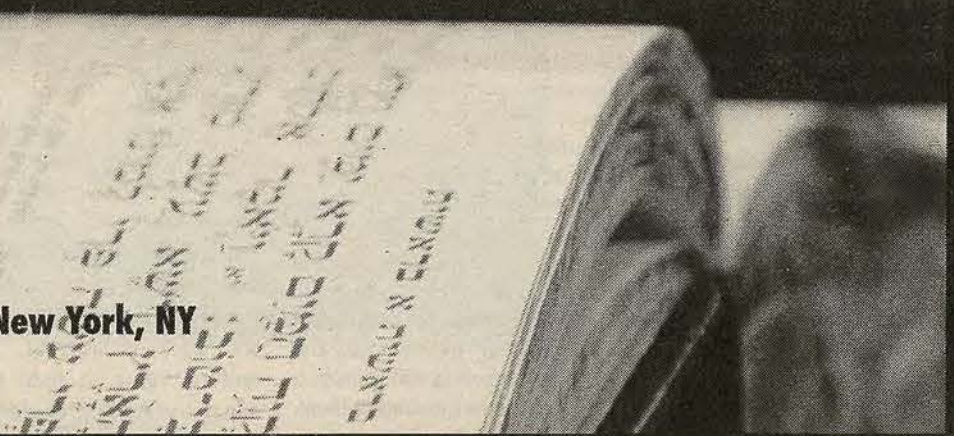


Rabbi David Flatto
Returning to the Beginning: Teshuva Ironies
and Insights from Sefer Breishit



12:30 PM - Culminating Lecture
Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
The Teshuva Themes of Sefer Devarim

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JUDAIC STUDIES DIRECTOR ELECTED TO PRESTIGIOUS AAJR SOCIETY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

more "meaningful and enjoyable."

"I am very pleased by Dr. Kanarfogel's election to the American Academy for Jewish Research," declared Dr. Karen Bacon, the Monique C. Katz Dean of SCW. "This honor is one more indication of how highly respected his work is within the academic community. For Stern College and for his many devoted students, he continues to inspire and provoke excellence in teaching and in research. We are very proud of his outstanding record of achievement."

COMPLIANCE HOTLINE PROMOTES CAMPUS TRANSPARENCY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"Of course non-profits want to operate on the same level of transparency and principles and openness that we see in the profit world," said Pollak. "There has been a growing trend that universities are starting to bring in independent third party companies to set up a whole system for employees or students or faculty - anybody who is observing something that is not being handled in the proper way. It was something that came up as a best practice that we felt we should be doing."

Complaints can be submitted either through a 24-hour, toll-free telephone number or the YU compliance website. The company that provides the hotline service, Global Compliance, receives the complaints and forwards them within an hour to Grace's desk. "She has the ability to go straight to the president or straight to the audit committee if it's something that warrants the high profile," Pollak said.

Pollak listed financial issues, health and safety problems, diversity trouble, and misappropriation of university assets or information as matters that could be routed through the compliance hotline, among others. She cautioned that the hotline is not to be used for trivial matters, and that an issue like student cheating should be brought to the attention of either the Dean's Office or Student Affairs first. Rather, the hotline is for unaddressed issues that threaten the health or ethics of the university on a large scale.

Pollak asserted the need for companies to have a service that ensures that the company's internal machinations are kosher. "Every company and organization should have an internal auditor, so that they're checking to make sure that they're doing everything right," she emphasized. According to Grace, the audit committee has been a standing committee at YU for "quite some time." Grace has been employed by YU for just under two years.

While she feels that there won't be too many new issues that will crop up via the compliance hotline, Grace is confident that should there be problems that have as yet not been attended to, the hotline will be an important step in their resolution. "From the research that I did and from what the independent third party [told us], [the hotline] is very effective," she postulated. "People should feel free to speak about things that may not be right."

AZRIELI BRIDGES GRAD SCHOOL INNOVATION WITH DAY SCHOOLS NATIONWIDE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

support and mentoring to the teacher," enumerated Shanin. The second model is the teacher fellowship, wherein a teaching fellow is assigned to a community for a two-year stint with its schools. The fellow attends classes at Azrieli over the summers for the duration of the fellowship, and receives mentoring and training assistance.

Participating schools are pleased with the fruits of their collaboration with Azrieli. Rabbi Jay Goldmintz, headmaster of the Ramaz Upper School, sees his school's partnership with Azrieli as a mutually beneficial relationship: "In many ways we aim to be a lab school for Azrieli in which we can provide them with a venue for their research while we enjoy their expertise, as well as the invaluable contributions of Yeshiva and Stern students."

Ramaz, located on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, is recognized by Azrieli as a teaching center where Azrieli students may gain credit towards their grad school education through their teaching experience there. "It is our hope that we can work toward further professionalizing Jewish education so that young people who enter the field can do so with all of the advantages of experience, training and mentoring before they enter their first job," he continued.

The Robert M. Beren Academy of Houston, Texas, is another school that has enjoyed its partnership with Azrieli. "Over the course of the last 2 or 3 years, YU has really been reaching out to communities around the country to offer support and guidance for schools and shuls," enthused Rabbi Ari Segal, Head of School. "Knowing that we are always looking to improve our school and are so connected with the notion of research informing our practice, Dr. Goldberg asked if we would be interested in piloting the BRAVE program in our school."

BRAVE is a bully prevention program that Azrieli faculty member Dr. Rona Novick helped develop. It is designed to help students, parents and teachers deal with bullying situations in schools and to generally foster a more positive school environment. BRAVE has been implemented in various public and parochial schools nationwide.

"BRAVE is an example of what the Institute can do in blending the best of service to the community of Jewish education, and adding to the knowledge base to move Jewish education forward," said Novick. Novick added that the Institute has acted to facilitate more research and implementation in Jewish schools vis-à-vis the BRAVE program.

Rabbi Segal expressed his satisfaction with the program, and with the Beren Academy's connection with YU. "I believe we are starting to see the dividends in an improved school culture," he observed. "To think that as a school in the middle of Texas we have the resources of a University behind us, is empowering and inspiring."

"The Institute has already, on numerous occasions, served as a 'convener,' bringing together remarkable resources in Jewish education," Novick asserted. "The synergy of research, practice and professional development has enormous potential to bring the field of Jewish education to new levels."

THE OBSERVER

THE IMPERATIVE OF ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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cause of homelessness and hunger - two of the most indispensable needs. The figures are astounding - in 2004 a fifth of all New Yorkers were still living in poverty - a figure that has remained virtually unchanged since the 1990's². In New York City alone 32,933 people are living in shelters with scores more not accounted for³. And in our very own Jewish community almost a quarter of a million people live with incomes under 150% of Federal Poverty Guidelines with an additional 104,000 "near poor" living in the eight-county New York area with incomes only modestly above the poverty line⁴. The numbers are astounding, overwhelming and demand a response.

Masekhet Kiddushin 82b, quotes a *beraita* relating that a parent must teach his child a trade, lest the child become so financially desperate and be drawn to undignified and questionable actions. The Rabbis recognized that the most basic needs of shelter and food must be met otherwise people will sacrifice their dignity and honor in order to survive. Unfortunately, this principle holds true today. Too often people are so desperate and vulnerable that they are taken advantage of and exploited. One manifestation of this reality is the global slave trade, enabled by human trafficking. Today, there are over 27 million people enslaved in various ways including the labor and sex industries. The resurgence in slavery over the past fifty years is due to population explosions in the developing world as well as rapid social and economic change which have forced citizens to relocate to urban centers sacrificing job security and stability.⁵

In response to both local and global poverty the Social Justice Society will be introducing the Economic Justice campaign focusing on hunger and homelessness in the NY region and human trafficking and slavery throughout the world. Despite the clarity that mitzvot like *shemita* shed on our obligation to take action against the poverty and its underpinnings, this is a particularly difficult undertaking. There is no good vs. evil; there is no single person or country to blame. The fight against poverty requires sensitivity, patience, and dedication and will only succeed with the help of students, faculty and administration.

The Social Justice Society has been hard at work this summer preparing for an exciting and fulfilling year. Our efforts to combat economic injustices at home and abroad are ambitious and we need the help of everyone on campus in order to successfully translate our values and vision into sustainable change.

ENDNOTES

1. Vayikra 25:2-8
2. http://www.citymayors.com/society/nyc_poverty.html
3. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dhs/downloads/pdf/VERA%20Study.pdf>
4. http://www.metcouncil.org/site/PageServer?pagename>About_Jewish_Poverty_FAQs#compared
5. <http://www.freetheslaves.net?NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?pid=304&scrid=301>

SCW ENGLISH DEPARTMENT EXPANDS ITS RANKS

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According to Dr. Nachumi, the department's search has yielded remarkable teachers and scholars who will bring "breadth as well as depth to the English Department faculty as a whole."

Dr. Linda Shires is joining the SCW faculty with twenty-seven years of teaching experience, mostly at Syracuse University, where she served as the Director of Graduate Studies for the English Department. Dr. Shires also taught graduate and undergraduate classes in English, Women's Studies, and Holocaust Studies. After earning two degrees in Classics, she pursued her passion for British Literature with a post-graduate B.A. at Oxford and a Ph.D. at Princeton. Her main focus of research and teaching is nineteenth-century British literature and Modernism. Dr. Shires described herself as "especially interested in form, interpretive methods, interdisciplinary inquiry, and historical and cultural contexts."

Her fall schedule includes teaching senior seminar, a class reserved for English majors only, and a class in Victorian fiction. Dr. Shires was especially attracted to SCW's reputation as a vibrant community, committed to intellectual growth, and high standards of education. A mid-life convert to Conservative Judaism, she enthused: "I am eager to work in a Torah u-Madda environment where I can integrate aspects of my life, while sharing and learning in dialogue with my students." As a graduate of three all-women's institutions, Dr. Shires noted the empowerment and close friendships afforded by such an education.

Dr. Lee Manion will be teaching a survey class in early English literature and Freshman Honors Seminar. His previous experience includes several years of teaching literature and composition courses while a graduate student at the University of Virginia and a year fellowship at the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London. In England, Dr. Manion further developed his research skills by working with manuscript evidence in British archives, an experience he found both challenging and tremendously enjoyable.

After completing the fellowship, he taught at Suffolk University in Boston as he earned his doctorate at the University of Virginia. Before coming to SCW, Dr. Manion was a visiting assistant professor at the University of Rhode Island where he designed and taught graduate and undergraduate courses based on his research. His expertise is in medieval English literature, although he has studied early modern literature as well.

Dr. Manion is hopeful that SCW's status as a liberal arts institution devoted to general education and smaller classes will afford him the unique opportunity to form strong relationships with his students, which he considers one of the great joys of teaching. Dr. Manion anticipated that the "commitment to ethical thought and study, a reverence for books, and an understand-

ing of the need for textual interpretation" of the SCW student body will enhance the classroom experience.

Dr. Matt Miller, another new addition to the English Department, was most recently a visiting professor at the University of Iowa. He also taught part-time at Iowa's Mt. Mercy College. Dr. Miller completed his Ph.D. in 2006 and received an M.F.A. in creative writing from the Iowa Writers' Workshop. In addition to publishing several of his own poems, he has written articles and reviews on poetry, including a book exploring the creative process of Walt Whitman.

While his general area of interest is American literature, he is especially passionate about American poetry. Dr. Miller's specific expertise is in nineteenth-century American literature, creative writing, electronic scholarship, and book studies. He is active in Whitman-related scholarship and in the most visited single-author site, the online Walt Whitman Archive, in which he hopes to involve interested students.

The outstanding reputation of the student body is Dr. Miller's main motivation to accept a faculty position at SCW. He hopes to invigorate the creative writing program, especially in poetry, the genre in which he is most interested, as well as attract talented writers to give readings and interact with the Stern students. This fall, Dr. Miller is teaching a class in reading and writing poetry, an honors Composition and Rhetoric class and a survey class in American literature.

The fourth hire of the department, Dr. Kim Evans, received her Ph.D. in literature from the State University of New York at Buffalo, where her training was in the field of nineteenth-century American literature, with a special concentration on the works of Herman Melville. After an eighteen-month Fulbright Research Fellowship in New Zealand, she taught literature and philosophy full-time at the University of Redlands. After publishing her first book, "Whale," a defense of Ahab's logic in Melville's *Moby Dick*, Dr. Evans is finishing a follow-up project, "The Missing Limb."

Dr. Evans is especially interested in the intersection of literature and philosophy, both of which are subjects fueled by what she described as a "rational refusal to accept the world as unknowable." Dr. Evans will be teaching an honors class in literature and philosophy this fall, where she will introduce to SCW students her approach of descriptive criticism in studying texts.

Impressed by the intellectual life at Yeshiva University and particularly SCW, Dr. Evans looks forward to working with students committed to Torah values while engaging in a stimulating liberal arts curriculum. "Students who are bright enough to go anywhere but brave enough to engage in multiple, sometimes competing discourses, are exactly the students who interest me most," she declared.

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