



THE YESHIVA UNIVERSITY OBSERVER

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

'THE OWNER'S NAME IS ON THE DOOR' - ALLEGED PONZI SCHEME SLAMS INVESTMENT, CHARITY COMMUNITIES

Esther Baruh

"In an era of faceless organizations owned by other equally faceless organizations, Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities LLC harks back to an earlier era in the financial world: The owner's name is on the door. Clients know that Bernard Madoff has a personal interest in maintaining the unblemished record of value, fair-dealing, and high ethical standards that has always been the firm's hallmark."

The description of Bernard Madoff's brokerage firm from its now-defunct website rings bitterly ironic now, a few weeks after Madoff's alleged confession that he perpetrated one of the biggest investment frauds in history. A man who had made significant philanthropic contributions, Madoff was described by a Yeshiva University (YU) alumnus in the investment field as possessing a "good" reputation.

Madoff served on the YU board of trustees and acted as the chairman of the Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB). After his alleged admission of investment fraud to his

sons, Madoff was arrested by the Securities and Exchange Commission and is currently under house arrest in his New York apartment.

The revelation of Madoff's alleged Ponzi scheme has grabbed headlines for weeks and has investors reeling. "For the Jewish community as a whole, it's a tragedy," a source close to YU said. "Everybody was already hurting after the economic downturn and now there are some very charitable individuals who have lost a lot of money, there are entire foundations which have shut down, and there are the endowment losses which we've all heard about."

University Hit Hard

Madoff resigned from all positions held at YU on the Friday following his arrest. No mention has been made yet of whom his replacement might be.

All mention of Madoff on the YU website was promptly removed after Madoff tendered his resignation, including his remarks at the

2008 SSSB dinner when he welcomed new SSSB dean Dr. Michael Ginsberg.

Ironically, Madoff's stunning revelation came just days before the annual university Hanukkah Convocation and Dinner held at the Waldorf=Astoria on December 14. Joel addressed the situation in his speech to the guests: "Yeshiva University remains the gold standard," he asserted. "The university is strong; its finances remain strong. We are dealing proactively with economic realities. Despite these seemingly dark times, we must focus on investing in the world through the majestic and timeless Jewish mission."

Joel mentioned that that Convocation was able to scale back its budget by over \$125,000 and generated over \$1 million more than the previous year. The Convocation's keynote speaker, New York governor David A. Paterson,

spoke positively of the university's future to an enthusiastic audience. "122 years later and only four presidents later, despite the obstacles of the past four days, this university is one that epitomizes the meaning of survival and will emerge unscathed," he declared roundly.

In a December 16 letter to the entire university community, Joel outlined the losses suffered by the university, but reassured his



This photo of Bernie Madoff was formerly displayed on YU's website, alongside Madoff's greetings to Sy Syms School of Business Student and Alumni Gala Dinner attendees, until tragedy struck.

MUMBAI MEMORIAL DRAWS STUDENTS, FACULTY

Adina Brizel

On December 17th, dozens of Stern College for Women (SCW) and Yeshiva College (YC) students assembled in Weissberg Commons in Belfer Hall to attend a memorial service for the victims of the terrorist attack in Mumbai, India, last month.

The long Jewish memory for tragedies that occur to our people was the impetus for holding the memorial. "After we experience these horribly sad tragedies, we shouldn't walk away from them and forget," explained Sivan Kerem (SCW '09), president of SCW student council (SCWSC). "We need to remember the awful tragedies and the feeling we felt when we initially heard about them."

Adira Lautman (SCW '09), TAC president, opened the event by leading the audience in reciting *Tehillim* [psalms]. She invited seven people connected to the Mumbai victims to light candles in the memory of all those killed in the terrorist attack, particularly the

Jewish victims murdered at the Chabad Nariman House.

Sophie Marmor (SCW '09) was the first speaker. Marmor spent a couple weeks in India this past summer as part of a class given at the Yeshiva University Institute for Public Health. Marmor spoke of the "greatest lesson of Mumbai - tolerance." She praised the peaceful interactions of the different religious and ethnic groups that make up the population of Mumbai.

Marmor spent Shabbat at Nariman House the weekend that she was in Mumbai. She described Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his wife Rivka as people of compassion and "a shining example of *v'ahavta lere'acha kamocho* [love your fellow man as yourself]. She concluded with an appeal on their behalf that the audience should emulate their example of tolerance in their interactions with others, regardless of racial, religious and national differences.

The second speaker of the evening was Rabbi Shlomo Sternberg, a former *chavruta* [study partner] of Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg. Rabbi Sternberg spoke emotionally and passionately about his encounters

with Rabbi Holtzberg. He shared his belief that if Rabbi Holtzberg was alive, he would "tell us to continue from where he left off," and reach out to souls that are far from Judaism. "When we see extreme evil, the good people must go to extreme good," said Rabbi Sternberg.

Rabbi Sternberg also encouraged the audience to take a lesson from the terrorists: that a small, committed group with big goals has the ability to overpower one of the largest armies in the world. Reaching out to other Jews must be done in a "selfless" way, Rabbi Sternberg noted. "We can't sit back and worry about ourselves," he added. "We have to change the world. We have to stick out a hand and do *chesed* for the sake of *chesed*."

He urged the audience to increase their acts of *chesed* [kindness], as the Holtzbergs did, and concluded by commenting that these acts of kindness would bring *Mashiach* [the Messiah].

The event continued with a brief video presentation from Aish HaTorah about the Holtzbergs and the proper response to evil. The message of the video echoed the sentiments of earlier speakers,

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INSTITUTE FOR UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP STUDIES ISRAEL YEAR PHENOMENON. TRACES RELIGIOUS GROWTH

Nava Billet

"Ask any YU student what the five most pivotal junctures were in his or her life," says distinguished psychologist and professor, Dr. David Pelcovitz, "The year in Israel will be one of them."

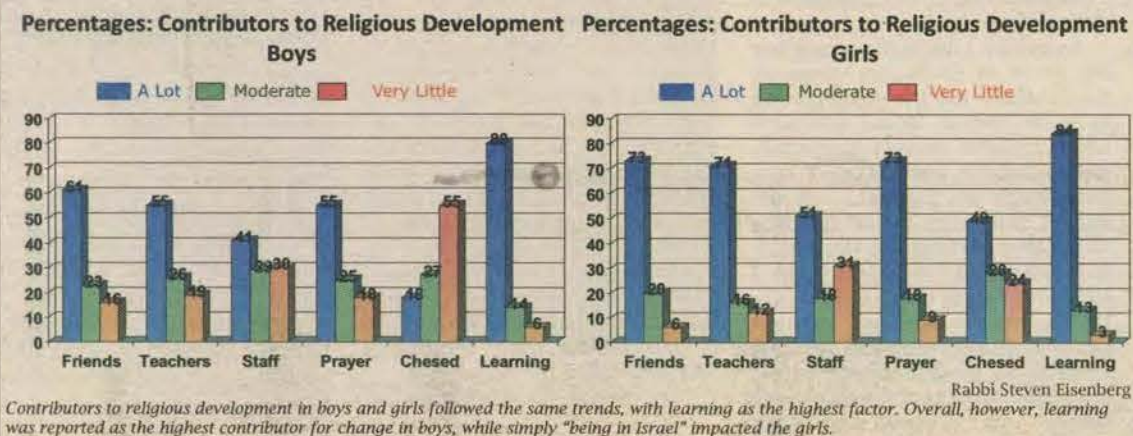
The year in Israel has captured the imagination of the Modern Orthodox community in recent years. In all of our communities, as well as in Yeshiva University's many institutions, there are many young people who have made significant lifestyle changes as a result of this transformational year. For some, these changes have been transient and for others long-lasting. Many have been turned on to religion, spirituality, Torah-learning, and ritual; others felt jaded or disillusioned by the complexities of the year abroad.

For years, many of us have pri-

vately theorized about the effects of the year in Israel, whether or not we think it has been generally beneficial to the Modern Orthodox community, and how we think the community has changed. In 2007, these speculations took a more scientific turn with the publication of *Flipping Out? Myth or Fact: The Impact of the "Year in Israel."* This interdisciplinary collection offered sociological, psychological and educational analyses of various facets of this phenomenon.

Educator Rabbi Dr. Shalom Z. Berger conducted a quantitative (statistical) study in waves, where, per his dissertation, the post-test group studied was made up of "384 respondents, all students after one year of Israel study, with 315 respondents studied in the follow-up study group. Of the 315

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THOUGHTS OF STUDENT LEADERS

THIS TOO IS TORAH, AND I MUST LEARN

Olivia Wiznitzer, Editor in Chief



We all know the rules.

But what happens when we break them?

In this strange place in-between, there are all different

kinds of people, and more importantly, all different kinds of Jews. Even those who see themselves as being Orthodox or commit to living within the *halakha* [Jewish law] boundaries of their religion will invariably find themselves in a bind where their heart and mind disagree. While their mind urges them to fulfill the halakha, they follow the desires of their body, or alternatively their heart. One of the ways in which this is most predominant occurs with regard to all things sexual. Sexuality and intimacy is considered one of the most important parts of life; in its proper time, there is nothing more sanctified and holy. What, however, happens to those of us who, curious, have broken the rules?

Oh, there are many different ways to break the rules. There are those of us who have looked at or are addicted to pornography. There are those of us who have masturbated or otherwise stimulated ourselves in order to obtain sexual pleasure. There are those of us who have broken the rules of *shomer negiah* [not touching a member of the opposite sex in a loving way], whether slightly or over a prolonged period of time. And each of us has responded to these acts in a different way. Some of us have been eaten alive by guilt, while others may see this as normal, and care little for the halakha. What is certain, however, is that there are all sorts of people, and that it is quite possible that among these people we have those who have done something they were not supposed to have done.

What, then, is to be done next? Shall we pretend this out of existence? Hide it from our wives or husbands? What kind of a relationship is that, where the husband or wife cannot trust the other to be honest with them? And yet, many Jewish men and women are raised with unrealistic expectations of what their future husbands or wives are to be. Pure, unsullied, never having succumbed to their desires, or what is even stronger, the strong desire to connect to someone because one loves them, which goes beyond mere physicality, that is who we are meant to be. And what happens to those of us who don't fit that model? How do we respond?

Perhaps the most logical response, and the one that I have witnessed most frequently, is for people to fall into the depths of despair. They have failed, they have broken God's law; there is, in many ways, no hope for them. Frustrated and faced by laws they cannot understand, respect, and which they are forbidden to talk about, people become angry, either with God or the seemingly cruel human representatives who seem to have so little respect for the very human struggles we all face. And

from then on, as people often do not like to live double lives, or feel shame, they may mock these laws or otherwise denigrate them, even though they may not truly feel that way. It is simply that when something seems insurmountable, one does not wish to view oneself as a failure; it is better and easier to view the mountain that must be climbed as ridiculous, a task no one need attempt to accomplish.

But there is another way. Why not admit that we are human? Why not act kindly toward ourselves and our fellows, noting that each person is human and has his own weaknesses and strengths? Each person has his own desire, that compulsion with which he struggles all his life. For some people, this lies in the area of sexuality; for others, it may be something completely different. Yet it remains that no one can adequately measure the way in which desire courses through the blood, forcing a person to attempt to weigh and redefine himself in the wake of that passionate stirring of the blood.

If we have sinned, no matter our sins, there is always the potential to rise again, to begin anew. As

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DESPITE WHAT WE KEEP SEEING, HONESTY IS STILL THE BEST POLICY

Sivan Kerem, SCW Student Council President



In the aftermath of the Bernard Madoff scandal, many of us have found ourselves embarrassed by the behavior of a fellow Jew and the enormity

of his crime, in addition to being worried about the message his financial deceit portrayed to the world around us. Unfortunately, Madoff's behavior only seems to confirm the widely-held stereotypes about Jews and money to the extent of Jews being willing to defraud their fellow Jew, including charities which are devoted to Jewish education and bettering Jewish life. It is unclear how many families are going to be affected by Madoff's historic Ponzi scheme and whether or not charitable organizations will need to discontinue their operations on account of this scandal.

But personally, I cannot even begin to fathom what Madoff was thinking when he began this scan-

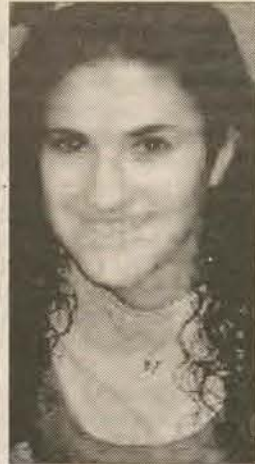
dal. Didn't he realize that if he ever got caught, the people he would be hurting the most were his brethren: the Jewish federations, Jewish day schools, Jewish non-profit organizations? All people who were working day-in and day-out, trying to better Jewish education and Jewish life. How did Madoff even justify this behavior to himself? Didn't he know better?

These questions recall an issue brought up by a SCW student at a recent town hall meeting: academic integrity. While this may not be on the same level, or in any way equitable to the amount of wrong Madoff has done, there is still a way in which we can take our questions about his behavior and apply them to ourselves. Why are we at Stern and Yeshiva not instinctively repulsed by cheating in our university the same way we feel instinctively repulsed by Madoff's deceitful behavior? Why is it that growing up in homes and schools that taught us to eat, sleep, and breathe Jewish moral values has not instilled within us a intuitive distaste for anything with a drop of dishonesty or unethical

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WOMEN IN THE FRAMEWORK OF HALAKHA

Sara Hindin, Vice President of TAC, Torah Activities Council



Reflecting on the poor turnout at a recent TAC-run *shiur* on the topic of women making *kiddush* on Shabbat, I found myself thinking back

to a deeply troubling conversation I had had with a friend. We had been discussing the role of women in the Modern Orthodox community, when my friend said in a slightly condescending tone, "I don't see why some women feel the need to cut the *challah* or make *kiddush* on Shabbat; it's clearly a feminist attempt at emulating the male role in Judaism." This argument, which I have heard countless times, is one I find both insensitive and thoughtless. Below is an expanded version of my response to her comment, as well as further thoughts on the subject.

Much of what sets Shabbat apart from a routine weekday is the time devoted to both *davening* [praying] in *shul* [synagogue] and Shabbat meals, the *seudot*. That being said, it becomes difficult for many women to pinpoint their role in the *mitzvot* of Shabbat. Inasmuch as women may not *daven* for the *tzibbur*, the congregation, how then can their role be extended beyond simply cooking and serving the Shabbat meal? Should their role in

the *seudot* of Shabbat be about the food alone, or perhaps ought it to extend to include a *mitzvah* of the *seudot*? To dismiss this thought as prompted by feminist sensibilities belittles the underlying question: should women be dissuaded from being active participants in *mitzvot* of Shabbat which they can perform within the *halakha* framework, or should their role be limited to non-*mitzvot*, i.e. cooking the food, for fear of wrong intentions?

Some women (my friend included), are not troubled by these issues, but rather than denigrate such frustrations, their criticism of those women who do harbor these frustrations ought to be kept to themselves. These are real questions that many women in our communities grapple with, and, if they are not dealt with properly, they can lead to disillusionment and loss of faith in the halakha system. If opportunities such as the *mitzvah* of cutting *challah* present themselves as viable options for women within the framework of halakha, then women should be permitted, or perhaps even encouraged, to participate in such *mitzvot*.

As a child, I distinctly remember my sense of confusion whenever my brothers led the congregation in *Anim Zemirot*, *Yigdal*, and *Adon Olam* [various prayers commonly sung after the conclusion of formal prayer on Shabbat.] At the end of *shul*, they would describe to me how exciting the experience had been, and I wondered why I was denied that opportunity. After all, like my brothers, I always came to *shul* on time and davened every word; what made my brothers more worthy of being chosen than I? As I matured and began

to appreciate the complexity of the halakha system, I came to terms with reality; there are areas in halakha reserved exclusively for men. However, discouraging women from participating in areas of halakha that can potentially be opened to them, I believe, is doing women a disservice.

Many halakha figures fear that women are not being intellectually and emotionally honest when pursuing new avenues of halakha expression. And it is precisely because of this fear, that those same halakha figures prefer to persist with what is traditional, rather than encourage novel behavior. But is it not possible that preventing women from participation in these arenas of halakha, may, in the long run, have more severe adverse effects? Often the result of being overly strict, where strictness is not required, leads to unintended negative consequences.

A perfect example of this is the highly contentious topic of women's *megillah* reading in this university. Since some *poskim* [halakha decisors] permit women to read the *megillah*, why must it be looked upon so negatively? Instead of focusing too heavily on the tainted reputation this institution may receive by allowing females to read the *megillah*, why not look at it from a different angle, from the viewpoint that it can allow for increased religious passion and devotion, something all Jews strive for on a daily basis? Or, put differently, allowing permissible acts may help solve the problem of disappointment in a system of halakha that limits the role of fifty percent of the population.

I appreciate the opposing view,

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THE YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

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NEWS

TEACHING FELLOWSHIP GIVES OPPORTUNITY TO SCW ALUM

Adina Brizel

The 2008-09 academic year marks the inception of two teaching programs, the Teacher Training Fellowship and the Give-Back Fellowship, created by the Institute for University-School Partnership, a division of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration (more commonly referred to as simply Azrieli). The purpose of these fellowships, as per the Institute's website, is to place "cultivate the Jewish educators of tomorrow by providing them with the opportunity to teach today."

Each fellow is meant to serve as "passionate and enthusiastic role models of Torah u'Madda in their schools and communities." By providing mentors and teaching experiences in Jewish day schools outside the greater New York metropolitan area, participants are given multiple opportunities in education as well as exposure to the greater Jewish community. As the midpoint of the school year draws nearer, fellowship participants and their coordinators reflected on the structure of the fellowships and their function.

According to Joseph Small, Project Coordinator at the Institute, the Teacher Training Fellowship "recruits, teaches and trains exceptional college graduates interested in the field of Jewish education." This program, which spans two years, provides each fellow with a teaching position at a school outside the New York metropolitan area. Fellows return to New York for three summer sessions at Azrieli to beef up their teaching skills. Tuition for the summer sessions is covered by the fellowship, as are full travel and housing expenses.

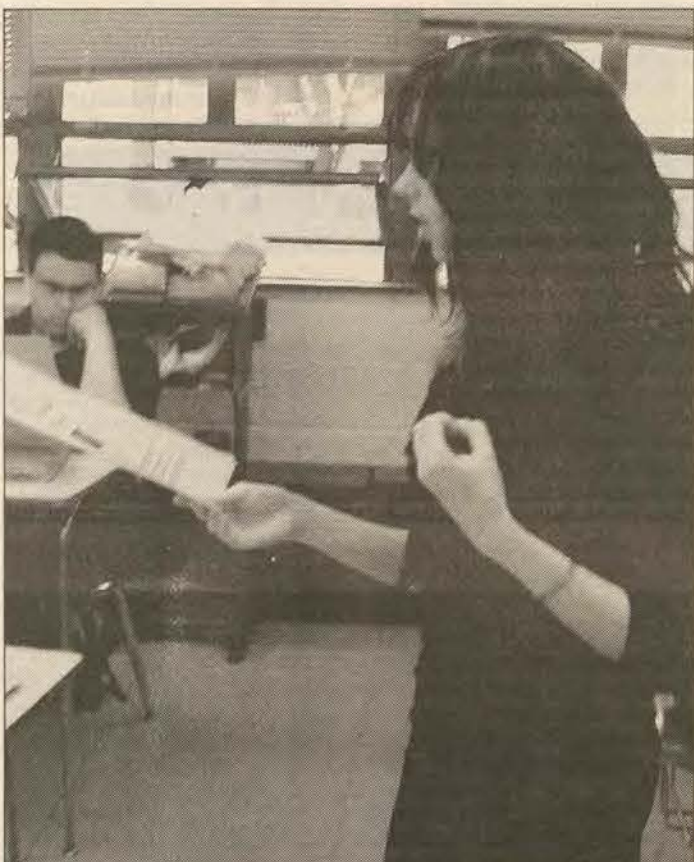
Fellows also receive a professional development stipend, and support from Yeshiva University, via conferences and other materials. Ida Crown Jewish Academy in Chicago, Illinois, is currently playing host to one of the Teacher Training fellows, Stern College for Women (SCW) alumna Adina Kastner, nee Schwartz (SCW '08). Kastner, who majored in English at SCW, became interested in teaching at Chicago's yeshiva day schools when her husband made plans to pursue his master's degree at the University of Chicago. Following her interview at ICJA, assistant principal Dr. Jeremy Kahan contacted Small, who offered Kastner the fellowship.

Another aspect of the fellowship is the mentor system, in which a teacher at the host school acts as a mentor for the fellow. The mentor meets with the fellow to offer feedback and support for on-the-job concerns. Kastner's mentor at ICJA is English teacher Caryn Engel. Kastner praised the mentor system, which is unique to her among other teachers at ICJA. She remarked that Engel is "honest, open, warm and caring."

Engel participates in monthly conference calls with Small and other mentors associated with the fellowship. Engel commented that Small is "very helpful," and that the conference calls "offer resources and suggestions that help me provide my mentee with a supportive environment." Engel also spoke positively about the mentor system, adding that she "wishes there was a program like this when I was a new teacher!"

A second Teacher Training fellow, Ephraim Iliagouev (SSSB '08), was placed at Margolin He-

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Courtesy of Adina Kastner
Adina Kastner, recipient of the Teacher Training Fellowship through the Institute for University-School Partnership at Azrieli, teaches in her Ida Crown classroom.



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RACISM AND BIGOTRY TARGETS OF NEW CAMPUS CLUB

Esther Baruh

A club aimed at eliminating bigotry at Yeshiva University undergraduate colleges was formed at Yeshiva College (YC) this year under the guidance of Avi Kopstick (YC '10) and Ely Winkler (YC '10). Named the Yeshiva University Tolerance Club (YUTC), the organization hopes to decrease the presence of racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of bigotry at the Wilf Campus.

The club's founders pointed to slurs and epithets that they've heard around campus as the impetus for starting the club. Kopstick, the president of the club, said that his aversion to "nasty things" he's heard in and out of class galvanized him into action. "It was actually Dr. Ladín who finally inspired me to take action," he added. "But the truth is, I started this club because it's a representation of what I personally believe. Sensitivity towards others and concerns like that are very important to me."

Josh Shinefield (YC '09), another member of the club, became involved in YUTC after an incident in his off-campus apartment proved to him that racial bigotry existed among students at YC. During the course of a party that Shinefield hosted, an inebriated YC student shouted a racial slur at Shinefield's female Hispanic housemate.

"How is it that we have allowed racial bigotry to become so rampant that such an episode could have occurred?" Shinefield reflected in a letter he wrote to the Tolerance Club members.

Shinefield cited other racially charged comments made to him, particularly about the election of an African-American to the White House. "Students frequently say racially insensitive comments without considering the repercussions," he remarked. "When you say something aloud you are acknowledging its legitimacy. Even if you allow prejudices to be spoken without taking a stand, you are lending it your silent support.

Certainly most of us would never be so insensitive to publicly discriminate against another minority, but our words said in private nonetheless reverberate."

Shinefield's thoughts echo the larger mission statement of the club. Kopstick and fellow student Ely Winkler (YC '10) saw a need for discussions about tolerance in order to combat "disunity" on and off campus. Their mission statement asserts: "The student body needs to understand that not everyone thinks the same, not everyone has gone through the same experiences, not everyone feels and expresses emotion in the same manner. And knowing this, we should all be sensitive towards other people's way of life and be wary of ever making anyone feel that they do not belong."

The club has had trouble getting some of its plans off the ground. There was talk of organizing a panel of YC alumni who belonged to different minority groups on campus, such as someone with a learning disability, an alum with a mental illness, a *ba'al teshuva* [returnee to Orthodox Judaism] and a graduate who is homosexual. The proposal was to have the panelists reflect on their experiences at an all-male, religious institutions given their background or life situation. The panel was nixed on the basis of the inclusion of a homosexual participant.

Kopstick surmised about the "apprehension" that people on campus have about YUTC and its mission, and why the club has encountered opposition to its initiatives: "I think YU, and the Jewish community as a whole, is very image-conscious, and to get out there and say anyone in YU has any sort of problem or is different in any unorthodox way scares people," he speculated. "During club fair, we presented ourselves with a written mission statement. It said that we want to combat the harm that comes as a result of discrimination due to ethnocentrism, racism, sexism, and homophobia. So people were reading it and they

couldn't read any other word besides for 'homophobia.' It's like it popped off the page and people couldn't see anything else. People honed in on this one word and said, 'oh, I'd totally be for your group except for the fact that you mention 'homophobia' there,' and walked away."

"As a member of the tolerance club I am often asked if 'Tolerance Club' is code name for 'Gay Club,'" Shinefield related. "The fact is that tolerance towards all human beings is a necessity. The Tolerance Club recognizes that homophobic discrimination is significant, but it is by no means the only or most important topic."

Kopstick noted that he knows students who are homosexual or are *ba'alei teshuva* who have what he termed "alienation problems," namely, they feel removed from and unaccepted amongst the student body. He explained that some *ba'al teshuva* students are sensitive about their lack of proficiency in Hebrew, and are wary of serving as cantors because they do not wish to be mocked by other students. He stressed that homophobia is just one form of bigotry the club is aimed at eradicating.

"We hope to open the lines of communication between students of disparate beliefs," Kopstick and Winkler wrote in their mission statement. "YUTC is a forum for forthcoming conversations that are of critical importance. In addition, we all just want to see a campus where no student feels afraid and no voice remains unspoken."

Sivan Kerem (SCW '09), president of the Stern College for Women Student Council, said that while the issues that the club wants to deal with are mainly on the Wilf campus, she saw its mission as something that SCW students should take note of. Religious intolerance can be a problem at Beren, she noted.

"I think that Stern really does need a tolerance club," she opined. "Not necessarily for the issues that this club might be striving for, but

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NEWS

KASHRUT AND ETHICS EXAMINED IN FIRST TEIQU EVENT

Esther Baruh

The intersection between ethics and *kashrut* [Jewish dietary laws] was the focus of the December 9th inaugural event of TEIQU, a student-run organization devoted to developing opportunities for increased intellectual discourse and dialogue in the realm of Jewish academics, faith and community at Yeshiva University," as per their mission statement. TEIQU - an acronym for "A Torah Exploration of Ideas, Questions and Understanding" - was founded this academic year by Gilah Kletenik (SCW '09) and Simcha Gross (YC '10).

TEIQU's symposium came in the wake of months of news coverage regarding the AgriProcessors scandal in Postville, Iowa. AgriProcessors, founded in the 1980s by the Rubashkin family, was the largest kosher slaughterhouse and meatpacking plant in the United States. A series of events that

took place over a course of a few months, including a federal raid on the plant, charges of child labor violations and immigration and bank fraud charges against a member of the Rubashkin family, resulted in AgriProcessors filing for bankruptcy.

The scandal has generated much hot debate in the Orthodox community over what the proper response should be to companies that violate U.S. law. Seeking to address this question, Kletenik and Gross organized an evening of what they called "frank discourse and dialogue" to address the possible confluence of ethics and *kashrut*.

TEIQU invited the heads of "key Orthodox organizations that have been players in the aftermath of the Agriprocessors revelations" to come and present their viewpoints through a moderated panel entitled "The Kosher Quandary: Ethics and *Kashrut*."

One of the topics Kletenik and

Gross asked the speakers to address is the Conservative movement's *hekhsher tzedek* [justice certification] proposal, a supplemental "ethics" certification that would reflect a production company's adherence to Jewish ethical standards.

An overflow crowd of over 300, including member of the press corps of the New York Times, the Forward, the Jewish Star and the New York Herald, filled Weissberg Commons of Belfer Hall to hear the panelists give their opinions.

Kletenik delivered the opening remarks. "The tapestry of Jewish history is colored by kosher quandary," she declared, linking the TEIQU event with other instances of food-related trouble in Jewish history. Kletenik described the event as "an opportunity for dialogue" before turning the podium over to the panelists, who presented their introductory

speeches.

Rabbi Avi Shafran, director of public affairs at Agudath Israel of America, was the first of the panelists to speak. Shafran used the metaphor of the connection between poetry and personal hygiene to demonstrate his emphatic belief that a lapse in ethics on the part of food producers has absolutely "no effect" on the kosher status of the food they produce.

Shafran lambasted the Conservative movement's *hekhsher tzedek* proposal, calling it an idea that had been "conceived in sin." He pointed out that the charges against the Rubashkins family are still only allegedly true. "What we do know is that it is Jewishly wrong to assume guilt based on accusation," he insisted.

He added that another reason for his dislike of the *hekhsher tzedek* idea is that it isolates Jewish food businesses for inspection of their ethics. "Jewish ethics is a metaconcept," he said. Shafran felt that all Jewish businesses should be held accountable for their business ethics without overemphasizing one mode of business over the other. He stressed the need to turn to communal leaders to develop a response to ethical scandals.

The second speaker of the evening was Rabbi Menachem Genack, rabbinic administrator of the Orthodox Union's (OU) *kashrut* division. Genack echoed Shafran's assertion that despite a food producer's ethical failings, the kosher status of their food item is not compromised. He mentioned the Maimonidean placement of the laws of *kashrut* in the category the laws of holiness, implying that *kashrut* can be used as a vehicle for holiness and that one shouldn't pervert the terms of *kashrut*.

Genack was mostly positive towards the *hekhsher tzedek* initiative. While he cited his belief that monitoring food producers' ethical behavior should be left to the federal government, he also

noted that the idea should be "applauded" for trying to bring its constituency "back to kosher."

Genack remarked on his perturbation about the "perception of kosher" by the gentile community, expressing his concern against creating a *chilul Hashem* [desecration of God's Name]. He felt that the *hekhsher tzedek* would help "balance people's perception of kosher."

Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) chief executive Rabbi Basil Herring was the third panelist. "Much of what I would say has already been said," Herring said, referring to the remarks of his colleagues on the panel. Herring went on to stress the importance of "ethical behavior on the part of every single Jew."

"Anything which diminishes that message is a shame, not just in terms of how it is perceived but in terms of what God wants from us," he emphasized.

Herring told the audience that the RCA, together with the OU, was formulating ethical guidelines for all businesses, beginning with kosher establishments because "that's where the rabbis are." The RCA and OU hope to institute specific expectations of ethical behavior in their contracts with food businesses, but "we are deluded if we think these *kashrut* agencies can enforce and monitor this completely," Herring said, echoing Genack's assertion that the federal government is best equipped to enforce ethical laws. If allegations of law violation are proven, then the *kashrut* agency could take steps or impose penalties.

Herring's suggestion for a response to the Rubashkin scandal was for people to look inward and examine their own behavior instead of pointing fingers. He admitted that we "have the right" not to patronize businesses we feel have violated ethical principles, but cautioned that imposing a boycott on a particular business is a complex action that needs prop-

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The Observer

From right, panelists R' Shmuly Yankowitz of Uri L'Tzedek, Rabbi Basil Herring of the RCA, Rabbi Menachem Genack of the OU and Rabbi Avi Shafran of the Agudath Israel, prepare to tackle questions at TEIQU's opening event.

'THE OWNER'S NAME IS ON THE DOOR' - ALLEGED PONZI SCHEME SLAMS INVESTMENT, CHARITY COMMUNITIES

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readers that the institution is financially stable, especially in light of overall market losses. He urged the YU community to use this opportunity to look inward.

An alumnus of YU with experience in the field called Joel's response "reasonable."

"President Joel responded to the Madoff scandal with dignity and clarity," praised RIETS Rosh Yeshiva Rabbi Moshe Tendler. "He did us proud."

Another person in the investment world who had been at YU years ago speculated that the Madoff scandal might make donors wary of making contributions. "If someone was on the margin thinking about giving the money or not, they may view this as a negative toward YU," he surmised.

An article in the daily news section of the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that Moody's

Investors Service, a credit ratings and risk analysis provider, said that the company might downgrade the university's credit ratings due to its interactions with Madoff. According to a Reuters article reporting the same occurrence, Moody's currently rates YU at the "Aa2" level, two steps below the highest credit rating. Moody's promised to conduct their survey of the university's governance, investment management and debt over a period of three months.

Merkin Connection Raises Questions

J. Ezra Merkin's close handling of moneys invested with Madoff's company has raised eyebrows. "If he ran a fund supposedly under his management, and yet the entire fund was invested with Madoff, that is actually intentional fraud, if you will," said a YU alum in the

field. "People were paying Ezra Merkin for Ezra Merkin to manage the money, not to outsource it to Madoff." Merkin's good reputation as a successful investor and risk manager may have led investors not to question where their money was going, the graduate speculated.

"Any time you're defrauded, you made a bad decision, but it's not like you could have, based on the information you had available, say 'this is absolutely wrong and there's an obvious thing going on,'" he pointed out. "That's why it's called fraud."

He guessed that "whatever anyone wants to say is going to come out in the form of law suits."

The lack of due diligence conducted vis-à-vis Madoff's company has investors scratching their heads. A graduate of YU in the investment field theorized that Madoff was able to keep his

alleged scheme secret because of his positive reputation among investors and the Jewish community as a whole. "He had the trust of his peers, the university," the alum said. "It tells you people thought he was a good person. That's why Bernie Madoff was able to get the benefit of the doubt all these years - because he did have that reputation."

An alumnus of YU who attended the university years ago said he doubted whether Madoff began his investment advisory service intended to defraud his clients. "He probably started out with the intention of making money, and then lost money, paid them out of new money, and then it snowballed and became this enormous Ponzi scheme," he said.

A Loss of Epic Proportions

The data reporting the extent

to which charities and individuals have been affected is beginning to come in, and the results are of epic proportions, shutting down many organizations and representing the loss of the entire net worth of some investors.

Joel asserted in his letter to the entire YU community that the university's endowment had lost \$110 million with the collapse of Madoff's company. This portion of the endowment had been invested with Ascot Partners, a hedge fund managed by J. Ezra Merkin, a former member of the board of trustees at YU and chair of the investment committee. Merkin's firm invested a substantial amount of its assets with Madoff, resulting in the loss of millions of dollars for its clients.

The YU endowment, as of December 16, 2008, was valued at approximately \$1.2 billion. This

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NEWS

KRESSEL SCHOLARSHIP UNDERWRITES UNDERGRAD RESEARCH

Suzanne Mazel

Competitive funding for undergraduate research was made possible this academic year by Dr. Henry Kressel, managing director of Warburg Pincus LLC, and a 1955 graduate of Yeshiva College (YC). The Kressel Scholarships, awarded to two students at each Yeshiva University (YU) undergraduate school, were created to perpetuate research studies between students and faculty. The recipients of the initial round of Kressel Scholarships at Stern College for Women (SCW) were Malka Bromberg (SCW '09) and Ariella Zoltan (SCW '09), as well as YC students Ari Lamm (YC '09) and Samuel Blass (YC '09).

Dr. Kressel expects that "this program will lead to a richer intellectual environment at Yeshiva University and encourage more students to pursue a career in research through graduate studies."

"The idea is to make it possible for students to work with talented faculty in advancing knowledge and to get a taste of the exciting world of research," he added.

Applicants created research proposals after being nominated for the scholarship by their professors. A committee narrowed down the pool of successful applicants and then selected the final

recipients. The scholars are given a timeframe of one academic year and summer to expend on their research project, as well as \$7,500 for the academic year to fund their research, with additional money available for travel expenses or research support. The faculty mentors of the students are provided with \$2,000 to help with the costs of supervising the student's research.

The Kressel scholars are expected to present their work in student sessions to spark larger discussion. The structure of the Kressel Scholarships is the first program of its kind; other research programs at YU are focused solely on summer research.

Bromberg is researching how to make alternative fuel cells for cars more effective. Current alternative fuel options do not have enough power to perform operations that require high energy levels quickly enough. Bromberg described her project: "I'm researching carbon nanopaper (self-supported sheets of carbon nanotubes) decorated with platinum nanoparticles. Hopefully, this electrocatalyst will speed up the chemical reaction which occurs in hydrogen fuel cells, thus causing the fuel cell to produce more energy per unit time, bringing this green alterna-

tive energy source closer to practical application."

The method for researching this topic, said Bromberg, involves synthesizing sheets of nanopaper and decorating them with platinum nanoparticles of various sizes. Bromberg conducts electrochemical tests to determine if the Pt-doped nanopaper will increase the efficiency of hydrogen fuel cells, hoping to prove her hypothesis that platinum-decorated carbon nanopaper does indeed increase the efficiency of hydrogen fuel cells. Bromberg is also looking to discover the optimal size of platinum nanoparticle for the increased efficiency, and would like to eventually publish her findings.

Professor Anatoly Frenkel, the head of the physics department at SCW, mentors her throughout this process. He said of Bromberg that she is "rapidly developing the vision, motivation, and expertise to see it through, with [their] help," and needs "minimum guidance."

Frenkel expressed the satisfaction he experiences from watching a student develop the capability for, and enjoy, high-quality scientific research.

The second Kressel scholar at SCW, Ariella Zoltan, is focusing her research on Muslims living

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KASHRUT AND ETHICS EXAMINED IN FIRST TEIQU EVENT

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er consideration.

The final speaker, Shmuly Yanklowitz, founder of Uri L'Tzedek, an Orthodox social justice organization, delivered an impassioned address peppered with the catchphrase of "Where is our moral courage?"

Yanklowitz pressed that *halakha* is a "floor, not a ceiling," and asked the audience to realize that something can be technically kosher but ethically unfit. Even if ethics and kashrut aren't formally connected, he said, for us to patronize a company that isn't ethical enables improper behavior. He cited examples of *halakhic* responses that indicated the importance of proper treatment of workers.

"We don't want *halakha* to be morally void," he exclaimed.

Yanklowitz mentioned Uri L'Tzedek's response to the scandal, a new initiative called the "Tav HaYosher," modeled after a grassroots movement in Israel. The Tav HaYosher (ethical seal) is a certificate that Uri L'Tzedek plans on granting to kosher establishments who abide by law regulations regarding workers' compensation and hours. Yanklowitz invited the audience to volunteer as compliance officers in the Tav HaYosher movement.

After the panelists had each delivered remarks, Kletenik and Gross posed questions to the panel on various topics, including how - or if - social justice concerns should be addressed when granting kosher certification; what the communal response should be if the Rubashkins are convicted; the difference between Tav HaYosher and the *hekhsher tzedek*; and why kosher certifiers define ethical standards by United States law. The answers given echoed the earlier statements and ideologies of the panelists.

Yanklowitz differentiated between Tav HaYosher and the

hekhsher tzedek, saying that *hekhsher tzedek* would be conflating ethics and kashrut improperly, but added that he would give his blessing to the movement, citing a need for "unity" in promoting ethical standards of business.

Gross and Kletenik felt the evening was a success. "Simply beginning the conversation about the kosher quandary was invaluable," Kletenik voiced. "It's not often that we have opportunities for frank discourse and dialogue within our community. We have received significant positive feedback on the event."

The evening was sponsored by Stern College for Women Student Council, Torah Activities Council, Student Organization of Yeshiva and Yeshiva Student Union.

Chani Kovacs (SCW '09) attended the event. She found the opinions of all four panelists to be valuable, but felt slightly more in tune with the positions presented by Rabbis Shafran, Genack and Herring. She appreciated Shafran's point that a scandal of national proportions happened because of individuals being remiss in *bein adam lechaveiro* [personal interaction], and the dramatic cause-and-effect demonstrated by the scandal should propel the community to look inward and improve.

"I think that it was important for the authority figures in the Jewish community to be open about what happened and give possible ways to understand the situation and to learn from it," she said.

Osnat Rabinowich (SCW '09) aligned herself with Herring, whom she felt "had a more global view."

"I would have liked more opportunity to hear from the audience and their questions," she said. "I felt in general the whole thing was a little more theoretical."

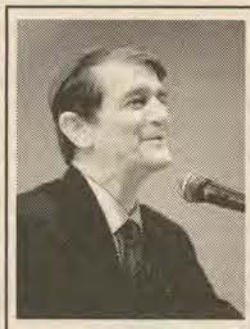
BIBLE SCHOLAR VISITS BEREN FOR EVENING OF TORAH STUDY

Esty Rollhaus

Modern Bible scholarship at Stern College for Women (SCW) received a nod on the evening of Thursday, December 11, when Dr. James L. Kugel delivered a lecture entitled "Midrash Before Hazal" to a full audience of SCW and Yeshiva College (YC) students. Kugel, the chair of the Institute for the History of the Jewish Bible at Bar Ilan University and the Harry M. Starr Professor Emeritus of Classical and Modern Hebrew Literature at Harvard University, has authored and edited fifteen books and articles focusing on biblical commentary in the Second Temple period.

The event was organized by TEIQU: A Torah Exploration of Ideas, Questions and Understanding, a student-group "founded this academic year, established with the goal of building opportunities for heightened intellectual dialogue and discourse on an inter-campus level in the realm of Jewish academics, faith and community," as per their mission statement. TEIQU's aim is to foster intellectual discourse and dialogue.

The co-founders and directors of TEIQU, Gilah Kletenik (SCW '09) and Simcha Gross (YC '10), were particularly enthusiastic about the prospects of the lecture. "It goes without saying that we are honored to invite Dr. Kugel onto our campus and study midrash with him," expressed Ms. Kletenik. "Dr. Kugel is a world renowned scholar and



Google Images
Dr. James Kugel, a noted Bible scholar, spoke about "Midrash Before Hazal" at Stern College for Women.

authority on Bible. Many students, particularly those who have studied his works in classes at SCW and YC, are excited for the privilege of studying with Dr. Kugel."

The lecture, sponsored by the Torah Activities Council and Yeshiva Student Union, focused on biblical exegesis in the period before Hazal. Gross explained that Dr. Kugel selected this topic, the focus of his early work in Harvard University, to emphasize that his most recent work, which had received a lot of publicity, "did not eclipse" his previous scholarship. Gross was alluding to Dr. Kugel's controversial 2007 book, *How to Read the Bible*, which was greeted with a mixed reception because it called Divine authorship of the Bible into question.

While there was some controversy surrounding the event, given the nature of Dr. Kugel's latest work, little protest was publicly

voiced. According to Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Cohen, professor of Bible at SCW and Associate Dean of the Bernard Revel Graduate School, "James Kugel is a world-renowned scholar who has made enormous contributions to our understanding of Tanakh and its interpretation by Hazal, and it is therefore a unique and valuable opportunity to have him come and speak at Yeshiva University."

When asked about the controversial aspects of Kugel's work, Dr. Cohen asserted: "It is true that Professor Kugel's views on biblical authorship are not those of traditional Orthodoxy and that, no doubt, is the source of the controversy. However, in my opinion, Yeshiva University's educational ideals demand that we not limit ourselves to learning only from those who share our precise *hashkafa* [religious outlook]."

Additionally, the topic of the lecture was similar to "an insightful - and well-received" lecture that Kugel delivered to the Bernard Revel Graduate School in the 1990s. "In light of that earlier experience, there is good reason to expect that this lecture will provide valuable insights without impinging on Orthodox sensibilities," Dr. Cohen noted.

That attitude was echoed by most of the students in attendance. Ariel Urkowitz (YC '10), an economics major, had much to say about the invitation extended to Kugel. "There are invitations sent

out to people far to the right also, so there should not be a question of sending out this invitation as well, especially taking note of the fact that [Kugel] does practice Orthodoxy," he pointed out.

Urkowitz, a self-proclaimed fan of Kugel's has read his previous works and is currently working his way through *How to Read the Bible*. He was entirely pleased with the event and would like to see more like it. In response to the charges of heresy, Urkowitz added, "We are all adults, and do not have to believe what [Dr. Kugel] says, if there is *kefira* (heresy) in what he says."

Shiffy Staiman (SCW '10) enthused that the event attracted a diverse crowd, "and on a Thursday night too!" Staiman was impressed with Kugel's ability to engage the crowd and encourage people to look at the material from a new perspective. "We are used to looking at the Torah and asking deep questions, which he referred to as 'rabbinic' in nature," Staiman observed. "But during his lecture we had to understand that the earlier

midrashim asked the most basic, surface-level questions which we do not necessarily see asked in the sources we regularly study."

While some students and faculty members may have been surprised by Kugel's invitation to speak at YU, Kugel himself asserted that he was not surprised. "I don't see myself as controversial," he declared. He claimed to be mostly unaware that his latest work sparked so much controversy. Since he considers himself an Orthodox Jew, he was surprised that some were hesitant to have him speak at YU. "I see myself as an Orthodox Jew, and Yeshiva University is an institution of thinking Jews, and I think they wrestle with these questions," he commented. "I speak to the people of Yeshiva University. I know who I am and what I'm speaking about, so no, there's no reason to not let me speak."

Kugel was amused by the potato, broccoli and noodle kugels served at the event, a pun on his last name he admitted he had not encountered in previous lectures.

FEATURES

SEXUALITY IN THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE ON SEXUALITY

Olivia Winitzer

What is the Jewish perspective on sexuality? More importantly, how is one to learn about it? This topic is rarely discussed, either because people do not feel comfortable with it, do not see it as being appropriate, or believe that one ought only to learn about it once one is actually engaged. This becomes problematic, as invariably, as Abby Lerner notes in her essay "Thoughts on Teaching Taharat HaMishpahah: The Role of the Teacher Today," published in the Orthodox Forum's *Gender Relationships in Marriage and Out*, there is a student who will inquire, "How could all have [sic] this been so forbidden our entire lives and now we are told it is filled with *kedushah*?" (Blau 193). These words were echoed by a Stern student who wishes to remain anonymous,

who stated the following:

"I feel that there is a big discrepancy between what I hear contemporary Rabbeim and teachers say about sexuality and what I see in early Jewish sources. I am taught that sexuality is holy and great and encouraged within the context of marriage but then I see sources such as the Katav Vakabbalah on "Kedoshim Teheyu" talking about how holiness comes from limiting physical and sexual desires. I am not sure how sex can be holy if limiting it is holy."

This dichotomy does indeed seem confusing. In an essay entitled "Of Marriage: Relationship and Relations," published in both Tradition magazine and the Orthodox Forum's *Gender Relationships in Marriage and Out*, R' Aharon Lichtenstein takes on the issue, confronting the sources in an effort

to make sense of them. He does not shy away from noting that there are *rishonim* [early authorities] who do not see "love or companionship as the *raison d'être* of marital sexuality" (Blau 12), citing, for example, the Rambam in Mishnah Torah, who states that "when one has sexual relations, he should act in order to maintain his health and to reproduce. Therefore, he should not have relations any time he desires, rather only during the time when he must produce semen as a medical need or for the sake of reproduction" (Blau 13). Ramban to Leviticus 18:19 states that, "the Torah allows cohabitation only for the sake of reproduction" (Blau 13).

However, "a more balanced and even positive attitude" may be found in the last chapter of Rabad's *Ba'alei ha-Nefesh* and the

anonymous *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*, often misattributed to the Ramban. In Rabad's list of motivations to have relations with one's life, the third is the fact that a man's wife "desires him and he recognizes her attempts to please him. She adorns herself that he should notice her" (Blau 14). In contradistinction to this, a "genuinely enthusiastic tone pervades the discussion of the *Iggeret ha-Kodesh*" which includes a statement explaining that "this essay is clean and holy and represents that which is appropriate at the appropriate time and with the correct intentions. One should not think that this appropriate essay contains shamefulness or nastiness... All should believe that God created everything according to His wisdom and did not create anything shameful or disgusting" (Blau 15).

After a lengthy treatment of sources ranging from the original Talmudic texts to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, R' Lichtenstein concludes that in our positive view of sexuality for the sake of love or pleasure "we are buttressed, be it only subliminally, by the conviction that we are siding with Hazal, and they with us" (Blau 28) and that at the very worst, "we may be disregarding the attitudinal counsel of some *rishonim*" while not "countermanding their *pesak*" (Blau 28). He also states our reliance upon "our own mentors," most notably the Rav, whose essay *U-Vikkashtem mi-Sham* actually takes the Rambam and enlists him in his own camps, stating that the Rambam "reflects positively upon the sexual union. He denounced the sexual craze and aggression.

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METHODOLOGIES OF KALLAH TEACHERS

Hannah Golden

Everyone bombards the girl with a sparkling diamond band newly placed on her finger. When is the wedding? Where is it? Have you picked colors? Which band will be playing? One question that is rarely thought of and even more infrequently asked: who is your *kallah* teacher [pre-marital advisor]? *Taharat Hamishpaha*, family purity, a mainstay of Jewish life, is a topic rarely dealt with before a woman's engagement.

"When you're preparing to be married, your head is everywhere," explains Nechama Price, a *kallah* teacher in the New York area and instructor of *hilkhot niddah* [marital laws dealing with menstruation] instructor at Stern College for Women. "My goal and what I totally believe is that *hilkhot niddah* are really hard to keep and the more I understand the easier it is to keep."

In Stern, Price has at least one semester with her students to cover the laws of *niddah*, while she has only seven sessions with her soon-to-be brides. In the different settings she takes different approaches to the same material. "It's totally different when I teach here; we do it all inside [with the text]. We do specific topics but you do it very much inside."

However, Price's *kallah* classes, attended usually by her students or their friends, examine topics differently. "It's less inside and more practical," she says about the classes, usually given to groups of four.

Price began learning the laws of family purity while in the Graduate Advanced Program in Advanced Talmudic Study at SCW, then learned it again on her own, and continues to study the subject. "There are different approaches to teaching *kallah* classes," says

Price. "Therefore, for a student to find a class that matches what they are looking for, they need to find someone way in advance. You book a hall; you book a *kallah* teacher."

"I think that one of the most important things for a *kallah* is someone they are comfortable talking about *niddah* with," says Price emphatically. "Someone they can talk to when they shouldn't have to make decisions themselves."

Sara Mizrahi, 37, a *kallah* teacher of ten years in Brooklyn's Syrian Jewish community, comes to the same conclusion. "This isn't a five minute relationship," she says.

Although Mizrahi does see a difference between herself and older *kallah* teachers, she instructs in a similar manner. "It's the same info," she states.

"It was a very warm atmosphere, the way I was taught," Mizrahi continues. She tries to replicate that comfortable atmosphere in her own classes. "The girls come to my house," she describes. "I set the table with pastries and fruit;

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TZELEM: LIFE VALUES & INTIMACY EDUCATION

Olivia Winitzer

Dr. Jennie Rosenfeld grew up in the Orthodox community and attended a coed elementary school and a single-sex high school. She started thinking about issues of sexuality then because "you see a difference between how men and women relate to each other in a coed environment vs. a single-sex environment." She noted that when she went to *shul* [synagogue] she would hear her Rabbi talk about everything except this one topic. Curious, she wondered why everything but this was discussed during the Shabbos *derasha* [lecture.] A graduate of many Yeshiva University schools, such as the Yeshiva University High School for Girls (Central), Stern, the Graduate Program for Women in Advanced Talmudic Studies at Yeshiva University (GPATs), and Azrieli, she is intimately familiar with the Modern Orthodox world.

In 2005, the Orthodox Forum, a convocation created by Chancellor

Norman Lamm to which the best and brightest Jewish minds are invited to form a kind of think-tank to analyze issues of importance to the Jewish community and present their papers on the subject, was about the topic of gender relationships in marriage and out. Dr. Jennie Rosenfeld teamed up with Koby Frances to interview Orthodox men and women and put together some of the findings into case studies that were dramatically read aloud at the conference. It was in connection to these interviews that the idea for Tzelem as an "educational opportunity for people to really learn about something that doesn't often get talked about" was born.

At that time, Yeshiva University (YU) had put out a call for Incubator Projects, namely, ideas for a non-profit organization that YU would fund. When Rosenfeld and Frances sent in their proposal, they figured that there was no way YU would take it on "because it's

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JEWISH SEXUAL EDUCATION & THE LACK THEREOF

Olivia Winitzer

Recently, The Observer took a poll of Yeshiva College (YC) and Stern College for Women (SCW) students regarding sexual education. The questions asked were: 1) What type of high school did you attend (public or private, all girls vs. co-ed?) 2) Did you have a sex-ed class in high school or earlier? Did it incorporate aspects of the Jewish point of view on sexuality? Alternatively, did you have a Jewish hashkafic class on sexuality without discussion of technicalities? 3) What is your a) first and b) main source of knowledge about sexuality: Internet, Media, Parents, Friends, School, Other? 4) Are you satisfied with your current knowledge of sexuality in a) the technical sense and b) the Jewish point

of view?

While the majority of respondents to the poll requested anonymity, this does not invalidate their positions or the truth of their responses.

Many students replied that they were satisfied with their knowledge of sexuality, whether it be in terms of the technical or Jewish point of view. They cited parents, Internet, media, peers, their own personal experiences or the admissions and advice of friends who were sexually active as their source of knowledge. However, an overwhelming majority of students stated that they would welcome the opportunity to learn more, although they were divided about what might be the appropriate forum for that, and almost everyone

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JEWS & SEXUALITY IN THE MODERN-DAY WORLD

Olivia Winitzer

In a world where many are struggling to reconcile their Judaism and sexuality, it is important to know that there are those who are willing to listen. Happily, the existence of the Orthodox Forum means that such people exist. The Orthodox Forum was "initially convened by Dr. Norman Lamm, Chancellor of Yeshiva University" and "meets each year to consider major issues of concern to the Jewish community" per its mission statement: "Forum participants from throughout the world, including academicians in both Jewish and secular fields, rabbis, *rashei yeshivah*, Jewish educators and Jewish communal profession-

als, gather in conference as a think tank to discuss and critique each other's original papers, examining different aspects of a central theme. The purpose of the Forum is to create and disseminate a new and vibrant Torah literature addressing the critical issues facing Jewry today."

In 2005, an Orthodox Forum was convened on the issue of sexuality. The papers presented at the forum were published in an Orthodox Forum book entitled *Gender Relationships in Marriage and Out*. Among the issues addressed was the difficulty of being an older single who desires to express oneself sexually, sexual identity and questions commonly asked rabbis about that, the way in which a *kallah*

teacher [pre-marital advisor] structures her class and why, a review of available literature used to prepare *kallot* [brides] and *hatanim* [grooms] for marriage, and concerns raised about the laws of *taharat hamishpaha* [family purity].

Perhaps one of the most interesting essays in this compilation of works was one entitled "Excerpts from Interviews with Orthodox Singles," by Koby Frances and Jennie Rosenfeld, who later founded the program Tzelem, which is run through the Center for the Jewish Future. This article particularly speaks to the Yeshiva University constituency, in its focus on unmarried men and women navigat-

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FEATURES

SEXUALITY IN THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

INTERVIEW ON SEXUALITY IN THE ORTHODOX JEWISH COMMUNITY

The Observer: Thanks so much for making time for us! Could you explain exactly what it is that you do/ what position you hold?

Dr. David Ribner: I am the founder and director of the Sex-Therapy Training Program at Bar-Ilan University, the only program of its kind in Israel, probably in the Middle East. I am certified as a sex therapist in the United States and Israel, and I have a private practice in Jerusalem. I see primarily religious and Haredi couples. I write and lecture extensively about Judaism and sexuality.

The Observer: If you could provide some background information for my audience, that would be fantastic. When people come to you, what is it exactly they are seeking to find out?

Dr. Ribner: I'll use the model of the organization most prominent in America - the American Association of Sex Educators and Counselors. What they have created is a 3-tier structure in which there are sex educators as one particular group of professionals, there are sex therapists and in the middle are sexual counselors who deal with less difficult, less complicated situations. Sex therapists deal with a variety of issues that relate to an individual's sexual functioning - anything from un-consummated marriages to issues that are more complicated such as premature ejaculation in men or vaginismus in women and sometimes more subtle issues like the couple's attitude with regard to sexuality as individuals and with each other.

The Observer: I'm not exactly sure of the structure in Israel, but how would most religious couples/people obtain their information about sex?

Dr. Ribner: The structure in Israel and America is roughly similar - the madrichim and madrichot - the chassan teachers and kallah teachers - evolved into the primary source of information in the community. Most sexual health professionals who are part of this community are concerned that the information is often insufficient, inappropriate or outright wrong. While there are programs to improve the situation, I think for most students who come from religious background, there is little sex information that is taught in high schools whether in Israel or the States. Unfortunately, most parents don't talk to their children about any aspect of intimacy and information tends to be transmitted through peer groups. We feel that this is something that should be more of a community concern.

My own focus is that I would really hope that parents take a greater role in transmitting accurate sexual information to their children. It was once a parental role and I think it would be ideal if we could

return it to that model.

The Observer: At what age do you think parents ought to have that conversation with their children?

Dr. Ribner: Starting out with 7 or 8 so that children know this is a topic that can be talked about in their home. As they mature and topics become more subtle and sophisticated, so should parental responses. The greatest confusion and most difficult challenges come with adolescence, when our children are most in need of guidance. Adolescents will more likely feel comfortable raising issues and asking questions if this is a topic that has been discussed with them earlier in their lives. Parents can then talk to their children before marriage about physical and emotional intimacy, and not just one week before the wedding, so that this information can be weighed, questions can be asked. If parents need guidance on how to do this [talk to their children], that guidance is available from a variety of sources.

The Observer: Tzelem in the states had a program run through high schools. What are your thoughts on that?

Dr. Ribner: The fact that information ends up transmitted in high school underscores the idea that only a teacher can talk about sex rather than parents - it's better than nothing, but ideally parents should reclaim this role.

The Observer: The people who come to talk to you - what level of sexual knowledge do they generally already have?

Dr. Ribner: First of all, I'm rarely the first stop - if someone has a sexual difficulty, chances are they talk to a Rabbi, Madrich, and brother or sister - I would say that the overwhelming majority of people who come to me, whatever their background, come with insufficient information.

The Observer: For the people who are not in the know - who is it they should talk to in order to get this information? Or are there books they can read?

Dr. Ribner: There isn't really a great book that I could recommend now - there is a Sefer from Rav Elyashiv Knoll entitled *Ish v'Isha* which I think will be translated and published in English which is the best thing at this point, although in terms of actual sexual information it's still lacking. Currently I am working on writing a book with Dr. Jennie Rosenfeld, as I think that there is a definite need for information of this kind. Other than that, there is little available right now. If you can find a Madrich or Madricha who has a reputation of imparting clear, accurate, up to date sexual information, that is probably the best option for now.

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Key Concepts and Topics in the Life Values and Intimacy Education Curriculum Based directly on Life Values Curriculum: Health Education for Jewish Day Schools

| | |
|--|--|
| Key Concept 1: Values and Personal Skills Topics: Values Decision Making Communication Appropriate Assertiveness Negotiation Looking for Help | Key Concept 4: Sexual Behavior Topics: Sexuality throughout Life Masturbation Shared Sexual Behavior Abstinence Human Sexual Response Fantasy Sexual Dysfunction |
| Key Concept 2: Relationships Topics: Families Friendship Love Socializing Marriage Parenting | Key Concept 5: Sexual Health Topics: Reproduction, Contraception & the Family Abortion Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV Infection Sexual Abuse Reproductive Health |
| Key Concept 3: Human Development Topics: Reproductive Anatomy & Physiology Reproduction Puberty Body Image Tzniut Sexual Identity & Orientation | Key Concept 6: Society & Culture Topics: Sexuality and Society Gender Roles Laws of Family Purity Sexuality & Religion Sexuality & the Arts Sexuality & the Media |

Courtesy of Yocheved Debow & Dr. Anna Woloski Wruble
These six key concepts are stressed in the "Life Values and Intimacy Education" curriculum as prepared by Yocheved Debow and Dr. Anna Woloski Wruble.

| | Key Concept 4: Topic: Sexuality through Life | Key Concept 4: Topic: Shared Sexual Behavior | Key Concept 4: Topic: Abstinence | Key Concept 2: Topic: Socializing |
|------|--|--|--|--|
| 6th | Sexual feelings are natural. Sexual behavior must be conducted with due regard for Tzniut | The Torah guides human behavior and expression of human feelings. | | |
| 7th | Sexual feelings often cause impulses and tensions in ones body. The Torah has Halachik guidelines which relate to sexual behavior through life. Sexual behavior must be conducted with due regard for Tzniut | The Torah does not allow touching between boys and girls, because it can often have - or lead to - sexual implications. | | As children grow older they begin to feel and act differently towards friends. These feelings may be awkward & confusing, but are normal part of growing up. Group activities provide opportunities to develop relationships with peers of both genders. |
| 8th | Any discussion of sexuality should be done in accordance with Torah standards of Tzniut. | Because of the ambiguity of the meaning of physical contact, the Torah significantly limits physical contact between members of the opposite sex not married to each other. The laws governing physical contact between men & women not married, popularly known as Negiya. | | Sexual involvement includes any form of touching - Negiya. Halacha discourages physical contact between males and females unless they are married to each other. |
| 9th | Sexual feelings, fantasies and desires are natural. They often cause impulses and tensions in ones body and for this reason, the Torah had guidelines relating to sexual behavior throughout life. | The Torah does not allow touching between boys and girls, because it can often have - or lead to - sexual implications. | Most people are challenged by needing to be sexually abstinent. | Different & confusing feelings about others often develop as children mature. The prohibition Issur Yichud is because when a male & female spend a lot of time together in a closed room, they are more likely to become sexually involved. |
| 10th | Healthy sexuality enhances total well being and is a definitive part of married life. Sexuality is an integral, joyful & natural part of being human. | In a healthy marriage, husbands & wives share intimacy that is expressed verbally & behaviorally. One of the most beautiful parts of marriage is husband & wife encouraged to see intimacy as valuable part of marriage. Husbands & wives should communicate about most intimate parts of sexual relationship in order to enhance mutual pleasure & mutual intimacy. | Children are not ready for sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is not a way to achieve adulthood. | |
| 11th | All people are sexual beings, who experience sexual feelings, fantasies & desires. The Torah has halachic guidelines relating to sexual behaviors throughout life. | | Most people are challenged by needing to be abstinent. | When one experiences sexual feelings that cannot be ignored easily, may be helpful to talk to a trusted friend or adult, educate oneself by reading and/or talk with a professional who respects orthodox values. |
| 12th | Sexuality is multifaceted; it has biological, social, psychological, spiritual, ethical & cultural dimensions. | For most people sharing sexual intimacy within the context of a marital relationship is the most satisfying expression of sexuality. | People in romantic relationships can express their feelings without engaging in sexual activities. The difficulty of sexual abstinence cannot be overlooked. | |

Courtesy of Yocheved Debow & Dr. Anna Woloski Wruble
This chart demonstrates the ways in which certain key concepts can be taught differently and elaborated upon depending upon grade level.

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JEWS & SEXUALITY IN THE MODERN-DAY WORLD

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ing the modern-day world.

Frances and Rosenfeld noted that "[m]ost of the interviewees grew up with strong religious Orthodox backgrounds. Those who grew up in less observant homes became more observant in their later teens. In terms of their occupations, they were Jewish educators and leaders, rabbis, corporate professionals and students of various disciplines" (Blau 122). When they described their experiences in intimate relationships, they confessed to feeling trapped, because "single men and women are fully developed sexual beings who interact with a world saturated in sex. They have no halakhically permitted sexual outlet" (Blau 123). In addition, many single men and women feel or have been taught to feel that there is no acceptable venue in which to voice these feelings. Therefore, "many single adults lack a language in which to internally process and outwardly discuss their sexual feelings and experiences" (Blau 124). However, keeping silent often led to feelings of guilt, especially if members had made physical contact with one another, in which case they had broken the rules of *shomer negiah* [not touching a member of the opposite sex in a loving way]. This was compounded by feelings of shame, self-loathing, and hatred of oneself due to one's hypocritical behavior. This in turn may lead to decreased levels of religious observance, as one finds it nearly

impossible to integrate one's religious and sexual identity.

Frances and Rosenfeld stressed that though it is not possible to simply recreate halakha, it is proper to "normalize these issues for our community" (Blau 124) in terms of being able to offer a listening ear. In that way, "this part of their identity" can "become both speakable and hearable" (Blau 125). In this way, individuals can "start to believe that their actions did not ruin them as Jews or as people" (Blau 125).

Also of interest was an essay by Yuval Cherlow entitled "Premarital Guidance Literature in the Internet Age." Of the many topics he addresses, he notes that with regard to masturbation, "[i]t is difficult to imagine how large this issue looms for the religious sensibilities of young men; there are far more questions on this topic than any

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THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE ON SEXUALITY

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Our teacher (Rambam) demands that man elevate his sexual existence; its sanctification is accomplished by stamping it with halakhic purpose" (Blau 29).

In contrast to this careful view, perhaps typical of R' Lichtenstein's approach, Avraham Peretz Friedman's work *Marital Intimacy: A Traditional Jewish Approach* is overflowing with sources that describe the holiness, sanctity, beauty and pleasure that is part of the proper sexual relationship in Judaism. Friedman strongly asserts that "[t]o emphasize the negative while ignoring the positive aspects of the Jewish outlook on sex results in a misrepresentation and, ultimately, a falsification of Torah ideology. A Torah-true view of sexuality can only be obtained by grasping the many disparate threads and weaving them together into one multicolored tapestry" (Friedman xii). He notes

that many people "with a rudimentary knowledge of some of the Torah's restrictions on sexuality jump to the erroneous conclusion that the Torah is against sexuality. They *choose* to remain ignorant of the Torah viewpoint, fearing that Torah knowledge will only serve to inhibit their enjoyment. How opposite from the truth" (Friedman 4).

In his desire to speak the truth, Friedman carefully prepares the reader by explaining the function of pleasure within Judaism as a whole, citing the fact that the Torah "lauds the enjoyment of physical pleasure as desirable, since each pleasure provides an opportunity to feel and express gratitude to the One who created and provided this enjoyment" (Friedman 10). He introduces the concept of the two *mitzvot* [laws] associated with sexuality, namely *pru urvu* [procreation] and *onah* [a husband's obligation to satisfy his

wife's desire for marital intimacy.] He then offers a fascinating interpretation of the statement, "*Barati yetzer hara, u'barati lo Torah tavlin*," found in Kiddushin 30B. Often, this statement is interpreted as, "I created the *yetzer hara*, and I created the Torah as its antidote." While this is a "reasonable rendering into English" (Friedman 43), in fact, it does not capture the meaning of the statement in its entirety. "*Tavlin*," he asserts, does not mean antidote— "unless you use ketchup, relish, or mustard to serve as an antidote to your hamburger, hot dog, or steak" (Friedman 43). More accurately, he explains, *tavlin* means spice or condiment, "and a spice is used to enhance and complement that which it accompanies, as opposed to an antidote, which counters, opposes, or negates" (Friedman 43). In that way, the true understanding of this statement would be "I created the *yetzer hara*, and I created the Torah as its spice" (Friedman 43).

With this understanding, we now comprehend Torah law. Torah serves to shape and direct the "reservoir of raw, undisciplined, impulsive, instinctive desire" (Friedman 46) which appears in the shape of the *yetzer hara* [evil inclination]. In this way becomes a "powerful, incomparable source of energy to be used in the service of God" (Friedman 47). One way of doing this is through channeling sexual desire so that it becomes sanctified and holy. The Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, describes this in his essay "The Redemption of Sexual Life" in his work, *Family Redeemed*. He states that "Judaism considers the body the wellspring of *kedushah*. That is why it focused its attention upon the body" (Soloveitchik 74). In redeemed sexual life, rather than treating one's partner as an It, in which case "man cheats nature, steals from her all the pleasures she has in store for him, and refuses to fulfill the commitments he automatically takes on while deriving comfort and gratification from nature" (Soloveitchik 93), he changes the relationship from the I-it to I-thou. In this case, "[e]rotic love tears down the barriers within which the individual is shut in. Erotic love delivers the I from his loneliness and leads him toward the thou" (Soloveitchik 94).

Lest an individual operate under the misconception that the sole purpose of sex is to procreate, Friedman explains that this is "patently false and fundamentally non-Jewish" (Friedman 51). As an example, he notes the fact that the halakha "guards and protects, with no less vigor or zeal, a woman's right to sexual satisfaction in situations where pregnancy is clearly not an objective or a possible outcome" (Friedman 51). He also cites numerous sources to evidence his point. R. Zerach Eidelitz, for example, student of R. Yonaton Eibeschitz and author of *Or LaYesharim* stated that "[j]ust as one must be fluent in the laws of *Niddah*, so, too, one must be fluent in the laws of *Onah* [laws regulating perform-

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METHODOLOGIES OF KALLAH TEACHERS

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it's a different kind of relationship."

"I think there's a lack of certain kind of teachers," muses Mizrachi. "Someone who would present halakha in a way - that the girls would want to follow halakha - and give them a little bit of inspiration." In her four sessions, which usually last over two hours, she talks with the women about various aspects of the halakha. In the sessions that usually last between two to two and a half hours, Mizrachi leaves a great deal of time for questions. She also provides them with a set of notes, put together by a group of kallah teachers in her community.

"It's [kallah teaching] evolved over the years," she maintains. "Especially since the JOFA conference in the spring, I've made a lot of changes to what I do." In March, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA), along with Yeshivat Chovevei Torah and Drisha Institute conducted a conference entitled "Demystifying Sex & Teaching Halakha: A Kallah Teacher's Workshop." "Sexuality and halakha," Mizrachi says, are two things that

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JEWISH SEXUAL EDUCATION & THE LACK THEREOF

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stated that would love to understand more of the Jewish point of view on sexuality.

An anonymous SCW student who attended a single-sex Bais Yaakov school explained that she had "no sort of discussion about sexuality in school. The extent of my sexual education there was a brief foray during ninth-grade biology about male and female anatomy. Besides that, nothing. The topic was avoided, both by teachers and students. And I don't recall any sort of *hashkafic* [Jewish outlook] discussion, which I could have used. We briefly mentioned *Taharas Hamishpacha* [family purity] for one class in twelfth grade without getting into the halachic details." She further explained that her main source "of knowledge was definitely the internet." "I never talked about sexuality with anyone because I was under the impression that it was improper to discuss," she noted. While she does not currently want to learn anything more about the technical sexual act, she "definitely would like to know more about the Jewish point of view. I think I lack an awareness of Judaism's opinion on sexuality; my knowledge-base is unfortunately purely secular. I think sexuality is a topic that is not

discussed enough in my community, and the result is misconceptions and self-doubt about feelings that should be understood and accepted."

In contrast to this student, an anonymous YC student who attended public school explained that there was "a required 1 semester course which functioned as both a comprehensive sex-ed, anti-drug, and mental health course. It was required for graduation but parents who didn't want their children learning that in school could opt out instead. It incorporated no religion into the class." He explained that his first source of knowledge about sex was his parents, and that his parents and school are his main source of knowledge, as his "dad talked about it in pretty good length but didn't really fully go into the scientific realm of it all. In middle school I had a sex-ed class every year. In elementary school they first gave us one in 5th grade. All of them were really comprehensive and scientific so by the time I entered high school I was pretty educated about the subject." However, he too is lacking knowledge about the Jewish viewpoint on sexuality, and humorously notes that would "probably have been illegal to teach" at his public school.

Another public school attendee, Cheryl Noll (SCW '10) remarked similarly that she had "great health teachers in 7th grade and high school. They would answer any question without being shy. I remember in seventh grade, one of the boys in my class called another a douche, and my teacher asked him if he knew what it meant. No one in the class did, so she explained it." Her school incorporated sex-ed from 5th grade and up, where in "5th and 6th grade each we spent one afternoon watching a video and discussing (boys in one room, girls in another). 7th grade we had a semester of health which included sex, drugs, alcohol, and nutrition, but was mostly about puberty. Then, some time between 10th and 12th grade it was required to take another semester of health, this focused more on sex, drugs, alcohol, and nutrition. There was no mention of religion of any sort." She notes, however, that "I don't really know much from a religious perspective" and would be interested in learning more.

An anonymous SCW student who attended a Beis Yaakov school, though probably more "chilled than most," noted that overall she is quite satisfied with her sexual education. "Although

my high school might not have had a typical sex ed class, many of my teachers had the approach of 'The Torah cannot be censored, so let's talk about what it actually says.' So when we studied topics like the rape of Dina, Yehuda and Tamar, and even the issue of Moshe separating from Tzipora, the concept of sexuality inevitably came up, and was discussed at length. I think the atmosphere in the classroom was one where people honestly could ask anything, so I'm very grateful for that. In addition, I had wonderful classes on sexuality in seminary, which helped me come to a better understanding of the Jewish approach."

However, she notes that her "only qualm with my education was that I think there was an underlying assumption that sexuality was a male thing, and that women did not and should not come into an awareness of their sexuality until marriage. I think this belief is pretty wide spread in the Jewish community, and even in secular society, that even if you learn these things, it doesn't really apply to you. There obviously is a huge difference in male and female sexuality, but I think it can be harmful to many girls who think they are

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TZELEM: LIFE VALUES & INTIMACY EDUCATION

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just such a burning and important issue and if YU is going to take it on in such a way that it can reach a mainstream Orthodox audience, we've got to make it happen." To their joy and amazement, YU was indeed interested, and Rosenfeld and Frances began outlining ways in which they could create a program to help foster understanding and knowledge of sexuality within the Orthodox world. During that time, Tzelem shifted from being an Incubator Project to being a Special Project of the Center for the Jewish Future.

Tzelem fulfills two main functions. Firstly, it is a program that allows for programming and conferences to train *Chassan* and *Kallah* Teachers [premarital advisors]. At these conferences, medical and mental professionals like gynecologists, sex-therapists, Rabbis and other persons of interest attend to help offer the most up-to-date and useful information to these

teachers. Dr. Rosenfeld noted that "being a chassan or kallah teacher is really defined today as teaching *hilkhot niddah* [laws of family purity] in which case, a person can be very proficient and has studied inside the halakhos in terms of *mikvah*, *harchakos* [distancing oneself from one's partner during the days of impurity] and all the questions of *niddah*, but that doesn't mean they received any training or feel comfortable talking about sexuality." Indeed, she notes, the "fact that a chassan or kallah teacher is supposed to talk about sexuality is not so obvious to them." And so Tzelem determined to "try to train the trainers" in its effort to transmit accurate knowledge to the public. These sessions have been taped and are available on CDs; the most recent conference took place on October 28, 2007 and was about "Creating Healthy Expectations in Our Kallot."

Secondly, however, Tzelem wanted to pilot a sexual-education

curriculum in Jewish day-schools and high-schools, in an effort to educate children so that by the time they were adults, they would feel comfortable with their sexuality. Yocheved Debow and Dr. Anna Woloski Wruble were the two women who created this curriculum, having met Jennie and Koby at the Orthodox Forum. Yocheved Debow explained that "the initiative for this curriculum started many years ago at the Fuchs Miz-rachi School in Cleveland by a woman named Miki Wieder. She was a parent in the school and a sex therapist who was troubled by the lack of sex ed. The curriculum really evolved out of her initiative in this area."

Debow, who is trained as a clinical psychologist and as an educator of Judaics, served as Academic Principal in the Middle School of a Jewish day school in Cleveland for a few years after having taught there for a while. She is currently

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were not paired together for most religious people. "The JOFA conference was something very important to me because that really brought everything together. When I learned previously we didn't discuss those details, we didn't really talk about sexuality, your wedding night and what to expect, and intimacy."

Also at the conference was Orly Lieberman, a former student in the Drisha Scholars Circle Program, and an accidental kallah teacher. "I had a friend who approached me," she explains. "She wanted to take kallah classes. I told her 'I never taught before, but if you want to be a guinea pig, I'd cater a class to you.'"

She provides handouts to her students, but prefers a more text-based approach. "I basically teach the Torah straight out of the text," she says. "I always start with the Torah... I talk about what can be found in the *Mishna*, in the *Gemara* [oral tradition], *Talmud*, in the *ahronim* [later Jewish authorities]." Her handouts are minimal—"nothing too extensive: things I've written up, and things I discuss, basic anatomy."

"I am the first step that many of my students turn to when they have questions," says Lieberman gravely. As many of her students' first instructor on family purity, she has encountered ignorance. "I have taught couples where they weren't observant but they wanted to find a way to integrate this [family purity] in their marriage...I have had the unfortunate experience to tell them that sex before marriage is also an *issur karet* [prohibition where a violation thereof results in a soul's being "cut off" from Israel], and you could watch their faces fall."

"It's a lack from their education that they equate sex and marriage," Lieberman reasons, "so that when you're married you need to keep *hilkhot niddah*."

"I find that many of my students don't know how to integrate the two - *niddah* and sexuality," says Lieberman, blaming this reality mainly on the education model. "Even though they heard of it [hilkhot niddah], they've never engaged in it," she explains. "And suddenly being *frum* [religiously observant] means something else than it did 6 months ago, and they don't have a healthy relationship model because we don't talk about it."

"There are some things I think a person doesn't need to know until they're on the precipice of having sex," she says, "but there are some things they should know. I think a woman should know her own anatomy, I think a woman should know what the sex act is."

"I do think there should be something prior [to engagement], but not details, that's not necessary," says another New York kallah teacher who wishes to remain anonymous. "But definitely something to ease the process."

"My husband is a rabbi and he often marries couples. He's a

mesader kiddushin [marriage officiator] and one of our pre-requirements to be a *mesadar kiddushin*, is that they learn with him and me." Through her studies of *taharat hamishpaha* in a variety of classes and readings, she began and continues her *niddah* education.

"They're going to learn it and do it before they get married at least once," she says of some of her openly unobservant students. "There is always concern, and sometimes I've been very surprised." She once bumped into a bride years after the initial instruction. "She told me 'Oh, the *mikvah* [ritual bath] in the Upper East Side is so beautiful," she speculates, "maybe they'll do it when they're in the mood...it's like planting seeds."

She teaches her kallah courses in three or four sessions, in which she verbally imparts the information she has garnered. "You need to keep the halakha, not know where it is," she explains.

Robin Naiman, the *mikvah* attendant in Silver Spring, MD as well as a kallah teacher, takes a similar approach to teaching, but sets certain conditions. "I had a girl come to me," she says, "...because of the *rabbanut* [rabbinate]; in Israel you can't get a *ketubah* [marriage document] unless you've learned with someone and they've signed off. And I won't do it unless they give me their word they'll come back [to the mikvah], it's not just for the rabbanut." Generally she teaches people in her community, siblings and friends of former students.

"When a girl comes to see me," says Naiman, "I assume she knows nothing about being with her husband and that she knows nothing about the halakha." Although she herself did learn *taharat hamishpaha* before marriage, she did not find it helpful. "I took *taharas hamishpaha* at Stern [College for Women]; I wasn't engaged, and it was like a joke to me," she explains. "Then, when I sat down, sure I remembered some things." However, she does not recommend that classes begin prior to engagement. "I don't think it's appropriate to do it until you're there," she says. "I don't think they should go into that, because it's a little scary."

Naiman only teaches one-on-one, to make her students more comfortable asking questions. "I didn't have a good experience with my kallah teacher," she says regretfully. "I asked her a question once. She responded to me in a way that I didn't ask her again. I was so profoundly affected that it was awkward after asking her. That's one of the reasons I do this."

INTERVIEW ON SEXUALITY IN THE ORTHODOX JEWISH COMMUNITY

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The Observer: Would you say that talking about sexuality in the Orthodox Jewish world is a taboo topic, and if so, why do you think that is?

Dr. Ribner: I don't think it is necessarily taboo; it is a topic that makes people uncomfortable and consequently people don't discuss it. Classical Jewish sources have been very forthright about dealing with sexuality. A couple years ago there was an article published by R' Aharon Lichtenstein in Tradition which I think is an excellent survey of halakhic literature over the past centuries. My understanding of contemporary poskim is that couples should be able to experience sexual pleasure and enjoy themselves in this realm. Many people who refer to me are Chassidish Rabbeim, Roshei Yeshiva and Mashgichim - people whom you might be surprised to hear talking about sexual dysfunctions but who realize that unless a couple is able to resolve these issues, it can be problematic or destructive.

The Observer: You mentioned earlier that people often come to you with insufficient information; is that information regarding the technical aspects of the sexual act or the Jewish point of view on the matter?

Dr. Ribner: The truth is that I don't really deal with people in terms of halakhic issues- if they have a problem with halakha, I send them to their Rabbi. And if there is a need for the Rabbi to consult with me, I will ask that he call me. I have no problem working within the boundaries he sets.

The insufficient information is generally how bodies are built, how hormones affect behavior, the "how to" of sexual activity. Couples have come to me after two or three years and have not known how to consummate their marriage because they simply have not known what to do.

The Observer: How can people acquire accurate information about sex, their bodies and the like?

Dr. Ribner: A number of your questions ask for specific information regarding normative sexual functioning and dealing with various sexual dysfunctions. What follows is a list of Internet sites that provide reliable, updated information:

www.siecus.org
www.aasect.org
www.sexualhealth.com
www.kinseyinstitute.org/ccies
www.nurtureyournature.org
www.goaskalice.columbia.edu

The Observer: Have you encountered any prevalent myths within the Orthodox community about sexuality? What are they, and could you explain how they are flawed?

Dr. Ribner: I am not aware of prevalent myths within the Orthodox community about sexuality. Regarding how others see us, I would be happy to email an article on this topic to anyone interested.

The Observer: Could you give the name of some books/ manuals/ places parents can go to seek guidance about how to have conversations with their children about sexuality?

Dr. Ribner: Guidance for parents wishing to talk with their children about sex and intimacy can be found at www.siecus.com, including a list of resources. Currently, no such material exists written for Orthodox families.

The Observer: How do Kallah Teachers/ Chassan Teachers generally acquire their knowledge/expertise in this area i.e. have they spoken with you or other doctors? What makes someone a reliable Kallah/ Chassan teacher?

Dr. Ribner: In recent years, Chassan and Kallah teachers have been afforded the opportunity to acquire reliable sexual information through courses given both in Israel and the U.S. in, for example, Bar-Ilan University and Yeshiva University. Unfortunately, there is no requirement that these teachers take such a course nor is there any way of knowing what information the young couple receives and the attitude with which it is presented. We have been lax in demanding communal quality control in this critical and sensitive area. We should not be proud of the fact that we expend significantly more energy ensuring the *kashrut* of our chickens than properly preparing our children for one of the most important aspects of their lives.

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Other articles written by Dr. Ribner are available at Yeshiva University's Tzelem Resources webpage: http://www.yu.edu/cjf/tzelem/page_cjf.aspx?id=18098

Those interested in contacting Dr. Ribner may do so by emailing him at: matzeel@hotmail.com

FEATURES

CHABAD'S TREMENDOUS RESPONSE TO TERROR

Yonit Tanenbaum

Stunned, lamenting, action. In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy that struck Mumbai, India on November 26th and 27th, Chabad took action. In tremendous ways, the ultra-orthodox Hassidic Jews redirected their grief into positive action in order to combat the evil that quaked their world.

"This week, no one is celebrating," said Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz, editor and publisher of the weekly newspaper, *Yated Neeman*. "But they are more united than ever before. After the atrocities in India, all of us are more united."

Among the hostages who were killed by terrorists at Mumbai's Nariman House were two Chabad *Shluchim* [emissaries] of the Lubavitcher Rebbe: Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg and his pregnant wife, Rivka.

In Chicago, a crowd of 1,300 showed unity and support at the Skokie Hotel on the evening of November 26th, for the Jewish Community's Memorial Evening of Tribute and Solidarity. Rabbi Daniel Moscovitz, regional director of Chabad Lubavitch of Illinois, read a letter from President-Elect Barack Obama that offered condolences to the entire Jewish community, acknowledged the "mission of service to the Jewish community" which the Holtzbergs provided, and vowed that the "terrorists with no regard for human life" would be brought to justice. Moscovitz then appealed to the crowd to utilize this moment of inspiration to add light to the world by increasing personal acts of goodness and kindness, a response central to Chabad values. *Mitzvah*-pledge cards were filled out by participants, which Moscovitz will take to the grieving families in Israel. 250 letters of comfort written by students of the Jewish day schools in Chicago will also be delivered. Hundreds of Friday Light kits were distributed to the participants as part of the Shabbat candle-light-

ing campaign.

Shluchim of Long Island gathered Sunday, November 30th at Chabad of Mineola for a memorial and prayer service, as reported by www.crownheights.info, a leading Chabad news site. The community, consisting of several Chabad institutions, joined in prayer, song, and inspirational speeches. Rabbi Raify Konikov, representing the neighboring Chabad emissaries, was chosen to travel to Israel for the Holtzberg's funeral.

About 1,000 people thronged to Gayley Avenue on Sunday, November 30th, to attend a memorial at the West Coast headquarters of Chabad in Los Angeles, California. Those in attendance paid tribute to the Holtzbergs and the other victims, vowing to combat the evil with acts of goodness, even in the face of the terrorist attacks.

Thousands of Jews, from every corner of the world, regardless of their prior observance, have pledged to do acts of kindness and good deeds in the wake of the terror attack in India. While some have taken upon themselves to light Shabbat candles or don traditional phylacteries, others have resolved to increase contributions to charity, go to their local Chabad House, show more love for their fellow man, learn from the Bible, or offer prayers to God. According to Chabad teachings, such deeds serve as the light that dispels darkness. "We must honor the souls of those torn away from us, by immortalizing their lives through our positive deeds," said Rabbi Simon Jacobson, scholar of mysticism and author of the best selling book *Toward a Meaningful Life*.

Donations have been steadily pouring into funds set up for the rebuilding of the Mumbai Chabad Center and to support the two orphaned Holtzberg children. "I attended a memorial for the victims of Chabad Mumbai at my synagogue on Saturday," said Lucette Lagnado, author and reporter for

the Wall Street Journal. "It was very crowded — filled with people I had never seen before. Worshippers went up to the pulpit and pledged thousands of dollars."

Arising from India's 9/11, as the media has termed the attacks, is peace and unity among Jews and even among the media; Jewish communities gathered together to pay tribute to the victims of terror in India, while media exchanged minute-to-minute updates.

In addition to the sorrow Jews are experiencing upon the loss of their own in India, the latest acts of terrorism have had a far-reaching, enabling effect on the entire Jewish community.

"This Shabbat you'll find me at a place I haven't been for years -- my local Chabad," proclaimed Rob Eshman, Editor-in-Chief of the Jewish Journal, on Friday, November 28th. "I hope you do the same. I hope rabbis of all stripes march down with their congregants to do

the same."

Mel Konner, author and professor at Emory University in Atlanta, GA, told CNN, "The extremists, the terrorists, the Islamist radicals... hate the prospect of peace among these nations and the possibility of progress and getting away from this violence... Unfortunately in these situations, it's always possible for a small number of people to have an exaggerated effect on everything."

"As we mourn [the Holtzberg] untimely and incomprehensible deaths," said Rabbi Pinchas Alouche, Chabad shliach to Scottsdale, AZ, "it is high time for each of us to continue their work with renewed vigor and conviction." Alouche encouraged Jews to continue to perpetuate Judaism, in their own lives as well as in the lives of every Jew encountered, which is in essence the very mission for which the Holtzbergs sacrificed themselves. "There could not be

a sweeter revenge for the barbaric terrorists, may their names be erased, who murdered them so cold-bloodedly," he added.

Naftali Salomon, a friend of the Holtzbergs', related, "Gabi and Rivka's entire goal in life was nothing other than to help a fellow human being in need, bring a fellow Jew closer to Judaism, or to simply put a smile on the face of someone who was feeling down. And they did so with the utmost sacrifice, selflessness and humility; never taking credit for their accomplishments or patting themselves on the back."

"What else can one do but look for the glimmers of light and hope amid the darkness and bitterness?" Salomon said, going on to describe the lasting impact the Holtzbergs had had on those whom they encountered, whether it be through the Jewish ritual bath they established, the prayer services they

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Despite tears and sadness, Chabad challenges others to build and grow from the Mumbai tragedy.

Huffingtonpost.com

PROFESSOR PROFILE

IMMUNOLOGIST DR. WEISBURG: FROM BIG TRUCKS TO BIG STRIDES

Yaira Dubin

A physiology class filled with laughter is a rather unusual thing. More often filled with groans, confusion, and utter silence, physiology isn't known for having a tremendous fun factor. Apparently, Dr. Jeffrey Weisburg hasn't heard of this stereotype; either that, or he chooses to ignore it. Whether cracking a joke or teasing a nervous test-taker, Dr. Weisburg's personal trademark is the incredible interest he shows in each of his students and the tangible excitement and energy with which he fills his classroom.

As both a professor of physiology and immunology and as a researcher, Dr. Weisburg has an extremely busy academic life. But he manages to make it look easy. When pressed to pick his favorite

part of what he does, he has trouble deciding. "If research is going great," he says, "then there's no better feeling or high in the world than getting the answers and discovering new things. But when my students are really interactive, there's nothing better than teaching students." The only part of the job that really gets to him, he says laughingly, is writing letters of recommendation.

A professor at Stern College for Women since 2002, Dr. Weisburg has started to truly grasp some of the Stern College idiosyncrasies. Wryly, he comments on the overwhelming obsession with on-lsychas.com and tights sales. But mixed in with his exasperation is his very real admiration for the college and its students. He places a tremendous amount of

import on students' opinions of his classes, maintaining that he is "never prouder than when a student comes back after graduating and thanks me that I affected their life for the better." His 2005 Professor of the Year Award occupies a prominent place in his office because it means an incredible amount to him that his teaching made a difference to so many of his students.

When asked what he would change about Stern if given the chance, he hesitates. "It's such a great school," he says, "...the only thing I would say is that ... being a small school, we're limited in what we can do lab-wise so I would love to use what we have around us more... we're in New York City and we have some of the greatest medical schools around us, including Ein-

stein. We should be able to use them more, for my own research purposes and for students... we get a great education but it could be even better if we saw cutting-edge research."

However, Dr. Weisburg's ambitions don't start and end with Stern College. His life goals include receiving an honorary degree from a university in recognition of his research discoveries concerning multi-drug resistant cancer, and having his obituary deserve a place in the *New York Times*.

Dr. Weisburg's role model as a complete human being is his aunt, Rhoda Eisenberg. "She did everything right," he states. "She was a fantastic physician and a fantastic parent." Dr. Weisburg follows in her footsteps, balancing his career in academics with his family life at

home in Aberdeen, NJ. He coaches both his sons' baseball and soccer teams while playing an active role in his synagogue, Temple Shalom. He proudly states that he loves to cook, claiming that in fifteen years of marriage his wife has only cooked dinner about thirty times — the rest were his own creations.

Dr. Weisburg didn't always picture himself as an immunologist; as a child, he wanted to be either a garbage collector or a fireman because "they both drive big trucks." Even once he reached graduate level he was still considering a career in neuropharmacology. It wasn't until he began research for his thesis that he realized how much the field of immunology interested him.

Dr. Weisburg offers a valuable

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FEATURES

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES
JEWISH COMMUNITY IN PANAMÁ

Myriam Camhi

Panamá is a small country in Central America, sandwiched between Colombia and Costa Rica. It is mostly known for its world wide famous Canal, for its recent construction boom and as a sunny and relaxing place for Americans to retire. Some might have even heard about the beautiful beaches, calm waters and lively nightlife, as well as about its famous shopping venues and intense business and commercial activities. Panamá has become the trade connection between the Far East and Latin America.

However, most people do not know about Panamá's best kept secret: the most vibrant Jewish community in the region that

numbers almost 9,000 souls. This Jewish community lives in the smallest Spanish speaking country in Latin America whose population is barely 3 million.

The Jews in Panamá are ranked number one in Jewish population growth outside of Israel, having grown from 2,000 people to its current number in just a couple of decades. Panamá is the only country in the world (besides Israel) to have had two Jewish presidents, Max Shalom del Valle in 1969 and Erik del Valle Maduro between 1985 and 1988.

What is this little country's community strategy for success? Many say that the strong and consistent leadership of Rabbi Sion Levy, very recently deceased (he passed away this past November), completely

transformed the community from a small group of families into what it is today: a solidly orthodox (85% have kosher homes and observe Shabbat), growing *kehilah* [congregation] with strong bases in *tzedakah* [charity] and widely appealing Jewish education.

In fact, enrollment in Jewish schools reaches 98%, an amazing number when compared to the majority of the countries in the Diaspora, whose Jewish schools must constantly compete against other non-Jewish public and private schools for students. There are 3 Jewish schools in Panamá city and a newly founded Yeshiva, each catering to different interests and tastes, but with the common goal of providing quality Judaic and secular education. Panamá

also boasts 3 synagogues.

Most graduating high school students stay in Panamá to pursue their careers in national universities. Stephanie Manopla, a Panamanian first-year student at Stern, left because she wanted to meet other people and study in New York. "However, I would like to return one day," she says. "Panamá is a great place to raise kids and to have a family."

The flourishing religious growth that is present in Panamá today is the product of a long and difficult process. Jewish immigration formally began during the 19th century, when Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews arrived to Panamá in substantial numbers looking for economic opportunities related to railroad construction of railroads and the Californian Gold Rush. The first congregation was called Kol Shearit Israel and was founded in 1876.

Throughout the past century, many more families came to escape the wave of violence in the Arab countries such as Syria and Egypt, and from Nazi Europe. These families eventually established the congregations Shevet Achim (the largest congregation in Panamá) and the Beth El respectively, and established successful businesses along with the aperture of the canal. However, up until the middle of the century, the incipient Jewish community numbered roughly 600 souls.

When Rabbi Levy first came to the country in 1951, he found a community that was barely observant and not interested in becoming more so. With much tenacity and perseverance he was able to reach even the most reluctant and unwilling among the community members to raise consciousness about the importance of religious

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CHABAD'S
TREMENDOUS
RESPONSE TO
TERROR

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conducted, the Jewish weddings they presided over, and their son Moshe who "miraculously survived thanks to the heroic nanny."

Perusing the headlines of articles posted on Chabad websites, one would surely notice the influx of news announcements of Chabad-initiated memorials in cities across America as well as internationally, in which entire Jewish communities have joined in mourning. Unity, support, solidarity; Jews have shown their fundamental ties, many disregarding their differences in denomination, by joining together in memorial and action to honor the Holtzbergs and others killed in Mumbai.

"You know, this is the Chabad spirit: turn tears into action and into energy," said Rabbi Shalom Paltiel, a close friend of the Holtzbergs, during his interview on NBC's Today Show.

"In order to succeed in this battle," wrote Uri Orbach in his article titled "Light versus Darkness" published in Ynet News, "we must realize that this is yet another struggle between the sons of light and the sons of darkness. And light shall win."

Today, after the global media coverage of the horrific Anti-Semitic events in Mumbai, the world has more exposure to Judaism and Jews: a people steadfast in their beliefs and selfless acts to bring the world to a better place - one not of darkness, but of light.

It begs the ironic question: was this the terrorists' intent?

EVERY WOMAN A MANAGER

Estee Goldshmidt

Some students at Stern College for Women may believe that if one does not have to take a class to fulfill a certain requirement, there is no point in taking the course. Although Stern's many general requirements provide college students with a wealth of basic knowledge, there may be a certain natural quest for knowledge that is lost in the race for a degree. Certain classes can prove beneficial for any student, regardless of her major. One example of such a class would be Principles of Management 1020, given by Dr. Horvath Rosh. Although the Principles of Management course is essential for any student at Sy Syms School of Business and covers the basics of business management, it may also be extremely valuable for women planning to pursue a careers in teaching, administration and other fields. It may even be useful for those intending to be housewives, since it deals with issues of leadership, communication, and time management—issues that do not only arise in business settings.

Instead of the usual classroom setting, Rosh (or Lisa, as she prefers to be addressed) divides the class into teams of four to six girls who work on a *hesed* [charitable] project together throughout the duration of the semester. At the outset, each team sits together in a circle and chooses a project that requires an average of two hours of work per week outside the classroom. "One cannot learn management from a book, just as one cannot learn swimming from a textbook" says Rosh. "This project will give students a way to practically implement the theory that we learn in class."

Leadership, teamwork and time management are the class's three foci. The first session of the week is a practical in-class exercise which requires team members to use their creativity in order to carry out the exercise effectively, while the second class is a debrief of the exercise from the previous session followed by theory and simulation of the topic being cov-

ered at the time.

Another thing that makes Lisa's Principles of Management class unique is that it has no midterms or finals. The course requires students to write six papers throughout the course of the semester, demonstrating the student's ability to reflect upon the various class projects, team work and theory, and show how they help or hinder the student's personal life.

One day this semester, the classroom is transformed into a coffee shop, where some students become workers and some become customers. From one round of customers to the next, technique and service are discussed and improved. For example, a large container of coffee was exchanged for individual coffee packets. Although individual packets ensured the superior quality of the coffee, to use them would require much more work on the side of the person serving. To speed up the process, a cashier was placed next to the worker. Food and drink were given out in class, making the atmosphere in the classroom more informal and opening minds to new ideas and creative thinking.

The next week the class was presented with a dilemma: a certain company has twenty applicants for a certain job and only six job openings. The class is provided with a brief biography of every applicant. The class has the power to hire six of those twenty. Each team had to choose the six people they would employ and explain why. Although this exercise made many students feel uncomfortable, Professor Rosh said: "Realizing priorities is the beginning of self awareness." One of the teams in the class, "The Interns," said that they found the task very difficult because by choosing to hire certain people, they were rejecting others.

"I look forward to Monday activities in Management class," relates Miriam Gerstein, a sophomore at SSSB.

Once all the class members were divided into three groups: "uppers," "middles," and "lowers,"

there was a project that had to be completed by the "lowers." However, only the "uppers" knew what the project entailed and how it had to be carried out. The "uppers" were able to communicate with the "lowers" via the "middles;" the whole project had a time boundary and the class was supposed to figure out how to achieve the goal, despite the difficulties. The Principles of Management class of 2008 did not succeed in completing the task. "Throughout my whole teaching career, I have had only two groups of students which successfully finished this project," commented Professor Rosh at the end of the class.

During the debrief and the theory session the class learned why they had been unsuccessful and the importance of clear and respectful communication between the management of an operation and its workforce. "I have learned the importance of hearing opinions of other people," says sophomore Nicole Rey-Leon about her experience in the class.

Projects teams varied from providing students with the opportunity to vote, to organizing fundraising events with raffle drawings, to bringing different communities together through an interactive learning experience. Each team worked on their project throughout the semester, and at the end of the semester, each team made a presentation to the entire class demonstrating what their project entailed, what difficulties they had encountered, and how they had been overcome. At the end of the presentation, each team member related what they personally gained from being involved in the project.

Dr. Lisa Rosh not only teaches the principles of management, but provides her students with the tools and opportunities to apply the principles to management to real life in a fun manner. "To tell you the truth," relates Jackie Sapoznik, "I am a freshman and did not know what I was getting into by registering for this class. I was very lucky."

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 PARTICIPATE IN YOUR GRADUATION CEREMONY.

OPINIONS

BOILED FROGS

Abby Vishniavsky

I walked up to the men loading the vending machines. "Is it possible to turn off the lights in the machines," I inquired of a short man in a grey sweatshirt and brown cap. He responded with a quick, "Why?"

I took a deep breath awaiting the tumble of words that have splashed, spilled, rolled, and dove out of my mouth on the many occasions that I find an opportunity to speak about the environment. My tongue moved rapidly, my lips shaping sounds to form words as thoughts flew out of my mouth before I had a chance to process them.

I explained that, for starters, this university is amidst a budget crisis and that even small things like turning off unneeded lights in the vending machines make a difference. My real concern, however, I began, was the environment. The electricity used to light the vending machines, although not an enormous amount relative to how many lights are turned on throughout campus daily, is an unneces-



Is our complacency toward the element demonstrates similar to the boiling frog phenomenon?

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sary use of electricity that may originate from numerous electricity plants that put tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. The man pushed his hat up slightly with his thumb, revealing bewildered eyes and knitted eyebrows. A blunt response in a thick

Spanish accent—"But then you can't see the food."

I realized with a jolt of reality where my environmentalist outburst brought me, enjoying it with every drop. "You can't see the soda until it comes out," I logically responded, noticing the numerous types of machines there were in the long row. "That's the first place you even see what your dollar bought," I said, pointing to the small black square hole at the

bottom of the soda machine. His quizzical look deepened, "Do you really think that will make a difference? I'm not in charge of this anyways. He is." He pointed to a man with long, curled *payos* [side-locks] who was speaking rapidly into a cell phone wedged between his shoulder and ear, as his hands busily stuffed bags of pretzels into the empty coils of the vending machine in front of him.

As soon as he ended his cell phone call, I approached him with a clenched grin, knowing what awaited. I began a conversation that sounded eerily similar to the exchange I had experienced less than two minutes previously. "How old are you anyways, 80, 110? Don't you have better

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WE'VE HIT A FLAT NOTE

Dana Adler

I came to college to be educated. I didn't come because it was "the thing to do" or because my parents had forced me, but because I wanted a true and well-rounded education. The kind a young nineteen-year-old with a full-time job dreams about: an education that broadens horizons and leaves one with a feeling of accomplishment, and not just on a social level. I wanted all of the social and intellectual things that come with college. Of course grades cannot be overlooked, and are very important, but in the scheme of things, when all is said and done, the *real* importance is the information gleaned from the incredible professors and faculty that the university has to offer.

Unfortunately, no matter the reason, several adjunct professors have been given smaller course loads and less classes to teach. One such professor is Chris Buchenholz.

Anyone who has taken Chris's music class can attest to the fact that Chris does not follow the "standard" approach to teaching. His curriculum marches to its own drum. He grades based on effort, and asks that his students not leave his classroom clinging to the memory of a grade point average, but rather things that were *felt* throughout the semester. Chris brings uniqueness to the class: he recognizes that music is not something appreciated by all, nor understood by all. Yet he has patience and regard for each and every student that enters his universe of music. And everyone leaves with something, from the most unappreciative to the most unreachable student.

Our university is a unique dichotomy in and of itself: we often talk about the "Yeshiva" versus the "University" aspect and the dilemmas and clashes the two can bring. On the Yeshiva front, we strive to look past the competition and the grades and one-upmanship, and do our best to learn the Torah purely for its own sake. This is ex-

actly what Chris does in his music class. His class is an escape, where one leaves remembering the content and the means rather than the ends. Chris encourages everyone to *think*, a concept often lost in the routine of memorization and spit-back that students get caught up in on a daily basis. He introduces each and every student to music and what it has to offer while challenging our capacity to expand our spectrum of knowledge and culture. He doesn't expect us to see things through his eyes and point of view, but rather through every individual student's perspective.

Chris brings the "*lishma*" [for its own sake] aspect of learning to the "university" half. To destroy this is criminal. A horrible crime has been committed when the pursuit of knowledge is halted. I am talking about a teacher whom I have come to respect and admire tremendously after one short semester of being fortunate enough to be a part of his wonderful and dynamic world which we simply call a classroom. I know I am not alone in thinking this. I have overheard conversations in hallways, elevators, between current and past students talking about the misfortune of not only the demotion of Chris, but of all the future students who will never have the opportunity to learn from a true genius. It's very rare that a genius can teach and relate to people on a regular intellectual level. This is what Chris does, and to rob him of that opportunity is truly criminal, and affects too many people. My thoughts on the matter had to be put into words, and words must be put into action. As a mere student, I am not privy to all of the facts behind the cutbacks, but I do know is that a major injustice is being committed against adjunct professors. Chris is one example of many adjunct professors who need more classes, since without that opportunity the student body is being robbed of the gifts that these professors have to offer. I, for one, cannot let this injustice pass without saying a word.

BODY, MIND AND SOUL:
THE CROSS-COUNTRY EFFECT

Annie Wasserman

If you had asked me three years ago if I would ever join the cross-country team, I would have laughed in your face. Yet, here I am, a senior at Stern College, captain of the cross-country team for my second consecutive year. It all began in 2006 at the 5K for Israel race in Van Cortlandt Park when Jake Benesch, who is now assistant coach to our amazing leader, Stan Watson, recognized that a few Stern girls liked running. The rest is history.

What is there to like about running? Why should someone join the cross-country team? These are questions that might float through your mind. The best way to explain would be to describe the way in which the team fits together, its camaraderie, unity, and perseverance, and the way in which these meets help join us together, forging us into one unit. For example, at our most recent meet, twelve women lined up in their blue Lady Mac uniforms ready to try their very best, even if that meant running, jogging, or merely walking. Despite what you might think, the cross-country team is not actually about speed. It is about having a great time, taking in the beautiful scenic surroundings, and pushing it through until the very end with out giving up.

Although only five members of the team were present at the pre-season sports camp, the team qua-

drupled in size with the beginning of the fall semester. The new additions definitely missed a growing experience during pre-season training. Running three to four miles twice daily during sports camp, including one run that took place extremely early in the morning, we came into the season feeling prepared. Additionally, Carrie Heimann, the athletic trainer on the Beren Campus, gave daily conditioning sessions, which left team members super sore, but somehow crying for more. It was great to be back in camp as a camper again. The camp had immaculate facilities and grounds for swimming, boating, and playing any other sport imaginable. Nights were spent hanging out, playing volleyball, and bonding with the other sports teams, which included women's soccer, volleyball and tennis, and men's soccer and cross country. The teams that attended sports camp were availed of a unifying experience that has carried through to life on campus. Sports, friends, and Judaism—what more could you want as a start to a new school year? Although I cannot speak for the other teams, I know that the cross-country team left feeling like an actual cohesive unit and as a participant of YU athletics.

For the team, leaving pre-season meant co-ed Friday morning practices at Van Cortlandt Park and Sunday meets. Our practices in

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RACISM ON CAMPUS

Lauren Burstein

During a recent Hebrew class, I sat silently, perhaps stunned, as some surprising comments surfaced from inside the classroom. A discussion arose after reading Yehuda Amichai's poem, "Jerusalem." The poem, which Amichai wrote in 1967, just before the start of the Six Day War, describes a Jew who is gazing from the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem's Old City, onto the Palestinian section of the city. The Jew sees a kite in the sky, which is presumably held by a child, and some dirty laundry hanging to dry. The imagery that Amichai uses throughout the poem to depict the Palestinian section of the city is not that of hostility or hatred. Amichai wrote the poem during a time of poverty, of pain, and of fright. The poem describes the sadness felt by both parties, a sadness that may only be felt by one race: the human race.

Angry voices filled the back of the classroom. "How can he [Amichai] say this?" "He wants us to feel bad for the Arabs?" "They were the ones who started the war." A determined student dared to argue with the majority opinion, "Actually, the Egyptians started the war, not the Palestinians." Suddenly, tension arose in the classroom. No longer was there only a disagreement between the students and Yehuda Amichai, but there was



Yehuda Amichai dared to describe Palestinians as something other than the enemy. Do subsequent class reactions make Stern students racist?

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also a disagreement within the student body itself. A supporter for the majority opinion had to respond to the unworthy statement; she had to assert her opinion over a pure fact: "Yeah, well they're all the same." No one responded, either because they agreed with the statement, or because such a perverse proclamation was not worthy of response.

Looking back on the situation, I realized that this was not the first time that I was exposed to such an attitude on campus. On November 5th, 2008, the day after Barack Obama was elected the next

president of the United States, a friend of mine walked into my room looking very angry. She told me that a girl in one of her classes announced to everyone, "Well, I don't like Obama. I'm a racist, and I can't help it." *A racist?* Does this girl have any idea how much this remark negates Jewish values? One major aspect of Judaism is *tikkun olam*, or the *reparation of the world*. As Jews, we are obliged to help with the world's progression; we have the duty to exemplify morality. We are certainly not permitted to engage in conduct that would contribute to the world's ethical decline.

Furthermore, someone who makes such inappropriate comments must not realize that her remark is contradictory, due to the mere fact that she is not only a Jew, but is an American, as well. "I can't help it." What does that mean? We do not live under an apartheid government, which breeds prejudicial citizens. On the contrary, America is a place where people are free to make their own decisions, and it is certainly a place where people can be the commanders of their own thoughts. The speaker most definitely *can* control her thoughts; she most certainly *can* "help it."

I speak as an American, as a Jew,

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OPINIONS

REMOVING THE SHACKLES OF ATSCAD

Malka Margolin

Take in the following, not unusual, scene: a student walks into the Caf. Immediately after making her way down the stairs, she plucks her cell phone out of her pocket and begins to militantly dial numbers. Her eyes continuously peruse the tables of students before her. But, to no avail, she can reach none of her friends and sees no familiar-enough face in the Caf. Fear, nerves, and, in some cases, slight nausea overtake her. She buys her food, puts it in a bag, and leaves. This young woman's experience is a prime example of a manifestation of the all-too-common SCW disorder: the "Afraid to Sit in the Caf Alone Disorder" or what is simply known as ATSCAD. ATSCAD can be described as the fear of sitting alone or of being seen sitting alone in the caf. Sufferers often fear that their fellow caf-goers will assume that they are friendless. It is quite possible that you have been blessed enough not to suffer from this detrimental disorder, but it is highly likely that you know of at least a few young women who do

suffer from it. However, if you are pained by this vicious state of mind, take my hand, and let us venture forward together past this dangerous condition and onto freedom.

One fine evening, I sat in the Caf with a friend and enjoyed the delightful mush that I had purchased. Suddenly, someone with whom I was slightly familiar appeared before us and said that she would stand with us until her friend returned to the table at which they were sitting. My tone of voice must have revealed my surprise when I asked her, "You won't sit at the table alone for a few minutes?" In reply, I received words that conveyed deep admiration for my independence. *Independence?!*

Okay, I will take a compliment any day, but this does not have much to do with independence. This has to do with having a little bit of confidence in yourself. If you sit in the Caf by yourself, it does not mean you do not have friends. No one is looking at you and thinking, "Poor girl. She has no friends." And even if that thought does happen to cross

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MY EXPERIENCE AT BEIT HASHALOM

Chana Scholl

About two years ago, when I was in my shana alef [first year] in seminary, I stayed at Beit HaShalom in Chevron for Shabbos with my friend Michelle. As I recall, we really didn't know what we were getting into at the time—we just fell into the situation. We had originally wanted to go somewhere unusual and exotic for Shabbos, like Tel Aviv or Haifa, but had settled on Michelle's great uncle's family in Talpiyot. However, then our plans fell through on Thursday night. I remember that we both panicked upon hearing this news—we did NOT want to stay in the dorm that Shabbos. Desperate, Michelle called a friend who referred her to her radical uncle in Kiryat Arba from whom she ex-

tracted the number of a lady who gave her the number of a family that lived near Hevron, the Hizmes, who would certainly love to host us. We called Mrs. Hizme, with whom we spoke in our broken Hebrew for a while, until we realized that she was conversant in English, and she invited us to stay with her family for the weekend. I think she mentioned something about a strategic something or another and potential danger. We really weren't paying all that much attention; we were just thrilled that we were going someplace cool for Shabbos and were rather pleased that this whole arrangement had worked out well in the end.

When we arrived at their home the next day, Mr. Hizme took us around the local museum, a testa-

ment to the Hevron Massacre. Mrs. Hizme explained to us that her family, together with her married daughter, son-in-law, and new grandchild, were taking strides towards moving into this building, Beit HaShalom, which had been purchased by an American Jew from an Arab. At that point, the Hizmes were using their "real home" for the purposes of preparing food for Shabbos, because the electricity in the Peace House was too unreliable. She explained that in going to stay in the Peace House over Shabbos we were participat-

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BODY, MIND AND SOUL: THE CROSS-COUNTRY EFFECT

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The Bronx were filled with discussions on life, *hashkafa* [religious outlook], and a little bit of running technique. Like our running, these discussions were led by our coach, Stan Watson. Stan has coached at Yeshiva University for twenty years. Stan imparts us with his own unique *mussar* and his thoughts on God and His goodness. He always encourages us and asks only for our effort—not for perfection. I've learned from Stan that running is a way of serving our Creator: through exercise, we appreciate the world via our eyes and our bodies. Throughout both the good meets and the interesting experiences of running in freezing rain, Stan always stays positive. I could not have pounded through some of those runs without his support and influence. He claims that if he would die tomorrow, he would be content. He is happier than Donald Trump. I believe in what Stan teaches and aspire to be like him.

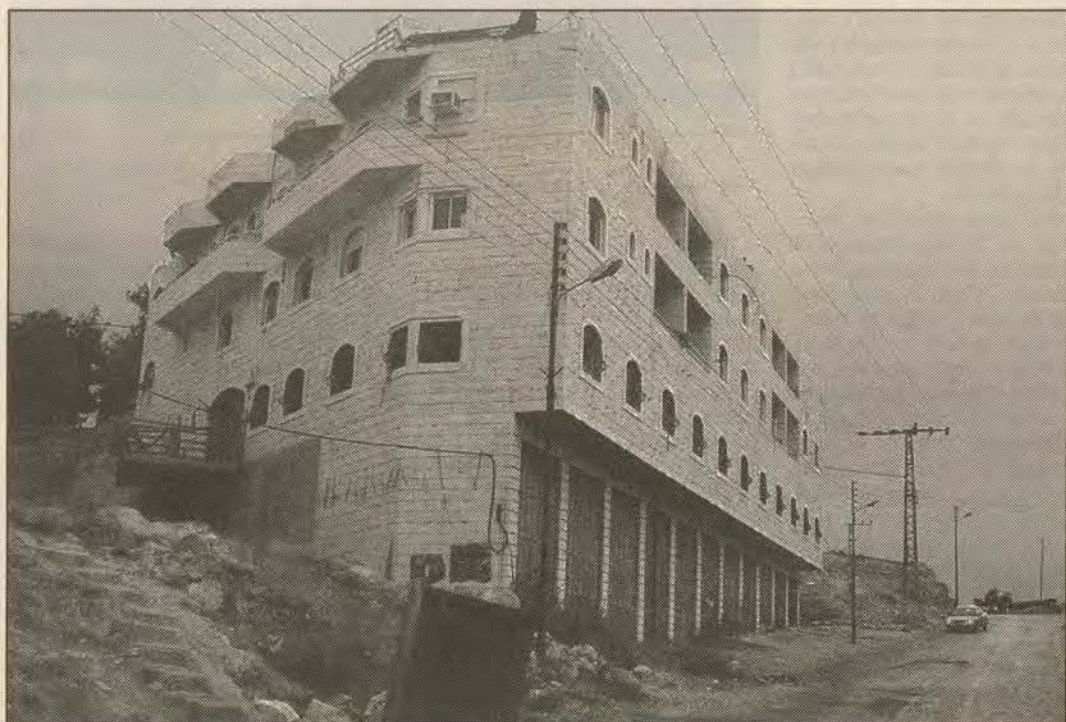
But I am not Coach Watson. I am a Jewish girl who runs in a skirt. Running in such attire at meets of seventy to one hundred people allowed the other teams a more diverse experience. Many times, as I would run in my skirt and long sleeves, women running next to me would gasp, "How are you running in those clothes?" Mind you, they most likely were dressed as if they were ready to go swimming. I would kindly reply, "Are

you hot? That makes two of us!" The occasional interaction of this sort always left me out of breath, but still smiling. Most of our team tried to offer words of encouragement to opposing team members, and other teams expressed gratitude and respect.

Have you ever tried running three to five miles in extreme weather conditions along mountainous terrain? You should try it sometime. It is not an easy task to accomplish, but after each stride of pain, the feeling of achievement is incredible. The best part is seeing the finish line, knowing that my teammates—men and women alike—are waiting for me. Then, when it is my turn to cheer on my teammates, whether they come in 1st or 101st place, watching them cross the finish line is reward enough. Watching my teammates finish a race makes every bead of sweat and minute of frostbite I experience worthwhile. The running itself can be extremely difficult during races, but it was the team bonding during practices and the long drives throughout the season that made my experience so amazing. Each of the seventeen women on the team has not only become my running buddy, but is a sister to me now, as well.

Our last race was bittersweet. Literally. There were Entenmann's waiting for us at the end, as well as other teams dressed up as fairies and construction workers. Our

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Our family is ailing when we evict people from Peace Houses.

Wikipedia

ARTS AND CULTURE

ON MATTRESSES, PRINCESSES AND PEAS

Olivia Wiznitzer

Based on the December 15 performance.

Despite having started half an hour late, "Once Upon A Mattress," the Stern musical which premiered December 14 and 15, was a captivating, entertaining retreat to a considerably revved-up version of the fairytale "The Princess and the Pea." After a lush, beautiful overture, the work of Aliza Greenland (Music Director), the curtains opened to reveal a beautiful set featuring golden chairs and a painted window overlooking a moat, complete with painted reeds and the like. Actresses were adorned in beautiful costumes in all the colors of the rainbow; DeeDee Klein and Georgie's efforts were clearly appreciated. While it was somewhat confusing to watch an opening scene that featured actresses performing as the Queen, Prince and Princess who did not actually reprise those roles in the rest of the musical, and oddly turned into guards and ladies-in-waiting instead, Dina Horowitz's (Lady Arabella in the musical, and the Princess in the dramatic prologue) dancing was exquisite.

In an entertaining move, Gabi Binstock (Minstrel/Assistant Art Director) told over the conventional version of "The Princess and the Pea" before segueing into the true version, which features an

overbearing queen, a meek prince and a very unconventional princess. Unfortunately, it was not very easy to see Gabi during her various interludes and asides, as the lights were dimmed to a cool ice blue, and nobody thought to introduce a spotlight upon the storytelling minstrel. Even so, Binstock entertained admirably in her feathered cap as she strummed on a lute and proceeded to tell the tale.

Rivkah Rogawski, who played the part of Queen Aggravain, developed the role admirably, although she sometimes seemed to take a little too much inspiration from the extremely pompous Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland*. Loud, rude, arrogant and larger-than-life, Rogawski's Aggravain commanded the stage in a splendid black and silver robe interwoven with shimmering fabric, long red tresses and a permanently dissatisfied expression.



DeeDee Klein as Princess Winifred the Woebegone, alias Laura Mitzner, peers out from atop her bed of 20 mattresses.

Despite the fact that she claims to desire the marriage of Prince Dauntless, portrayed as a meek, confused young lad by the dark-eyed and melodic Rebecca Grazi, her tests, which are concocted with the help of the Wizard Cardamon (Deenie Wasserman, resplendent in a starred wizard's hat and loose robes), are designed to ensure that any contender ultimately fails. This causes much misery in the kingdom as none are permitted to

wed before the Prince does, and so two overhasty lovers, the dashing Sir Harry (Alana Himber's delicately feminine beauty and jutting chin add just the right touch of charm to this debonair knight) and Lady Larken (Shosh Balk, with the sweetest voice of them all) find themselves in a problematic position when the Lady realizes she is pregnant! It is at this point that Sir Harry must launch a daring escape to find a princess for Dauntless, so that he and his lady can wed.

Amid the confusion, there is the mute and aptly named King Sextimus, brilliantly portrayed by Arielle Gorman, who stole the show. Gorman is extremely expressive with her body, a gymnast whose talents extend to acting, as her facial expressions were also extremely evocative. Mute until "the mouse devours the hawk," as a prophecy states, Sextimus contents himself with drinking wine, mocking his arrogant wife behind her back, and chasing women along with his sidekicks, the Jester (Elana Wenner) and the Minstrel. The Jester, whose motley and makeup were very cleverly done (silver and black glitter achieved a fascinating effect; the costume was probably one of the most difficult) was wonderful in his good humor and wit.

At long last, Sir Harry returns to the castle with a princess in tow. However, this princess has swum the moat, an entirely unladylike act which immediately makes her the King's darling and Dauntless' favorite. Princess Winifred the Woebegone, portrayed by Laura Mitzner, was a close second if not equal to Gorman, also managing to win the hearts of Schot-

tenstein Cultural Center's nicely sized audience. Loud, unladylike, and someone who is clearly interested in getting the party started, Princess Winifred brings zest, pizzazz and fireworks to the show with her incredibly amusing admission that in fact she is "Shy" while her every move demonstrates that she is the farthest thing from that bashful state. Determined to beat the Queen at her own game, this very unpolished princess - who clearly has a golden heart - attempts to study history and spelling in order to ensure that she will pass Aggravain's test and triumph.

Trouble is brewing between Sir Harry and Lady Larken, however, as Lady Larken has mistakenly assumed that Princess Winifred is actually a servant (she was, to give her credit, basing her assumption on the fact that Winifred seemed to be mopping the floor) and Sir

Harry cannot forgive her for that. Their dramatic fight and confrontation concluded to a showering onslaught of applause. These two lovers are extremely silly in their antics, which are expansively ridiculous to the point that the King, the Fool and the Minstrel engage in a scheme to help Lady Larken escape, but are found out by the irritated Queen Aggravain, who is insisting on QUIET to ensure that Princess Winifred sleeps. The Queen has devised a test, along with the Wizard, that she is sure the Princess will fail - a test of her sensitivity, for she will place one pea underneath twenty mattresses, and only if Winifred feels it will she be able to marry the Prince.

It is at this juncture that the props master may consider herself brilliant. Although Ani Brieger, a professional artist, beautifully painted the set's castle walls, moat and reeds, nearly all might wonder how a scene with twenty mattress-



Beautiful in black and white, Elana Wenner's Jester amused and delighted.

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FACING FEARS IN THE ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

Clara Hersh

In the film "Narrow Bridge," writer and director Israel Moskovits confronts the controversial issue of sexual abuse in the Orthodox Jewish world. Moskovits plays the protagonist, Daniel Schneider, a philosophy major attending secular college. He meets Rachel Goldberg (Samantha Leshin) in a philosophy class. The pair quickly forges a bond discussing philosophy and religion, enhanced by the fact that they are seemingly the two Jews on campus. While Rachel has not grown up religious, she is interested in learning more about her heritage. Daniel helps Rachel learn about Judaism and both grow to admire each other over the process, during which they begin dating and eventually become engaged.

Their relationship has its complexities. Rachel is quick to open up to Daniel and divulge her past, but Daniel is very elusive about his life before college. Whenever Rachel asks about his past, Daniel evades her questions and hastily changes the subject. A flashback reveals that the reason for Daniel's elusiveness is because when he was young, Rabbi Kaufman, a teacher whom he trusted and who had helped him in his struggle with Judaism, had one day offered

him a ride home, then took a detour and sexually abused him.

When Rachel goes home with Daniel to meet his parents, Daniel is once again confronted with his childhood trauma, as well as Rabbi Kaufman himself. This throws Daniel into a state of panic. He starts to fight with his mother and fiancé and draws away from them. His behavior is so erratic that Rachel begins to question whether or not she made a mistake accepting Daniel's marriage proposal.

The climax occurs when Rachel gives Daniel an ultimatum. She demands Daniel tell her what is bothering him, and threatens that she will go back to college and break off the engagement if he does not comply. In an emotional confession, Daniel tells Rachel about the rabbi who abused him, and she suggests that he bring the rabbi to justice. Before Daniel can have such closure, however, the rabbi is struck by a car and killed. Daniel is left to mend his emotional wounds without the resolution he needed. He ultimately finds solace in his relationship with God, his fiancée, and his supportive family.

"Narrow Bridge" confronts many contentious themes. First, Moskovits tries to tackle the quest of a Modern Orthodox boy in college. Daniel is the first one in his family

to go to college. After a lifetime of Jewish education, he is thrust into a secular college where he must survive as the only Orthodox Jew on campus. This situation has a straining effect on Daniel and his family, and his mother is not entirely supportive of Daniel's engagement to a *baalat teshuva* [one who chooses to return to Judaism.] Daniel disagrees with his family on what it means to be an Orthodox Jew and this conflict manifests itself when he brings Rachel home to meet his parents.

The other main theme in "Narrow Bridge" is the presentation of sexual abuse in the Orthodox Jewish community. There is a false assumption in many religious communities that sexual abuse does not exist within their enclosed society, making it harder for victims to come out or call their abusers to justice. Although "Narrow Bridge" was amateur in its filmmaking technique, this particular message is presented with powerful force, showing the damage inflicted on the victim and the effects that appear later in life. Daniel's relationship with Rachel was strained because of his abuse, and it also affected his view of God and justice because in his view Rabbi Kaufman had not received proper retribution.



Daniel and Rachel's lives intersect, revealing a terrible secret.

narrowbridgefilm.com

Sexual abuse occurs in all communities. What may cause it to be more damaging in a religious community is the denial of its existence, or worse, total awareness of the situation, followed by abrupt concealment. There have been cases where teachers were found to be sexual abusers, but rather than being publicized, were merely relocated to other schools, putting other children at risk. Many abusers are not strangers, but individuals that have a bond with their victims. Like the Catholic priests who abused children in their community, Rabbi Kaufman was a clergy member in power who had the respect and admiration of the child he damaged. Sexual abuse from a clergy member could be even more

traumatizing because it has the power to cause disillusionment of the religion itself. One of Daniel's most admirable attributes in "Narrow Bridge" is his utter conviction to Judaism despite his abuse.

Israel Moskovits deserves commendations for confronting this important issue. In his film he exposes the reality of sexual abuse in the Jewish community, making it accessible not only to Jews, but to non-Jews, too, who are unaware of the effects. "Narrow Bridge" has been screened on campuses around the country and is continuing to open the dialogue in the Jewish community about this significant problem just beginning to break its surface.

ARTS AND CULTURE

PSYCHOLOGICAL MERRY-GO-ROUND

Yaelle Frohlich

The Broadhurst Theatre's revival of "Equus", directed by Thea Sharrock, has received considerable media coverage thanks to its two stars, Daniel Radcliffe (playing Alan Strang) and Richard Griffiths (playing Martin Dysart). Although hype is often overrated, this production does not disappoint.

"Equus" is the story of psychiatrist Martin Dysart's attempt to understand disturbed teenager Alan Strang's motivation for blinding six horses. Playwright Peter Shaffer wrote "Equus" after a friend mentioned a similar crime of animal cruelty in passing, and Shaffer was so disturbed by the crime that he sought a way to explore the incident so that it "could be made comprehensible." All but the crime itself is made-up.

"Equus" first appeared at the National Theatre of Great Britain in 1973, eventually running over 1200 performances on Broadway and winning the 1975 Tony Award for Best Play.

Peter Shaffer wrote a note in 2008 (included in the playbill) that he was hesitant to allow "Equus" to be produced so many years after its debut, worried that psychiatric techniques may have changed significantly since the 1970s. Many theatergoers will certainly be relieved that Shaffer came to the conclusion he did, leading to the current production.

"Equus" explores passion and its limits, as well as the nature of insanity. Alan Strang (Radcliffe) is consumed by a religion of horses that he has created in his mind, while Martin Dysart (Griffiths) wallows in the monotony and marital dysfunction in his own life. The

audience is challenged to identify which is the worse disease: a passion that violates society's beliefs and morals, or a socially approved life completely devoid of any passion.

The production uses very little scenery or props, with a few grey stage boxes as the set's only furniture. The stage's bareness forces the audience to use its imagination and catapults them into the unadorned philosophical problems that the script presents.

The psychiatrist-patient interaction between Griffiths and Radcliffe is a real theatrical treat. This pair of actors may have drawn laughs together as antagonistic uncle and nephew in the *Harry Potter* movies, but on stage their energy is palpable on an entirely different level. Tensions increase as Dysart coaxes information out of Strang, and breaths are held as Strang wails, twitches and sweats the details of the horse cult he has created. Some touching scenes even prompt appropriate laughter.

Individually, too, these two giants are fabulous. Dysart evokes bitter chuckles while he analyzes his unfulfilling life and the tragic absurdity of a personal-failure-yet-professional-success treating Strang for insanity. Strang's dangerous delight then causes a certain degree of repulsion in the cultish rituals he has invented, so incredibly convincing thanks to Radcliffe's superb performance as the disturbed child psychiatric patient.

Also particularly captivating are the choreographed movements of the six actors who play horses. Costumed in tight brown clothing

and silvery horse-face masks with spherical eyes of yellow lights, the horses' eerie dances set the mysterious mood of the play's most wrenching scenes.

It is questionable whether the play's featuring full-frontal male and female nudity is truly necessary. In a flashback towards the end of the play depicting Strang's first thwarted sexual encounter with fellow stable hand Jill Mason (Hannah Camp), they both strip down before Jill runs offstage and Alan blinds the horses, still nude. Though the stark nakedness adds a shock factor to the image, the sexual and psychological significance of the scene in question would not get lost in a bit of clothing. Still, although it may occur to the audience that they are seeing as much of Harry Potter as Moaning Myrtle does in the prefects' bathroom in *Goblet of Fire*, Alan Strang's mental torture at breaking point overshadows any impulse to giggle or look away reciting psalms. And in all honesty, the nudity is barely even noticeable from the back of the theater.

Another point of irritation for finer sensibilities is the accent of actress Hannah Camp. Although her British pronunciations are decent, she is clearly the cast American. However, as in the case of her nudity, the fake accent is petty in comparison with the play's overall gravity.

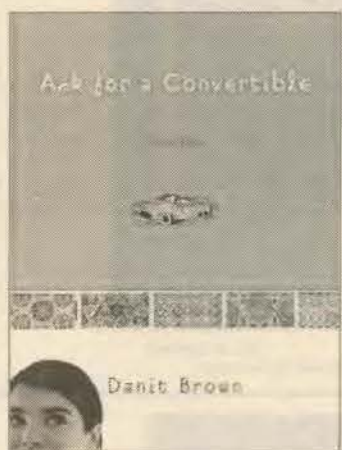
Though "Equus" does not afford light entertainment, it certainly provides the opportunity to contemplate the nature of passion, religion, relationships, and disease, albeit from the point of view of a seventies playwright.

STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

Rivkah Rogawski

Ask for a Convertible, Danit Brown's candid exploration of a secular Israeli's attempt to integrate into American society, derives its title from the basic assumption that all Israelis seem to hold about American wealth and prosperity. As the main character, teenager Osnat Greenberg, along with her Israeli mother, tries to assimilate into her American father's world, she increasingly finds her illusions of both America and Israel shattered. Brown uses the unusual format of short stories told from the perspectives of myriad characters, both main and minor, to deftly weave a Dickensian web of subplots and side-themes while retaining a cohesive thread of both plot and subject matter. Brown succeeds marvelously in pulling off this difficult structure, and along with Osnat's tale she offers gems such as the story of Harriet, a Midwestern Jewish child who shapes her life around intense preparations for the rise of neo-Nazism.

Brown's stories are clothed in a lucid, introspective writing style characterized by lovely passages such as, "But here it was, his life; his wife stopped at the beginning of a sentence, all that breath waiting to be exhaled, and him pressed against her, hoping she wouldn't continue, hoping she'd forget what it was she wanted to say" (51).



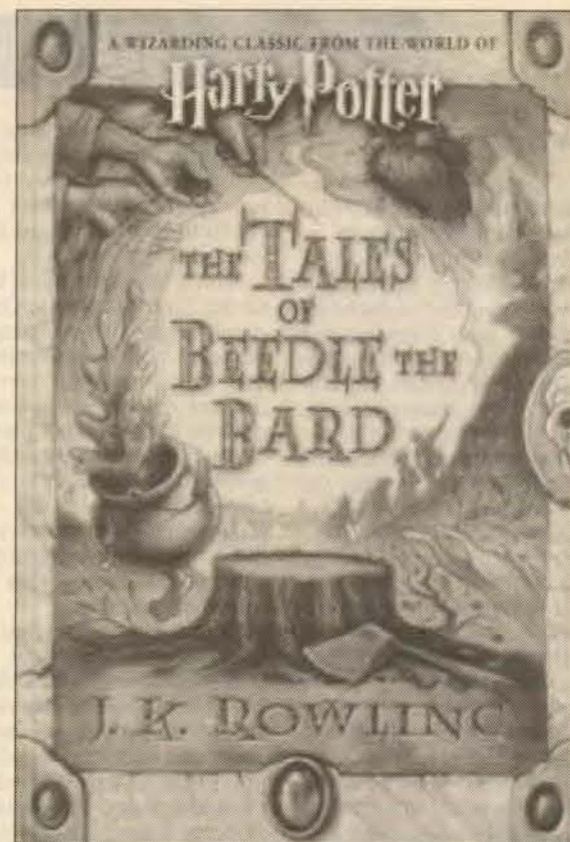
Barnesandnoble.com
Ask for a Convertible documents the story of a secular Israeli attempting to live the American lifestyle.

Her sentences just barely skirt the edge of kitsch and cliché, but Brown neatly injects them with a freshness that saves her from the perils of familiarity. The characters dreamily inhabit settings that range from the stolid American Midwest to the vibrancy of a Tel Aviv bar, all described with a touch of hyperbole, although that might be expected from a first-time author.

Most importantly, *Ask for a Convertible* deals with issues about what it means to be a secular Israeli Jew in America, trapped between both worlds but belonging

to neither. Osnat desperately tries to fit into her high school, adopting a persona of tough promiscuity in order to earn a semblance of acceptance. As she matures, she goes through a series of boyfriends all named Chris - that most non-Jewish of names - finally finding herself feeling torn and traitorous as she sits in Christmas Eve mass with the last of the Chrises. Osnat's struggles are applicable to any immigrant in America, and she desperately analyzes the coping mechanisms that her predecessors adopt. However, her Jewishness ultimately confounds her, and she returns to Israel in the hope of finding a home.

It is at this crucial junction that Brown's collection disintegrates, as the reader painfully watches a likeable heroine muddle through endless self-pity, loneliness, and angst. Osnat's challenges almost lose their poignancy, though any American who has ever struggled with Aliyah experiences will be able to identify with them. However, the core strength of Brown's message about Jewish identity barely loses its strength and the delightful episodes that accompany the main plot offer other perspectives on what it means to be an Israeli Jew in America. In her first literary showing, Danit Brown has succeeded in capturing afresh the essence of 'a stranger in a strange land'.



"Beedle" is a success due to Albus Dumbledore's scrivener's capacity. Photobucket.com

THE TALES OF BEEDLE THE BARD

Hannah Scholl

When the release date of the *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince* movie was moved from November 2008 to July 2009, the HP fandom was beside itself. The books had come to an official close the summer before, leaving many avid worshippers seething for any kind of HP action. This change of date was decidedly unwelcome. Fortunately, J.K. Rowling had announced exactly a fortnight prior that she would be releasing *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* - translated from the ancient runes by Hermione Granger - to the masses on December 4, 2008, having initially penned and presented the tales as individual thank you's to six key Harry Potter collaborators. As such, "Beedle" has effectively filled the vacuum by the dearth of a Harry Potter film this multidenominational holiday season, and booted the appallingly awful *Twilight* series off the top of the USA Today Bestsellers List to boot.

"Beedle" is a companion novel to the Harry Potter series, in the same strain as *Quidditch through the Ages* and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*. Hence, non-fans would probably not be interested in the fairy-tales. Even so, it is possible to appreciate it purely on the strength of the collection's five fantastical tales and J.K. Rowling's surprisingly well-executed illustrations. Though the book is a sort of wizard's equivalent to Muggle fairy tales, Muggle and wizard alike will enjoy and extract from the stories' relevant morals for themselves and modern society.

To be perfectly honest, the tales are not particularly new or unique, in particular "The Wizard and the Hopping Pot" and "The Fountain of Fair Fortune" have a somewhat generic vibe, although "The Tale of the Three Brothers" (despite having been copied almost word for word from the seventh Harry

Potter book) still feels refreshingly original and profound.

What truly defines and elevates this book from the mundane - though perhaps just as successfully alienating non-Harry Potter fans - is Albus Dumbledore's delightfully erratic, odd, and illuminating exegesis, which is present in the footnotes and commentary. Even though Dumbledore does not even once mention Harry or any of his friends, his observations cement the tales squarely at the center of wizarding life. He primarily frames the stories as a commentary on wizard-Muggle relations, but uses them also as a springboard into topics such as censorship, Hogwarts's proud non-theatrical tradition, man's pursuit of emotional invulnerability and immortality, Animagi, and, of course, the infamous Elder Wand. Dumbledore also anecdotally references familiar characters such as Lucius Malfoy, Professors Kettleburn and McGonagall, Voldemort, his brother Aberforth (whose favorite childhood bedtime story, incidentally, was "Grumble the Grubby Goat"), and his own dear, quixotic, and supremely confident self.

This book, though appearing perfectly appropriate for children, is targeted at the more mature Harry Potter fan. "The Warlock's Hairy Heart" is a rather graphic story, and is sprinkled throughout with sufficient examples of Dumbledore's bizarre humor (e.g. References to a wizard's "fondling Horklumps" and whatnot).

Ultimately "Beedle" is highly recommendable to all adult HP fans unless they happen to despise Dumbledore. Obviously the first place to go would be the local library. However, those with deeper pockets should bear in mind that in purchasing the book, net proceeds go to Rowling's charity, The Children's High Level Group, which

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ARTS AND CULTURE

THE SCOOP ON NEWSIES

Alisa Ungar-Sargon

Yeshiva College Dramatic Society's adaptation of the 1992 film *Newsies* ran seven sold-out performances from December 6th to 11th. Directed by Lin Snider in her sixth YCDS production, and assisted by stage manager Josh Eckmann, the actors bravely took on Brooklyn accents, Disney-style dancing, and compensation for absent women. After weeks of excitement, the audiences were not disappointed: the songs were blissfully familiar, the notes at each song's end were decidedly on key, and the leads were cute enough to warrant ample swooning.

The basic script followed the movie closely, with a number of tweaks here and there to avoid finding a dress for some unfortunate Yeshiva student. Centering on Jack Kelly (Danny Hoffman) and his fellow *Newsies*, the homeless teenage boys who distributed newspapers at the turn of the century, the story opens with new guy David (Nachum Joel) coming to learn the ropes. When the

owner of the newspaper, Pulitzer (Shimon Gutstein), decides to raise their newspaper price, the *Newsies* organize under Jack and David to form a union and strike the wrongdoing.

With a live four-piece band and an ingenious conversion of the intimate stage, the experience was a personal take on a familiar musical. The connection between actor and musician was keenly felt, and the scenes taking place on the makeshift fire escape added to the general feel. Though the costumes left much to be desired - Pulitzer was actually in sneakers, albeit black ones - the ensemble scenes were distracting enough to overtake the trimmings.

Hoffman, in his first leading role, proved competent and capable of the responsibility. With his charming voice and distinctive accent, his solo hardly seemed to drag, and that, combined with his appealing looks, allowed him to steal the hearts of countless experienced Stern girls. Joel, the lead supporting actor, may have had the looks to carry off similar feats;

however, his seemingly flawless voice was given a mere five seconds of stage time rather than a proper display, and the potential for amazement was unfortunately diminished.

A number of convincing characters stood out throughout the show. Medda (Roy Hilf), turning from a buxom Swedish redhead to an Israeli vaudeville performer in a tux, started out stiffly but delightfully improved with impressive attitude and stage presence. Racetrack (Jeremy Nagel) was consistently good right through, and at times seemed to be the only talent well played and given appropriate stage time. Les (Ely Winkler) took his tall stature and managed to play a well-crafted little person in spite of it, replete with bright-eyed earnestness. Pulitzer (Gutstein) somehow, after spending the entire play talking to himself on one end of a ceaseless phone call, pulled off a notable showdown with Jack at the very end. And who could pass up the enjoyable tumbling of Guttersnipe (Aryeh Waserman)?

Though the play received great accolades from its returnees (especially coming from counterparts at SCDS), there was a lack of energy and conviction from the actors. Parts of the show consisted of watching them either singing in a stationary position or dancing unenthusiastically, while the dramatic sections tended to include flat personalities who seemed bored of their own lines. But then there would be a moment of clarity in which they would wake up, remember their inspiration, and continue the brave fight.

Following in a proudly displayed tradition of theater (that ironically includes a version of Broadway's currently most revealing play, "Equus," also reviewed in this issue), the members of YCDS continue to put on fine plays to the utter delight of countless Stern ladies. Overall, the play was a pleasurable experience, and proved memorable to all attendees, encouraging much anticipation for further productions.



Jacob Layman
The YCDS cast of *Newsies*.

LIGHTING UP THE NOTES

Rivkah Rogawski

Sometime during the complicated process of finding the Chanukah Concert hall, I lost my entrance ticket. Therefore, I subsequently spent the first fifteen minutes of the concert, which was sponsored by the undergraduate student councils and J&R Music and Computer World, maneuvering my way through the myriad cliques of chattering students and begging for a bright yellow entrance bracelet. As I settled myself into my folding seat, I thought to myself, "This better be worth it."

I must begin by saying that the concert hall was very attractive, with lovely molding on the ceiling and glass paned windows. However, the noise level was probably several thousand decibels above that recommended by the American Hearing Association (if such an organization exists), which made it rather hard to hear what was being said on stage and impossible to engage in friendly chatter with one's neighbors. I arrived just as Aryeh Kunstler was being ushered off stage and Menucha entered. The band, comprised of three energetic singers, seemed genuinely enthusiastic about their performance and performed with gusto. The songs and vocals were unremarkable, but they did perform a new number, "Shma", the title piece of their upcoming album.

Menucha was followed by Dovid Gabay. Although a solo performer, he managed to occupy the entire space on stage with his gyrations and neatly sang several upbeat numbers. Of course, after Dovid Gabay came the band that everyone - especially the females in the audience - had been waiting for: the Yeshiva Boys Choir. Adorable in coordinated black vests, YBC performed their most famous songs to an admiring audience. The band was surprisingly professional and well choreographed, a lone adult man directing his charges in their movements and words.

After a fifteen-minute intermission, the bands performed again in the same order. Menucha retained their enthusiasm, but a waning crowd had lost some of their interest in the group, which

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ON MATTRESSES, PRINCESSES AND PEAS

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es can be portrayed onstage. And yet, the creative mind of DeeDee Klein (Art Director and SCDS Vice President) and the collective efforts of Shira Sragow (Producer) and Shifra Zack (Tech Director) ensured that the twenty mattresses truly *were* twenty mattresses, wheeled onstage and focused in brilliant colors of pink, green and blue. The lighting during this scene was particularly vivid, thanks to the efforts of Tech Directors Zack and Rachel Nemzer, while Deborah Wiseman's "Nightingale of Samarkand" was unforgettable as she squawked away in her golden cage while wearing neon-orange and yellow tights and headgear.

Having been beguiled by the Jester and the Minstrel (but not until King Sextimus and Prince Dauntless sing and alternatively act out a hilarious duet entitled "Man to Man Talk" to educate Dauntless in the rudiments of marital intimacy), the Wizard confided the secret of the Queen's plan to them. They in turn made sure to stuff the contents of the castle's armory beneath Princess Winifred's bed. She did not sleep a wink, and thus wins the right to Prince Dauntless' hand in marriage, while the Prince takes on his mother, fulfilling the prophecy of the "mouse devouring the hawk" so that his father can speak once more. To make matters even more lovely, Sir Harry and Lady Larken make up in "Yesterday I Loved You" which includes such catchy lyrics as "Yesterday I loved you/ like never before/ but now I must confess/ Today I love you less" at which point the audience is agape in horror, only to hear the conclusion "than I will tomorrow morning!" However, this conclusion is not reached before a number of other musical and artistic contributions, including the beautiful vocals of various and sundry members of the class and an absolutely riveting tap-dance number between the Jester and his Father, portrayed by Rochelle Sonenberg. The choreography of Sonenberg, along with Yael Brodsky, made the entire show a smashing success.

Perhaps the most successful part of this very worthwhile production was the inclusion of so many new members and faces to the Stern College Dramatic Society cast: fresh talent is always appreciated. Dalia Caplan and Rebecca Cinammon's able direction was evident in every movement, song and action of the cast, while Tiferet Weiss, President of SCDS, had good reason to feel proud of herself. In short, "Once Upon A Mattress" was utterly delightful, making it another Stern production gone right.



Debra Wiseman debuted as *The Nightingale of Samarkand*, resplendent in yellow and orange clothing and headgear.
DeeDee Klein

ISRAEL

INSTITUTE FOR UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP STUDIES ISRAEL YEAR PHENOMENON. TRACES RELIGIOUS GROWTH

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follow-up study respondents, 196 responded from 62 of their colleges in the United States, and 119 returned the questionnaires after a second year of study in Israel." The students were both male and female, and the study focused on them before, during, and after their time in Israel, primarily seeking to understand the educational change they experienced. Psychologist Rabbi Dr. Daniel B. Jacobson conducted a smaller qualitative (grounded theory) study, through in-depth interviews of students who were between 6 months and 2 years after their year in Israel, who had experienced "significant change." This study, limited to a male population, sought to understand psychological changes students experienced in Israel. Finally, sociologist Dr. Chaim Waxman took a broader perspective and considered the sociological impact on the Jewish communities both in Israel and America.

Flipping Out was a groundbreaking book in the sense that it pushed the community to recognize that something significant was happening to its youth, and by extension to the broader community, which required serious analysis and understanding. However, it was limited in several ways. Dr. Jacobson's study, since it was qualitative, was limited in scope, while Dr. Berger's study was more focused on comparing different types of Israel programs and their effect on students as opposed to the year in and of itself.

Utilizing the research capacities of the Azrieli Graduate School, and funding from the Institute for University-School Partnership, an Azrieli affiliate, Dr. David Pelcovitz, the Gwendolyn and Joseph Straus Chair in Psychology and Jewish Education at the Azrieli Graduate School, and Rabbi Steven Eisenberg, the Mordecai Zeitz Doctoral Fellow at Azrieli, are in the midst of performing a three to four year longitudinal study, with three phases: The study begins by observing Modern Orthodox teenagers in their senior year of high school, then focuses on students during their year in Israel, and finally analyzes them after their return. Of *Flipping Out*, Eisenberg says, "It is a real privilege to continue the process... The Gemara (Hullin 7a) uses the expression *makom heinekhu avotav lihitgader boah* [Our forefathers left for us a place to distinguish ourselves] in

the areas which they began. I am very grateful for people like Dan Jacobson and Shalom Berger who were pioneers in beginning this project."

The Pelcovitz-Eisenberg analysis took first time data from seniors at six New York area Modern Orthodox high schools: two all-female, two all-male, and two co-ed. The second time data looked at students attending various programs in Israel, including twelve women's and ten men's study programs. The design of their survey, as well as the relationships they developed with various schools both in the US and in Israel, enabled them to sample a larger number of students than had been examined previously.

In the initial part of the study, 230 high school seniors answered the survey, and the number rose to 600 students who responded to the next-phase survey in Israel. 150 of the initial students responded to the follow up survey and 450 more volunteered to complete the questionnaires. Dr. Pelcovitz admitted that students were not eager to participate at first, but, "once they started, they were fascinated by it. Many were happy they did it. It gave them a chance to reflect about the year."

The three year longitudinal study focused on predictors of religious development and satisfaction with the development. In the sample of high school seniors, students with the strongest religious affiliation had overall positive experiences with religion growing up. They reported that they had experienced positive religious coping with difficult situations; the moralities of their families were strongly tied up with religion; and they had experienced extra-familial support from rabbis and teachers.

In their presentation, Pelcovitz and Eisenberg open with an nineteenth-century commentary on Ethics of the Father (4:18) by Rabbi Yisrael Lipschitz (*Tiferet Yisrael*), who comments on the words of Rabbi Nehorai, stating that one should "exile oneself to a place of Torah." Rabbi Lipschitz explains, "This means a person should leave father, mother, and family, and all personal belongings to a place where these are lacking. And even though the separation is difficult it is as critical as a babe being weaned from his mother's breast." These words suggest that a personal journey is an important

component of every person's development.

Some of the statistics from the year in Israel phase of the Pelcovitz-Eisenberg study attest to positive effects of separation. To Pelcovitz, the effect of simply "being in Israel" was one of the most interesting findings. "Overall, Israel (connecting to the people, spending Shabbat with families who live in Israel, being in the land of Israel) was reported as strongly contributing to growth," they state in their report. Pelcovitz suggested the "Magic of Israel" effect could be related to youth feeling unique identification with the Jewish State. "The power of the Zionist idea—that's a real engine of growth because it intensifies the connection to Land and People which becomes connection to learning and religion."

While "being in Israel" was reported as the most significant aspect of the "year in Israel" for women, for men this was slightly surpassed by learning Torah. Both men and women reported that learning more about the unique role of prayer contributed significantly to their year. Interestingly, looking only at the data from the year in Israel, women reported more significant change

and growth than men. Perhaps this accounts for the larger number of males staying *shana bet* [second year]. Alternatively, Rabbi Steven Eisenberg suggested that in general, throughout all religious sects, women are more spiritual and religious than men.

For Eisenberg and Pelcovitz, much remains to be analyzed from their findings. At first, they looked primarily at the way survey-participants changed and aspects of the changes that occurred—but they were not seeking to explain the causes of these changes. While they have now begun causal analysis, it is a longer process. However, the data they have already gleaned, focusing on correlation rather than causality, can suggest many interesting implications for how parents and the broader community can respond to the transformed youth returning from Israel.

Dr. Pelcovitz explains that his study with Eisenberg is highly relevant today "particularly because it is an area that a lot of parents are nervous about... Parents worry about religious change as a form of rejection."

Although their study, because of its size and the scope of its questions, will take the conversation

about the "year in Israel" to a new level of scientific inquiry, both Pelcovitz and Eisenberg understand that their study is somewhat limited due to "selection bias." Since the survey participants were self-selected (they responded completely of their own volition) it may be that only certain types of students who had certain similar experiences responded. A future study would try to ensure that the broadest possible group of respondents is reached.

For those interested in further elucidation on this topic: the Israel study will be presented in greater depth at the SOY Seferim Sale 2009.



Courtesy of Rabbi Steven Eisenberg
Dr. David Pelcovitz (pictured above) ran the Israel study alongside Rabbi Eisenberg.

SABAN FIGHTS IRAN

Olivia Mathias

Student activists from all over the country gathered in our nation's capital for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's (AIPAC's) bi-annual Saban Leadership Seminar from December 20-23 to train and prepare for a semester of political activism. According to AIPAC's press release, "This year, more than 400 students from 125 campuses in 35 states across the country" participated in the program. Though they differed in background in terms of racial heritage, political affiliations, and religious ideologies, they came together at the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington DC to discuss one specific issue for which an abiding interest was shared—the need to maintain and protect the strong alliance between America and the State of Israel.

Emphasizing the theme of "A New Beginning," the focus of the December 2008 Saban seminar focused on the threat of a nuclear Iran, and more specifically, the dangers the Iranian threat presents for the State of Israel. Saban student activists addressed the issue with urgency. They outlined detailed plans to educate and engage their university peers. Upon return to their respective campuses, the Saban trained leaders are expected to encourage their classmates to lobby members of Congress, sign petitions, and engage in meaningful discussion about a nuclear Iran and how it will affect the global agenda.

Ryan Khaldar (YC '10), asserted his goals early on in the seminar: "I think it would be effective to post

weekly International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) updates around campus on Iran's progress in their nuclear program to show that this is not something to be taken lightly." He added, "I'm also organizing a lobbying mission in the spring so that students can get a sense for how rewarding it is to be a part of the political process." Some YU representatives at Saban expressed concern that Yeshiva University's pro-Israel events feature lecture series, discussion panels, and the promotion of Israeli culture, but when it comes to political activism and advocacy for protecting the State of Israel, it falls short.

YU students present at the conference attributed the absence of political activism for Israel lobby to general campus apathy. Unlike students on other campuses, YU students are not constantly confronted with anti-Zionist rhetoric from classmates nor are they required to defend Israel's right to protect itself. Campuses nationwide are making progress with the pro-Israel movement because hostility constantly provokes them. "Often it is more challenging to mobilize the apathetic than to combat the opposition," says Jason Kirshner (SSSB '11). "I think our campus is proof of this."

Clearly, YU students have been active in promoting the dangers of a nuclear Iran as evidenced in the fervent rally against President Ahmadinejad's visit to the United Nations this past September, but since then the issue has remained relatively dormant on campus.

While some students feel pow-

erless in the political arena, a conference like AIPAC's Saban Leadership Seminar teaches students that they can also be a great asset to political movements. Like any other advocacy group, when young people come together they form a strong political bloc of their own. "When enough citizens care about a particular issue and show their devotion to the cause, we can make a difference" says Moriah Manning (SCW '10). "That is why it is so exciting to be active in politics—because success is tangible and results are quantifiable."

In American politics, nothing is more satisfying than witnessing the results of a healthy and functional democracy and nothing is more rewarding than being a part of the process. If the past election has proven one thing it is that when enough people are dissatisfied with the status quo, and those people act, change is possible. To avoid the detrimental effects of complacency, it is a responsibility of young activists to speak out.

The message Saban emphasized was how imperative it is that campus leaders refute the slander of Israel as enemies like Iran seek to become a nuclear power. As Edmund Burke said at the rise of the French Revolution in 1789, still ringing true 220 years later, "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." A democracy, as representing the "power of the people," means that a democratic country is only as strong as the ideas of its citizens, and the lengths they (citizens) go to promote their ingenuity.



Courtesy of Rabbi Steven Eisenberg
Rabbi Eisenberg presents the results of the Institute for University-School Partnership Israel Study to educators.

SCIENCE

BIOLOGY CLUB HOSTS NEUROSCIENTIST

Emily Liebling

On Wednesday, December 17, students flocked to Yagoda Commons during club hour to listen to an exciting lecture given by Dr. Anna Marie Kenney. As a neuroscientist and laboratory head at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, she works in the department of Cancer Biology and Genetics. The biology club invited Dr. Kenney to speak to the students about her groundbreaking work in the field of cancer of the brain.

In her lecture entitled, "mTOR pathway in sonic Hedgehog-driven neural precursor proliferation", Dr. Kenney enthralled her listeners with a very comprehensible explanation of her research. Because cancer of the brain is a phenomenon most commonly prevalent in children, current methods of cure, such as surgery or radiation and chemotherapy, are particularly risky. Due to the fact that the pediatric brain is still in its developmental stage, any and all of the aforementioned therapies, could cause irreparable damage. Such damage could include a decreased IQ, delayed motor and verbal development, and the like. A mode of cancer elimination that could bypass all of these complications would truly be an earth-shattering discovery.

Dr. Kenney's specific research involves neuronal growth and development in the cerebellum and the possible applications to tumor growth inhibition.

The cerebellum's primary function is to process sensory information and coordinate the execution of movement. Running, walking, and even standing and balancing are all activities that fall under the auspices of the cerebellum, which undergoes most of its development after birth. Neurons, specialized

cells of nervous system, found on the outer portion of the cerebellum proliferate very rapidly. They receive signaling from adjacent neurons to divide. The signal molecule is known as sonic hedgehog (and, yes, named after the video game character). By what mechanism does this take place? eIF4e and S6k are proteins involved in neuronal proliferation and development; eIF4e causes cells to divide and S6k causes them to leave the cell cycle and mature. Sonic hedgehog supports eIF4e protein activity, while it suppresses S6k activity. It therefore promotes proliferation over differentiation of neurons.

The question arises as to whether extra copies of the eIF4e gene cause cancer, which, by definition, is uncontrolled cellular growth. The answer is not yet clear, but duplication of the gene will definitely contribute to the enlargement of a tumor that is already present. Sonic hedgehog has, actually, been found to increase mRNA cap



Dr. Anna Maria Kenney came to speak to Stern students about her research, which focuses on treatments for brain cancer, especially in young children.

binding and the translation initiation complex of eIF4e, therefore, by preventing sonic hedgehog from doing this, cell proliferation will cease. What, then, stops sonic hedgehog? Dr. Kenney's lab has discovered that the addition of growth factors to the cell, inhibit sonic hedgehog, thereby halting cell division. This new method of the inhibition of sonic hedgehog production could prove to be revolutionary in the field of cancer therapies, as it could be used as a non-invasive treatment for brain cancer.

The audience, consisting of science and non-science majors alike, showed great enthusiasm as students listened to Dr. Kenney, asking questions and participating in the discussion. Shira Kaufman (SCW '09), who did research in Dr. Kenney's lab during the summer, noted that, "The speaker was very well received. Not only was there great attendance, many people stayed to ask questions and speak with Dr. Kenney after the program. She is an inspiration for women who want to go into research, as she has many years of experience leading a lab and has published many papers, yet she is still very down to earth."

Though the details of the project are very complicated and intricate, Dr. Kenney made the material as "listener-friendly" as possible. Dana Adler (SCW '09) reported that she, "Really enjoyed the lecture. I learned a ton from it and even though she was speaking from a very biological and medical perspective, I was impressed at how she explained things for people who didn't necessarily come from a scientific background."

The biology club thanks Dr. Kenney for a wonderful presentation and educational experience.

WILL NEW YORK TURN SOLAR?

Tali Trachtman

The chemistry club presented a speaker, Christopher Neidl, on December 17 who is the outreach coordinator of an organization called Solar One, a green energy, arts and education center that inspires New Yorkers to become environmentally responsible city dwellers. Neidl spoke while everyone else had sushi, and gave a presentation explaining what makes New York City (NYC) such a good place to produce solar energy. He also spoke about an initiative called the Empire State Solar Initiative (ESSI) whose goal is to pass a law to get NYC to be a mass producer of solar energy.

Photo Voltaics, or PVs, are panels that are put on the roofs of buildings or residential homes and the panels convert sunlight into energy. As Neidl says, the sun "dwarfs any other potential energy source". The amount of sun PVs can absorb for one hour is enough energy for one year or energy for the entire world. However there are only .002% of PVs in New York because of the effect of cost. The presentation went into detail about the difference in cost between the energy we receive from the power plants as opposed to PVs on our rooftops. Another reason this solar energy program may be slow to pick up is the reaction by many to the program, who term it the "regalia of environmentalism".

There were many benefits to replacing the power plants in Manhattan with PVs on rooftops and some of these reasons include the disintegration of smog, which is composed of sun and nitrogen oxides, which is emitted from coal and industrial manufacturing factories. PVs also "displaces the dirtiest plants" which are diesel generators, used when more energy is needed in an emergency. Another benefit about PVs is that blackouts occur mostly in a peak of summer which is also the best time for solar energy to be used.

This year has a common theme for the chemistry club and that is preventing global warming through chemistry. "We try to hold events that educate people about things being done or things they can do," states Grace Charles, co-president of the chemistry club. One such event will be taking place next semester, when they do a high school presentation to teach students about "green chemistry and

compose the curriculum, it instead directs interested parties to the published book, which they can purchase from KTAV and implement in their schools if they so choose.

Dr. Rosenfeld would ideally like to help singles who are struggling with sexual ethics and sexuality. She believes that "often they hear *shomer negiah* [not touching a member of the opposite sex in a loving way] and *yichud* [not to be secluded alone with a member of the opposite sex] but don't hear sexual ethics- how to make decisions, how to interact *bein adam l'chaveiro* [interpersonal relations]. So even when someone is not able to keep the *halakhos*, there are other aspects, other Jewish ethical teachings that they can think about" She believes that "even if you're violating the halakha, Juda-



<http://solar1.org/feed>
Among other things, Solar One suggests that one day we will be able to "wear solar like a patch of solidarity on your skin." A research team led by Steven Novack at Idaho National Laboratory made this discovery.

water as a source of fuel." The next event to be hosted by the chemistry club will involve learning how to crochet using plastic bags as yarn. In order to learn, and be in the know about the chemistry club, the best bet is to look on the bulletin board every month, "about what is being done with chemistry and global warming."

There were many chemistry club members at this speaker but there were some people there for other reasons. Lauren Tessler (SCW '11), admitted she came to the speaker because she needed to critique a speaker for her speech class. But after sitting there, Tessler said "it ended up being good". She is not sure how active she would be in the pursuit of solar energy, but after learning recently that San Francisco leads in recycling, and learning from Solar One that California expends more solar energy, she emphatically said "so I should just move to San Francisco and see what happens." Avigail Soloveichik (SCW '11), the secretary and photographer of the chemistry club, said "I really like chemistry even though I am an English major." She proceeded to say that it is confusing for her to consider the connection between the energy a teacher speaks about in class and the energy spoken about at this speech. As she left the room, Soloveichik said, "But when I do, it will be good."

ism still has a lot to say to you in the realm of sexual ethics."

Given YU's recent substantial monetary loss and the current economic situation, Tzelem's future is very unclear. Rosenfeld and other key players in the program have made *aliyah* to Israel in the past year, and the person who had been working on the project at the Center for the Jewish Future until now recently left her job. Whether Tzelem continues to play a key role in the Modern Orthodox future depends entirely upon how much we want it to- and whether we make it clear to President Richard Joel and Yeshiva University as a whole that this is a program we want to keep.

In case of further questions or comments, please email tzelem@gmail.com

TZELEM: LIFE VALUES & INTIMACY EDUCATION

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completing her doctorate in Education and her field of specialization is Sexuality Education. Anna, her partner in this endeavor, is the Academic director of Hebrew University's nursing school and her doctorate was about sexuality. She is a sexuality educator and runs a clinic for sexual health at the hospital. Their different backgrounds gave them a shared breadth of experience that served them well when they developed the curriculum.

Debow explained that she finds Tzelem's mission important because "it is an area of education that is not being addressed at all in the Modern Orthodox world. Our students however are exposed to endless messages about sexuality from their exposure to the secular world; they also have a natural curiosity about sexuality and all that relates to it which when not addressed from within the day school educational system leaves them educated only by the messages of secular society. There is no question that we, as a community, need to start educating in these areas in a proactive fashion."

When asked how they designed the "Life Values and Intimacy Edu-

cation" curriculum (the portion designed for grades 3-8 is currently published by KTAV), Debow explained that "[g]rades 3-12 was based on a 60 page document that had been developed over a number of years by a group of educators, rabbis and therapists at the Fuchs Mizrahi School in Cleveland which itself was adapted from the guidelines put out by the Sexuality Education and Information Council of the US (SIECUS) for Comprehensive Sexuality Education."

The lessons are aimed at incorporating appropriate life values into the school curriculum, where sexuality is only one topic that falls under that framework. Information is age-appropriate and ranges from focusing on good communication skills to body parts and privacy to the meaning of friendship and addressing issues of identity.

The curriculum is currently being piloted at SAR Academy and Yeshivat Noam in addition to several more schools, such as HAFTR in the Five Towns and Maimonides in Boston. Rosenfeld states that thus far the feedback has been amazingly positive, although she noted that "there has been some feedback that in one of the schools in particular, it's going amazingly with the girls but they are strug-

gling with the boys. If you check out the research in sexuality education in general, in the non-Jewish world as well, making it work with boys is often more challenging than making it work with girls."

One of the interesting focuses of Tzelem is their teacher-training aspect. Rosenfeld explained that "we wanted to have teachers from the schools teaching this class because when you bring in an outside expert, like bringing in the doctor three or four times, it's more ad hoc; you're bringing in an outsider which sends a message that sexuality is something that can't be taught about by your Chumash teacher, English teacher, Navi teacher; it's something where expert knowledge is needed. So we wanted to break it down to make it so that sexuality is just another part of life for everyone. It's life; it's not something that's strange that we need to bring in a special doctor to talk about. It's integrated as part of the life of a whole individual."

More recently, the curricular aspects of Tzelem have been handed off to Azrieli, who acts more as a liaison or referral agency rather than actually implementing the curriculum. Since Azrieli did not

FASHION

LOVLEIGH LOOKS: CULTURE SHOCK

ASHKENAZI VS. SEPHARDI FASHION

Leigh Cohen

Stern College is a runway of diversity representing Jewish cultures from all over the world. We Jewish American woman are known for taking pride in our appearance and expressing ourselves through fashion. Our range of styles and trends is incredibly eclectic, largely dependent upon our heritage.

In the Jewish realm, the terms that are used to differentiate the two major groups of Jews based on birthright and heritage are *Ashkenazi* and *Sephardic* Jews. Ashkenazic Jews originally descended from western Germany and later migrated and settled in all of Eastern Europe. Sephardim hail from what is now Spain and Portugal. For both Ashkenazi and Sephardic girls here at Stern, fashion is truly a beloved art of expression. However, there are major stylistic differences between the two sects; so much so, that our heritage is often identifiable through our fashion statements.

Sephardic girls are known for their modernistic and ornate style, whereas Ashkenazim tend to dress more conservatively. In the United States, the major Sephardic communities are predominantly found in New York, New Jersey, and Florida. Thus, since these communities are so close-knit, many Sephardic girls tend to dress in a signature style. It is easy to hear a Sephardic girl from a distance, simply by the jingling of her wrists. Wherever she hails from, be it Persia or Syria, she surely accessorizes with golden bangles. The bracelets are a traditional piece of jewelry that have become a popular icon for girls in Sephardic communities as a symbol of their heritage. Many families give them to their daughters as wedding gifts or as a rite of passage.

Sephardic girls, on the whole, are also very meticulous in the way they dress. Mothers are known to encourage their daughters to take care of their appearances in order to meet their husbands. But Sephardic girls often feel pressure from their fashion-conscious peers to look their best and stay updated on the latest trends. They are sure to always look presentable in every way possible and are always up to date with the current fashion. This can mean anything from getting their hair and nails done, or splurging on the latest *Allice and Olivia* dress in Saks.

In Stern this winter, Sephardic girls can be spotted wearing the newest "(Michael) Kors" boots or *Chanel* flats paired with matching stockings. Now, some associate stockings with the "frummy" Ultra-Orthodox dress code, however Sephardic girls know how to dress them up by wearing shorter skirts or choosing unique patterns. Even outside of the close-knit communities of Flatbush or Deal, Sephardic girls make a strong impression on the fashion scene.

Ashkenazic fashion is much more subtle and diverse than the funky Sephardic style. The Ashkenazi population is much larger and therefore, is more widely spread throughout the world. In fact,

Ashkenazim make up 80% of Jews worldwide and represent 6 out of 7 million Jews in the United States today. Because the Ashkenaz communities are so much larger and not as closely linked as Sephardic communities are, the fashions of Ashkenaz are much more eclectic and cannot be labeled by one single look.

However, there are two particular styles that Ashkenaz girls often sport. One particular mode of dress is very preppy and conservative. In Stern, it is customary to find and Ashkenazi girl wearing a *J.Crew* or *H&M* cardigan, paired with and matching skirt. These girls are also huge fans of "*Tory's flats*" and wear them in all different colors and textures. Ashkenazi fashion is also acknowledged for accessories. Not only are matching gloves and scarves a big fashion trend but as the weather turns colder, earmuffs are added to ensembles.

However, Ashkenazic fashion is associated with another look as well. A popular trend amongst Ashkenazi girls, that is also rather smart, is dressing comfortably. Many Ashkenazim prefer to feel cozy in cute T-shirts and sweat-shirts paired with denim or cotton skirts. In addition, the wearers of this laid-back look are huge fans of those comfy, bulky-looking boots, Stern girls know and love, the *Ugg* boots. Many Ashkenazim wear them with bold colored tights or patterned knee-high socks, which really bring color to their outfits. No matter which type of look Ashkenazi girls wear, they definitely show their point of view and look stylish doing so.

It is really hard to determine solely based on fashion whether

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Google Images
Featured in Valentino's Spring 2009 Collection, the model's sophisticated blouse, tailored skirt, and opaque tights reflect the recent refinement of young female fashion.

Talia Kaufman

This Month's Vogue carries a message that weighs heavier than the magazine itself. The section "Hip and Humble Holidays" features gift suggestions that are hip and well, actually humbly priced. Atop the page is a funky black Norma Kamali for Walmart Tee that banks a modest six bucks. Vogue shops at Walmart? That can only mean one thing: The Recession has begun to hit even the heaviest hitters and the pockets of their Prada purses have gotten a bit lighter.

It seems that the days of Happy-Go-Louis-V spending is going out of style. Women are tossing their fashionista tiaras and opting for a new title: *Ressionionistas*. Recession Chic consumers are getting off the waiting list for Hermès Birkins in fear that they soon will be depressionistas waiting on a food line.

Heather Viggiani, on a blog at Perice Mattie Public Relations, describes "recession chic" as a movement in retail. "A host of discount brands kneel graciously at the feet of recession and position their products and services not only as the smart thing to do, but the posh one."

Grant Barrett, a lexicographer who specializes in slang and new words argues that the word is being used as an excuse for Americans to buy more stuff:

"It's kind of permitting consumers to have justification for their spending habits," he said. Mr. Barrett argues against the philosophy of "recessionistas" as "The idea is, because they are spending less or getting more value, it is still O.K. to shop," he argued in a recent phone interview with the *New York Times*. "It's a very self-serving message."

Ressionionistas no longer aspire to fill Carrie Bradshaw's Manolos,



Google Images
Fashion designer and Recessionista Sigerson Morrison shares her talents with Target.

and a new style icon has taken her spot, marketing manager at IBM, Mary Hall. Ms. Hall, was introduced to Recessionista-dom through newspapers and on Web sites like *Jezebel.com*, began to blog a chronicle of her cheap-chic fashion and beauty choices: *therecessionista.blogspot.com*. She has been "Queen Recessionista" and educates recessionista-wannabes on everything from thrifting to designer collections for affordable chain stores. She believes that being a Recessionista is about maintaining peace-of-mind, and a fabulous wardrobe in these troubling times: "It is more lighthearted to say 'I am the Recessionista, and I don't really go for that,' instead of saying 'I can't afford that or I don't want to spend the money.'"

What does a Recessionista go for? As the times begin to look darker, so do the collections on the runways. Nicolas Ghesquière of Balenciaga, Alber Elbaz of Lanvin and Narciso Rodriguez are dulling last season's brights to severe black-pallated cocktail dresses and structured suits. At the Yves Saint Laurent show, models reflected a dark mood with black bowl-cut wigs and black lipstick to give his simple jackets and tunic

dresses a somber, graphic edge. Even Christian Lacroix, famous for his flamboyant use of bright color, opened his fall show with a parade of models dressed in the dark hue.

"Of course, black is like a mask," says Christian Lacroix, who calls this shift in sensibility a new minimalism. "The new pureness of lines centered on cut rather than decoration, the laser geometry of shapes and silhouettes are all maybe signs of a graphic protection linked unconsciously to recession, just like at the end of the '80s."

Black is darkening the beauty and home markets too. Baccarat just introduced a collection of black crystal goblets, and Chanel Beauté's Black Satin nail polish is one of the brand's best-selling products. The gothic trend trends to cast more of a shadow as times become more unsure.

However, not everyone in the fashion industry looks to the dark shift in palette as reason for despair. Leatrice Eiseman, executive director of the Pantone Color Institute explains that "Black is always the color people rely on most often in tough times, especially

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GENERATION O

Adina Erdfarb

It started with Generation X. They gave birth to Generation Y, which proceeded to morph into the I Generation, characterized by an ever-growing consumerism and that omnipresent iPod. But Damien Cave of The New York Times has noted a recent shift from the I Generation to the O Generation, signifying president-elect Barack Obama, marking the latest in a series of eras defined by a lone letter of the alphabet.

But what do Generation O's females have to say about fashion?

We have traded our Sidekicks for Blackberries, our iPods for iTouches, and our PCs for Macs. We have foregone our precious UGGs for Donald J. Pliner, buried our boho-chic moccasins in the back of our closets to make room for more the more sophisticated Tory Burch flats, and have embraced the professional look of opaque tights. We forsake Abercrombie and Fitch and Hollister for the cardigans and pencil skirts of J. Crew and Banana Republic. Bequeathing our puffer jackets to our younger sisters, we opt for long, belted wool coats and

cashmere scarves to brave this season's cold weather. And in our hair are appliqué headbands, a la Blair Waldorf. We are no longer juniors, but rather, young women, opting for more muted, professional earth tones to make their statements.

But this recent shift in fashion tastes is not just a byproduct of the I Generation growing up. The current economic recession has placed a damper on the bold fashions of previous seasons. Reprioritized, today's consumer has her eye on the prize as well as the price tag, more than ever before. As a result, many shoppers have become less ostentatious in their fashion statements. The trendy Lacoste crocodiles and Juicy J's that were all the rage a few years ago have lost their must-have status. Though these brands still retain marketability, the up-and-coming trademarks are noticeably more modest.

What has brought on the sudden refinement of young female fashion? The O generation is marked by a sophistication that is attempting to replace the youthful, immature

over-enthusiasm of the I Generation. Impressed by Obama's scholarship, the typical Generation O'er is currently attending university, preferably in a bustling city with a cultural nightlife. Embracing knowledge and worldliness, Generation O is infiltrating college campuses, availing themselves of the many opportunities accessible to tomorrow's professional leaders.

With the youngest president-elect in United States history about to assume the presidency, and with Generation X scrambling for ways to retain a youthful appearance, being young is no longer a liability. Capitalizing on the asset that is our young age, Generation O is power dressing to enter the workplace and the world stage.

The conservative dress and more modest brands reflect that Generation O is ready to be taken seriously. Anticipating opportunity, we have dressed the part in button-down shirts and tailored skirts. All that we can do now is tap our manicured nails and await our big break.

THE OBSERVER

THE JEWISH PERSPECTIVE ON
SEXUALITY

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ing marital intimacy.) There is nothing blemished, shameful or ugly, God forbid—there is only holiness and purity, when intimacy is performed properly” (Friedman 55). There are laws that govern the pleasure that must be provided to one’s wife, for example, when one is “intimate with her, his intent should not be on his own pleasure, but rather, he should be as one honoring an obligation to another” (Friedman 58) states Rabeinu Yaakov, the author of the Tur. The Vilna Gaon, in his commentary to Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer 25, clarifies that this means that a man should “not be intimate with his wife solely for his own pleasure, without regard for his wife” (Friedman 59).

What exactly is part of the man’s *mitzva* of *onah*? He must begin by conversing with his wife, utilizing light, easy, loving words, of praise or otherwise (Brachot 62a notes that Rav chatted lightly and joked with his wife before having intimacy) (Friedman 90). He should hug and kiss her and otherwise “please his wife and arouse love between them” per R’ Yaakov Emden (Friedman 92), be physically close to her while unclothed and even after intercourse, he should “continue to chat lightly and lovingly with her in order that she not think that his whole intent in speaking this way earlier was for the sake of his own pleasure” per the Damesek Eliezer (Friedman 83). It goes without say-

ing that a man should not force his wife to be intimate with him if she does not wish it; indeed, “[e]ven if she is unwilling to have intimacy simply because she is temporarily angry with him or she happens not to be inclined at the time to have intimacy, he must not force her and have intercourse with her against her will while she fears him... And even if, after having just had intercourse, he wants to have intercourse again and she is not agreeable to it, it is forbidden (see Eruvin 100b),” per R. Yeshaya A. Z. Margalit (Friedman 60). The same concept is reiterated by the Magen Avraham, Ravad, Rami b. Chami and Meiri.

Torah channels and elevates one’s sexual desires, elevating and sanctifying them. The sexual act, when performed within one’s marriage, is pure and holy, and serves to create *devek* [lit. clinging, meaning closeness], bringing man and wife closer together. It is through *devek* that a man and woman become one. Rashi to Sanhedrin 58a-b notes that if a woman “does not derive pleasure from the sexual intimacy, she does not cleave to him,” (Friedman 56) which suggests that if she does derive pleasure, she will cleave to her husband. The sexual act, therefore, is meant to give pleasure, but more than that, it is meant to unite and bond together the two people, man and wife, in a holy and pure bond, so that they cling to one another and shall not be sundered.

BOILED FROGS

continued from page 12

things to think about?” he asked. I couldn’t decide whether I should feel horrified or humored at this response to my environmental plea. “19,” I responded in defiance to his obviously rhetorical remark. He turned back to filling the vending machine coils, trying to show me that he was not interested in the current conversation, but I still was. I continued on my previous rant regarding how every bit of wasted energy makes a massive difference to our fragile environment. “You’re better off using the extra energy you’re trying to save up here,” he responded with a grimace while tapping his head with his pointer finger.

Although his reply was unnecessarily harsh, I couldn’t bring myself to conjure up anger. Actually, the only emotion I was able to feel was that of pity. He is only one of the many victims of the boiled frog syndrome.

If you place a frog into a water bath and slowly heat the water up to a boil, the frog in your experiment (please don’t actually try this at home) will continue sitting happily in the water bath unaware of his imminent death. Frogs can only feel sudden changes in tem-

perature; frogs only notice the extreme change. We humans are quite similar in this fashion in that we don’t notice, and thus don’t care, when slow changes endanger the environment, for example. My friend filling the vending machine is a textbook case of boiled frog syndrome. He won’t believe that what he is doing will affect the environment until something he does has an extremely drastic effect on the environment, so that he witnesses the effect with his own eyes.

I’m afraid I am the one that must diagnose you. I am afraid to let you know that you are a victim of the all-too-common boiled frog syndrome. You don’t notice that you are sitting in a steaming hot water bath of excess carbon dioxide emissions. We are all in denial of the effects of our forgetting to turn off the bathroom light or of leaving the computer on as we sleep soundly through the night. Every small thing we do to reduce carbon emissions makes a world of a difference. It’s hard to notice, but it’s our world that’s at stake here.

Please jump out of the water before it is too late.

THE CROSS-
COUNTRY
EFFECT

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last meet took place at our home base, Van Cortlandt. Yeshiva University was one of the sponsors, and we can truly say that we did our school proud. Both the women’s and the men’s teams placed second, earning each team their very own trophy that attests to the amazing achievements of this season’s cross-country teams.

But we can do without the trophy. We have our good memories and Stan’s words of wisdom with which to walk—no, run—away.

THE TALES OF
BEEDLE THE BARD

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aims to change the quality of life of institutionalized and otherwise marginalized children worldwide. *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* is an entertaining and edifying read that will satiate the direst HP yearning and provide much needed respite in the coming finals-laden weeks.

Good Luck on Finals!

MY EXPERIENCE AT BEIT HASHALOM

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ing in something very significant, because the Peace House is located smack in the center of an Arab village and serves as a meeting point between the Jewish communities of Kiryat Arba and Hevron. The hope was that it could potentially lead to an expansion of the Jewish community between those two points. Her family and several others had been slowly progressing towards completely relocating into the building and had been making a point of staying over on Shabbos even when it was almost entirely uninhabitable. Even then, they were worried about the Israeli government concocting some premise to use as grounds for their expulsion. These families didn’t intend to make it any easier for the government to do so.

Quietly and efficiently, we loaded up everything needed for Shabbos and drove about five minutes straight through Arab territory until we got to the Peace House. Michelle and I were situated in a vacated apartment next door to the Hizmes, the owners having gone elsewhere for Shabbos. The place was a wreck. Everything was made of naked concrete; the rectangular shaped holes in the walls meant to serve as windows were covered with some kind of loose plastic that flapped in the breeze, and that same plastic also served as a wall between the porch and the inside of the apartment. The owners, ostensibly a young couple, had created a little room within

the space by putting up tall pieces of driftwood around their bed to create a modicum of privacy. I think there was one serviceable toilet for the whole building. Wires were sprouting from holes in the cement floors and ceiling, and I actually saw a baby gnawing an exposed outlet before her father stopped her. From our “window,” Michelle and I could see a group of about six soldiers under some kind of camouflaged tent, keeping watch. This was the real deal.

I remember that night, after the meal, we discussed how fortunate we had been to happen upon such a wonderful family. As only Mrs. Hizme and her son-in-law spoke English, we were forced to speak in Hebrew and actually didn’t embarrass ourselves too much in the process. Plus, unlike many other Shabbos hosts, they took an interest in us, asking about our families and hometowns and plans for the future. Michelle and I both had the shock of a lifetime when the son-in-law, the very picture of a Mizrahi settler—huge knit kippa, dreadlocked payos [sidelocks] and all (who had until that point to our ears spoken Hebrew like a true Israeli)—said that he’d grown up just a little bit away from Michelle’s home, recognized her shul, and had attended the local coed high school. It seemed to open up a world of opportunities to us impressionable youngsters that someone effectively our age could just shed his old identity and forge a completely new and dramatically

different one. It was simultaneously intriguing and inspiring that this boy—born and bred in the Five Towns—was now living in Hevron, married to an Israeli girl and a new father to an Israeli citizen, living the life of a settler.

I remember that the davening at *Maarat Hamachpelah* [Tomb of the Patriarchs] was beautiful. It seemed so heartfelt and authentic. It was the first time I had ever heard people drumming an accompaniment while engaged in tefillah, and, boy, were they enthusiastic about it! Of course, we loved seeing the soldiers everywhere and asking them for directions as we explored the neighborhood—at that point, we weren’t yet jaded by the olive green ubiquity.

For seudah shlishit, the Hizmes entertained Rabbi Simcha Hochbaum and a group of college students whom he was hosting. He spoke about the Hizmes’ demonstration of emunah and the sacrifices that they were making to live in the Beit HaShalom. At the conclusion of Shabbos, Mr. Hizme drove us back to the bus stop. Over Shabbos, the family had inquired whether I had any relatives in Israel, to which I gave my trademark response “not any identifiable ones,” meaning that, if I had any, I didn’t have the faintest clue who they were. The last thing Mr. Hizme said to me was “Chana, always remember, you have family here. We are your family.”

I haven’t spoken to nor heard from the Hizmes since that day,

but since December 4, when the Israeli police expelled eighteen Jewish families from Beit HaShalom (before the purchase of the building was even ruled illegal, as I’m sure it will be), I’ve been thinking about that last statement that Mr. Hizme made to me almost two years ago. And then I contrast it with the statement issued by Netanyahu right after the expulsion: “We must act with an iron fist against the outlaws.”

Sadly, Israel provides the depressingly irrefutable proof every day that we Jews are family, but we are a sick family indeed when we view one another as criminals, whether that designation refers to the Peace House residents or to the police force that removed them. We are a sick family when so many of us feel the need to encourage such polarizing characterizations of one another in order to facilitate peace and progress. I am quite at a loss for words, so I’ll quote Yisrael, who lived in Beit HaShalom for 20 months and was quoted as saying the following in a recent Arutz Sheva report, “One thing is clear: It will all work out in the end. We thought that our possession of Beit HaShalom was a step in the Redemption process, but apparently God has different plans. We have to act in this world, and we have to serve God, and the bridge between them is prayer; prayer is the key...” Ultimately, only prayer will heal us, and only prayer will bring peace. Let us daven for the redemption now.

RECESSION
CHIC

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if they’re going to spend on big-ticket items.”

“I think it’s more of a reflection of practicality and reality,” says designer Narcisco Rodriguez. “When times get tough, people want things that are real and lasting. Black is certainly reflective of that. It’s what you can bank on, and it’s the most elegant color.”

This is not the first time in American fashion history that the trends reflect the countries economic state. In the booming, pre-Crash 1920s, flapper hemlines barely covered the fishnet stockings, bouncing giddily to the knee before falling down to the ankles in the depressed 1930s.

The 1960s’ youthquake, represented by postage-stamp-size miniskirts, led to a similar stylistic shift before the oil crisis of the 1970s mellowed designers back into an earnest, hippie frame of mind. The recession of the late nineties brought on the Kurt Cobain inspired grunge stage completely shift from the flashy aesthetic of the eighties.

So, you recessionistas should keep pinching those pennies. Because if the fashion time-line has proven one thing it’s that: Even through the darkest winter, a bright Spring is ahead; after a time that is so black, the future is bound to look pretty fabulous.

THE OBSERVER

REMOVING THE SHACKLES OF ATSIKAD

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someone's mind, why should you care? I have witnessed students who speak for a lengthy period of time in class with confidence and conviction about their strong values and beliefs. Yet, you will never see them in the Caf without a group of people. Maybe, they have hordes upon hordes of friends and, therefore, simply never have the opportunity to sit by themselves, but maybe not. One Stern student, when asked if she would ever sit in the Caf alone, replied, "No way. I'm terrified of sitting alone in the Caf!" Why should we adhere to the ridiculous notion that sitting alone carries a connotation of loneliness and of being rejected by your peers?

Isn't there ever a moment that you just want to be by yourself? All day long, there are people, people, and more people. For that half hour, you have the opportunity to meditate in serenity. Slowly, take out your bagel and spread cream cheese. Give your corn chowder a little mix. Look around the room and stare. My favorite pastime, when sitting alone in the Caf, is spacing out. All day long, we are so caught up with papers, studying, and organizing. When you sit down in the Caf, let your mind wander and catch up on those thoughts you haven't had time to ponder. I would like to let you in on a little secret: sitting by yourself ain't all that bad. In fact, it can be a wonderful experience.

Women have come so far as citizens of this glorious country, yet there is an additional endeavor that can propel us even further. Women of the Beren Campus: if you seek progress, if you seek independence, come to the Caf. Women of the Beren Campus: walk down the stairs to the Caf. Women of the Beren Campus: banish ATSIKAD and all that it stands for. And on that day we will stand on the tables in the Caf and proclaim for all to hear, "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

DESPITE WHAT WE KEEP SEEING, HONESTY IS STILL THE BEST POLICY

continued from page 2

conduct? Why do we continue to cheat despite having been taught not to since we were little children?

We may attempt to excuse ourselves by pointing elsewhere—at proctors who fail to detect (or notice) the rampant cheating around them; at faculty who fail to take effective measures to prevent cheating; at members of the administration who fail to hold accountable those students caught cheating. But at the end of the day, it is the individual who must act morally and live by the code of honor the Torah has established for each of us.

The Sefer Mitzvot Gedolot writes that when Hashem finally arrives to redeem the Jewish people, "the rest of the world will approve, say-

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other" (Blau 157). He noted that most of the inquiries are framed in such a way that the one asking seems to believe that masturbation is "the most severe of sins, and furthermore, there is no possibility of repentance for it" (Blau 158). While Cherlow notes that there are "some kabbalistic sources for this position, it is certainly not the normative *halakhah*" (Blau 158). While he states that we must remain true to the halakha, we must do our best not to allow people to suffer such fear and trepidation and operate under the belief that they can never atone for this breach.

Cherlow also notes the difficulties many young women have accepting the fact that their future husband may have masturbated before meeting them, and the "fear and deep concern" (Blau 158) these women express about their future husband's ability to raise a healthy family due to this. Cherlow recommends that there should be "guidance directed toward women on the significance of masturbation on both the physiological and spiritual planes" in kallah classes or premarital preparation litera-

ture so they will have a clearer idea of what it entails. He notes that partners must be able to come to terms with each others' shortcomings, and that premarital literature must "advise people to give preference to a partner in whom one has confidence regarding his or her readiness to make steady progress, over one who may appear more appropriate now" (Blau 161).

The work contains many other essays of interest regarding various aspects of the sexual relationship. It is an excellent resource for anyone curious about these issues, or otherwise seeking to understand the problems another may face within this realm.

The Orthodox world is not alone in seeking to confront the issue of sexuality in the modern-day world. Fascinatingly, the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) has created an entire website focusing on "Evaded Issues" available at <http://www.jtsa.edu/x8933.xml> which contains a compilation of resources on sexuality and relationships. Dr. Shira Epstein, the Project Director for "Evaded Issues" and Assistant Professor at the JTS Davidson School of Educa-

tion, explained that after receiving a grant from the Jewish Women's Foundation of New York three years ago, she knew from "the very beginning that we needed to think about systemic change and the way we train Jewish educators to address evaded issues in formal Jewish settings."

Epstein has a specialization in Gender and Jewish Education; she has done a lot of work in this area. When she first created the project, she created an advisory group in an attempt to figure out a way to "create a methodology, a way of training Jewish educators to think about the everyday moments that occur in their teaching or during off-time, synagogue school, or snack time" where you "overhear two kids talking, maybe they're using derogatory language or homophobic language, and you have to decide whether you are going to say something or intervene." The acronym that she and Naomi Less, the lead consultant for Evaded Issues, have created for this, is EJMS (Educational Jewish Moments).

What are EJMS, you may ask? Educational Jewish Moments are those moments a Jewish educator has to make a difference or intervene during something which is happening that may be separate from the actual curriculum s/he is slated to teach, but which nonetheless conveys core Jewish values. JTS runs 2 hour sessions out of the Jewish community in New York to train educators, making use of a variety of activities and interactions between the teachers gathered there. "We create a scenario, then have educators respond to it and brainstorm about what's problematic about this," states Dr. Epstein. She has educators think about what would go through their mind at the point in time at which they might overhear

two girls pressuring a boy to hook up with a third girl, whom they term a "slut." Should the educator intervene? What makes them reluctant to do so? In a barrage activity where one person stands in the middle of a circle and acts as the voice for what is going through an educator's mind, everyone must answer, "I am reluctant to respond because..." and name the thoughts and ideas going through their head.

Supposing that an educator did indeed want to respond to this overheard conversation, how could they do so? Epstein has created a four-part system: Name, Select, Connect & Interject. Name the issues: what's the problem you want to tackle? Is it the *lashon hara* [evil speech] aspect of this conversation, or just the fact that one should not pressure another to engage in sexual activity if he is not comfortable with it? You may only have time to address one of these issues. Epstein is interested in doing these training because when these moments actually occur, people generally must respond instantaneously. These practice scenarios allow Jewish educators to think about methods they could use to "engage people with authentic Jewish experience in order to connect with their lived values."

One of the most exciting things the "Evaded Issues" group has created is a resource detailing various approaches and ways of tackling the issue of sexuality from both a secular and a Jewish point of view, ranging from the Reform to the Orthodox perspective. The guide is free and available at <http://www.jtsa.edu/Documents/page-docs/Davidson/Evaded%20Issues/Evaded%20Issues%20Resource%20Guide.pdf>, and can certainly be of much use to all.

TEACHING FELLOWSHIP

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brew Academy in Memphis, Tennessee.

The second fellowship founded by the Institute is the Give-Back Fellowship, a one-year program. The Give-Back Fellowship concentrates on providing fellows with opportunities to "assist with student activities, resource teaching and other aspects of school programming." These fellows are also placed in day schools and receive summer training at Azrieli. Each fellow also receives a mentor and a professional stipend. At the end of the year, if the fellow wishes to further pursue a career in Jewish education, he or she can apply to the Teacher Training Fellowship. Sam Ross (YC '08) is currently serving as a Give-Back fellow at the YULA Boys High School in Los Angeles, California.

Fellowship applicants must first be accepted to Azrieli. Applicants then submit their applications via the Institute's website and are contacted to arrange interviews with a selection committee. Schools wishing to participate in the program may contact the Institute and see if they meet specific Azrieli-established criteria for taking part in the program. Both fellowships are open to students of all majors.

'THE OWNER'S NAME IS ON THE DOOR'

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figure represents an approximate loss of \$500 million since January 1, 2008, a dip that is largely due to poor returns in a volatile and sliding market. Joel assured his audience that this decline would "have minimal impact on day-to-day operations," and that continued donations would help sustain the university's financial health.

The university has hired Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, an international law firm with offices across the U.S., Europe, Australia and Asia, and Cambridge Associates, a privately held consulting firm, to assist the university in evaluating its conflicts policies and procedures along with its governance structures. The evaluation process is expected to take place over a number of months.

SAR, a Modern Orthodox yeshiva located in Riverdale, NY, also had substantial investments with Ascot Partners. In a letter to the SAR community, Jack Bendheim, president of SAR, claimed that SAR was unaware that Ascot had investments with Madoff. The portion of the SAR endowment invested with Ascot was worth approximately \$1.3 million. "In light of the allegations, we are now valuing this investment at zero," Bendheim

wrote.

Investors expressed their shock and pain at the disclosure of Madoff's alleged perfidy. "It's shocking to have someone revealed to be completely different from who you thought they were," said a source close to YU. "You go from having this person who was well-loved and trusted in so many circles, to all of a sudden finding out that he is a crook who has committed one of the biggest frauds in history. That deception causes a lot of pain and hurt on the personal level, too."

YU is a double victim, asserted the source, both through the monetary loss and through Madoff's associating himself with the university.

Jay Steinberg, executive director and founder of Gift of Life, a bone marrow registry, called the current data on Madoff's losses "the tip of the iceberg."

"I'm still trying to accept the reality of the situation, like many people out there," he said. "It's really something very hard to believe. All the charitable organizations out there that have been impacted by this need to try to find new people who are not affected by this who can help fill the gap."

Steinberg said that while Gift of Life had no direct investments

with Madoff's company, many donors to the charity did, resulting in a major downsizing of the number of donations coming in. With donors unable to fulfill their charitable pledges, Gift of Life's ability to grow their registry is stunted. "The fundraising that we do directly impacts the tissue-typing in the registry," Steinberg explained. "In order for us to do drives, we're going to need to do fundraising in order to pay for laboratory testing."

Steinberg hopes that students who have been involved in the registry in the past will step in and initiate grassroots fundraising, or that possible donors who haven't been adversely affected will focus their charitable donations on Gift of Life so they can keep their mission going strong.

"We are all devastated by this, but we have to redouble our efforts and focus on the mission at hand," he said.

The wound of Madoff's alleged fraud is still too raw for investors and beneficiaries to formulate what they would like to say to Madoff. "I'm not sure, to be perfectly candid with you," Steinberg admitted. "You might want to ask me that question in a couple weeks. We're certainly all in shock right now, but we'll get through this."

THE OBSERVER

THIS TOO IS TORAH, AND I MUST LEARN

continued from page 2

single men and women who follow Jewish law, we are not permitted to engage in premarital sex. It would be foolish to think that the thought of engaging in an intimate relationship with someone does not occur to us, however, or that we have not been curious and attempted to find out more about this subject. And so, rather than it being taboo, rather than young men and women being left to wallow in pools of self-inflicted guilt, rather than everyone evading an issue rather than providing a structured and clear environment in which to address it, we ought to discuss it. And we ought to discuss it in as clear and respectful a manner as possible.

There are many of us who attend this institution who have never had a comprehensive sex-ed class in our life. We have certainly never had such a class from the Jewish perspective. Why is it that Yeshiva University does not offer such courses? Yes, there is indeed a *hilkhot niddah* [laws of family purity] class offered at Stern College for Women, but that is practical and deals with texts. It does not deal with the *attitude* that one entertains toward sexuality, whether one is to view it as a holy and pure action or something dirty and impure. And if for whatever reason the school cannot offer such a class, at the very least, could there not be a sex-ed course or session offered by the school nurse or doctor? I have never seen such a session advertised, and I believe it would be of interest to many.

Then, on the other hand, there are the people who may never have deviated from the halakha, but whose education is lacking because it is solely based on the Torah and Talmud. Such people may be completely unaware of differences between ideas brought down in Tanakh and those that occur nowadays, such as the fact, for instance, that not every virgin bleeds. The Tanakh proudly alludes to the sheets stained bright red as a sign of a virgin's purity, and if one truly lives within that world and is not aware of this fact, he might have cause to doubt his wife's purity. And yet, this is simply something that is different nowadays than it was in biblical times; nowadays, not all women bleed.

Whether it is because one is so far removed from sexuality because of his efforts to cut himself off from it completely (which is somewhat amusing, because since Haredi yeshivot rarely offer a class on sexuality, that means that when

men learn Gemaros addressing this topic, the Rabbanim must assume the students have acquired the information from illicit sources, a peculiar system) or because one has broken these laws, there is much to learn in the realm of sexuality. I do not believe that we ought to postpone this learning until one is engaged or just ready to get learning; it is impossible to undo a lifetime's ignorance in the matter of six or seven sessions with a teacher. Indeed, at the very worst women may be confused, frightened or otherwise disconcerted by what they are expected to do with their husbands, and at the best, the paucity of the information presented them beforehand severely disables them when they actually enter into this lifelong commitment, because they may have little to no idea of what that actually entails, in the physical sense. And what of the older single who desires to know about her body and about these laws? Should one truly have to be on the brink of marriage before learning anything about one's body? Does it make sense that a 20-year-old bride should know more than a 32-year-old single woman?

This is aside from the fact that many times, the instructors in these sessions do not have the most accurate facts in their possession, and err while attempting to impart knowledge. As there is currently no one course that every *chassan* and *kallah* teacher [pre-marital advisor] must take in order to become certified, anyone who desires to call himself a teacher may set himself up in that capacity. Not every teacher will have the same amount of knowledge, and some teachers may even feel uncomfortable discussing is-

issues of sexuality! The idea that a young man or woman should learn everything they ever need to know about sexuality from this third party once they are about to enter into the marriage commitment is absolutely ludicrous, patently absurd. By the time someone has reached the age at which they can choose to be married, they ought to have an idea of what the act of consummation of a marriage entails, from both an emotional and physical standpoint.

In a world that features posters glorifying semi-nude women and sex in nearly every movie, does it make sense that we as young adults should find out about sexuality from the media? From the Internet? This is a distorted means of acquiring information. Ideally, we should be able to ask our parents about this topic, and there should be no shame in discussing it. If, for whatever reason, we cannot turn to our parents, then our teachers, Rabbanim, and doctors should be trusted sources. There should be no reason to feel uncomfortable discussing sexuality as long as it is done in a respectful manner, with a true desire to know and not to simply make jokes. After all, as Kahana said to Rav, "this too is Torah, and I must learn." We must work toward creating a world in which children and parents can trust one another, and every single currently taboo topic can be discussed with the proper equanimity and respect it deserves. There is nothing in this world that is so dangerous as lack of information, or misrepresented information. It is those who know nothing and who think they know all who often, whether intentionally or unintentionally, wreak the greatest harm.

MUMBAI MEMORIAL

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namely, that increased kindness in the world is the correct response to violent tragedy.

Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter, University Professor of Jewish History and Jewish Thought, and Senior Scholar at the Center for the Jewish Future, was the final speaker. He connected the tragedy in Mumbai to the story of Chanukah. According to Rabbi Schacter, the true hero of Chanukah did not fight on the battlefield. Rather, it was the anonymous *kohen* [priest] who decided to light the menorah despite having only one small flask of oil. This individual, posited Rabbi Schacter, said to himself,

"I have light, I'm going to light." Even when surrounding darkness seems impenetrable, one can use his or her abilities to spread light and goodness. "You do what you can do," Rabbi Schacter said.

Rabbi Yona Reiss, Dean of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, concluded the event with the recital of the *Kel Ma'alei Rachamim* [God Who is Full of Mercy] prayer.

Assorted undergraduate student councils, including Yeshiva Student Union, SCWSC, Yeshiva College Student Association, Sy Syms School of Business Student Council and the Torah Activities Council, sponsored the event.

RACISM ON CAMPUS

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as a walker of the streets. I speak as a woman, as a friend, as a human being. I speak from a place of concern, from a feeling of sadness. But I am not without hope, because I see a solution to this matter. I am not concerned that the people who spoke and continue to speak derogatorily are bad people. I fully understand that they may be uninformed or unaware that the language that they use is, in fact, derogatory. Therefore, please be aware. Be aware that what you say may be hurtful to others, that the words that you use are important, that the language that you speak has meaning and substance. Please be aware that people are emotionally connected to words, that verbal communication is the basic form of interaction, that this is how we relate to others and how

others relate to us. Please be aware and remember to be self-conscious when you speak or communicate in any other manner.

To the other audience, to the people who are appalled by such language yet hesitate to respond to it, to myself included, I propose that we too become conscious of the language that we hear, because speech is a process that represents the relationship between speaker and listener. The process is not over when the speaker is finished speaking, but rather it is finished when the listener is finished listening. Therefore, it is the listener's duty to respond to and to address the language that he or she hears.

Respectful language is respectful thought. In regard to this, I ask all to respect.

ASHKENAZI VS. SEPHARDI FASHION

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you are Sephardi or Ashkenazi. From these trends it is evident that while there are styles that are popular amongst one particular group, we are one people who share one heritage, the same beliefs and of course, fashion trends. Indeed, many times these styles will be concurrent and are not a reflection of ethnic group at all, but rather a matter of fashion taste. However, it is apparent that a person's environment and tradition definitely has influence on their fashion and by taking a closer look at a group's origins, whether they be Ashkenazi or Sephardi girls, our differences in fashion are about as distinct as our *halakhot*.

KRESSEL SCHOLARSHIP UNDERWRITES UNDERGRAD RESEARCH

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in major European countries. Her project will "investigate religious accommodations for Muslims in France, Britain, and Germany and determining if religious discrimination serves as a primary cause of violence and protest in Western Europe."

She first became interested in this topic when she learned that Muslim protests in Europe often stem as a result of economic grievances and discrimination in education, employment, and housing. Zoltan found these findings surprising, "given the attention surrounding the 'headscarf affair' in France," a religious discrimination issue. Zoltan has been working on her research since the summer.

Dr. Elizabeth Radziszewski of the political science department nominated Zoltan for the scholarship because she was "impressed" with a paper Zoltan wrote for class. The sophistication

of the paper showed Dr. Radziszewski that Zoltan "had the skills to engage in serious research."

During the research process, Radziszewski helps edit Zoltan's work. She works with Zoltan to address any issues that may arise and formulate ways to confront them. At the end of the term of the scholarship, Zoltan will complete a research paper of the same scope as an article capable of submission to a scholarly journal. "Her research will be an important contribution that has significant implications for policy improvements," Radziszewski commented. She added that Zoltan will have a product to show potential employers that demonstrates "analytical skills that undoubtedly will prove valuable on the job market."

"It's been a great experience for me personally to have an opportunity to work with a student on a sophisticated research project," said Radziszewski.

RACISM AND BIGOTRY TARGETS OF NEW CAMPUS CLUB

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I think on a broader scale. On a religious standpoint, we definitely are not really tolerant towards other people."

"Instead of embracing the diverse community that we have, we stick with people who are like ourselves. We don't go out of our way to help someone," she continued. "We need a tolerance club to make people aware that we can see the value in every person."

Education and activism

are the two tools that YUTC hopes to focus on in order to foster tolerance on campus. YUTC's activities have so far included hosting an information booth on diversity in the workplace and developing a newsletter in honor of the National Day for Tolerance. Additionally, the club has started an anonymous blog at <http://toleranceoncampus.blogspot.com> where students can voice their opinions on tolerance at YU. Panel discussions on religious

intolerance in the academic world and a rabbinic forum on tolerance from a *hashkafic* point of view are on the agenda for next semester.

"We recognize Yeshiva University as a beacon and a guiding light to the Orthodox community and to the entire world," Kopstick concluded. "If we ever wish to be a positive influence on the world around us, we need to first perfect the trait of tolerance within ourselves."

LIGHTING UP THE NOTES

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lacked certain innovative creativity. Dovid Gabay cleverly started a popular, crowd-rousing song by jumping down into the audience and inviting someone to join in the opening with him. Yeshiva Boys Choir, having already won the love of the audience, returned to perform a show-stopping Chassidish wedding niggun complete with an adorable "chossun" surrounded by gymnasts and jugglers.

The show finished with all the

groups coming on stage, from the tiny tots of YBC to Dovid Gabay, and presenting a bouncy finale. In a particularly nice touch students of YU who were once members of YBC were invited onstage to join their successors in song. All in all, the Chanukah concert proved a fun event, melding the typical social scene with some of the best names in Jewish music today. I left somewhat deaf in both ears, but thoroughly satisfied after an enjoyable evening.

THE OBSERVER

JEWISH SEXUAL EDUCATION & THE LACK THEREOF

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biological freaks because they feel and think certain things, that supposedly only guys feel and think. I think everyone would be better off if it could just be stated that women too have feelings of desire, and even sexual frustration."

This was echoed by another Stern student who explained that she was "really bothered by the fact that in high school we were taught that women have less sexual desire than men. Since that has not been proven to be true and it makes girls question whether their sexual desire is "normal," what is the purpose of teaching this?"

Some students explained that their knowledge of sexuality is self-taught. One YC student who attended a private Hareci all-boys high school stated that there was no sex-ed class and elaborated, "Discussion of sex is completely taboo in those institutions, for better or for worse." He noted that his first source on the matter was "friends in elementary school who probably didn't know anything but were trying to figure things out." Later on in his life, he talked with his brother, alongside utilizing books, Internet and media, noting that while he is "satisfied" with his knowledge of sexuality, his "education did absolutely nothing to aid my understanding."

Similarly, a YC student who attended a private all-boys school in Toronto, noted that he did "not have a sex-ed class in high school or earlier" and that there "was no talk at all about sexuality; it was very taboo." While he states he is "satisfied with my current knowledge of sexuality in the technical sense and the Jewish point of view," he notes that "it is based on my own readings, not anything taught, and I feel the worse for not being taught it."

An SCW student who attended a coed Modern Orthodox day school stated that she had "sex-ed classes in a series for every other year starting in sixth grade. Sixth grade is mostly about the body and its 'changes.' Eighth grade is about the technicalities of sex, tenth is about Sexual Health and safety, and twelfth grade is the basic ideas of halakhot of marriage (mostly the 7 *nikkian* [clean days after a woman's period ends] and *mikvah*). Boys and girls are separate, and it's unclear what the boys do; all I know is that a rabbi teaches them and they felt uncomfortable for the most part." She noted that her, "knowledge in terms of the technical aspects is as developed as it needs to be for a *bat Torah* [daughter of Torah]."

However, when it comes to halakha, this student related that she feels "a significant lack of understanding. My understanding is significantly clouded because I have never seen the textual sources. There are so many silly rumors like 'what really goes on in the *ychud room* [room where the bride and groom are alone together for the first time]' and such that have become the "debate" topics in conversations with my friends. There are *Shivim Panim l'Torah* [70 interpretations to the Torah] and many of my friends don't understand that just like most halakha debates have many different possible solutions, these issues also do."

Elana Sroka (SCW '10) offered practical advice about how sexuality could be incorporated into the high school curriculum, noting that, "I have always strongly believed that sex education should be taught in high school. I went to an Orthodox- all girls school and the only education I received was a brief overview in biology and a *nid-dah* class for when we are married. I think it's outrageous that sex-ed is not taught, however I understand that yeshivot are hesitant to teach it because of the message it could send. I do, however, believe that growing up in a modern society, yeshiva students should have some type of sexual education. I am not satisfied with my level of sexual awareness, and I think that this is general knowledge that everyone should know about. If a Jewish-school is uncomfortable teaching sex-ed, it can be taught in a non-personal way. For example, in a world where aids and sex slavery is unfortunately prevalent, everyone should be aware of the risks that go along with that and the class can focus on sex-education through global issues."

Rafi Herskovits (YC '10) attended a private, all-boys school, which had a sex-ed class given in 12th grade by the instructor for Physical Education. There was no Jewish point of view incorporated. He noted that in high school, sexuality was brought up a few times in Gemara class, due to the fact that they were learning *Kiddushin*. However, Rafi is "not satisfied in either way. I feel as though I have a very small knowledge of sexuality in both the technical sense and from a Jewish point of view."

Another SCW student noted that when she went to Jewish school in middle school after having attended public school through 6th grade, she had a sex-ed class which "basically just said not to let boys touch you where your bathing suit is, which is useless information unless you live under a rock." She noted that it is important for Jewish women to know these things, not only so that they can feel comfortable having sex in the future, but also because if "they are taken advantage of or if they get an infection or if they are sexually assaulted" they need to know who to go to. She stated that it is "women's right to know about their sexuality and body parts and how to take care of their bodies. Especially in college or university- there should be an information center" because women may be having premarital sex.

An anonymous YC student summed up the viewpoint of many other students when he stated that, "I feel that most Rabbis feel that right before one gets married is the time that's most acceptable to teach about sexuality in a Torah way. In my opinion, that's at least ten years too late. We in America are bombarded by how the *goyishe* [gentile] world views sexuality, and it's very hard for us kids to develop a positive sexual perspective without support from a younger age. How can one have pride in something about which one has no idea? There are many misconceptions that Jewish teenagers have regarding sex, and they're definitely detrimental."

He noted that when he first be-

came interested in Orthodoxy in 8th grade, he attended an NCSY canoeing event where, "a ways down the river, a bunch of the guys tried convincing me that the "really Orthodox" have sex through a sheet. (What else would a bunch of 8th grade boys talk about?)" He noted that "I didn't find out that was a

complete lie and, even further, an incredible breach of Halacha until three years later." He wishes that "more Rabbis had said *something*. *Kedoshim Tihyu* [And you shall be holy]- It's a simple Rashi... stay away from *arayos* [improper sexual actions]. What are *arayos*? Why would the Torah mandate us

against such acts? While it may seem to many a serious breach in *tznius* [modesty] to talk about such things- in a world where we're already talking about such things from such unkosher sources, can we afford to let our children be ignorant about something so basic, so important to Judaism's future?"

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES

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practices such as Torah studies, *kashrut* [dietary laws] and Shabbat observance.

Today Panamá City hosts eight kosher restaurants, the largest kosher supermarket outside of Israel, and a growing kollel program. "I didn't meet him [Rabbi Levy] personally," says Manopla, "but I heard that he brought change to the community and he made people understand what it really means to be Jewish."

Although communities will always have challenges and problems to solve, Panama is an admirable example of community survival and growth based on Torah and mitzvot. "Thanks to the community structure," Manopla concludes, "people in Panamá are able to maintain their spiritual level and lead very rich Jewish lives."

WOMEN IN THE FRAMEWORK OF HALAKHA

continued from page 2

however, I strongly urge the halakhic decision makers of this institution to re-evaluate some of their choices. Even if they do not openly criticize, silence is often the greatest indicator of disapproval. If we want to build a community that follows halakha, yet seeks to continuously infuse religious passion in halakhic commitment, then perhaps being slightly more flexible can have far-reaching positive results.

PROFESSOR PROFILE

continued from page 10

piece of advice to students considering careers in the sciences. "There's no rush to get to it," he says. "You don't have to do it so quickly. Take your time and enjoy it. Take some time off between things. I took two years off before. It makes you want it even more."

An extremely accomplished educator and researcher, Dr. Weisburg points out that the bottom line is that you need to love what you do. "I think it's an honor to be teaching," he says. He lives this ideal every day in his classroom and his labs, using the success he's achieved to enable others to follow in his footsteps - all with an enormous grin on his face. Lucky students.



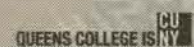
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