



The Yeshiva University

OBSERVER

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Sy Syms, New and Improved

Aimee Rubenstein

Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) is in the process of gaining business specific accreditation by The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). "That is not to say that we are not an accredited school," explains Adira Katlowitz, SSSB Presidential Fellow. Yeshiva University is accredited by the Middle States Commission of Higher Education, and, as YU's undergraduate business school, Sy Syms is included in their accreditation.

Besides the accreditation, SSSB is in the process of renovating its requirements and curriculum as well. Aliza Reimer, who graduated this past spring, was a student representative on the Curriculum Review Committee, a committee made up of various professors representing each of the areas of study and two student representatives. "The changes made to the curriculum were the result of the work of this committee," says Reimer. "Some of the changes were mandated or strongly suggested by the AACSB guidelines, and some came straight from us."

The new curriculum, which goes into effect in September 2010, will be "more relevant and more rigorous, and will truly serve to better our school and therefore better serve our students," says Katlowitz. Classes are reinvented to accommodate the business world of today. The current economic slump is just one example in which the adapted classes of the new curriculum will prepare students for the ever-evolving economy. "We have reviewed our curriculum," reassures Katlowitz, "and are changing it to be more relevant to the current business environment."

Fewer than 500 of the 2,500 business programs in the United States are able to attain the AACSB accreditation due to AACSB's high standards and the difficult accreditation process. New required courses about the global business environment emphasize math and other quantitative skills. "Business is going global," states Katlowitz. "The new accreditation ensures SSSB will not be left behind."

The number of required courses of business majors has been reduced, enabling students to take more elective credits. "The courses offered in each major have been reconstructed to be more intense within each individual class," says Katlowitz, after speaking with SSSB Dean and Professor of Management Information Systems Michael Ginzberg. Now, more liberal arts courses are accepted to fulfill the requirements for majors. "I think the student voice was heard by the administration," says Reimer.

continued on page 3



Alisa Ungar-Sargon
Consul General of Israel in New York, Asaf Shariv, with BESA director Efraim Inbar following the conference.

U.S.-Israel Relations in the Obama-Netanyahu Era

Hannah Golden and Yaelle Frohlich

The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies (BESA) at Bar Ilan University and Yeshiva University held their first joint Israel Conference at the YU's Midtown Manhattan Schottenstein Cultural Center, to a mostly Jewish crowd of 250 people on September 14. The conference, open to all, focused on the changing relationship between the United States and Israel given their respective new leaders, President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The 18 speakers and chairs among them professors, strategists, writers, a former Israeli United Nations ambassador, and the Consul General of Israel in New York tried to explain the policies and actions of both countries, in part through the personalities of their leaders. Conference organizer Dr. Steven Fine, Director of the YU Center for Israel Studies and Chair of the Department of Jewish History at Yeshiva College, attempted to preserve the academic integrity of the conference by bringing together presenters from all directions of the political spectrum.

Georgetown University professor Robert Lieber, standing tall at the lectern, began the conference by comparing Obama to Michael Dukakis, a failed Democratic presidential nominee. "Dukakis was

very smart but he was so smart that he didn't know what he didn't know," explained Lieber. "I get some of that [attitude] with Obama. But I do think that Obama shows more willingness to learn and take it in than Dukakis. Thankfully." Obama's inexperience in the international arena made it difficult to predict his future policy.

Inexperience is not a problem shared by his Israeli counterpart, Netanyahu. Instead, Netanyahu, who served as Prime Minister from 1996 to 1999, has a reputation to overcome. Shmuel Sandler, a senior fellow of BESA, used an anecdote to explain the situation. "He [Netanyahu's Chief of Staff] compared Peace Now to a virus, and Bibi reprimanded him," Sandler said with an inflection of surprise, noting that under the previous Netanyahu administration such behavior would have been accepted if not encouraged. "We see this now from Netanyahu and it's important that the leaders can learn from their mistakes."

There are many possible explanations for this new attitude: years away from the Prime Ministership, age, or maturity. But Sandler negates them all in favor of something more elemental: Benzion Netanyahu, the Prime Minister's father and noted scholar of Jewish history. "Before the election, the three [TV] channels in Israel allowed the candidates to choose

YUMS Going Google, Event Calendar Expanding to Web

Yaelle Frohlich

Yeshiva University will be switching its email system from YUMS to Gmail at some point during the upcoming spring semester, confirmed Marc Milstein, Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer for YU on Monday.

How will the transition work? "All students will automatically receive Gmail accounts, but schools will be done separately over a several week period," described Milstein. "For a limited time, old YUMS accounts will remain open so students can transfer any old email or contact lists to their new accounts. The format of the Gmail addresses is still being finalized." As always, students will continue to have the option of forwarding their YU emails to a different account of their choosing.

So that the University can work out how to most efficiently manage the new system, two of YU's professional schools will be the first to join the oft-exalted Google empire.

Milstein cited economic considerations as the reason for the venture, which involved YU's highest echelons, including President Richard Joel. It began in early 2008, when the heads of the Student Life Committees were contacted and pilot groups set up. "The old YUMS system is antiquated, increasingly at risk of mechanical failure, difficult to maintain, and would cost a great deal of money to replace," explained Milstein. "Gmail is free and will be maintained by Google. In addition, Gmail has significant storage capacity that we could never offer, online applications that could not be provided by us, and an interface that is streamlined and familiar to a large number of students."

However, students should not expect to send their announcements to any stud@gmail.com. "The mailing lists will continue

to be centralized on University-owned and -operated servers," adds Milstein. "Those addresses (and control by the various University administrative departments) will not change."

Email will not be YU's only technological area hopefully undergoing changes this spring. A new web calendar called Resource 25 (R25) will also be implemented to facilitate event publicity and organization of event location reservation. "All Yeshiva University spaces are listed in this centralized system," explained Michael Scagnoli, Director of Operations for YU's Department of Communications and Public Affairs, "and the Office of Campus Events and Office of the Registrar will use it to book events and classes."

Scagnoli added that once R25 is implemented and events are approved and added onto it, students will be able to view event information and announcements, follow events of personal interest on their own calendars, as well as contribute event-related flyers or images to R25. "It is our hope that students will benefit greatly from the R25 master web calendar," said Scagnoli.

To secure a room or resources for an event under the new system, students will need to first go to the Office of Student Affairs, where they can submit the event request and web-destined description.

Another tool implemented in spring 2010, called RSS, will be of additional use in keeping track of YU's many and diverse events. "[RSS] doesn't take the place of emails," clarified Scagnoli, "but will be an additional way for students to receive online notifications about the types of events that are of most interest to them. As the new system is rolled out, the Office of Campus Events is ready to answer questions and help students in any way it can."

INSIDE

- New Call to Serve Program - 3
- The Observer: Separate, But Better - 9
- Sigd: A Union of the Two Cultures - 13

an environment in which they'd be comfortable [for an interview]," explained Sandler. "Mr. Netanyahu chose to interview with him and his father. His father's 100 years old, and they interviewed him there in Netanya. They asked him if his son was ready to be Prime Minister, and he said he'd be better than any of his rivals. This statement was very important in light of a previous statement that his son would be better as a foreign minister."

Given Netanyahu's previous time

as Likud Prime Minister, there was doubt if he could form a coalition government. In the Israeli system, the political party that has the most elected parliament members is given the chance to form a government with other parties. If they are not able to reach a party platform comprise with other minority parties, then another party is given the opportunity to form a government. "I think [Netanyahu's] main policy is to build a consensus," said

continued on page 4

THOUGHTS OF STUDENT LEADERS

A Humble Senior's Anthem for Life

Mollie Sharfman, Senior Class Secretary and President of the Dance Club

There is an immense amount to do in this lifetime. Oh so many priorities. It sometimes feels like one big to-do list; deadlines we have to make, editing friend's papers even though we haven't written our own yet, and trying to make sense of friends' love lives when ours is just as royally complicated. Welcome to the life of a college girl.

What about schoolwork? Does it ever get done? Papers that need to be written and tests that need to be studied for, but are usually left until the last minute. The readings that need to be looked at before the class, but how many of us actually keep up with them?

If this sounds like a description of your life then you are in good company. This is how my life has been working for over eighteen years now and I am tired of it.

I have written an anthem for myself in my attempt to slow down and truly appreciate my life. But this anthem is actually for anyone who wants to get more out of every day.

It begins with actually "doing the readings." When a teacher asks you to prepare something for class, actually prepare! You will truly enjoy the class and might actually learn something! You might connect the reading to something occurring in your life and participate in intellectually stimulating conversations and debates.

Do the readings in life as well. Finish those books you never got the chance to finish. I have a book list that I began last summer and it just keeps getting longer. Add anything that interests you. My suggestions are those classics you might have missed. In addition to classics, other inspiring books I read were: "Mila 18" by Leon Uris, the "Freedom Writers Diary" by Erin Gruwell, and "Tuesdays with Morrie" by Mitch Albom.

Surround yourself with good people. With people who make you a better person, not those who will bring you down. When you are dating, don't settle for less. Find that person with whom you really connect; who makes you feel alive. Love like Noah Calhoun did in the famous love story, "The Notebook," as he declares, "I am nothing special... just a common man... but in one respect I have succeeded as gloriously as anyone who's ever lived... I've loved another with all my heart and soul and that has always been enough."

Open your mind and heart to love.

Test yourself. Leave your comfort zone. Make sure you don't regret that you didn't try out for the musical because you were too scared. This is the time to overcome your fears. As Lee Ann Womack pleads, "when you get the choice to sit it out or dance... I hope you dance."

Make time for family. Respect your elders. Make sure Daddy knows you are still his little girl. Make sure Mom knows she is your best friend even though you occasionally fight. Listen to Grandma when she wants to talk about yesterday. Make time for your little sister because those two hours you take out of your busy schedule mean the world to her.

As it is written in the "Ethics of

the Fathers" 1:6, "acquire for yourself a teacher." "Tuesdays With Morrie" asks, "Have you ever really had a teacher? One who saw you as a raw but precious thing? With wisdom could be polished to a proud shine? If you are lucky enough to find such a teacher... you will always find your way back." Find that teacher who believes in you and who helps you quench your thirst for learning. Those teachers will always be there for you.

Lastly, I beg of you to never become jaded. Lee Ann Womack also requests this when she sings, "I hope you never lose your sense of wonder." Just because you get older doesn't mean you can't laugh until you cry, frolic in an open

field or do something spontaneous. Make sure you never stop believing in imagination. Don't forget those childhood dreams because they can still come true with just a little passion and hard work. As Henry David Thoreau once said, "our truest life is when we are in dreams awake."

If you aren't happy, try to pinpoint where the problem is coming from. It could be that you are putting all of your energy into a certain cause that might not be necessarily your niche, passion or worth your time. "So many people walk around with a meaningless life," illuminates Albom in "Tuesdays With Morrie." "They seem half-asleep, even when they're

busy doing things they think are important. This is because they're chasing the wrong things. The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning."

It isn't too late. Pick up that tennis racket again, read "The Odyssey," open up that easel and start painting. No matter how old you are, it isn't too late to experience true happiness and meaning.

I know how hard it is to change, to get out of the slump—but it never hurts to try! I am trying. I will let you know how it goes.

Holy Love Song

Yaelle Frohlich, Editor-in-Chief

This Sukkoth, as the forecasted inch of snow descended on my hometown of Edmonton, Alberta, I recalled Naomi Shemer's lyric in the song "Sheleg al Iri," ("Snow Upon My City") sung by Ruhama Raz in 1976: "sheleg al iri/nah k'mo tallith" Translated: "Snow upon my city/rests like a tallith (traditional prayer shawl)."

Three subsequent rhyming stanzas describe a woman waiting for her beloved to return from "The Lands of Warmth" and bring her back figs, dates and a golden apple, symbolizing the sweet longing she has endured. Incidentally, the song has an alternate title: "Peiroth Hamisha-Asar" ("Fruits of the Fifteenth"). This reference, of course, is to the holiday of Tu Beshvat, the new fruit-filled birthday of trees that falls on the fifteenth of the Hebrew month of Shvat, usually around January or February.

Judaic references in classic Hebrew works—a subject whose depth, admittedly, cannot even be scratched in an editorial of this length—often expand to incorporate not only objects and holidays, but whole biblical verses and even *midrash* (exegetical Jewish lore). Take popular lyricist Ehud Manor's love ballad from the patriarch Jacob to the matriarch Leah, titled "Ani Ohev Otakh Leah," which attempts to salve the anguish of Leah's constant pursuit of her husband's affection. The chorus, loosely translated, is as follows:

"Many years have passed/And my two hands have grown tired/And your eyes, how they have increased in beauty/Like the eyes of Rahel/I love you Leah...If I forget you, Leah/My name is not Israel."

The stanza alludes to the 14 years Jacob worked for Laban to marry Leah and Rahel, and clearly plays on the commentary that Rahel's beauty was superior to Leah's only because of her eyes. The song is essentially a fusion of art and biblical tradition.

Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) has inspired the romantic, linguistic and dramatic Jewish imagination for centuries. And Hebrew, of all languages, has the unique ability to play on biblical syntax, whether in High Holiday liturgy, beloved radio hits or Nobel Prize-winning literature.

Of course, to appreciate the

overlap of biblical and modern Hebrew, one must possess at least a working knowledge of Hebrew and *Tanakh*. For those who do, and who care, the rewards can be great.

There is something soul-uplifting about reading a passage of Shai Agnon—our Hebrew-language Nobel laureate—and identifying Song of Songs wordplay in the story "Im Libi" ("With My Heart"), a timid boy's sincere pursuit of words and stanzas to write a birthday poem for Shulamith, "the most beautiful of girls" ("hayyafa ba'banoth"). Or, in the story "Mishomrim Labboqer" ("More Than Watchmen Wait in the Morning"), being able to connect the lack of leadership described in the Book of Judges to the reluctance of a Polish Jew—likely more comfortable with subjugation than independence—to assume the crown of Poland. "*Bayyamin hahem ein melekh b'Yisrael*" ("In those days there was no king in Israel"), goes the quote from Judges; Agnon changes the location to Poland ("Polin").

The evocative power of Hebrew literature has also championed significant social and political change. For example, Haim Nahman Bialik's epic poem "In the City of Slaughter" ("B'ir Haharega"), written in the aftermath of the 1903 Kishinev Pogrom, was circulated (and translated into Yiddish and Russian) in tribute to the victims as well as to encourage Jewish self-defense. In drawing on sensitive catastrophe imagery from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Psalms and other books of *Tanakh*, the poem's expression of bewildered grief and chastisement of the Jews for not fighting back is nothing short of heartrending—and chilling, considering how the Holocaust was only 36 years away.

Of course, there is the argument that biblical references can be made in English, or Yiddish, or any other language that Jews have employed in their creative endeavors. However, despite my own and deeply rooted love for the English language, I cannot help but feel that such literature, even of the highest quality, cannot achieve the same effect as Hebrew works of comparable quality. Non-Hebrew references to Bible and Judaica—for no reason other than simply

continued on page 19

Renewal

Tirtza Spiegel, President of the Biology Club

The High Holiday season has once again come and gone. As I sit back and reflect on the year 5770, a certain Rosh Hashana tradition strikes my mind, and for the first time, I am truly able to recognize and appreciate its significance. The eating of the new fruit (that has not been eaten in over a month) is often viewed as a nice way to usher in the New Year; why not be rewarded with an easy mitzvah for making the "*Shehehyanu*" (the blessing said on a new fruit) on Chinese pear or a star-fruit?

This year, however, I saw the tradition in a new perspective. To me, eating the new fruit denotes courage and tolerance. What better way is there to begin the year than getting out of one's arena of comfort by daring to try something new? Although apples with honey signify a sweet, age-old tradition, the newness of a litchi nut can be just as significant and exhilarating to taste. New fruit may look different, but sample them—you will be surprised at the tasty result.

Tasting the new fruit can be compared to our actions during the New Year. Instead of staying within the lines of comfort, try something new. If you normally play basketball, try out for volleyball. If you are a chemistry major, enroll in a history class. Become involved with different clubs on campus. Volunteer at a homeless shelter. Perhaps come to school dressed from head to toe in bright purple (I'm kidding here). Wear running shoes instead of ballet flats. You never know where you may find your niche.

This idea can be extended to relationships as well. Though other people may look different, behave differently and have different beliefs, everyone has their own rich "flavor," which transforms them into unique individuals with interests, passions and experiences. Difference does not have to be viewed as a negative quality; on the contrary, it can be seen as an advantage. Use the start of this New Year as a chance to take the plunge. Smile at the girl sitting next to you in class. Ask the girl sitting across from you in the

continued on page 19

The Yeshiva University

OBSERVER

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NEWS

CDC Initiates Call to Serve Program as Uncle Sam Expands Hiring

Yaelle Frohlich

The stress of graduation and a scarce job market weighs heavily on the minds of many college seniors this year. However, relatively few people are aware that the United States federal government will be hiring over 100,000 people over the next five years. Yeshiva University's Career Development Center (CDC) website informs that with 1.9 million employees—among them many baby-boomers—eligible to retire by 2010, the federal government is the only sector currently expanding its hiring.

With this in mind, YU recently became one of 670 member schools of the Call to Serve Government Program, which operates in conjunction with the non-partisan Partnership for Public Service. "The Call to Serve initiative is to educate, empower, and inform students about the public service opportunities that exist in the federal government," says Kate Berrio, the CDC's Call to Serve coordinator.

Berrio hit the program's website by chance last year while coordinating a panel. She raised the possibility of becoming a member school, and President Joel signed off on the idea, the sole prerequisite for membership.

The government, it would appear, is hiring in every sector. "There are entry-level positions across the board in terms of job function and what students would be looking for," says Berrio, listing accounting, paralegal, archaeology, communications, human resources, management, project development, programming, marine biology and forestry as just a few of the specializations available. "I saw a posting once for a bartender," Berrio adds.

"I think the government gets a bad rap because of the image of bureaucracy that it has," muses Berrio about why employable people may not automatically consider government work a primary possibility, asserting that such work is a lot different than the oft-assumed image of pushing around papers all day. "I think that people have a very stereotypical image in their brain of working for the government...but of all the people I know who worked for the government, I don't know of one who quit."

There are several advantages to working for the federal government, whose jobs, open only to American citizens, are posted on a rolling basis on usajobs.gov. Uncle Sam offers employees health care, a flexible work schedule and a starting salary ("comparable to the business world," according to Berrio) of about \$40,000, which, depending on performance, can double within 3 to 5 years. "It's bureaucratic in a good way," says Berrio about how the government also affords lots of opportunity for promotion. "It is government, it is structured, and they do what they say they're going to do."

And the benefits may be greater than monetary. "Working for the government is really a way to have an impact on what's going on around us as Americans," says Berrio.

How can the CDC help? With applications, for a start. Berrio says that although the multi-step application can seem "a bit daunting," it is, in essence, similar to other application processes. One difference is that applicants must place their information on the usajobs.gov application system, which then generates a resume according to the job-related relevance of each entered item. In lieu of a cover letter is a questionnaire called KSA (standing for Knowledge, Skills, Abilities), about the applicant's experience. "There is a specific way in which you should answer [the questions]," says Berrio, and the CDC can offer guidance. "I'm not going to say [the application] doesn't have many steps," says Berrio, "...however, you can get through it. It's not as bureaucratic and scary as it seems

to apply."

Berrio also points out that the same networking concepts used in the business world also apply to the federal market, and that, as with any industry, the best way to open doors to federal government employment is to get a federal government internship.

Call to Serve is picking up steam on campus. The CDC is partnering with the J. Dunner Political Science Society and Pre-Law Society on November 18 to host a speaker, Ariel Werner, who will talk about her experience doing legal work in the New York district. On December 1, there will be a Call to Serve panel about the public service/nonprofit sector, which will include a representative from the Environmental Protection Agency.

More information is available at yu.edu/cdc.

Sy Syms, New and Improved

continued from page 1

"We wanted more electives and got that."

Along with the new electives available, majors have been merged. The Management Information Systems (MIS) and Statistics departments are now known as Information and Decision Sciences. The accounting major will have a "CPA" track preparing students for the CPA (Certified Public Accountant) qualification, as well as a "non-CPA" track for students wishing to learn accounting without acquiring the CPA.

Current seniors will graduate without the adjusted courses, as the new curriculum is still in its final stages of completion. The freshman class of 2010 will be the first to benefit from these new requirements. And for anyone

caught in between? "See academic advisement as to what is the best course of action for you - to switch completely, or to work out some sort of hybrid program," advises Katlowitz.

"[The new course requirements] provide the student with a greater integration of their business coursework with the rest of their education," declares Reimer. With the accreditation of the AACSB, SSSB seems to be turning over a new leaf by providing students with the classes, resources, and skills to conquer the business world of today.

Aimee Rubenstein is a sophomore from Florida who just loves the rain.

New Package Room Brings Organization, Accessibility

Helen Ayala Unger

This year, any Stern College for Women student eagerly awaiting the arrival of her textbooks, new clothing, or cookies from home has noticed the creation of a central package room, located in room 2D of Brookdale Residence Hall. This room, staffed by students, serves all dorms on the Beren campus, replacing the system in which Resident Advisors (RAs) sorted packages in each dorm. This change was initiated by the student-run Student Life Committee and University Housing Committee, directed by Rachel Kraut, for the purposes of organizing and consolidating the package sorting system.

"In each dorm [under the former system], RAs were only on duty for three hours a day, so students didn't have ready access to their packages," reasoned Beren Campus Director of University Housing Rachel Kraut when deciding to create a new system. Now staffed by student employees, many of whom are work-study students eligible for government-pay financial aid, the package room is open for eight and a half hours on weekdays, allowing greater accessibility to students. The former system, in addition to being limited to about four hours a day, did not provide any sort of security for packages, which made it easy for a student's mail to go missing. The new package room is fully equipped with NeoTrak tracking technology, which, according to Kraut, provides "accountability," as well as a way to contact students immediately and electronically when their package is ready for pickup.

Brookdale RA Meira Zack (SCW '11) welcomed the new system, claiming that it relieved RAs of one of their more time-consuming duties and allowed package handling to "be smoother for everybody."

"Other universities all have centralized package centers," added Clara Hersh (SCW '10), another RA, who voiced great enthusiasm for the change.

A package room employee, Cha-

ya Sarah Sacks (SCW '10), noted that the room provides a new option for on-campus employment. "I'm very appreciative for the job," she remarked. Sacks also expressed her preference for the electronic system. "We used to only be able to get our packages for two or three hours a day and you'd have to hunt for package slips," she recollected with distaste, "whereas with this system, everything is much more organized and efficient."

Previously, students only found out that a package had arrived once the RA had filled out a note and placed it in the student's mail box. Under this system, it frequently took days to pick up a package, and occasionally the parcel could not be located for weeks after its arrival.

Student response to the central package room has been strongly positive. "You just show them your ID and bring the package number they email you...it works nicely," said Meirah Shedlo (SCW '13), a freshman who received textbooks in the mail. Sarah Cohen (SSSB '11) added that the new system is "more sensible" and "more accessible to people." Brookdale resident Ilana Herst (SCW '13), a freshman who also received textbooks and care packages from her family, felt "very satisfied" with the package room. She added that the open can of Twizzlers, for student munching, was "a nice touch."

Despite its efficiency and popularity, the new package room did not pop up overnight, nor was it free from technical glitches. The package room took approximately two years to create and establish. One setback was a lack of ready workers for the room. "The [Wilf] campus has a package room staffed by their Productions Services," clarified Kraut, "but since [Productions Services] isn't feasible at Stern, we had to hire staff." Productions Services is run by full-time YU employees who, in addition to running the Wilf package room, provide graphics for YU publications and events. The need

to hire package-room staff provided an economic setback to the creation of the service, but "the ease, organization, and customer-friendliness have made the change more than worth it," enthused Kraut.

Due to a delay in publicity about the new system, another hiccup arose when some students, unaware of the change, had their packages sent to dorms other than Brookdale. Students were still able to retrieve their packages, but days after their delivery. Kraut hopes to remedy this by informing students about the package room and reminding them to change the default addresses on their favorite online shopping sites as soon as possible. "Our overall goal was to create a more efficient and customer-friendly system," finished Kraut. "That's what we hope we've accomplished with this new package system."

Helen Unger is a freshman at SCW from Cleveland, OH. She plans to major in Biology with a possible minor in Economics. Go Cavs!



Amanda Douek working at Beren's new package room in Brookdale 2D.

Tamara Freiden

Package Room:

Brookdale 2D

Hours:

Mon-Thurs
1:30PM-10:00PM

Friday
10:00AM-1:00PM

NEWS

U.S.-Israel
Conference

continued from page 1

Sandler, dean of the social sciences faculty at Bar Ilan University, suggesting that Netanyahu had truly embraced a system of compromise. "One thing I can say, none of the plans since '67 - there were a lot of them - none of them worked unless both sides of the conflict wanted them to work."

Disagreements between Israel and the US could be tragic, but miscommunication and misunderstanding can be just as bad. "My main argument this morning is that President Obama has miscalculated and misunderstood public opinion polls and this miscalculation has not affected his policy-making on Israel and the Middle East," commented Eytan Gilboa, a lively author and Harvard PhD recipient who researched the issue for BESA, contending that Obama mistook the current atmosphere in Israel. "First, Obama ignored the election results; after all Netanyahu was able to form a coalition government, and his attitudes were right of center. This is the ultimate public opinion poll, and he ignored it." Gilboa, after studying the behavior of both world leaders, concluded that there would not be a change in either's policy. Regarding "[Obama's] attitude toward Netanyahu as a person, and Prime Minister," said Gilboa, "he wasn't acting like he supported a departure from the normal US approach to Israel."

Columbia University professor of international and public affairs Stephanie Neuman agreed with Gilboa that there would not be a change in either Israeli or US policy, but for a different reason. She argued that the conference was moot - that Israel is not a sovereign country, that can act of its own accord. "In the 1990s," she argued, "academics were looking out in the real world and saying, 'Hey, the concept of sovereignty which we have described as absolute has changed; some countries aren't sovereign.'" She backed this up by demonstrating that the power the United Nations exerted in Yugoslavia, as well as America's intervention in the Haitian coup of 2004, Iraq, and Somalia, negated the idea of countries being inherently sovereign. "The U.S. is so powerful that they reward cooperation and severely punish non-cooperation, [which] provides a strong incentive," said Neuman.

"I'm not saying a state can't resist, and can't say no...but it's costly," clarified Neuman. Sounding like the professor she is, Neuman pointed out that Israel has bowed to pressure from the United States before. In 2005, when Israel agreed to sell arms to China, America responded by imposing sanctions on Israel, claiming that selling the unmanned aircraft to China would give it an unfair advantage over Taiwan. In response to the demands, Israel folded, paid China \$350 million and abandoned the deal. "When it comes to policy, most states will relinquish control of their policymaking," Neuman continued. "Israel signed a statement of understanding with the United States pledging to consult with the United States on any



Dr. Philip Kitcher addresses audience at inaugural event of YU Center for History and Philosophy of Science on September 15.

Kitcher of Columbia University Kicks Off Inauguration of
The YU Center for History and Philosophy of Science

Tamara Freiden

On September 15, the Yeshiva University Center for History and Philosophy of Science held its inaugural lecture, "The Importance of Darwin for Philosophy," to a packed audience of 120 students, professors, and faculty members.

The speaker, Dr. Philip Kitcher, the John Dewey Professor of Philosophy at Columbia University, began the lecture series by addressing the importance of philosophical investigation. "I chose this topic," he said, "partly because of Darwin's bicentennial, but also partly because I'm currently most interested in the impact of scientific developments on broader issues."

Because the center emphasizes questions in scientific methodologies, Kitcher focused on Darwin's unique style of explanation - based on a historical perspective.

defense sale that might impact the US. If that isn't an abrogation or compromise, I don't know what is."

Neuman's analysis was not limited to Israel's lack of self-governance; she argued that America, the supposed puppet-master, was hardly able to dictate its own actions. "The President, sitting in the Oval Office...[the] sheer weight of the system has constrained the policies to such an extent that most - most of the interactions come down on the side of the United States."

Yeshiva University Professor Evan Resnick admitted that U.S. policy is difficult to formulate due to the checks and balances system, which make it harder to pass legislation dealing with rogue states. Additionally, Resnick attributed U.S. foreign policy mishaps to America's failure to offer incentives to rogue states on a purely conditional basis, drawing attention to prematurely delivered incentives to Pyongyang and the former USSR. "Using engagement as an award rather than an

Darwin's goal was to make sense of biological phenomenon in light of their past. "By understanding the past," agreed Kitcher, "we can understand features of their present."

Kitcher then proceeded to apply the Darwinian method to two cases which hit close to home for many of those in the audience: religion and ethics.

In terms of religion, Kitcher argued for the possibility in which religion may be shaped by social convenience, such as the need to work together and form a community. If viewed in this way, the forces that shape religions do not appear to necessarily bring about truth. However, for the sake of individual and social needs in a society, religion would still be deemed indispensable.

Kitcher also touched upon a

limited influence in the Middle East."

According to Inbar, Obama's overtures to Islamist governments will not be appreciated, but rather seen as a sign of weakness. "Obama, your president," maintained Inbar, "is viewed as a weakling in the Middle East. You have to realize, [these Middle Eastern states] don't extend a hand of friendship to the enemy. [They] try to subjugate...to kill them."

In an interview with The Observer the same day, Inbar expressed concern over Obama's attitude toward Iran. "I think Obama believes in the power of words," he said. "Iranians have a strong incentive to create a nuclear bomb, and [words] are not going to change that."

Any motivation, from fear to respect to a desire for social approval, may contribute to one's actions. If this is the case, ethics are a product of natural selection, a series of changes - processes that have no particular tendency to produce truth and knowledge. "The notion of progress is prior to [the] concept of truth," explained Kitcher.

After the lecture, Kitcher took questions, most notably from Dr.

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Israel, asserted Inbar emphatically during his presentation, is America's only reliable ally in the region. "The only country in the Middle East that is a sound ally for the U.S. is Israel," he said. "The only country where an American airplane can for sure land next year is Israel."

Norman Adler, a Yeshiva University professor of Psychology. In contrast to Kitcher's secular humanist perspective, Adler approached the subject as a biology-oriented religious humanist. Adler inquired how one could use science, particularly secular humanism, to analyze a concept, which, by its very nature, "contains emotional connectivity, and requires a 'Kierkegaardian leap of faith.'"

Students continued to gather around to ask questions well after refreshments were served, preventing the professor's leave.

In response to questions, Kitcher addressed the sensitive nature of his lecture. "While I don't think one can reasonably accept the literal truth of religious doctrines," he stressed, "I think that there's more to religious practice than that, and that aspects of religion remain important."

The new director of the center, Yeshiva University Professor Peter Achinstein, whose wife, in his absence due to an untimely illness, read his opening address, believes in opening the eyes of YU students to varying perspectives as well. "It's important to know what the views are, and by the time one enters college," he says, "one should be aware, even if religious, that there are scientists and humanists and so on, that are anti-religious, that's how the world is."

Achinstein, formerly of Johns Hopkins University, was a founder and director of the Johns Hopkins Center for History and Philosophy of Science. While Achinstein's idea for such a center originated at Hopkins, he intends to initiate the project at YU with equal fervor. If the crowd the first lecture drew is any indication, it seems his innovative efforts will come to fruition.

The main goals of the center are to bring major speakers, particularly philosophers of science, to Yeshiva University for students from Yeshiva College, Stern College, and all participating graduate schools to attend. Rather than focus on the technical particulars of a problem the presenter is currently studying, the speaker will address philosophical issues in a more general sense, catering to the undergraduate population.

Future speakers include prominent players in the field including Michael Strevens, a professor of philosophy from New York University (NYU), Ned Block, the NYU Silver Professor of Philosophy, Psychology, and Neural Science, and David Albert, professor and director of the Master of Arts Program in the Philosophical Foundations of Physics from Columbia University.

While the established lecture series seems promising, Achinstein's future plans for the center itself are just as intellectually stimulating. Achinstein hopes to invite younger faculty members from outside the university for more intimate conversation. "There are younger faculty members who can give talks...more directly to students, and have discussions with students," he says.

Although the inaugural lecture was only a taste, there seems much to look forward to with a center that has already showcased some of its intellectual vigor and student interest with the opening event.

NEWS

YU 2009-10: Enrollment Numbers Decline, Honors Rise, and Demographic Statistics

Adina C. Brizel

University officials have acknowledged that there has been a drop in enrollment for the 2009-'10 semester both at Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women. According to the Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Stern College Dr. Karen Bacon, this drop in enrollment is "something that has happened at a number of private colleges and universities." However, enrollment at community colleges is up by 5.3%.

The trend, which is noted on City University of New York's (CUNY) website, is not only represented at Queensborough Community College but dominant across the CUNY system, where tuition is \$4,600 a year at the senior colleges and \$3,600 a year at the community colleges. In contrast, tuition at Yeshiva University remains frozen at \$31,534 a year, with a slight increase on housing fees at Beren Campus for the 35th Street and Lexington Plaza buildings.

Helen Unger (SCW '13) believes that the high tuition is preventing students from attending Yeshiva University, who would otherwise enroll. An acquaintance of Unger's was accepted to Yeshiva College. However, he was also admitted to a prestigious SUNY (State University of New York) branch. SUNY's tuition is currently at \$5,000 a year for New York State residents and \$12,870 for non-New Yorkers. Unger believes he chose SUNY due to the depressed economy and savings of over \$25,000. According to the May 2009 press release regarding the tuition freeze, "YU provides approximately \$31 mil-

lion in assistance each year, with about 70 percent of students receiving some form of financial aid."

While the general enrollment of the student body is on the decline, enrollment has increased for both Yeshiva College's Jay and Jeanie Schottenstein Honors Program and Stern College's S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program. "Honors applications have remained strong, despite the tough economy," says Director of Enrollment Management Dr. John Fisher. "This fall we have a large and very high-achieving incoming group of new students for both the Stern and YC Honors Programs. They are at least one of the best groups ever, maybe the best ever."

In order to be admitted to the Honors Program, a student must have a 90 average, a combined 1400 score on the reading and critical math sections on the SAT (or a 32 on the ACT), participate in leadership and extracurricular activities and compete in the rigorous admissions process. Once admitted, these students are eligible for academic scholarships ranging from \$10,000 to full tuition.

According to Dr. Cynthia Wachtell, director of the S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program, 54 new students have just entered the Honors Program, and 6 upperclassmen have joined as well. 30 students graduated from the Honors Program during the '08-'09 year, and an additional 7 graduated this September after completing work over the summer. However, one must take into account the attrition

rate; not every student who enters the Honors Program will complete the course of study. Currently, there are 148 students enrolled in the program, and Dr. Wachtell is pleased that "the Honors Program is very robust!"

Honors Programs at other universities where the students receive similar tuition reductions or elimination are also on the rise. The Macaulay Honors College at CUNY's senior schools (Brooklyn, City, Queens, Hunter, Lehman, College of Staten Island and Baruch), which offers full tuition for its students, has been attracting students who would otherwise have chosen other schools.

"S.L.," a student from Northern California who is currently studying in Israel, said that although Stern College for Women offered her a generous sum, she chose admission at Touro College's Honors Program at their Manhattan Women's Division. The Honors Program at Touro also offers reduced tuition which is already much lower than SCW's, starting at \$13,000 a year. A CUNY was not an option for S.L., who would have been charged the \$7,500 for out of state-residents, in addition to dorm fees or getting an apartment. S.L. also wanted a program with full time Judaic studies, which the CUNY schools would not have provided.

According to Solomon Sved, Director of Institutional Research and an assistant professor of management at Sy Syms School of Business, there are 2,261 students enrolled on both campuses, with 1,039 on Beren Campus and 1,222

on Wilf Campus. Although there is a 50% tuition reduction for those who stay a fifth year, there are 87 "super-seniors" at Beren Campus, in contrast to the 55 at Wilf Campus. Yeshiva University also has reason to be concerned about competition from state schools: there are 340 New Yorkers at Beren Campus, and 485 at Wilf Campus.

There are 121 international students on Beren Campus, and 155 on Wilf Campus. The majority of international students are from Canada (56 at Beren, 84 at Wilf), with Israel (15 Beren, 18 Wilf) and France (13 Beren, 10 Wilf) following behind. Wilf also records having 11 Brazilian students, while there are none registered as such at Beren. The most popular majors at Beren Campus are biology (156 declared majors), psychology (116 declared majors) and business (118 declared majors). At Wilf Campus, the most popular majors include business (291 declared majors), accounting (152 declared majors) and psychology (118 declared majors). Majors in the social sciences (excluding psychology) are low, with philosophy and sociology ranking towards the bottom at each school (6 and 7 respectively at SCW; 10 and 11 respectively at YC).

There are 158 SSSB students at Beren Campus, while there are 443 at Wilf Campus, excluding the students who are in Israel for the year. Students who are in Israel for the year were only included in the numbers of majors declared; however, they were not included in the statistics about geographi-

cal diversity.

Marital status is also an important component in deciding whether to attend Yeshiva University. The expense of tuition could drain the funds of a newly married couple, in addition to all of the other expenses that young couples must consider. Although they do not live in campus housing, Zonline.com, ABC News' online website, reports that rents in New York City will be increasing over the next two years. According to Sved, citing a February 2009 survey of students, 3% of Beren Campus undergraduates and 7% of Wilf Campus undergraduates are married.

Although there has been a drop in enrollment, the tuition freeze may contribute to stabilizing the numbers and prevent them from dropping further. It will be interesting to note for the future, especially for those administrators involved in the re-accreditation process of yeshivas and seminaries, the number of students on the Joint Program who intend to enroll at Yeshiva University and the number of students who ultimately end up enrolling for the 2010-'11 year.

Adina C. Brizel is one of the 308 seniors on Beren Campus, majoring in Judaic Studies-one of 22 declared majors. She apologizes that this article is overly focused of New York and statistics, two topics that she particularly dislikes, though she is one of the 340 New Yorkers at SCW.

G-20 Spews Dialogue Pledges as Clandestine Iranian Nuclear Facility Approaches Completion

Hannah Golden

The most important country at the recent Group of 20 (G-20) summit wasn't invited. Iran became the focus of the summit, meant to coordinate economic plans of 19 countries and the European Union, when evidence of its secret nuclear facility was announced to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). On September 24th—the first day of the summit held in Pittsburgh, PA—the United States, United Kingdom, and France submitted evidence to the IAEA of the Iranian facility. The next day they took advantage of the G-20's world stage to rebuke the recalcitrant Iran.

Iran had first acknowledged the existence of a completed plant earlier that week, contrary to their previous denials, and counterclaims of IAEA and United Nations hysteria on the matter of nuclear proliferation. "The rules are clear," President Obama stated calmly on the final day of the summit, "All nations have the right to peaceful nuclear energy; those nations with nuclear weapons must move toward disarmament; those nations without nuclear weapons must forsake them. That compact has largely held for decades, keeping the world safer and more secure. And that compact depends on all nations living up to their responsibilities." The President's remarks were reinforced by the presence

and words of French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad replied later that day, in an interview with Time Magazine, that he had done no wrong. "This does not mean that we must inform Mr. Obama of every facility that we have," he declared defiantly. As a member of the IAEA, Iran has agreed to use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes.

In its role as the host country, America tried to highlight world unity instead of the specter of international nuclear conflict. "We have never been more united in standing with the United Kingdom, France, Russia and Germany in demanding that Iran live up to its responsibilities," noted Obama in his closing address.

Other countries seemed less certain of international accord. "We have taken notice that Iran sent a letter to the IAEA and this morning there was a statement made by

ated Press reporter about possible repercussions for Iran, the Vice Minister responded quickly; "You talked about punishment, and I don't like the word 'punishment.'"

I think the world's problems should be dealt with through dialogue. But I do hope that the IAEA will deal with this in its terms of reference."

The United States and China are joined together by their positions as world leader, but divided in their policy. "I think you've heard," announced Obama, "that even countries who a year ago

ago might have been reluctant to even discuss things like sanctions have said that this is an important enough issue to peace and stability in the world that Iran would make a mistake in ignoring the call for them to respond in a forthright

and clear manner and to recognize that the choice they make over the next several weeks and months could well determine their ability to rejoin the international community or to find themselves isolated."

Nuclear proliferation affects the world, but does not make all countries equal partners. Instead of being open to all, G-20 membership is restricted to ensure a union of industrialized countries and undeveloped countries, market changers and changed markets. While the G-20 includes only one member nation each from South America and Africa, the ten-year-old organization has tried to bring together a diverse group of financially strong countries. Excluded countries still have a voice at the U.N., and are occasionally invited to G-20 summits as guests.

Yet even countries that are permanent members of the G-20 complain about exclusivity. "China is not a member of the G-8, and the reason they chose the G-20 to deal with issues," maintained Yafei, "is because it had the reputation and it has members from all the continents and members from both developing and the developed world so it is very balanced." The Group of 8 (G-8) was created in 1975 for the six richest countries in the world - United States, United



President Barack Obama addresses the G-20 in Pittsburgh on September 24.

Hannah Golden

FEATURES

A Glimpse into the Orthodox Jewish Blogosphere

Ariella Gottesman

In the age of Internet, weblogs, commonly known as blogs, are one of the primary tools in a web-savvy individual's quest for knowledge. Anything can be found on a blog; politics, science, religion, economy, human interest stories. If there is notion, there is a blog.

There are as many 112 million blogs available on the Internet; how many of these blogs are oriented towards Judaism? The answer is more than you would expect, with many YU students numbering among the ranks of the bloggers.

Chana Wiznitzer (SCW '09), currently pursuing a Masters in Bible at the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies, has been blogging since she was in eighth grade, before blogging became

common. It started as an outlet for her creative writing and as a forum for discussions, but has evolved over time to a more personal blog.

Entitled "The Curious Jew," Wiznitzer's blog gives daily updates about her personal life and insights into Judaism. Her blog intertwines both her religion and her life; there are pictures of her cooking and painting, quotes, short stories, poetry, notes from YU classes, *divrei Torah*, and stories and updates about her life.

The Curious Jew has a diverse readership base, an aspect that Wiznitzer loves. "The Jewish blogosphere allows many different camps to come together," she says. "I love the fact that atheists, people who are no longer religious, secular Jews, Conservative, Reform and

all stripes of Orthodox Jews can all come together in this forum and speak to one another."

When asked why she chose to blog about Judaism, Wiznitzer replied: "Being a Jew is the most important thing in my life; it is how I define myself. Thus, it makes logical sense that this is what I would choose to document." She discusses Judaism from her own personal viewpoint, in connection to any topic, avoiding only politics. "I would rather hear about the inner working of someone's soul than trash public figures," she states.

The Curious Jew blog is not only the forum for discussion that Wiznitzer wishes it to be, it is also an area where Judaic studies can be pursued. Wiznitzer often posts her notes to the many YU classes and

events she attends, with source sheets available that she has scanned and posted online. "The important thing is that every person look for a means to connect with God or explore one's Judaism," she writes. "There are, thank God, so many available venues to learn about our religion within the confines of halakha." Wiznitzer's blog is a highly personal account, the majority of it written through a Judaic lens. "It is a portrait of my life," she explains.

While there are multiple other Judaic blogs, two large and radically different blogs are DovBear and Hirhurim.

DovBear has been blogging for nearly five years. "[I] probably [have] the highest non-Orthodox and non-Jewish readership of any Orthodox blog," he states on his blog. His contents primarily concern religion, politics, current events, and the overlap between all three. He has recently self-published a book, "DovBear on the Parsha," a collection of his parsha posts that are, by his own description, "as unique as they are charmingly irreverent."

Acerbic and unafraid to comment on any topic, DovBear's comments range from "Orthoprax Koferim: Teaneck vs. Williamsburg," a breakdown of the Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith and who has the 'edge,' to "On Baseball in General, and Pesach in Particular," a post that won the Jewish and Israeli Blog's Bronze Award in 2005. The only topic he avoids writing about is his personal life, disguising all family details. "I do this because I wish to keep the blog and my private life separate," writes DovBear. "I keep a very stout wall up between them."

DovBear maintains that Jewish blogging is important, as it can be the means for social change within the Jewish community on all ends of the religious spectrum. He views his blog as a forum where a range of viewpoints can be displayed and

complexity promoted.

On what may be the opposite end of both the real world and blogosphere spectrum, lies Hirhurim, run by Rabbi Gil Student. Hirhurim has been regularly updated for the past five years. Originally posting under the pseudonym 'Simcha,' Student's blog has the sole agenda of Torah. The policy is written on the homepage: "This blog is intended only for the interchange of ideas for the purpose of Torah study, promoting enlightened public policy and/or the refinement of character."

Student started blogging because as Jewish blogs were growing, he felt the messages were representing neither Torah nor traditional viewpoints. For him, blogging is "an outlet for Jewish life...primarily Torah and looking at the world through a Torah lens," he says.

Hirhurim is, says Student, absolutely and unabashedly biased. He promotes his own philosophy and approach to *halakha* (Jewish law). On more than one occasion he has gone to a Rosh Yeshiva concerning *halakhik* questions. While he does moderate the comments, deleting anything disrespectful or profane, Student allows for free discussion. Student's posts, however, are solely Orthodox views. "A person who speaks or writes to the public has an obligation to promote Judaism; we are all messengers in this world," he writes.

There are many Jewish blogs available on the Internet, documenting every philosophy available. Since 2004, there has been the Jewish and Israeli Blog Awards (JIB Award), run by the Jerusalem Post. Its purpose is to point new blog readers toward noteworthy Jewish, Israeli, and pro-Israel blogs. Both DovBear and Hirhurim have won awards in the JIB's. The Jewish blogosphere, while certainly a small minority within the larger world of blogs, has carved for itself a unique niche where religion and anything else can intersect.

Professor Profile: Dr. Mordechai Cohen

Elianna Pollak

Asked what he considers to be his greatest accomplishment, Rabbi Dr. Mordechai Cohen, Associate Dean of the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies and a professor of Bible at Stern College for Women, immediately mentions his five children, whom he is raising with his wife, Suzanne (SCW '89). Only with explicit prompting does Rabbi Cohen mention his professional accomplishments, of which there is a plethora to choose from. His choice? "The fact," he says, "that I have been privileged to teach over 1,000 students in the last 20 years at YC, SCW and Revel," many of whom have become educators and Rabbis themselves and have sent their students to study with Rabbi Cohen.

"Day to day it gives me a bit of pride and joy that I was able to convey a method of learning and passion for Torah study to many students," remarks Rabbi Cohen. Indeed, Rabbi Cohen's use of the word "convey" says much about the way he approaches teaching. He does not take credit for the knowledge his students acquire, but instead sees his job as one of direction. "I don't necessarily attribute the success of my teaching to my great pedagogic style," he says, "but rather to the motivation of my students to learn and the effort I devote to guiding them, and showing them how to learn at the highest level."

Rabbi Cohen followed his penchant for *Tanakh* (Bible) to Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush), where he learned under the influence of Rav Lichtenstein, whom Rabbi Cohen credits with having "planted [in him] a seed" of the paramount importance of learning *Tanakh* with *mefarshim* (commentators). In 1987, studying for his Master's degree at Revel, Rabbi Cohen spent an additional year at Gush learning in Rav Lichtenstein's *kollel*. As

part of the program, Rabbi Cohen gave a series of *haburot* (lectures), which Rav Lichtenstein critiqued, an experience Rabbi Cohen describes as "essential for my growth as a scholar and a teacher." That year, Rabbi Cohen also spent a significant amount of time studying with Nechama Leibowitz, which Rabbi Cohen describes as "a fantastic and formative experience."

"I was really fortunate to have such unbelievable teachers," states Rabbi Cohen.

Unbelievable teachers indeed. Rabbi Cohen has been privileged to study under the likes of Nechama Leibowitz, Rav Soloveitchik, and Rav Shachter (who was his *mesadder kiddushin* (wedding ceremony officiator) and with whom he remains in close contact).

Rabbi Cohen's name is considered great in its own right here at Stern College. His classes are often spoken of in awe, describing the incredible amounts of work they entail and the incredible learning benefits they offer. Often filled to capacity with 25 plus students, requests to audit Rabbi Cohen's honors *beit midrash*-track Introduction to Exegesis course are not uncommon, as everyone wants

an opportunity to experience the world of *parshanut* (Torah scholarship) that Rabbi Cohen opens to all passing through his class.

Rabbi Cohen, who had taught in YC since 1988, began teaching in Stern College in 1992, after receiving an M.A. in Bible from Revel (where he also earned his PhD in 1994), and an M.A. in English and comparative literature from Columbia University. Living with his wife in the Heights at the time, Rabbi Cohen describes his early years at Stern with a smile on his face. "The excitement of learning seriously in Stern, as in Yeshiva College, was bubbling at the surface at the time," he remembers fondly. "Since Suzanne and I had gone through the experience of dedicating years to learning in Israel before college, I could relate well to my many students who themselves were greatly inspired to study Torah in depth by their Israel experience." Serving as more than just academic teachers, the Cohens often had students over for Shabbat, playing the roles of mentor and role model as well.

When asked about Stern today, Rabbi Cohen stresses the "many opportunities" available at Stern and urges the Stern student not to take shortcuts. "Yeshiva University, of which Stern is a part, has the highest concentration of great [Judaic] scholars in America," he emphasizes. "This is the time you have to devote yourself to full time study, so take maximal advantage of the learning here at YU, Judaic and secular. Try not to rush; you can't ever come back to these years."

Unfortunately for the student body, Rabbi Cohen will not be teaching at Stern next year. Rabbi Cohen will be in Israel for the year, directing an international research group for the Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem, the premier research institute of the State of Israel, housed at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. There Rabbi Cohen will be collaborating with 10 scholars from around the world, experts in Jewish, Muslim, and Christian interpretation of scripture. It is rare that people from all of these disciplines come together, and this



Courtesy of Dr. Mordechai Cohen
Dr. Mordechai Cohen is devoted to guiding his students to learn at the highest level.

research group offers a unique opportunity to open new scholarly horizons through a comparative study of these cultures' reading of sacred scripture. Rabbi Cohen himself plans to devote his research next year to a new book about the Jewish tradition of Bible interpretation that will highlight its cultural dimensions, as Jews in Muslim and Christian lands interacted with and were influenced by Arabic and Latin learning. Not to worry, though; Rabbi Cohen will be returning the following year, coming back "enriched, with more to give to the students."

Despite his clear love for his work in Judaic studies, and desire to encourage learning and studying *Tanakh*, Rabbi Cohen is careful about advising people to become Judaic studies teachers. "This profession is not for everyone and often entails sacrifices, especially since many teachers are not paid appropriately," he says. Rabbi Cohen is certainly very happy to provide guidance and encouragement to those who do choose to pursue *hinnukh* (Jewish education) or academic Jewish Studies professionally, which he is especially qualified to do as Associate

Dean of Revel. And, indeed, many of Rabbi Cohen's best students go on to pursue advanced, post-graduate Judaic studies learning at Revel. "Get the best and broadest training you can," advises Rabbi Cohen to those interested in such fields, "so that you are prepared and qualified to take advantage of the greatest range of career opportunities that will come your way. More importantly, you'll be a better teacher and scholar as a result."

When asked about where he sees himself in ten years, Rabbi Cohen responds that he would like to be doing "exactly the same things at YU, having learned more, from books, colleagues and my students."

"I'm really happy where I am in all respects," he says.

Rabbi Cohen's joyful and satisfied response is testament to the love he feels for his position at Stern College, a sentiment that is unmistakable during his classes. The student body will undoubtedly feel Rabbi Cohen's absence sorely next year and will be counting down the months until he returns. Good luck Rabbi Cohen!

FEATURES

A Life of Tests, or The Test of Life?

Fran Tanner

One of the biggest challenges that college students face is proper time management. Undergraduates must learn to successfully balance courses, extracurricular activities, social lives, jobs, and other activities. In Stern College for Women, these challenges are perhaps even greater, as students take more courses than the average university student. They must balance not only secular courses but also Judaic studies, with many attempting to complete the required college coursework in just 3 short years.

Students shared with The Observer some of their time management challenges.

Leora Niderberg is an active first-time-on-campus student, returning from a year spent learning in Israel at Migdal Oz Beit Midrash Gevoha L'Nashim. She is involved in many organizations and clubs, including Bnei Akiva of NY/NJ, American Jewish Committee (AJC) Stern Society, and Stern College's Israel Club. She says that transitioning from Israel, where she could focus primarily on Torah study, to SCW, where she needs to be focused on many different subject matters at once, is a difficult adjustment. "I don't have time for everything," she says. "I often stay up very late finishing schoolwork."

Other students echoed this sentiment. Naomi Teplitsky, a transfer student from York, has mixed feelings about how her SCW workload compares to York. "I am taking seven courses, four secular and three Judaic," she says. "Last year I took five courses in secular college, so this year it seems like I'm taking a lot, but in some way it also feels like a step back." The workload is not the only issue that concerns her. "I don't really have time for everything," she says. "As of now, it's been okay but I'm a little bit worried for once the *hagim* [holidays] are over and the workload gets heavier. The challenge will be balancing meetings and preparations for programming with getting my work and studying done." Teplitsky, in addition to taking seven courses, is an active participant in Eimatai (a leadership development program run by the Center for the Jewish Future), Bnei Akiva, Stern's pre-law society, and the Tolerance Club.

With so many extracurricular opportunities available both on and off campus, students find themselves pressed for time. For many, these extracurricular involvements end up being the highlight of their college years and important sources of growth and personal development. These activities can impact the community at large, and may well be worth making time for. However, staying involved in these organizations, teams, clubs, and activities while keeping up with schoolwork certainly presents a challenge.

Maayan Hachen, who came to Stern after attending public school and then Midreshet Lindenbaum, is a member of the soccer team. This is a serious time commitment, involving practice or a game almost every night. She wishes she had time to be involved in other extra-

curricular activities, but since she is currently taking seven classes and a laboratory course, she says she simply doesn't have time. "I don't feel like I have enough time for everything that I want to do," she says. "I wish I wasn't in classes the whole day so that I could volunteer or get a job or an internship."

In addition to the challenge of feeling pressed for time, the cramped schedule presents other issues. Many students face serious scheduling difficulties when the beginning of the semester rolls around. Trying to schedule six or seven courses while meeting requirements proves difficult. Fitting in laboratory courses is especially challenging, and students who are pre-medicine and science majors find building their course schedules especially difficult.

"I didn't get into everything I needed," says Teplitsky, an English Communications major. "I didn't get into my biology lab. I can't take any of my major requirements until I take English Composition, so that's also a setback."

A number of students expressed frustration at not being able to take the *beit midrash* (intensive, more independent "study house") courses given four times a week in the mornings. These courses include built-in *havrutah* (paired) learning, but are often left out of schedules because of other requirements offered only in those time slots.

"Arriving at Stern, I had heard about the high *Gemara* [Talmud] *shiur* [class] and, coming from a year of study at Migdal Oz, I was looking forward to making it part of my schedule," says Sarah Lazaros. "Unfortunately, the advanced *Gemara shiur* takes place Monday through Thursday mornings, conflicting with both of the two chemistry recitation slots. Because I am pre-med and chemistry is an essential part of my course load this year, I had to opt out of the *Gemara shiur*."

Perhaps the scheduling issues need to be worked out from an administrative standpoint. For example, a possible solution to this particular scheduling conflict could be that mandatory science requirements, such as chemistry recitation or laboratories, will not be offered only in the nine o'clock A and J slots. These courses could be offered in other time slots as well, to make it possible for more students to take the *beit midrash* courses in the morning if they so desire.

In terms of the other time challenges mentioned, students are fortunate that there are available resources on campus to help them meet these challenges. SCW's Study Clinic is dedicated to helping students maximize their individual potential, and is a resource for all students. Dr. Gail Gumora of the Study Clinic describes a typical visit to the Study Clinic and how she is able to help students.

"During a typical visit, I listen to their concerns and then pull out a blank study schedule form," Dr. Gumora explains. "We fill it in together, balancing pockets of time between academic and personal needs. We plot out the hours set

New Year at Active Minds: Bipolar Demystified

Michelle Benrimon

Active Minds on Campus is a program of Active Minds, Inc. that exists as a student-run mental health awareness, education, and advocacy organization on college campuses. It is the only peer-to-peer organization dedicated to mental health awareness among college students. The organization serves as the young adult voice in mental health advocacy on college campuses nationwide. The group is designed to utilize peer outreach to increase students' awareness of mental health issues and symptoms of mental illness, provide information about available resources, encourage students to seek help as soon as help is needed, and to serve as a liaison between students and the mental health community. By promoting awareness and education, the group aims to remove the stigma that surrounds mental illness and to create an open environment for discussion of mental health issues.

Active Minds at YU is not a support group for students with men-

tal illnesses; it is an organization dedicated to educating students about mental illnesses, whether the student suffers from a mental illness or not.

Every chapter of Active Minds on Campus chooses to focus on at least one specific aspect of mental illness. Here at YU, because our undergraduate campuses are so small, and thus many people "talk," we have chosen to focus toward removing the stigma associated with seeking professional help for a mental illness. Help remove the stigma so people who need help won't feel ashamed to go and get help.

Our next event will be "Understanding Bipolar Disorder," featuring a screening of "Boy Interrupted," a documentary about living with bipolar disorder, followed by discussion and Q&A. The event will take place on Tuesday, November 3rd at 8:15pm in Furst Hall 501.

Bipolar disorder affects approximately 2.3 million adult Americans—about 1.2 percent of the population. Bipolar disorder is

aside for studying during a one-month period with days and hours set aside for specific tasks. Students have said planning helps them feel in control of their schedules. I also suggest strategies for handling different kinds of assignments and for remaining focused. My stickers have become my trademark. I place them on the completed study schedule for motivational support and comic relief when students doubt that they will follow the plan."

Some students choose a single appointment while others book steady time for a number of weeks. She sees positive results from these sessions. "They leave inspired, better equipped to handle the dual curriculum, and more confident that they can achieve their goals," she says.

Dr. Gumora has introduced a series of study skills workshops this semester. The first one dealt with emotions and learning. Students gained an understanding of their individual learning styles as well as the emotions that can undermine their time and focus. The next workshop will be on critical reading and note-taking skills. Students are encouraged to visit the Study Clinic's webpage (www.yu.edu/stern/thestudyclinic) for more information.

Dr. Gumora agrees that there are certainly challenges when trying to fulfill the requirements for six or seven courses a semester. However, she believes that these challenges are not insurmountable. She emphasizes that a Stern student's college career can be successfully navigated with proper time management. "Allotting time to various tasks in a realistic manner helps to increase productivity and reduce stress," she says. "I encourage all students to plan their time wisely and help them to do so when they visit the Study Clinic."

Furthermore, she believes the benefits of the dual curriculum far outweigh this particular challenge. "Students have the opportunity to

enrich their knowledge in both Judaic studies and general studies," she says. "They can explore ideas and principles from both a religious and secular perspective."

Some students think that the way the SCW Judaic studies requirements are set up also needs to be reconsidered and revamped. "It would significantly facilitate my life and allow me to focus on my area of concentration if YU would require two, rather than three Judaic classes per semester," states a student who wishes to remain anonymous.

However, many students echoed Gumora in citing the benefits of the system and expressed appreciation for the dual curriculum despite its challenges. A definite benefit of requiring Judaic studies classes each semester is that the dual curriculum "allows for the built-in study of *limudei kodesh* [study of sacred knowledge]," says Niderberg. Teplitsky shares similar sentiments. "[While CORE] still kind of confuses me, I'm getting used to it, [and] it seems like it gives people a well-rounded Jewish education," she says.

Perhaps the most important benefits of the dual curriculum are the lifelong skills that SCW's curriculum seeks to impart to students. Yeshiva University's philosophy of Torah U'Madda, reflected in the dual curriculum, is not just an educational philosophy, but also a mantra for life. The challenges which students begin to deal with as undergraduates don't end with graduation, but rather will accompany them throughout life. The skills they gain in college from navigating these two realms will hopefully help them later in life. "Given the complexities of today's modern world, this two-fold foundation provides them with a deeper and better-rounded context in which to embrace the world," Dr. Gumora eloquently states. Despite the challenges presented by the dual curriculum, they don't diminish the benefits of a *Torah U'Madda* education.

becoming one of the more prevalent disorders that are seen among the spectrum of mood disorders. The story of "Ms. A" in "DSM-IV-TR Case Studies: A Clinical Guide to Differential Diagnosis" by Allen Frances and Ruth Ross illustrates the classical symptoms of this disease.

"Ms. A, a 30-year-old unmarried schoolteacher, is dragged to the hospital by her parents, each pulling one of her arms. When the clinician enters the consultation room, the patient is restlessly pacing and loudly singing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." When introduced to the doctor, Ms. A notices his green tie and assumes that his name is Dr. Green. She consoles him for having brown, rather than green, eyes but assures him that he can change their color if he only wishes hard enough. Her attention immediately switches to something else, and Ms. A covers eight different topics in the first 2 minutes.

Although Ms. A is at first friendly and flirtatious, offering to show the doctor a bruise on her upper thigh, when the clinician suggests hospitalization, she becomes furious and threatens to hit him. She screams that her parents have bribed him to railroad her into the hospital so they can collect her disability insurance. She shouts that she has friends in the Mafia whom she will instruct to wipe both the doctor and her parents.

This episode began suddenly 10 days earlier, shortly after Ms. A broke up with her most recent boyfriend. Since that time, she has been sleeping only a few hours a night, has lost 8 pounds, has ordered several thousand dollars worth of special textbooks for her students, and has made dozens of long-distance calls. At the time of the initial evaluation, Ms. A is actually booked on a flight to the West Coast that is scheduled to take off in a few hours.

The patient has been hearing voices, both male and female, which suggests that she kill herself and persist in calling her a "dumb whore." She believes the voices are inspired by her parents but says she does not know how they transmit them. She has also come to believe that her thoughts can influence the course of future events and that her dreams are appearing in a disguised form in the daily newspaper.

Two observers disagreed on how best to characterize Ms. A's disordered thinking. One described her racing thoughts as flight of ideas; the other found them more disconnected and called them pattern derailment. Both agreed that Ms. A was occasionally incoherent.

Ms. A has had three previous episodes during the past 2 years, each of which began in a similar manner and then progressed to a depression that lasted 4-8 weeks. Between episodes, the patient was not delusional, hallucinating, or thought disordered. She drinks a bit too much alcohol and uses pot several times a week, but these activities do not seem to be related to the onset of this episode.

The patient is an only child who has always been her parent's pam-

continued on page 8

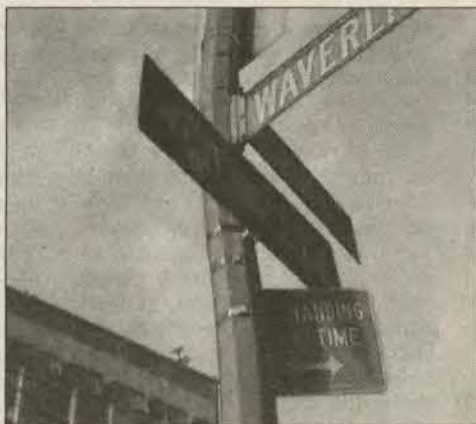
FEATURES

The Trends of Greenwich Village

Hannah Robinow

The five boroughs of New York City are famous for being worlds unto themselves, where a different adventure can be found any given day of the week. Greenwich Village, a neighborhood in the southern tip of Manhattan, is no exception. After all, it's a neighborhood where college students from New York University sip coffee next to dreadlocked hippies in Sheridan Park, where schoolboys from the local public school pit their basketball skills against each other in The Cages on top of the 4th Street Subway station. Pedestrians stream through the shops and pubs on Bleecker Street, buying records at Bleecker Bob's Records and rubbing elbows with celebrities like Uma Thurman. Clearly, this neighborhood is a vibrant, diverse hub of activity in Lower West Manhattan. However, this begs the question of how this area developed into its present status as one of the most eclectic neighborhoods of New York City.

Greenwich Village's origins are rooted in the story of the British conquest of the Dutch colony of New Netherland in 1664. Its name derives from the small hamlet that was south of New Netherland at the time, dubbed "Grin'wich." In 1712, Greenwich Village was officially classified as a village, and the name stuck. Over the next 200 years, this village became a well-known destination for bohemian poets, writers, and intellectuals, in addition to anyone with a desire to discover the latest developments in the art, music and cultural worlds. For instance, the Cherry Lane Theater was founded in 1924, and remains to this day New York City's oldest continuously running off-Broadway theater venue. The list of famous residents has included writer William Faulkner,



Looking Up From the Village.

Courtesy of Hannah Robinow

playwright Eugene O'Neill, and dancer Isadora Duncan.

In the 1950s, the bohemian air of Greenwich Village morphed into the Beatnik Movement. Thanks to their tenures in Greenwich Village, Beatnik notable writers like Allen Ginsberg, Truman Capote, Jack Kerouac, and Dylan Thomas inscribed this neighborhood into the national consciousness as a place where self-discovery was just around the corner, and where its residents lived out the social mores of rebellion and independence from common culture. The 1960s subsequently made the Village famous for its music scene as well, playing host to singers and songwriters like Bob Dylan, Dave Van Ronk, Paul Simon, Art Garfunkel, and the members of The Velvet Underground, James Taylor and Jimi Hendrix. In addition, the artist Mercedes Matter founded the New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting, and Sculpture in the Village in 1964. Matter, along with her students, founded an establishment housed at 8 W. 8th Street which served as the first site of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

Today, a visitor to Greenwich Village is much more likely to

see businessmen and college students walking around the neighborhood than to see an array of hippies and black-clad poets. Thanks to the effects of gentrification on the Village, the entire area has a much more upscale feeling. The streets are lined with high-priced boutiques as much as they are with small, aged cafes. Furthermore, preservation efforts initiated in 1969 resulted in designating the Village as a historic district, which currently protects an area encompassing 6th Avenue all the way to Hudson Street; this area contains over 2,035 structures that played an important role

in the cultural development of the neighborhood. In 2003, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission selected for preservation the Gansevoort Market Historic District, an area adjoining the Village that also includes the waterfront among the historic neighborhoods. Currently, the Village houses the main campus of New York University, Yeshiva University's Cardozo School of Law, Parsons School of Design, and The New School. Highlights throughout the neighborhood also include many buildings commissioned by the federal government for archives, the Manhattan Refrigeration Company, and Bell Laboratories that have been converted into residential buildings thanks to the preservation movement.

Greenwich Village's history makes it difficult to be characterized as a single type of neighborhood, because it has played a role in so many different social and cultural movements throughout time. However, its many different social, cultural, and intellectual points of interest are exactly what makes it so fascinating for tourists to visit and learn about.

New Year at Active Minds: Bipolar Demystified

continued from page 7

pered darling. Since early childhood, she has been difficult to please, subject to frequent tantrums, pervasively bitter, and extremely covetous of possessions (but bored when they are acquired). She has never married in spite of her great desire to do so and her considerable beauty and charm.

In her relationships with men, there is initially an intense mutual attraction that soon deteriorates into an equally great mutual hatred. She generally blames each new man for disappointing her and turning out to be "a selfish S.O.B. just like all the rest." She also blames her parents for being "middle class" and not exposing her to "country club" opportunities. Her relationships with men end in stormy displays of emotion, and several times she has made exhibitionist suicide attempts with pills. On occasion, she becomes promiscuous and was once severely beaten by a man she picked up in a bar.

Ms. A often feels hollow and unreal, unconnected to the strange reflection that appears in the mir-

ror, as if she is watching herself through the motions of life like a two-dimensional cardboard figure. These feelings are intermittent and can be interrupted by stimulus seeking (e.g., sex, drugs, or loud music). Although she tends to be pessimistic, unhappy, tearful, and suicidal, these feelings lift immediately when she meets a new man. She does not have vegetative symptoms of depression, except during her acute episodes. With all her difficulties, Ms. A has nonetheless been a relatively steady worker, supports herself, and is able to live alone."

Ms. A has classic symptoms of Bipolar I disorder.

The DSM-IV-TR (Diagnostic Statistical Manual) of psychological disorders describes Bipolar I Disorder in the following way:

"The essential feature of bipolar I disorder is a clinical course that is characterized by the occurrence of one or more manic episodes or mixed episodes. Often individuals have also had one or more major depressive episodes. Episodes of substance-induced mood disorder (due to the direct effects of a medication, or other somatic

treatments for depression, a drug of abuse, or toxin exposure) or of mood disorder due to a general medical condition need to be excluded before a diagnosis of bipolar I disorder. In addition, the episodes are not better accounted for by schizoaffective disorder and are not superimposed on schizophrenia, schizophreniform disorder, delusional disorder, or psychotic disorder not otherwise specified."

"Understanding Bipolar Disorder" will take place on Tuesday, November 3rd at 8:15pm at Wilf Campus's Furst Hall, room 501. (Refreshments will be served.)

Our "Stress Management Workshop" event, run in partnership with the Center for Healthy Living, will take place sometime in November with Dr. David Pelcovitz. This event will help equip students with some important knowledge and skills to allow them to handle the semester with more balance.

For more information, check us out on the web at www.activemindsatyu.wordpress.com, on Facebook (group name: ACTIVE MINDS YESHIVA UNIVERSITY), or email us at activeminds@yu.edu.

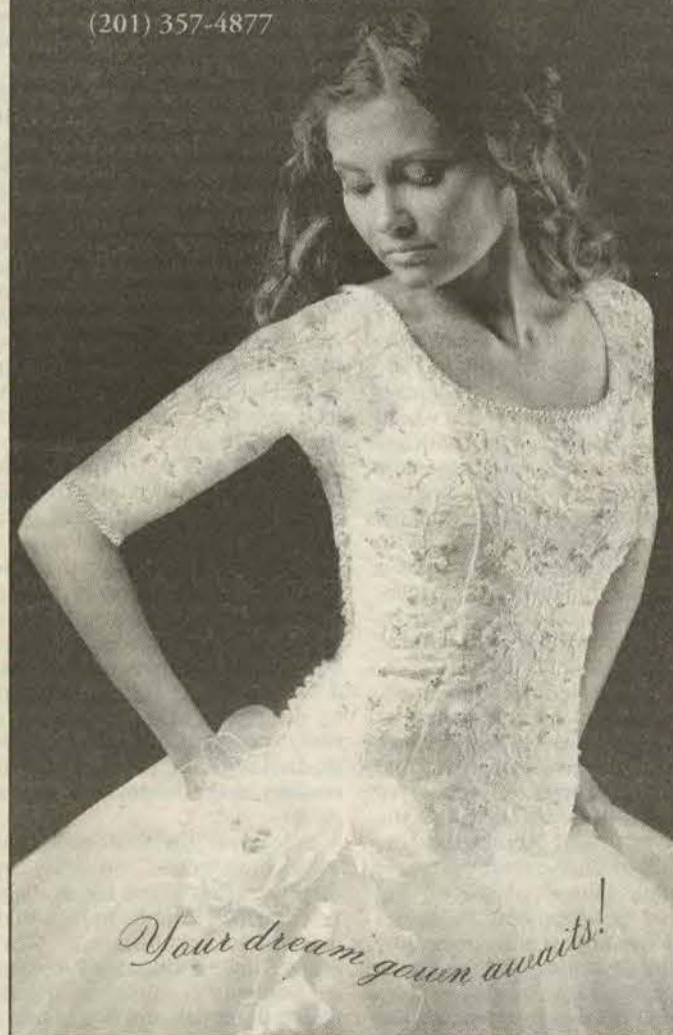
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OPINIONS

The Observer: Separate, But Better

Chaya Citrin

Like certain fashion styles, some ideas just keep making comebacks. Each year, it seems, some editor or staff writer at *The Commentator* comes up with the idea that *The Commentator* and *The Observer* should combine forces and merge into an uber-powerful newspaper called *The Commentator*. Over the years, a number of articles have been published, purporting a variety of different arguments in favor of "shutting down *The Observer*," as one such recent Commie article put it. I do not deny that there is merit to some of the arguments that have been made in favor of publishing one undergraduate newspaper. However, careful consideration of just a few of the most common rationales for eliminating *The Observer* uncovers their vacuity.

One of the arguments in favor of combining the two papers is that the coordination of news reporting that would result from publishing one paper would cut down on the redundancy in coverage of the goings-on of the Yeshiva University world—however minimal that redundancy may actually be. My own survey of *The Commentator*'s recent news offerings revealed a heavy emphasis on Wilf Campus events, if not so much on Yeshiva University as a whole. *The Observer*, however, places its focus on issues that are of particular relevance to students on the Beren Campus. Recently, some of those topics have included innovations in Stern College for Women's course offerings, changes in campus bureaucracy, and pertinent upcoming events such as rallies.

Our feature articles not only delve into Beren Campus life and women's roles in the Orthodox community, but also cover important issues that affect the wider Jewish community outside of the "YU world." On October 13, 2009, in an article about child molestation charges among Brooklyn's ultra-Orthodox community, *The New York Times* directly linked to a May 2009 *Observer* interview with Rabbi Yosef Blau by Olivia Wiznitzer and Estee Goldschmidt. Claiming that the minimal superfluity in the reporting of *The Observer* and *The Commentator* warrants *The Observer*'s decimation is not only insulting, but also ridiculous.

Another argument that has been made in favor of publishing a unified newspaper is one of logistics. It goes something like this: ever since Al Gore invented the Internet, in-person newspaper staff meetings have become unnecessary and nearly obsolete. Therefore, it is no longer an inconvenience for people who live 150 blocks away from each other to brainstorm and copyedit a newspaper. Since geography is no longer an obstacle to combining forces, the argument goes, there should be a joint newspaper. This argument makes sense—mostly. Even though newspaper staff meetings occur infrequently enough that traveling to attend one poses negligible difficulty, copyediting and layout formatting eat up hours of in-office time, frequently late at night. Although many Yeshiva College students have no qualms about

staying on the Beren Campus until the early hours of the morning, the editor-in-chief or layout editors of the joint undergraduate newspaper, if they are male, may find doing so inconvenient. Spending entire nights in an uptown newspaper office would be similarly inconvenient for a female editor-in-chief and for female layout editors. One may argue that, as technology has progressed and continues to do so, even copyediting and layout formatting need not be done in the newspaper office, thus allowing for a joint paper. *The Observer* staff, however, would rather not risk unprofessional copyediting mistakes just for the honor of being *The Commentator*'s trophy insert.

I wonder why it is that my *Commentator* compatriots are so en-

amored of the idea of joining forces. Do they seek to be more egalitarian, or do they just wish to see *The Observer* bite the dust?

Although I am not a proponent of combining the two undergraduate newspapers, since doing so would likely cut down on Stern students' involvement in the paper as well as our autonomy, I concede that doing so would eliminate a current problem: a lack of communication between the two papers' respective section editors. As things are, an Opinions editor at *The Observer*, for instance, has no way of knowing if an article she plans to run has been submitted to *The Commentator*, edited by a *Commentator* editor, and subsequently rejected by that paper. Although *Observer* editors have many wonderful abilities, telepa-

thy is not one of them. A merger of the two papers would be sufficient in helping to correct the regrettable lack of communication that exists between the two papers. However, such a merger is not necessary for correcting this problem. Section editors of the two papers can simply choose to be in contact with each other.

I continue to wonder what motivates some people's recurring obsession with shutting down *The Observer*. Is it chauvinism, insecurity, jealousy? I don't know, but one thing I am sure of is that, like shoulder pads and polyester, this particular notion is ready for last-ling retirement.

Chaya Citrin is The Observer's Opinions editor. She is a senior and is majoring in Judaic Studies and Political Science.

A Democrat Speaks Up

Allison Reiser

According to National Public Radio, strong support exists among Republicans for initiatives that "have the potential to help people who are trying to help themselves." Such an absurd statement should strike all American citizens as a patronizing attempt to convolute the true issue of poverty in today's world. It is extremely degrading and foolish to imply that impoverished individuals do not try to help themselves and are therefore undeserving of government assistance. I believe it is the duty of the government to assist those who are drowning in the current economy. Healthcare is perhaps the most pressing area in which the American public is in need of the government's help.

According to the Census Bureau's annual report, 46.3 Americans do not have health insurance. Not surprisingly, the poverty rate also went up over the past year. This correlation is not by chance. As the employment rate continues to spiral downward, the poverty rate increases, and, as a result, people are unable to afford health insurance.

It is true that caring for and supporting the impoverished citizens of a country will require a greater contribution from its taxpayers. According to National Public Radio, Republicans are far less willing to raise taxes for this sort of cause, while Democrats are more willing to raise taxes in order to help the impoverished. President Barack Obama's proposed healthcare plan is in line with Democrats' interest in combating poverty. Supposedly, the healthcare plan will contain a public option, making health insurance available to all Americans.

This leads me to think about the average Jewish American. As Yeshiva University women, we often vow to challenge the issue of poverty in America or in the Jewish community. Poverty within the Jewish community is so much worse than we may realize. According to the Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, "there are a total of 348,000 poor and near-poor people in Jewish households struggling to get by in the New York area."

As Jews, as Americans, and as people who care about the state of justice in the world, we must see a healthcare plan passed into law. We cannot stand by while our classmates, neighbors, and friends do not have health insurance. We should stand behind the Democratic Party as they attempt to have their initiatives passed in Congress. As President Obama said on September 9, he is not the first president to attempt to pass healthcare reform, but he will hopefully be the last. We are able to show our support by becoming educated about this issue, especially at events held by the YU Democrat Club. By educating ourselves, we become more aware and involved citizens.

Allison Reiser is the secretary of the YU College Democrats.

Summer... With Flies and Chipmunks

Hadassa Klerman

This summer, I had an exciting research internship. I had emailed professor after professor, scouring the biology labs of Boston for a position suitable for a college student with limited knowledge and experience and only 12 weeks of a summer vacation to contribute. Thankfully, the seventh person or so did have room for me in his lab, and so I ended up spending my summer working with flies. Yes, flies. Those little buzzing insects that you swat with a newspaper when they enter through a tiny tear in your window screen. Incidentally, I've actually gotten pretty good at catching flies, mostly by trapping them between my thumb and forefinger, perfect for transport to a more appropriate fly habitat (or morgue). I've also gotten good at identifying whatever flying insect buzzes in my ear when I'm at home or outside. I can't really say that I've identified which species of fly they are, but I can instantly tell you whether or not they are fruit flies (most of the time, they are not).

What did I really do? No, I did not spend all my time staring at masses of insects darting around plastic vials, and, no, I did not have to feed the trays of flies we kept. I did spend most of my time, however, looking at them through a microscope. I had to learn how to focus my gaze (and properly focus the microscope!) to endure hours of such work. But I also did a fair number of dissections.

For some reason, the dissections we did in biology lab were okay; a preserved frog or rat or even fetal pig required a deep breath, but no more. However, regular dissections of flies, only recently anesthetized from their hyperactive buzzing state, called upon significantly greater reserves of strength. I wonder what medical school anatomy will be like, but these dissections were not fun. My sister called me "Lord of the Flies" in honor of the species at the heart of my summer experience, but I felt more like I was inappropriately playing L-rd to my flies. Who was I to decide which flies would live and which would die, and which flies to cross

for progeny? I was content to let G-d run the universe without my so-called help. And the dissections raised some uncomfortable questions and parallels between humans and flies. I surely don't want anyone anesthetizing me and examining all the hairs on my head, the color of my eyes, and the curl of my wings (not that I have any). And I don't want to even consider the outcome of that line of reasoning.

During those weeks, an interesting critter problem developed for my family. While chipmunks had been a constant presence around our yard, this year they seemed more numerous and clever, or perhaps just more bold. Our aging air conditioning system received repairs one baking summer day, but the next week it failed again due to a chewed-up part. The repairman said a chipmunk was watching him as he worked, eyeing the air conditioner. A couple weeks later, cracks in the concrete of the driveway deepened, and parts of the driveway were completely dug up. My mother reported seeing one particularly young and feisty chipmunk, at which she called in someone to help us reclaim our house from the wildlife. "Enough is enough," she said, "and the wildlife must learn their limits." Wild turkeys (especially around Thanksgiving), rabbits, squirrels, owls (who make yearly appearances around Succoth time), deer, and a number of colorful birds (who have an unfortunate knack for flying into windows) are sufficient co-sharers of the property, and my mother is quick to point out that they don't pay any share of property taxes.

We now have a number of fake rocks around the house, just artificial enough to be comical. The hope is that the chipmunks aren't smart enough to see what we see, that the big charcoal rocks that have suddenly appeared on the property are nothing more than little plastic caves with peanut butter inside. Someone comes around regularly to check the rocks and remove any critters caught inside. I don't know what he does with them, and I don't want to ask. I hope he takes them away and re-

leases them to some nice green natural preserve, far away from our house. I usually refuse to consider the alternative, given my fly experience. But occasionally, in those quiet, still moments (generally late at night, in those few minutes before I fall asleep), I think about the chipmunks and the flies, and the correctness of our decisions. I note the parallel between the two situations in the exertion of man's control and dominion over other creatures, and the differences between my attitudes toward the chipmunks and the flies. Is it okay to kill the flies because my actions are in the name of research? Is it okay to have the chipmunks removed, because they are in my way and causing (significant) damage to my property, although not (yet) to myself? If these actions are to be condoned, is some measure of reluctance preferable or, perhaps, necessary? Can I reduce my desensitization toward the value of life, both human and animal, by feeling bad about what I (have to) do?

As a person who lives life according to *halakha* (Jewish law), I allow *halakha* to dictate the permissible courses of actions in such situation. *Halakha* does permit research on animals in many situations, often if there is significant, demonstrable (and possibly direct) benefit to humans. Similarly, *halakha* permits man to slaughter animals for food and dictates that a person's life takes preference over that of an animal. Yet, *halakha* also includes a principle of minimizing pain or discomfort to animals, which extends both to taunting creatures in the zoo and to mitzvot that involve animals. I believe that the feelings for animals and the concern over desensitization to the value of life are important elements in living out those *halakhic* decisions. I therefore strive to preserve that squeamish response to fly dissections—I believe that my character depends on it. Without it, I become callous, cruel and insensitive, traits that will carry over into my interactions with other humans, not to mention my interactions with the other critters that live with me on planet Earth.

OPINIONS

Building Sukkahs and Breaking Stereotypes

Hadassa Klerman

How many young women at Stern participate in building a sukkah (traditional temporary dwelling) around this time of year? I do not wonder how many belong to families who build sukkahs, as opposed to those who do not, or who attend Sukkoth programs in hotels or out of town, where their construction skills are not needed. I refer specifically to women building the sukkah, as opposed to men undertaking this task.

It does make sense that men should shoulder the task of erecting a sukkah. Generally speaking, the male population is characterized by greater physical strength, greater familiarity with the halakhoth (Jewish laws) involved in a kosher sukkah, and greater halakhic obligation toward the sukkah related mitzvot. However, that should not preclude women from helping out with the endeavor, and it should not relegate their participation to sweeping the floor of the completed sukkah and hanging up paper chains or other (perhaps more sophisticated) decorations.

Since I have no brothers, the women in my family share many male-dominated responsibilities. We take out the garbage, kill bugs, fix computer problems, and change light bulbs, without a thought of the fact that these jobs may often be the purview of the men of the world. Of course, we do these chores in addition to traditionally feminine tasks such as washing dishes, setting and clearing the table, cooking, and cleaning house. I never grew up with any notion that there are "boy" and "girl" chores.

This lack of differentiation between masculine and feminine responsibilities had its benefits in other areas as well. The women of our family are close to our father; we walk to shul (synagogue) with him and discuss divrei Torah (Torah matters) with him, and, naturally, we get the privilege of helping him with projects such as building the sukkah.

For many years, my family spent Sukkoth out of town with my grandparents. My grandfather insisted on putting up his own sukkah, made of wooden panels and a heavy, rigid frame, using his own tools and a rickety stepladder that even my father refused to use. I remember my grandmother worrying over his safety, but she did not help him, perhaps because she was once hit in the head by one of the beams. By the time my family would arrive, several days before the holiday, the sukkah was al-

ready completed and often already decorated. All that remained was to add the decorations that we had made in school and insisted on hanging up, even if that required moving whatever decorations were already on display.

Those years are over, and instead we now celebrate Sukkoth at home. Someone has to put up our heavy wooden sukkah, tighten the bolts and set up the wiring so we can have light for eight days. It was a family project the first year, and the second year as well. At some point, us womenfolk figured out how to do it alone, and my father was let off the hook.

This year, it was my father and I who put up the sukkah. Everyone was behind with his or her respective work or school responsibilities, and only I had vacation. Since I had the most time of anyone, I had the greatest share of the fun. I am too short to properly assemble all the panels alone, and I am definitively barred from using the power drill (probably more because of my father's concerns for his tools than concern for my supposed, but still unproven, ineptitude), so I am limited in my sukkah building responsibilities. However, there was much to be done that I could and did do. Throughout the entire project, I was grateful to have the time, and I pitied my sister, who did not have time off from college and thus could not join me in sukkah-building.

There is a special joy of sitting in a sukkah and knowing that you played an important role in building that hut. There is a special feeling of connection to the mitzvah and to the hag (holiday) when you are so actively involved in the preparations. Many women are indeed involved in preparations for hagim with their tremendous efforts in the kitchen. However, that is not unique to any specific hag, for we eat festive meals on every hag besides Yom Kippur. As for me, I do enjoy the considerable amount of time I spend in the kitchen before every hag, and I look forward to those hours of cooking, chopping, stirring and baking. At the same time, I am glad that there are no male stereotypes in my family that discourage my involvement in sukkah-building. I would not want to forfeit my share in the mitzvah, nor the fun with my father, for anything. Besides, this year my father taught me how to use his power drill. I actually drilled three holes without drilling into myself. Maybe next year I'll do more.



The Observer
Sukkahs embellish every balcony of a Beit Shemesh apartment building.

Concerning Federal Funding for College Loans

Hannah Robinow

As a summer intern in the Capitol Hill office of Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS), I had the opportunity to learn a great deal about many issues in American politics, such as conservative and liberal ideologies, climate change policy, abortion legislation, and education reform, just to name a few. I also had the opportunity to bear witness to the many debates and opinions that shape American politics. Even though I did not agree with all of the voices that weighed in on the television networks and over the airwaves, their passion for the matter at hand inspired me to re-examine how my political beliefs translated into action in the real world, especially as it pertains to my education.

During my internship, I had the privilege of sitting in on a meeting between Senator Brownback and one of his policy advisors to discuss recent developments in federal funding for education. They discussed the Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFELP) or, to be more specific, recent changes to funding for this program.

The FFEL program was established in 1965 thanks to the Higher Education Act. By partnering with universities, colleges, and private loan companies, FFEL provides four types of federally guaranteed loans for students, all of which are used throughout American colleges: Stafford Loans, Unsubsidized Stafford Loans, Federal PLUS Loans, and Federal Consolidation Loans. Though these programs differ by interest rates and payment periods, these four programs account for 75% of privately financed federal student loans in the United States. In contrast, the Direct Loan (DL) program gives students low-interest loans directly from the federal government; every single dollar disbursed by this program comes directly from the United States Treasury. The standard loan package offered by the DL program requires students to pay a fixed amount each month, with a ten-year deadline to repay their loans.

Currently, both programs receive government funding. However, President Barack Obama's budget proposal for fiscal year 2010 eliminated funding for the FFEL program in favor of the DL program. The Senate passed President Obama's budget proposal on April 29. The president's administration justified this decision by claiming that it would yield gross savings

of \$87 billion for the federal government between the years 2010 and 2019.

However, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) ran a cost estimate of HR 3221 (also known as the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 2009), the bill that mandated a change in funding from the FFEL program to the DL program. After running a cost estimate, the CBO found that due to increased administrative costs, the new program would actually save \$33 billion less than what the government previously calculated. Due to the original miscalculation of how much money would be saved by consolidating the loan programs, the DL program may run out of money. In a letter dated July 27, 2009 to Senator Judd Gregg, a Republican member of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, the CBO reported that a previous estimate done to determine the value of the bill's savings used the current value of federal cash flow without accounting for the risk that this cash flow might be constrained due to defaults or lack of cash. Therefore, this would result in less money saved than previously estimated, which would result in less money available to students and their families. In addition, increasing the government role in student funding options would ensure that if the DL program ever fell short of funding, students would have even fewer options to pay for college because they no longer have the private sector to generate creative, alternative means of college funding.

At Stern College for Women, every student is blessed with many opportunities to further her education and to be exposed to a myriad of worldviews in a nurturing academic environment. Every young woman here, regardless of her socioeconomic background, is able to enjoy the ability to spend the first years of her adulthood shaping her mind and strength-

ening her connection to Judaism. In fact, I challenge each Stern student to think of just one experience she has had this semester that has helped her think differently and more creatively, whether that experience was learning a new tractate of Talmud or a new mathematical proof.

Now imagine how that experience might change five years from now if students depend on loans from the government in order to afford college tuition. In wake of the current economic uncertainty still embroiling a broad spectrum of American families, this means that Stern students of today and tomorrow will join the millions of college students in worrying about their ability to pay escalating tuition costs. If the Direct Loan Program could no longer ensure that every student who wants to go to school can afford to do so, most students' college experiences would definitely change. If you relied on a Stafford Loan, then you would no longer have the multiple choices in funding that the FFEL Program provided, and you would not be able to fall back on the multiple choices that private lenders provide. Your mind would be shackled with concerns about how to keep yourself financially afloat while paying for the escalating costs of living and college tuition, both of which would be vying for top priority in your life.

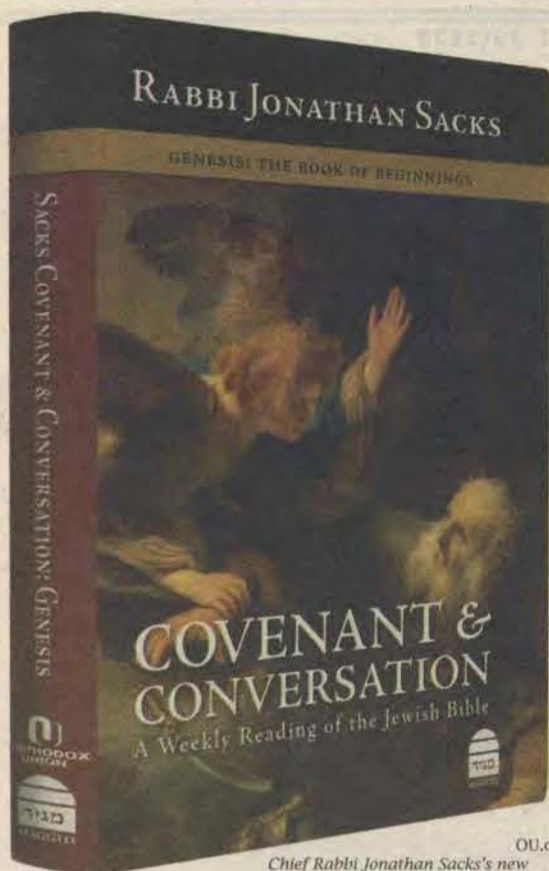
As you go about your day, think about what would happen if you weren't certain about where next semester's tuition was coming from. Wouldn't that make you pay a bit more attention to how your college education is funded and to who's in charge of distributing that money? This issue is a serious one that will likely affect a vast number of college students and that should be of concern to our student body. After all, this isn't just about whether you're interested in politics, but simply about what kind of decision-making power you want over your education.



Hannah Robinow spent the summer as an intern on Capitol Hill.

Courtesy of Hannah Robinow

ARTS AND CULTURE



OU.org
Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's new work, "Covenant and Conversation".

Parsha U'Madda: "Covenant and Conversation"

Rivkah Rogawski

When Sir Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Sacks, Chief Rabbi of the Commonwealth and noted theologian, writes a book series on the *parsha* (weekly Torah portion), the standard is set fairly high. Thankfully for its readers, the *Genesis* volume of "Covenant and Conversation: A Weekly Reading of the Jewish Bible" easily meets any expectations. The title of "Covenant and Conversation" manifests Rabbi Sacks's attitude toward the Torah. He attempts to simultaneously explore the text of the Torah, the Jewish people's covenant with G-d, and to continue an historical tradition of conversation through fresh interpretations of the text and its commentaries.

"Covenant and Conversation" is composed of vignettes organized according to the *parsha*. Each section opens with the events of that *parsha* succinctly summarized, followed by three or four essays on specific topics in the text. While these essays can be read separately each week, and indeed are probably intended to be read in such a manner, reading the entire book in one sitting enriches the experience, allowing one to trace Rabbi Sacks's favorite themes. Rabbi Sacks formulates textual explanations, philosophical extrapolations, and *hashkafic* ideas alike in clear, simple and elegant prose, clearly meant for all to understand.

Rabbi Sacks draws upon the Talmud and classic *meforshim* as well as secular philosophy, psychology, literature and science in his writing. These latter sources are used to flesh out arguments stemming from the text, making the reading of *Covenant and Conversation* feel like receiving a well-rounded education. In one instance, Leon Festinger's Theory of Cognitive Dissonance is used to explain the ambivalent behavior of Lot as he leaves Sodom. Rabbi

Sacks explains that Lot's intense internal tension, as expressed in the cantillation above the words, was a result of his "split personality" between the world of Sodom and the world of Abraham. In another case, reproductive cloning is tied to the close physical resemblance that Abraham had to Isaac. Nuclear transfer technology, says Rabbi Sacks, confronts the same issues of individuality and identity that Abraham and Isaac confronted because of their physical similarities.

Perhaps the most unique aspect of "Covenant and Conversation" is Rabbi Sacks's unabashed correlation of biblical events and teachings with modern day applications. "Covenant and Conversation" takes the moral and philosophical lessons that it draws from the text and makes judgments about modern Jewish history and politics. In the above example of Lot's cognitive dissonance, Rabbi Sacks states that such ambivalence plagued many Holocaust-era Jews and calls upon modern Jews to shed that embarrassment about Jewish identity. In another startling example, Rabbi Sacks relates the *midrashim* about Isaac and Ishmael's ultimate reconciliation and infers that "between Judaism and Islam there can be friendship and mutual respect." Such statements are bold and yet profoundly important, illustrating Rabbi Sacks's attempts to continue the "conversation" aspect of Torah study.

"Covenant and Conversation" can be understood regardless of one's study background. Although Rabbi Sacks carefully explains and translates specific commentaries and verses, these explanations engage both the experienced reader who has seen the material before and the novice eager to learn. Upon finishing the *Genesis* volume of the series, both will eagerly await the *Exodus* installation.

Finding Magic in Modern Art

Simi Lampert

Most of you probably read this title and immediately thought of big yellow triangles, or metal rods contorted into indistinguishable shapes. No matter how much you love paintings and sketches, you dread the modern art exhibits, unable to find truth and meaning in a misshapen glass box, which probably has a dent on the side, symbolizing Communism or oppression of women in Africa, or whatever the little placard on the wall suggests. However, the Modern American Art exhibit in the Art Institute of Chicago boasts masterpieces that can make even the most stubborn cynic pause and reconsider.

American Modernism is an art movement from a general era of the 20th century that began with a flurry of new techniques of painting, ranging from the angular and brightly colored Cubist images to the pastel-toned and slightly blurry look associated with Impressionism. One of these new approaches became known as Magic Realism, a manner of painting that embraces the fantastical. It dares the viewer to confront broadly imaginative scenes by depicting them casually within mundane images of ordinary life. Magic Realism was somewhat influenced by Surrealism, that less comprehensible form of art which has given Modern Art such a poor reputation among museum frequenters, although Magic Realist paintings allow for more logic and fluidity.

One of the earliest and most well-known painters of this style was Ivan Albright. An American painter who lived from 1897-1983, his art career began doing medical drawings during World War I in the gloomy squalor of a French hospital. This morbid start must account in some way for the dark and mysterious works of his later years. "The Picture of Dorian Gray" is uncontested as his most renowned painting, appearing as it did in Albert Lewin's 1945 black and white movie adaptation of Oscar Wilde's novel of the same name. The painting was commissioned specifically for this role, and eventually became the only scene in the film done in color, to exaggerate the effect of the detailed work. Today it is displayed prominently in Gallery 262 of the Art Institute of Chicago, where it is joined by two other extravagantly named works by Albright: "Into the World There Came a Soul Called Ida," and "That Which I Should Have Done I Did Not Do (The Door)."

The latter of these two is arguably the most striking - and unnerving - image to behold in the entire gallery. Its impressive title is befitting of a truly spectacular canvas. Albright spent an astounding ten years, from 1931-1941, composing the painstaking detail that makes up the final masterpiece, as if to record the actual progress of time as it passed by. As the name suggests, the painting is, in fact, of a door. Hanging on the warped and peeling wood of this forbidding door is a decaying wreath of roses and lilies, the bloom and bright colors long faded from the flowers; petals and stems lay abandoned where they've fallen at the foot of the door. The bald symbolism of vanished youth and opportunity is completed by the gnarled hand reaching around to grope the edge of the door, the gray wrinkles of the skin and antiquated lace of the sleeve mirroring the faded flowers. This is the type of painting that calls out to the viewer. It is impossible to pass by quickly or spare it just a glance. The eye is drawn in by the deep colors, as if one can feel the emotional energy that was invested in each stroke of the artist's brush. One is left defenseless. The mind struggles to comprehend all that the painting encompasses: The lessons, the meaning, mortality, man's need to make something of himself. Emotions are stripped bare before this awesome painting, and even when one has physically turned away, the feelings remain to be grappled with, the whirling thoughts stirred up and demanding consideration.

While art is often relegated to the role of pleasing the eye, or soothing the soul, as it were, Albright's prolific oeuvre, the essence of which is exemplified in "That Which I Should Have Done But Did Not Do (The Door)," proves there are pieces of art that may disturb the mind and even displease the eye, yet still have the ability to remain with us forever. This is the kind of art that will catch your attention and hold it, arresting your sensibilities so that they remain with you long after you've left their presence.



humanflowerproject.com
Ivan Albright's "That Which I Should Have Done I Did Not Do".

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ARTS AND CULTURE

Everyone Loves
New York

Alisa Ungar-Sargon

"New York, I Love You" looked promising. The second in producer Emmanuel Benbihy's "Cities of Love" series, the trailer made it seem like it would be the 2006 "Paris, Je T'aime" translated into American-speak. Whether it was the less structured arrangement of the new film or the fact that the Benbihy realized the need for American translation all too well, "New York" lacked a bit of the magic that made "Paris" such a pleasure to watch.

Both films concentrate on the concept of love - love with their respective cities as well as within them. They both bring together an absurdly long list of acclaimed directors and actors, primarily natives but also representing the interracial and tourist personalities. In "Paris", the directors each made a five-minute short, all of which were continuously strung together and headed by the short's title and director. The last few moments of the two-hour project showed a number of the characters interacting with each other, leaving the viewer with a sense of the sadness that permeated even the happy couples.

"New York" takes a different approach. Instead of having each short isolated into their five-minute windows, the actors from one director's work will leak into another's, blending the storylines but never quite resolving them satisfactorily. A film will run a scene or even finish in its entirety, and then pop up again later on for two minutes, sometimes as a transition to another character that will get their own segment in due time. Another film will play for two minutes with no explanation, with one of the actors returning to play out the rest of it in a similar motif, but with no reference to the first bit. It would seem that the point of this is to make apparent the interrelationships within the City, but as a storyline the result was not nearly as charming as the setup in "Paris."

One tactic that kept coming up in "New York" was the distinct Aha! moments, where the viewer watches a segment in which an assumption is being made about a certain character - that they don't speak the language, or that what you see is what you get - and at the end of the scene the assumption is ripped apart. This kind of storytelling can be very entertaining; one of the best moments was in director Yvan Attal's film, when, after a writer (Ethan Hawke) gives a woman (Maggie Q) an extensive speech about the life-changing experience of having sex with him, she reveals her own occupation. But it happens twice more in Attal's own continuing story (though one of them may have been at the hands of a transitions director), and then again in Brett Ratner's quirky/awkward prom night story involving a dateless high school kid (Anton Yelchin) and a method actress (Olivia Thirlby). (Bravo to him, though, for limiting Blake Lively's typecast to a scant few seconds.)

The film also capitalizes on

two major clichés: The magic of strangers interacting, as well as the impression, "That's what I love about New York." This continuity did connect the different segments, but not in a gratifying way. There seemed to be so much of New York missing, so much that wasn't being said. This might have been because the taxi drivers were talkative in the wrong way, or maybe it was because the characters seemed out of touch with the world around them, but in any case the telling falls short.

That's not to say that the film is without merit. The two most poignant segments have no connection to the rest of the film, and both deal with a literal but touch-

ing interpretation of the dying of youth. Shekhar Kapur's old school, bleak hotel setting involves a limping Russian bellhop (Shia LaBeouf) serving an aged British guest (Julie Christie). The emotion is palpable in their interaction, which is not fully explained until the last few moments when the older bellhop arrives on the scene. The very last short of the film is Joshua Marston's tale of an older couple's (Cloris Leachman and Eli Wallach) walk to the beach for their 63rd anniversary. The banter about his debilitated walk and the rest of their mildly disrespectful relationship is resolved once they get to the beach - a veritable journey, I assure you - and have a unique

moment of pure togetherness.

Another pleasure that can be found in the many minutes of New York bars, coffee shops, and sweeping landscapes is that of a single continuing character. A videographer (Emilie Ohana) whose introverted personality and role as observer act as somewhat of a guide, comes into contact with different characters from other segments, highlighting their personalities in sweet ways.

However, in a composite work about the populations of New York, a non-stereotypical take on religious Jews would have been nice. The biggest disappointment of "New York" was Mira Nair's segment involving Hasidim. The

film turned out to be a lackluster discussion of the similarities of religions between a young Hasidic bride (Natalie Portman, who also directed a segment) and an Indian diamond dealer (Irrfan Khan), leading to their both fantasizing about each other - she of him in a *streimel*, and he of her in a sari. There was even a reference to how the *sheitel* (wig) she's wearing might be made of Indian hair.

Perhaps the fifth film in the series will be more illuminating for Jews all over the world. Benbihy says that after films on Rio de Janeiro and Shanghai, the next in line, coming out around 2012, is titled "Jerusalem, I Love You."

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ISRAEL

A Union of Two Cultures;
the Definition of One People

Lauren Burstein

Although Heshvan, the month following holiday-packed Tishri, is often termed *Mar-Heshvan* ("bitter") due to its lack of festivals, for one community it holds celebration.

In the sea of white garments, I, in a deep purple dress, was the darkest color. Thousands of figures surrounded me, all voicing their prayers. I stood as a witness to their joyous occasion, yet I also felt warmly included in their community. My eyes were pleased with the beautiful scene that encompassed the emotions and uniqueness of the day. I felt happy; we all were grateful.

Every winter season, Ethiopian Jews celebrate a holiday known as the Sigd. In 2007, I was fortunate enough to experience the Sigd in Israel with my roommates and friends. My seminary, *Nishmat*, provides a program for Ethiopian women who wish to spend a year or more learning Torah studies. As the Sigd approaches, the Ethiopians at *Nishmat* become eager to share their culture with the other Israeli and Anglo students.

The word Sigd comes from *Mesigd*, which is one of two Ethiopian terms for a Jewish Temple. It is celebrated on the 29th of the Hebrew month of Heshvan. The Sigd honors Moses's giving of the law to the Jewish people. In Ethiopia, the custom was to fast until midday and to ascend the closest high mountaintop to commemorate the way in which the Bible was given over. Upon the mountain, the community would recite special prayers and eat a festive meal. They were unified by their outer appearance, as everyone was clad in beautiful white garments.

When I first came to *Nishmat*, I anticipated the experience of having Ethiopian roommates. While the idea of an intercultural en-

vironment seemed different and exciting, I was still worried that I would not fully connect with people of other ethnicities. However, during *Nishmat*'s celebration of the Sigd, as I sat and watched my new friends enact scenes of daily life in Ethiopia, and when I tasted their unique breads and side dishes, I realized that what separates them from me are merely the ritualistic components of daily life. While they may eat different foods and wear different clothing, listen to different music and wear different perfumes, they still retain the core values that all Jews are brought up with. Although I can distinguish myself from them because we were born on different continents, the fact is that we are one people. We are one religion with one faith.

Today, the Sigd is celebrated in numerous places around the world. While it is still celebrated in Ethiopia, it is also celebrated in Ethiopian communities in Israel and the Diaspora.

The biggest celebration of the Sigd in Israel takes place in Jerusalem. The morning of the 29th of Cheshvan, thousands Ethiopian Israelis travel to a community called *Talpiyot*, to a place known as the *Tayelet*, which means "lookout" in Hebrew. At the *Tayelet* there is a beautiful view of the entire city of Jerusalem.

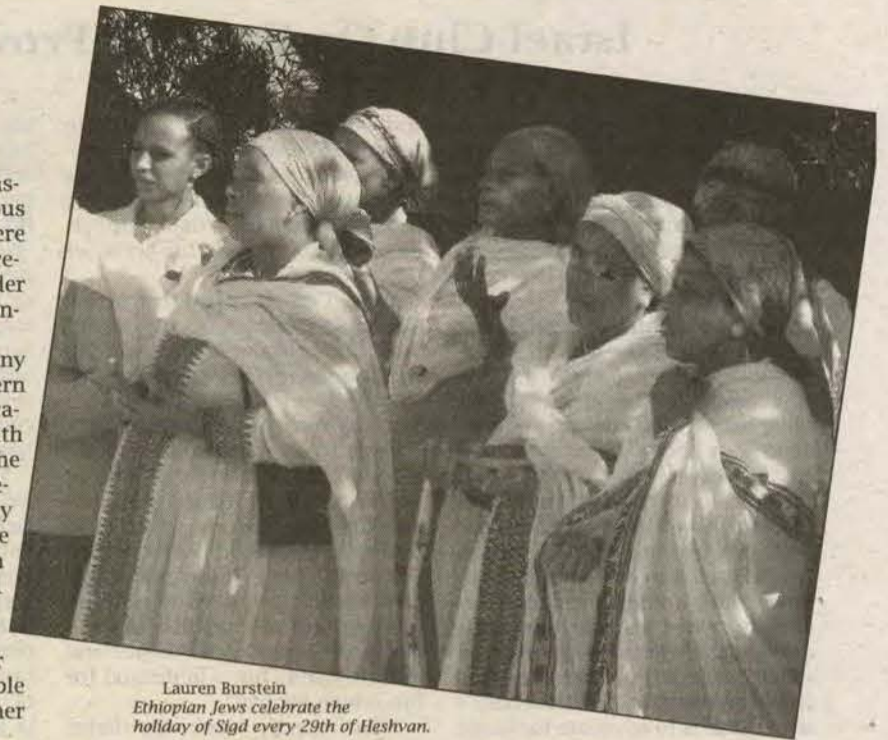
The travel to the *Tayelet* mirrors the pilgrimage that the elderly and newest Ethiopian immigrants had once taken in Ethiopia. But the event is just as exciting even for those Ethiopian Israelis who have lived in Israel their whole lives and who only hear of stories about their parents' or grandparents' pasts in Ethiopia. The *Qessim*, who are the astute leaders of the Ethiopian communities, stand under elaborately handmade umbrellas at the front of the assembly. They

recite prayers, and the entire assembly answers them with various Amharic chants. The atmosphere welcomes all the attendees: religious and non-religious, older and younger, Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian.

Following the assembly, many attendees travel to the Western Wall, symbolizing the solidification of their relationship with God. Although I did not follow the group to the Western Wall, I remember speaking with one of my roommates, *Alamturu*, when she returned. She came back with tears in her eyes and explained to me that she was so proud to be an Israeli Ethiopian—that she has the ability to retain her Ethiopian heritage, and still be able to visit the Western Wall and other significant landmarks in Israel.

Alamturu was born in Ethiopia and made aliyah with her family when she was 15 years old. After living in Israel for five years, she said she could not be happier. However, she explained to me that it was very challenging for her at first to be immersed in Israeli society. She had had to get used to a new school system, new friends, a new language, new clothes and new living standards, among other things. The Sigd, she said, allows her the dual opportunity to express her connection with Ethiopian Jews while embracing the Israeli culture that she has come to love.

All of my North American friends at *Nishmat* had an equally wonderful time celebrating the Sigd. *Miriam Gofine* (*Nishmat*, 08', *Stern College for Women*, 11') explains that the Sigd was an educational experience. "For me, Sigd reinforced the notion that there are rich cultural and historical traditions from communities beyond North Africa and Europe," she says. "Not all Jews are Sephardic



Lauren Burstein
Ethiopian Jews celebrate the
holiday of Sigd every 29th of Heshvan.

and Ashkenazic."

Michelle Sykes (*Nishmat*, 08' *Barnard College*, '12) was amazed at the sight at the *Tayelet*. "It was really interesting to see that the Ethiopian community was so strong in coming together and celebrating their holiday," she states. "The cultural aspects were also really cool—just seeing the beautiful umbrellas and the abundance of white clothing was really interesting."

Shoshi Spellman (*Nishmat*, 08', *Columbia University*, '12) was also excited by the congregation at the *Tayelet*. "Seeing the massive crowd of Ethiopian immigrants, who had struggled so hard to get to Israel, was so moving," she describes. "It was a real reminder of how lucky so many of us are, that we take Israel for granted and can just come and go as we please. These people went through so much, and have such a real appreciation of the State of Israel, and being able to celebrate that with them was amazing."

I feel extremely lucky to have at least once experienced a celebration of the Sigd. Furthermore, I am so thankful to have made close friendships with various members of the Israeli Ethiopian Jewish community. I had the opportunity to learn about their culture and to share aspects of my American culture with them. We are different from one another, and yet we are also the same. Jews are known for forming close-knit communities. We are known for sticking together through times of sorrow, and for coming together during times of joy. We are one people who have found pockets of land to inhabit across the world.

The Ethiopian communities have planted what is known in Amharic as an *adis ababa*, a new flower, in Israel. They continue to cultivate it through the continuation of the arrival of new Ethiopian immigrants to Israel. This year they will once again unite for a Sigd celebration on November 16, 2009.



Qessim recite prayers.

Lauren Burstein

ISRAEL

Israel Club On Campus: Providing a Necessary Outlet for YU Students

Rachel Stark

Why does Yeshiva University need an Israel Club? Israel clubs on secular college campuses aim to raise awareness about the fundamental issues facing the people and the land of Israel. However, many Yeshiva University students have probably attended more assemblies about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than they cared to stay awake for. A typical Israel Club may try to educate its student body about the nation's rich history, diverse population, and flavorful culture. Yet, many YU students have already spent a year or more learning in Israel, and have visited the country numerous times. They would have, therefore, already gained a strong appreciation for the country's culture and ethnic values. Furthermore, one fundamental role of a university's Israel Club is to advocate for Israel while fighting against anti-Semitic

and anti-Zionist sentiments on campus. Needless to say, YU's homogeneous population prevents such sentiments from infiltrating daily campus life. What purpose, then, can YU's Israel Club serve for the student body?

Israel Club co-president, Ayala Kurlander, feels strongly about maintaining an active Israel Club on campus. "Whether politically, culturally or religiously, most students at Yeshiva College and Stern College feel a connection to Israel," remarks Kurlander. "Because of this, I believe that it is important for them to have an outlet to express their passion and connection to the State. I also think that, as a Yeshiva, we need to have an active group of students that will stand up and defend Israel and what it stands for: a homeland for the Jewish People."

What exactly does the Israel club wish to accomplish at Yeshiva

University? "The main goals of the Israel Club are to have enjoyable and educational events that will instill an appreciation and devotion to Israel," explains Kurlander. "We want to have events to educate students on current issues in or about Israel, events that fundraise and do *chesed* [charitable work] for different organizations having to do with Israel, and we would like to have events that connect to the spiritual aspects of Israel."

Yeshiva University students are well aware of the difficulties that Israel faces in dealing with other nations of the world. Through programs like this year's kickoff event, a showing of "Faces of Israel," the Israel club is able to introduce students to a range of issues Israelis face living in the complex society of a nation which, after 61 years is still struggling to define itself. Presenting these more complex

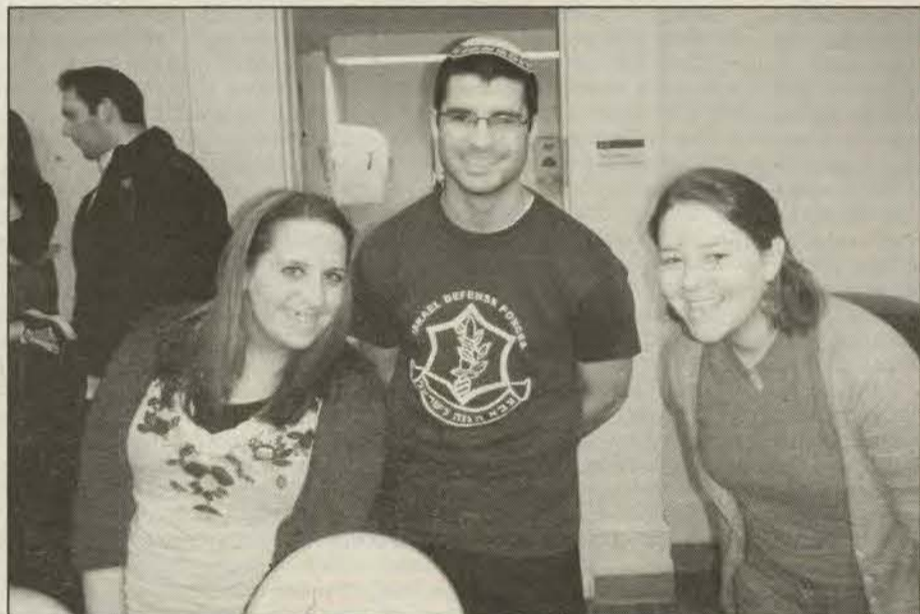
issues related to Israel," she states. "In the Israel Club, like in most groups and organizations we have a group of a bunch of different kinds of people, and therefore, we will of course have a multitude of different opinions. Everyone's opinion is able to be voiced, and will be heard, and at the end of the day, a decision will be made. We address every challenge we come across as objectively as possible and try very hard to put forward a full and unbiased presentation." Their goal is not to make everyone believe, think, or feel as they do. Rather, it is let everyone decide what to believe, think, and feel from an informed perspective.

The Yeshiva University Israel Club's goals are not necessarily different from those of other Israel clubs. They allow the student body to discuss issues and formulate opinions; they provide a welcoming atmosphere that is both educational and philosophical; they

permit students the opportunity to learn more about a country that they have an interest in.

The Israel Club is always open for new people to get involved. It would love to hear new and innovative ideas that students may have. "We are looking for students who are passionate and devoted to Israel to join the already large group of students involved," says Kurlander excitedly. "If anyone is interested in getting involved please email kurlande@gmail.com to let us know."

This year's Israel Club events so far have included the Israel Club Shabbaton, which featured guest speakers Yehuda Rothner, the director of Camp Stone and *Shai Melamed*, an *Aliyah Shaliach* for the Jewish Agency, a joint program with the Career Development Center, and the Israeli Fair. More exciting and interesting events are planned for the remainder of the academic year.



(L-R) Israel Club presidents Adina Poupko, Max Saltzman and Ayala Kurlander at the Israel Club Shabbaton's Saturday night activity on October 17.

Courtesy of Israel Club

issues is probably the greatest challenge the Yeshiva University Israel Club has to face. They are speaking to an educated, and often opinionated, audience. Members within the group itself may even disagree with one another.

However, Kurlander explains that the Israel club does not aim to provide a specific point-of-view. "The Israel Club at YU is an apolitical club that addresses any and all kinds of top-

Iranian President Speaks; YU Joins Protest

Cheryl Noll

The sight at the corner of 47th street and 2nd avenue, across the street from the United Nations, on Thursday, September 24 was impressive. Thousands of people of all ages—Jews and Iranians, most visibly—held signs and waved Israeli or pre-revolution Iranian flags. They were protesting against Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who was speaking inside the General Assembly.

Despite the fact that the rally was held between the holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and many Stern College for Women students had, therefore, already left the New York area, a number of SCW students did attend the rally, along with hundreds of students from other colleges and high schools in the tri-state area.

Dina Wecker (SCW, 10') was amazed by the diversity at the rally. "It is interesting how so many people and cultures are waving flags and fighting for freedom, and most of them aren't Iranian," she said. "There is a broad range of

people here from across the map."

Bob Kunst, a member of the organization Shalom International, carried signs denouncing Obama as "bad for Israel" and advertising the "Million Mensch March and Rally to Protect and Defend Israel and America" in Washington D.C. in June 2010. He traveled to New York from his Florida residence, and went from the rally at the UN to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania to protest at the G-20 Summit the following day.

Aside from people in the crowd with posters and stands, the rally had a program of speakers, such as Rudy Giuliani and former Canadian Justice Minister Irwin Cotler, who spoke out against Ahmadinejad and his policies. Elie Wiesel urged world leaders to shun the Iranian president, such as by giving him the cold shoulder and refusing to shake his hand.

"He is not my president," emphatically declared one speaker, a female Iranian activist based in the United States, her strained voice cracking as she implored, "Wake

up and smell the blood!" A refugee from Sudan called out to the crowd, "Let us stand up and be the voice of those who do not have a voice in Iran."

Accompanying the speakers on stage were four young people with signs that read: "I am a woman and in Iran I am stoned," "I am gay and in Iran I am killed," "I am a minor and in Iran I am persecuted," and "I am a Bahai and in Iran I am persecuted." They each wore black tape over their mouths, representing just some of the groups of people who are oppressed in Ahmadinejad's Islamic Republic.

The crowd excitedly listened to the speakers, frequently breaking out into applause, cheers, and even began chanting "stop Iran now" several times. A group of protesters brought noisemakers, which they used whenever a speaker said Ahmadinejad's name.

Although SCW and Sy Syms School of Business classes were not cancelled on Thursday for the rally, SCW and SSSB professors



A war veteran compares Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Adolph Hitler.

Cheryl Noll

continued on page 19

SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Science Book Shorts

Complications by Atul Gawande

Rivkah Rogawski

William Carlos Williams, distinguished poet and doctor, once said that poetry and medicine were to him nearly the same thing. Individuals like Williams, skilled at both writing and the practice of science, are rare. However, the marriage of good scientific research and informative, lyrical writing is a powerful tool of both education and entertainment. This column will showcase one popular science book each month that can be appreciated by scientist, writer and interested layperson alike.

Atul Gawande's *Complications* perfectly manifests these qualities. Gawande, a surgical resident at Harvard University, has written a highly personal and candid appraisal of modern medicine. Through a combination of vignettes from his residency, interviews with patients and doctors, and carefully culled research, Gawande illustrates the human side of medicine, with all of the fallibilities of an imperfect, hu-

man science. Medicine, Gawande argues, is a profession unlike any other—part modern science, part human logic and perspiration, and part mystical miracle. Above all, *Complications* attempts to peel away the precise, scientific veneer that modern medicine has acquired and to expose it in all of its human beauty.

Gawande's musings center on three basic themes, around which the book is organized. He begins by discussing the fallibility of a medicine administered by imperfect humans, discussing the problem of medical education, mistakes made by physicians, and what happens when "good doctors go bad." Gawande then turns to the mystery still shrouding many physiological phenomena, such as prenatal nausea, obesity, and acute chronic pain. Finally, Gawande turns to the uncertainty tainting medical diagnosis, touching on important aspects of the patient/doctor relationship as it pertains

to complex decision-making.

Gawande's writing is spare and clean, mirroring the candid presentation of his arguments and thoughts. He is able to smoothly transition from his own intimate experiences to broader trends, although it is these intimate experiences that give the book its "insider" feel. Reading *Complications* is like accompanying an insightful doctor on his rounds, privy to all the excitement of a surgical ward, and then having a fascinating conversation on what occurred there. Gawande inspires the reader to ponder medical institutions, and in light of the current political drama surrounding these issues, his book is both timely and important.

Rivkah Rogawski is the Science and Health editor and a chemistry major at Stern. She enjoys spending time in the lab, pondering the mysteries of entropy, and drinking her acid/base titrations.

Meet the New Chemistry Professors

Annie Press

With Dr. Chaya Rapp on sabbatical, there are two new chemistry professors at Stern College for Women's Beren Campus. Dr. Alon Gorodetsky is teaching physical chemistry and Dr. Brycelyn Boardman is teaching both sections of general chemistry. Both professors are new to the teaching profession. They shared with *The Observer* why they chose teaching, what they love about it and what they like to do with their free time.

Dr. Alon Gorodetsky attended Cornell University as an undergraduate and double-majored in applied physics and material science and engineering. Afterwards, he went on to California Institute of Technology for a PhD in chemistry. Similarly, Dr. Boardman majored in chemistry at James Madison in Virginia and received her PhD from University of California at Santa Barbara in organic materials.

Interestingly, both teachers are researching solar power as post-doctoral fellows at Columbia University. Dr. Boardman is exploring hybrid materials for solar application. This involves researching the efficiencies of material composed of organic and inorganic material with regard to their application on solar power. Similarly, Dr. Gorodetsky is doing research on organic photovoltaics. Photovoltaics is the research associated with turning solar power into electronic energy.

Both teachers are truly passionate about chemistry and hope to communicate this love to their students. This is manifested in their emphasis on learning the material, as opposed to the grades associated with the knowledge acquisition. As Dr. Boardman states, her least favorite aspect of teaching is the "students that focus on grades and not on learning." To this end,

both teachers express a love of teaching specifically because of the "really satisfying feeling when a student understands a concept."

When asked about their perception of the Stern community, Dr. Gorodetsky replied that the students appear "very intelligent, very vocal and not afraid to ask questions." Dr. Boardman observes that Stern students are sometimes overly motivated, which causes an unnecessary sense of competition between students. She also stated that she enjoys teaching women in particular, since they are a class underrepresented in the sciences.

In addition to their love of chemistry, both teachers are very interested in their hobbies outside of the classroom. Dr. Gorodetsky enjoys running and has run in both the Brooklyn and Queens half marathons, while Dr. Boardman loves cooking. She states that "if I was not a chemistry teacher, I would be a chef". Additionally, according to Dr. Boardman's students, she has a second calling as an entertainer. "Dr. Boardman is funny," stated one student. "If she was not a teacher she should be a comedian."

Although chemistry may have a reputation as a difficult course, especially at an advanced level, both Dr. Boardman and Dr. Gorodetsky make the subject come to life and relay their passion for the subject into the minds of their students. They are both motivated and excited to make their year in Stern College a great one.

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SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Medical Ethics Society Tackles Genetics in Fourth Annual Conference

Rivkah Rogawski

Is one free? Is man responsible for his behavior, considering the powerful effect that genetics has upon his makeup? At Yeshiva University's fourth annual Medical Ethics Conference, Rabbi Moshe Tendler posed these weighty questions to a mixed group of students, health professionals, and interested laypeople. The conference, titled "The Human Blueprint: A Jewish Perspective on Genetics", covered topics ranging from cancer and reproductive genetics to genetic behavioral determinism and the management of genetic diseases. YU's student Medical Ethics Society (MES) organized the conference in conjunction with the YU Center for the Jewish Future and with the sponsorship of the Fuld family. The conference wielded a two-pronged approach to the important and daunting issues enmeshed in modern applied genetics. The conference both informed the audience of the latest biomedical genetic research and treatments and presented various societal responses to these developments from *halakhic* (pertaining to Jewish law), bioethical and individual perspectives.

The conference began with an introduction from Tali Bauman and Sam Weprin, Medical Ethics Society co-presidents and conference organizers. Along with the rest of the Medical Ethics board, they began planning the conference last March under the guidance of Rabbi Dr. Edward Reichman. Dr. Reichman, associate professor of clinical emergency medicine at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and a Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS)-ordained rabbi, has advised the Medical Ethics Society since their inception in 2005. Reichman, says Bauman, "is the society's mentor in terms of providing us with the support to implement our ideas and choose speakers for our events." This year, the effort entailed coordinating 18 speakers and 400 guests, not to mention the myriad other details involved. Bauman also credited CJF Senior Events Coordinator Aliza Berenholz as a key player in putting the conference together.

The Medical Ethics Society saw the fruition of their labors in the smooth execution of the conference. After the introductory remarks, the first panel dealt with issues of reproductive genetics, in particular screening for genetic diseases. Dr. Susan Lobel delivered a brief primer on the processes involved and Dr. Adrienne Asch subsequently placed genetic screening in the larger social context, emphasizing the creation of an inclusive society that allows for the uncertainty inherent in any human medical enterprise and for the birth of "genetically diseased" individuals. Rabbi Kenneth Brander, dean of the CJF and another MES advisor, explained the *halakhic* context of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, genetic testing, and abortion.

This first panel modeled the conference's "modus operandi", i.e., the presentation of an "issue cluster", addressing the problem from a more general social perspective, and then treating it from a purely



The YU Medical Ethics Society executive board.

Courtesy of Aliza Berenholz

halakhic standpoint. The other topics addressed by the conference, cancer genetics and modern technological advances, were given this same thorough treatment. The cancer genetics panel centered on testing for the BRCA1 and 2 mutations, with presentations from Dr. Harry Ostrer, Rochelle Shoretz (founder of Sharsheret), and Rabbi Mordechai Willig. While Dr. Ostrer and Rabbi Willig focused their discussions on the problems surrounding the testing, Ms. Shoretz's presentation was an example of action-based solutions to the reality presented by breast cancer developments. The concluding panel on developing technologies, specifically personalized genetic medicine, similarly analyzed the topic from a variety of fascinating perspectives.

In addition to the three main panels, the conference also included the special presentation on behavioral genetics from Rabbi Tendler. Including a wealth of sources culled from the media, research publications, and Jewish texts, Rabbi Tendler presented a unique Jewish outlook on the startling idea implied by the Human Genome Project—that human behavior is controlled by the genome, and therefore humans are rendered less culpable for their actions. The participants were also able to choose from six postprandial breakout sessions on topics as varied as Familial Dysautonomia, forensic genetics, and the DNA Shoah project.

The audience at the Medical Ethics conference represented a diverse cross-section of the Jew-

ish community. Yeshiva University students were joined by a variety of health professionals and laypeople to participate in the conference. Ruth Vishnavsky, who traveled from Boston to attend the conference, enjoyed the "stimulation" offered by the conference and the chance that it affords her to think about Jewish bioethics. Another physician attending the conference added that it was an opportunity for Yeshiva University to serve the greater Jewish community. The Medical Ethics Society certainly attempts this integration of student and communal needs, offering up to 6.5 CME credits for physicians attending the conference and advertising throughout the tri-state area. When asked about this aspect of the conference, Bauman stated that "MES attempts to both educate the 'future' through the students and the 'present' through wider communal efforts".

Ultimately, the goal of the conference was not to neatly solve the problems it put forward, but rather to initiate constructive discussion and galvanize greater communal awareness. Individuals educated about such pertinent matters are better able to function in an increasingly volatile modern society. Such goals reflect those of the Medical Ethics Society itself, and students interested in joining themselves in the society can either email yumedicaethics@gmail.com or visit their website at www.yu.edu/medicaethics. Additionally, recordings of the conference can be found at yutorah.org.

It's Elementary: PT Come Home

Juliet Meir

Despite the ubiquity of the periodic table, how many people are truly familiar with the elements it contains? The elements are more than their atomic mass and number—elements are the components on which our entire world is based; without them our world would cease to exist. This column will explore one element each month, plumbing the depths of the periodic table.

This month's element, familiar to many jewelry connoisseurs, is platinum. Platinum, which has an atomic number of 78, has long been sought after as a valuable possession. The Egyptians and the South Americans have recognized this metal's value since as early as 100 BCE. Platinum's discovery was renewed by the Spanish conquerors of the Americas in the 15th-16th century. They gave it the name "platina"—based on the Spanish word "plata" for "silver"—but at first did not recognize the value of this metal, because it interfered with the activity of mining gold. In 1751, a Swedish researcher named Sheffer gave platinum its current name. Louis XVI in the 18th century called platinum "the metal of kings." Nowadays, platinum is known as the environmental metal because of its autocatalytic functions. Autocatalysts convert toxic materials in the Earth's environment into harmless compounds, and this property has led platinum to have a 20% abundance in manufactured goods.

Additionally, platinum plays an important role in biomedical research. For example, platinum has been used since 1977 to treat cancer by inhibiting the proliferation of living cells. Platinum's ability to stop the multiplication of living cells was discovered in 1962. Cisplatin was the first platinum-based anti-cancer drug; it was used to treat testicular cancer and some other cancers like ovarian, neck, and head cancer. The radio-opacity of platinum, or its high absorption of radio waves, allows the progress of a platinum anti-cancer treatment to be easily visualized on an x-ray. However, even though platinum is used widely as an anti-cancer drug, such drugs have noxious side effects and increased resistance, which limit their use.

Platinum is also used in pacemakers as an electrical conductor to steady heart disorders that produce an irregular heartbeat. Lastly, platinum marker bands are also used in catheters (tubing inserted into the artery) to guide the insertion of molecules and other solutions to the treatment site.

Clearly, platinum is much more than an atomic number on the periodic table. It is more than a mere collection of protons, neutrons and electrons. It is an element with a history, an element with great potential in the future of drug synthesis and medical instrumentation. Who knew platinum could be so ubiquitous?

STYLE

If You're Sri Lankan Then You Put Some Bling On It

Dassi Fant

Once upon a time, before the piercings, the bling, and diamond rings in those little blue boxes, jewelry was to be a symbol of eternal love, tradition and heritage. The significance of gems and jewels varies within each culture. Sri Lankan culture places greater value in jewelry than a Stern girl in her carat size.

Years ago, Sri Lanka had no real banking system. As a result, people would invest their money not in stocks and bonds, but in gold and jewelry. It was an investment not in fleeting objects, but the family's future. A woman's jewelry was her dowry and established her place in society.

The gold chain is a small piece of a traditional bridal necklace. This special necklace is worn by brides on their wedding day, made of 24-carat gold, and is long enough to touch the bride's knees. After the wedding, Sri Lankan gold artisans break the chain into smaller necklaces, meant to be given to the couple's children—perhaps one day even to grandchildren—and to be cherished as an heirloom representing the family's honor. Western culture's attitude to-

wards jewelry has become impersonal and ostentatious throughout the years. All too often, we are blinded by the shine of those craters we call engagement rings. Although the traditional ring's glow emanates a glow that is unique to the blushing bride, they are pebbles in comparison to the full-on competitive Bridezilla's rocks. Often, these monstrosities are flaunted with a choreographed touse of the pre-sheitel hair or strategically placed at the perfect angle when posing for OnlySimchas.com. Some brides will simply do anything in their power to get Harry Winston some attention. It is both tragic and ironic how a symbol of eternal love has become so perverted with materialism.

When did this shift happen, this evolutionary degradation of the sentimental to the flagrantly ornamental? Why did something so precious and so meaningful, an engagement ring, stop symbolizing love and start becoming a competition? And precisely how can an object, like a diamond, be a girl's best friend? Doesn't anyone prefer something, or rather someone, with a little more depth? And honestly, a De Beers princess cut

isn't going to look all that great in a custom tailored maid-of-honor dress.

But perhaps with love, age, and a bit of humor, these brides will begin to see something different when wearing a string of pearls from their Bubby or the sapphire bracelet they received on a special anniversary.

But until then, I wish luck, and, more importantly, wealth, to those embarking on the journey of competitive superficiality. And I hope that one day they will see past a feather in a stone or a crack in a gem to an exponentially more beautiful value.



Sri Lankan women honor their heritage by wearing traditional jewelry.

Courtesy of Dassi Fant

Fashion's Night Out: The Biggest Beneficiary-Less Benefit Bash

Talia Kaufman

On September 10, New York's first ever Fashion Night Out turned Manhattan into a High Fashion Halloween. Models, drag queens, celebrities and faux-shanistas paraded the streets and shops of the city decked out in couture and toting bags full of apparel from all of the participating designers. The night turned the city into a VIP room of an everything-extravagant extravaganza.

For those of you who live under a rock that does not accept MasterCard, Fashion's Night Out.com calls the night "a global initiative to promote retail, restore consumer confidence, and celebrate fashion, [for which] U.S. and international editions of *Vogue* coordinated evening extravaganzas in their respective world fashion capitals." The event spanned to the thirteen different fashion centers of the world, including Paris, London, Milan, Tokyo with, of course, the headquarters being in our very own New York City, where over 700 designers participated in the event. The fashion industry hasn't united for a cause like this since the war on cellulite.

Every fashion retailer across the five boroughs was invited to participate in helping to make fashion fun again. On September 10, stores were kept open until eleven o'clock and were filled with cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, dancers, celebrities and anything else that would keep the consumers entertained. Everyone from Top Shop and tiny boutiques to top-of-the-line department stores such as the three B's (Barney's New York, Henri Bendel's and Bergdorf Goodman's) and Saks Fifth Avenue—the palace of New York fashion—was in on the fabulous.

Mannequins magically came to life as models seemingly on a plastic person-inspired diet. Even the desserts dressed up for the

evening; Magnolia Bakery, known as the Chanel of sweets, topped their cupcakes with couture-inspired candies in honor of the event. And Justin Timberlake, Rihanna, the Olsen twins and Sarah Jessica Parker all seemed just average million-dollar shoppers; for the Queen herself was out and about that night—Her Royal Highness being Anna Wintour, *Vogue* Editor-At-Large-herself.

Hot off the release of her new documentary, "The September Issue," Anna spearheaded the entire extravaganza. The Queen appropriately appeared in Queens with Diane von Furstenberg, Kate Hudson and Mayor Bloomberg, who recounted trying to turn her down when she first came up with the idea—but "lost totally."

And if Anna had her way, she'd beat him at something else, too. Waiting for Bloomie to arrive in a VIP Room she fumed, "If he doesn't show, Diane (von Furstenberg) and I will run for mayor on a joint ticket and take over the city." Mr. Mayor, watch your back, or her fashion monarchy will be taking over our little democracy.

Although the evening was accessorized with a heart (the night's official T-shirt sales benefited the September 11 National Fund), the fashion industry is sticking with its classic look this season: selfishness. The knock-off charity event (which even asked for volunteers) was essentially the fashion industry's attempt to re-style our finances and put our money

where they believe it looks best: designers' empty clutches. The crashing stock market excuse is so last season.

Although the event barely raised enough sales to pay for the models' meals, the fashion industry is looking on the bright side. "We do a lot of events, and we generally don't get a lot of business from them," says Brook's Brother Claudio Del Vecchio. "...The best thing about Fashion's Night Out is that a lot of people came out and are still looking at shopping in a positive way, even if they didn't shop."

Perhaps Mr. Del Vecchio doesn't realize that we Americans already had a positive view of shopping; we'd shop from our BlackBerry while in the stores all day if we could. The reason that we're not shopping anymore is because we no longer have any money.

Because although the night did not bring much financial success to the industry, it was a grand party. Fashion Night Outers simply grabbed a cocktail and some hors d'oeuvres and enjoyed the festivities by spending the night people watching. That's exactly what America does not need: another excuse to get drunk and forget that they will not only not be able to afford the matchstick jeans that are going to be so hot this coming fall, but they won't be able to fit into them either. Americans will be outfit repeating this season in the wardrobe that they wore before we all became poor.

However, the real reason for the



The Queen, in the official Fashion Night Out Tee dress Poses with Justin Timberlake, the Prince of Pop.

Alert for Girl In The Plaid Skirt

Girl In The Plaid Skirt

Here in the Big Apple we lead big lives. We live in big buildings, this season are wearing big cardigans, and are always dreaming even bigger. However, one thing we don't all love: the BIG price tags. Even though we are in an economic recession, we are forced to swipe our cards for that mandatory online textbook with a 35th Street price tag, and those Red Mango cups that just keep adding up. All of this charging can take a serious toll on our lifestyles. Instead, we can take charge. Of course, the most stylish girl in all of Sy Syms couldn't flunk her statistics class, but why should school get in the way of fads, fashion, and, most importantly, fun?



The true identity of the Girl In The (Isaac Mizrahi Blackwatch) Plaid Skirt shall not be revealed.

While currently my head is out of headbands and into a pile of books while I cram for midterms, I am yearning for a way to paint the town red, showing off my panache and sophistication to NYC. A night out to see my favorite country-pop crossover princess, drink hot chocolate in Bryant park, or discover a sample sale of Fashion Week's top designers could be the cure to my mid-semester blues. Masking my stress with excitement is really what I am craving!

But all my dreaming seems to come to a halt when I realize the damper the economy and my elite-college lifestyle have put on my bank account. Still, I manage to remain the "fashionista" of Sy Syms while living the lifestyle of a "recessionista."

You may ask how I balance my urge to splurge and inner drive to be valedictorian of our amazing business school. You also may ask who I am. Well, while over the next year I will be sharing with you the latest trends, hottest spots and juiciest news, I will never share with you my identity. The Girl in the Plaid Skirt will be your guide on knowing who's who, what's how and how to be pretty and thrifty in the city without becoming penniless.

So write in your questions to ME, the most stylish girl in all of Sy Syms at girlinplaidskirt@gmail.com. I can only survive by reaching out to you, and then maybe you can survive school by learning to be as cool as me. I am for you and, most importantly, from you. I look forward to hearing from you, but right now the city is hopping and I'm going window-shopping. Time for a little retail therapy!

Stay Plaid and Stay Preppy,
G.I.P.S. <3

night was for another charity case: the campaign to save the Queen. Miss Wintour's contract expires soon and suddenly she's made being charitable and likable the hottest trend since headbands. She even accessorized her signature bob and sunglasses with a smile at the Spring 2010 fashion week. Perhaps that's because rumor has it that a contract renewal is already in the works.

She may not be able to save the

economy, but she can unite cities all around the world to throw one heck of a party, and that's more than the fashion industry's trendy little friend in the White House can say. And so once again we bow to the Queen—the one truly deserving of the Nobel Peace Prize this year.

Talia Kaufman is an English Major from Memphis, Tennessee. She also serves as recording secretary on Stern's Student Council.

THE OBSERVER

G-20 Spews Dialogue Pledges as Clandestine Iranian Nuclear Facility Approaches Completion

continued from page 5

Kingdom, France, Japan, Germany, Italy - and has since expanded to include Canada and Russia.

Some think that the Chinese complaints are not for the benefit of under-served countries, but for its own purposes. "China has an agenda to make their [economic] model the most powerful in the world," argued University of Maryland faculty member James E. Palombo. "I think there's a subtext to [China's statement] and China recognizes their power. China has to balance what they do and what Western countries are going to do."

By the end of the day, China and the other eleven countries excluded from the G-8, had reason to feel they had arrived on the international stage. At least, they no longer had reason to complain about being excluded, because the G-20 had agreed to abolish the G-8.

Last year the growing financial crisis put a spotlight on the London G-20 summit, where the members agreed to coordinate their economic stimulus policies. "The April summit was crucial in just coordinating the stimulus and monetary policy, and essentially giving people to do what they did," explained Paul Mason of the BBC television program Newsnight. "And it did. We're moving on from the crisis." His faith in the London summit was matched by his disbelief in the productivity of the Pittsburgh Summit; "This [summit] solves nothing, but it holds the whole thing together."

Pittsburgh is a city known for holding things together, most notably itself. The city, whose mid-

day skies were once dark night from steel mill soot, is now a leader of the environmentally friendly industry; a city whose main livelihood was stripped away with the fall of the steel industry, it has managed to keep going. Pittsburgh is not a symbol of economic health, but of perseverance and resilience. Obama acknowledged this in his closing remarks. "I think the mayor and the county executive and all the people of Pittsburgh deserve extraordinary credit for having managed what is a very tranquil G-20 summit," he said.

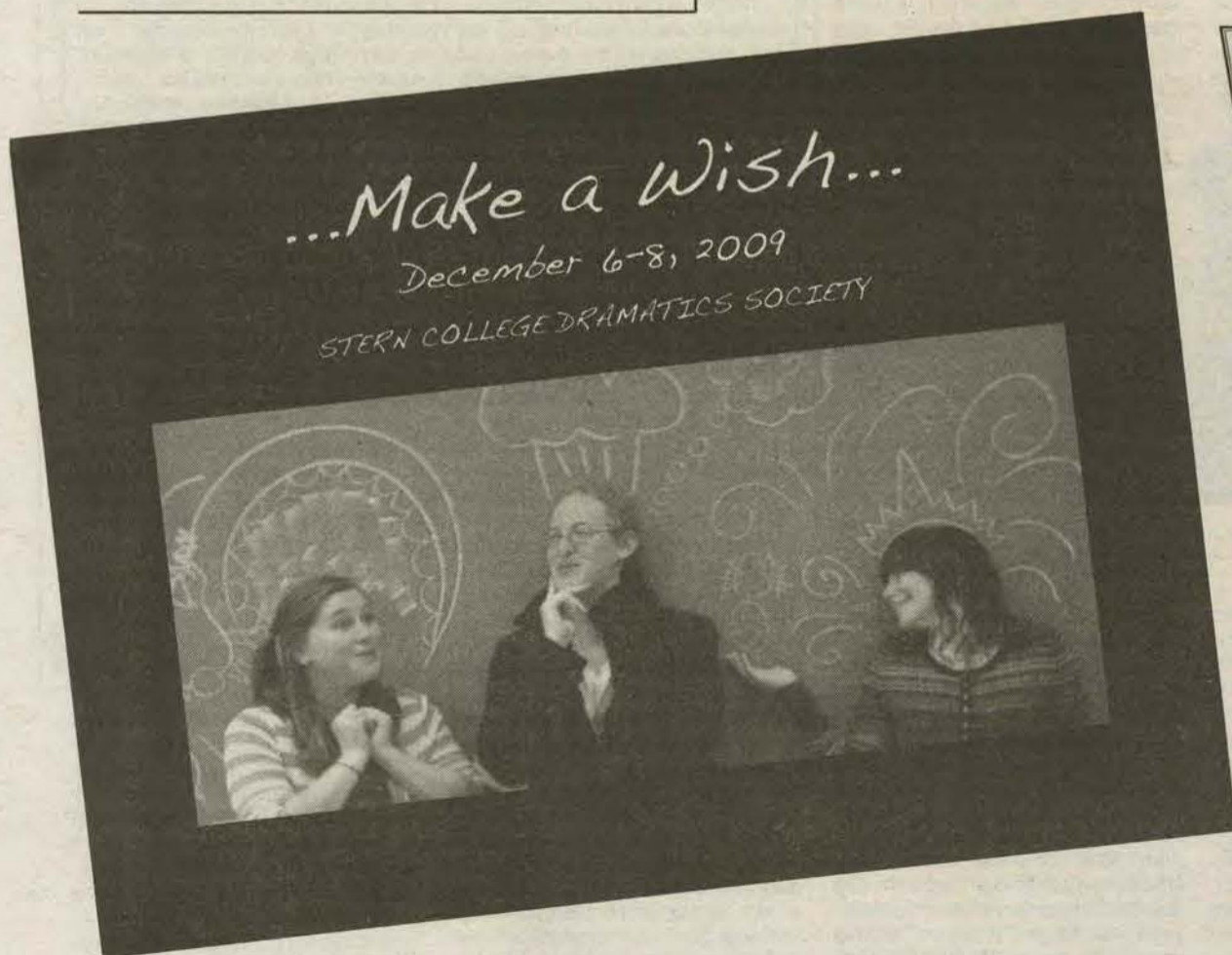
Hannah Golden is a native of Pittsburgh, who was graciously granted press credentials to the G-20 summit.

Editor's Note: On October 29, Iran refused a United Nations-backed deal to export three quarters of its uranium stockpile to Russia for conversion into nuclear fuel rods, good only for civilian (non-weapons) use.

WYUR FALL SCHEDULE

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
6:00PM-7:00PM	LAUREN FAL-ECK AND CO.		JOEY AND DOUG SHOW		TORAH TALK
7:00PM-8:00PM	SWEET D'S LIT AFTER HOURS	OPEN SLOT	NO MUNKEY BUSINESS	VIDEO GAME STOP	WHERE'S THE VANILLA PUD-DING
8:00 PM - 9:00 PM	THE AMERICAN DREAM	NATE AND YEHUDA RAMBLE AND RAVE	GIRL TALK	WHAT'S WITH THIS PLACE	theRush
9:00PM-10:00 PM	SAW YOU AT YU	RELATIONSHIPS REDEFINED	TALKING POINTS	BATMAN'S COFFEE HOUR	ECCENTRICITY
10:00 PM - 11:00 PM	SWORDS OF DESTINY	ON THE TABLE	A BLOCH OF LEEBS WITH A SIDE OF WILLIE	DEAD AIR	OPEN SLOT
11:00PM - 12:00 AM	BEHAR AND BRANDWEIN	CLASSIC TAMAR:LEVINE AND NO FRO	AWKWARD SILENCE / THE GUN SHOW	MAYER'S METAL MAYHEM	THE NOAH POLLACK HOUR
12:00AM - 1:00 AM	SUPERFANS	LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER	SOUTH AFRI-CAN FLAVOR	THE POCKET DJ SHOW	OPEN SLOT

If anyone is interested in joining the WYUR family, we are always looking for new members. If you would like to have your own show, or an off-air behind the scenes position, such as producer, please contact station manager Elisheva Mayerhoff at lmayerho@yu.edu.



Swine flu vaccine available at Brookdale's health center, room 2B

THE OBSERVER

BATTLE of the Bands



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SCWSC & YSU

Renewal

continued from page 2

cafeteria about her day. Strike up a conversation with your dorm neighbor. You can always learn from your peers and their experiences, and you never know when lifelong friendships will bloom as a result.

To me, the new fruit symbolizes the courage to try new experiences, and to value these experiences although they may be different from our own. This New Year can be as adventurous, spontaneous, fun, amazing, incredible and rewarding as we allow it to be. I like to say that I don't believe in the word "impossible." The potential is in our hands and the sky is the limit. But remember, if you never try something new, you will never know what you are missing.

Holy Love Song

continued from page 2

not being in Hebrew—will either always be haunted by their Diaspora origins or risk sounding contrived. Hebrew, on the other hand, has Judaism built into its foundation, and hence has the advantage of authenticity, of being the national—sometimes, nationalistic—heritage of a scattered people. It is the language in which our ancient traditions can merge naturally with our modern, multicolor and emotional reality. Hebrew, at its best, has the exclusive ability to unite the Diaspora regardless of era, exile or location.

Instantaneously, with just one key phrase or even a few words, a Hebrew writer can draw an educated audience's attention to Solomon's sensuality, Babylonian atrocities, or David's flight from Saul. Such quotations, which have been chanted in synagogues and study halls for centuries and whose exact forcefulness and implication can only be found in their language of origin, effectively convey the intended tone of the text—whether it be one of love, destruction or hope.

In that instant, that interface of divine and creative inspiration, the writer connects the living generation with the living God.

Iranian President Speaks; YU Joins Protest

continued from page 14

were notified to mark absences of students who attended as excused.

The Yeshiva University Israel Club strongly promoted attendance at this rally. With the help of the club's board members, they managed to gather a significant number of students to attend and protest. Any students who want to get more involved in the Israel Club, or other situations and events related to individual rights, whether in Iran, Darfur, or other places, can contact the club president, Ayala Kurlander, by e-mailing kurlande@gmail.com.

**To come to poetry club
or not to come to poetry club?**

There is NO QUESTION!!!!!!



Come write where it's good for you ☺

~The Poetry and Creative Writing Club

Please send comments and letters to the editor to

scwobserver@gmail.com

Heroes and Villains in Tanach

Yom Iyun • Sunday, November 1, 2009

9:30am

Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter
Must Biblical Heroes Be Perfect?

10:30am

Rabbi Hayyim Angel
The Complex Biblical Portrait of Ahav
Mrs. Smadar Rosensweig
Cain and Hevel as Personality
Paradigms in Tanakh: An Analysis
of Peshat and Parshanut

Rabbi Allen Schwartz
Yonadav: Deviously Deranged or
Cunningly Concerned?

Rabbi Dr. Moshe Sokolow
Saul and Agag: Who Was
the Villain? Pedagogical and
Methodological Considerations

11:30am

Rabbi Dr. David Berger
Jacob/Israel, Esau/Edom, and the True
Israel in the Jewish-Christian Debate

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

The Sanctity of Scandal

Mrs. Yael Leibowitz

Biblical Women as Victims and
Perpetrators of Violence: a Study
in Context

Mrs. Shoshana Schechter

From Prince of Egypt to Prince of
God: The Development of Moshe
Rabbeinu

12:30pm

Dr. Shawn Zelig Aster
Yehoshua and the Geography of
Eretz Yisrael: A Workshop

Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
The Bible's Villains Who Thought
They Were Heroes

Rabbi Dr. Mitchell Orlan

Hoshea, the Hero of His Time

Mrs. Deena Rabinovich

Yoav: Friend and Foe

For Men and Women

\$5 Suggested Donation
Free Admission for YU
Students

Registration at
9:15am

Mincha and
conclusion at
1:30pm

Yeshiva University,
Furst Hall 501
500 West 185th Street
New York, NY

Refreshments
will be served



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