



The Yeshiva University

OBSERVER

VOLUME LV, ISSUE III NOV 25, 2009

Sy Syms: A Man Who Believed in Education

Hannah L. Golden

The man for whom the Yeshiva University (YU) Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) was named, and by whom it was endowed, died of heart failure on November 17th at the age of 83. Born Seymour Merinsky, Syms grew up in Brooklyn and through years of hard work became the CEO of Syms, a low-priced, high-quality clothing chain. "Sy Syms embodied excellence in education, ethics, decency, humor and humility—he represented the best within us," said President Joel, in a YU press release announcing Syms's passing. "His vision and ours was to ensure that young men and women would receive the finest in business education while continuing to grow as proud Jews and thinking citizens. These values made Sy and his wife, Lynn,

role models for our children and our community."

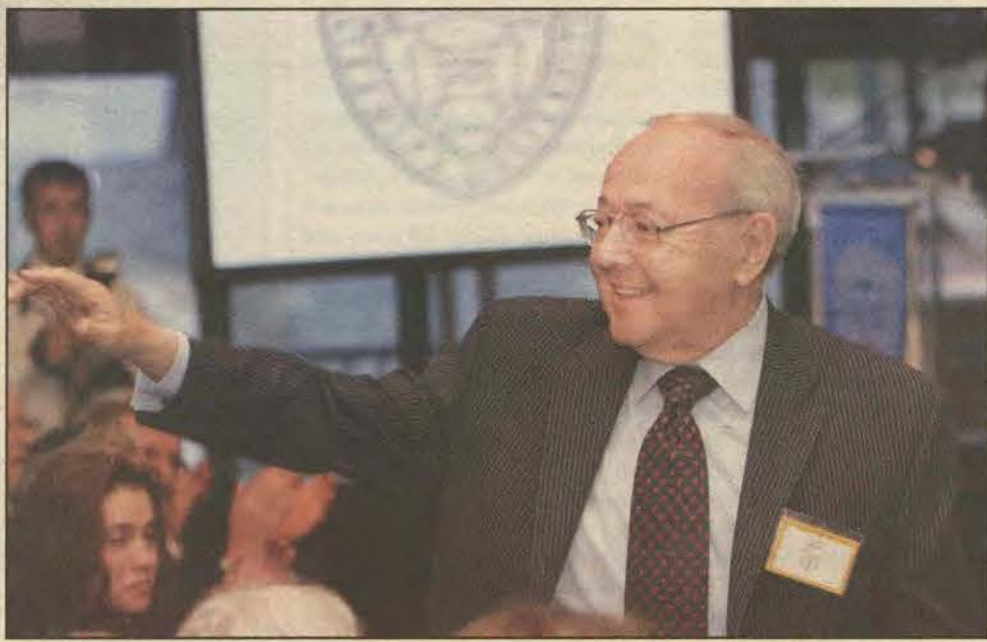
In addition to his wife, Lynn Tarmarkin Syms, Syms is survived by four of his children, two stepchildren, ten grandchildren and three sisters. Two of his children passed away in the 1990s.

Yeshiva University held Syms in high regard even before he helped create the SSSB, and awarded Syms an honorary degree in 1983 in recognition of his leadership in business and Jewish life. The following year, 1984, he became a member of the Board of Trustees; two years later, he provided the funds that began Sy Syms School of Business.

Syms was a generous philanthropist, and in addition to YU, many Jewish organizations were beneficiaries of his largesse. Syms gave funds to the Boys Town of

Jerusalem, UJA-Federation of New York, United Jewish Appeal and Israel Tennis Centers. Other institutions were also grateful to him for generous financial support, including Boston University, Children's Cancer Center & Blood Foundation and Parkinson's Disease Foundation.

"Sy had an enormous impact on our school," said Dr. Michael Ginzberg, dean of SSSB, in the press release. "Beyond his initial gift that provided the resources to get the school started 23 years ago, he was a continuing presence here. He was involved with the executive committee that provides advice and support to the dean, and he enjoyed interacting with our students very much. We will miss his friendship and guidance."



Benefactor Sy Syms passed away on November 17th.

Yeshiva University

245 Lexington Dedication, New Art Therapy Course, Coed Plays Addressed at Town Hall Meeting

Tamara Freiden

Stern College for Women's 245 Lexington Avenue building will be renamed "Stanton Hall" at a December 16 dedication ceremony, announced Yeshiva University President Richard M. Joel at a November 4 Town Hall meeting on the Beren Campus. The new building will be named after YU board chairman, Ronald P. Stanton. Despite his \$100 million pledge to the university in 2006—in addition to other extensive philanthropy, which includes Stern College for Women's Hedi Steinberg Library, named for his mother—Stanton humbly resisted the honor, said Joel, prais-

ing the benefactor's generosity.

Town Hall meetings provide a means of reciprocated communication between the president and the Yeshiva University community. 215 Lexington's Yagoda Commons was filled to capacity with students, teachers, and faculty members, many lining the back wall, as almost every seat was occupied.

Joel emphasized that Yeshiva University "is absolutely indispensable for the future of the Jewish people." Last year's rough economic situ-

ation led to the laying off of over 120 staff members, and the public shame of members belonging to the Jewish community. Joel made note of two other challenges still facing the university.

The first was the impending financial situation with which YU

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Can Iran Be Stopped?

Alison Snyder

America's efforts to stop Iran's nuclear program through negotiation will be unsuccessful, explained Bret Stephens, foreign-affairs columnist of the Wall Street Journal, on November 18. "We continue to engage Iran as they spit in the faces of our generous offers," described Stephens, former editor-in-chief of the Jerusalem Post. "They know America will come back with better offers. It's like stupid American tourist time and again." As America continues to offer Iran incentives to shut down their nuclear program, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the sixth president of Iran, continues to reject these offers, demanding that America break its ties with Israel and form a stronger relationship with Iran.

Tehran has rejected an offer that includes the U.S. dissolving four binding Security Council resolutions demanding that Iran cease enriching uranium. Additionally, "it was not enough that France and Russia were prepared, with America's blessing, to convert Iran's existing stockpile of low-enriched uranium (LEU) to a grade of 19.75%, a hair's breadth shy of the 20% needed for a crude nuclear device," Stephens reminded.

Stephens elaborated upon the conclusion that military efforts may be a necessary measure regarding Iran. According to intelligence, Iran stopped its nuclear program in 2003 when the American army was in Baghdad, since they were too scared to continue with the American presence in such close proximity. It is believed that ending the current Iranian regime is possible through a variety of methodologies. Through the combination of pressures such as sanctions and possibly the military, the Iranian regime would inevitably need to discontinue their nuclear program. The reason why people are opposed to this suggestion of military efforts is because they think the solution is temporary. "All solutions in life are temporary," countered Stephens, "and it doesn't mean you shouldn't do it."

"For all of Iran's stalling and cheating, the regime has been crystal clear about where it means to go," emphasized Stephens. "It bespeaks a degree of self-respect—the kind that tends to grow stronger the more the opposite party abases itself." It is crucial to understand that the Iranian re-

gime believes it has a purpose and that a nuclear program will help to fulfill it, he said. Furthermore, Stephens warns that after Iran becomes nuclear, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt will become nuclear as well. "The world is not ready for four, five or six countries in the Middle East to have nuclear weapons," Stephens reminded, yet the reality is that Iran is moving closer to achieving a nuclear program.

Ahmadinejad is not simply transparently building a nuclear program; he has also stated without hesitation that he plans to wipe Israel off the map once this goal is achieved. There are often those to the left who tend to wish this rhetoric away by explaining that Ahmadinejad's Persian was mistranslated. "The West has always paid a high price for not taking its adversaries at face value," warned Stephens. It is a distinct possibility that Iran is ready to follow through with these threats and attack Israel using nuclear weapons once they are capable of doing so.

America has been living with a nuclear China and Korea for years. The issue is not Iran's being nuclear, it is Iran's being nuclear under the current regime, explained Professor David Menashri from Tel Aviv University. Echoing the sentiments of Menashri, Stephens agreed that the long-term interest is to defeat the current regime. When the Iranian citizens living in Tehran were rioting the June 12th election they were holding up signs in English. "They weren't just practicing their English," Stephens emphasized. "They were asking the West not to recognize the legitimacy of the Ahmadinejad regime."

Additionally, Stephens posed the questions: "What are we doing to cultivate hope in Iran?" The people living under the current Iranian regime are outwardly asking for support from countries around the world. America agrees with the rioters, their goal is the same; both parties want to crush the current regime.

Concluding with an analogy, Menashri compared the strategies of Iran and America to that of certain board games. In the past, America had been playing chess, a game of strategy, while Iran had been playing backgammon, a game that is based merely upon hope. Today, he said, "the West is playing backgammon and the Iranians are playing chess."

THOUGHTS OF STUDENT LEADERS

Soul Baring

Rivky Kuperman, Poetry and Creative Writing Club Engineer

Poetry is a language I speak
leaking my soul across all soils
wearing my heart on my sleeve

as I roam far and wide, I seek
Professors who can fair curl and foil
poetry, the language I speak

until all as we know it grows weak
until connections smear like oil
searing my heart to my sleeve

We explain, We plunge down dark
and deep
into our straining souls, we bring
all up to boil
through poetry the language I
speak

in a never ending feat, we kick
back and beat
learn to dance in intricate coils
learns to wear hearts on our
sleeves

As we leap and keep the joy of all
deeds
of trees and of words, we reap in
all spoils
with poetry the language we speak
holding our hearts at our sleeves.

Rivky Kuperman, a senior at SCW majoring in psychology and English, founded and serves as president of the YU's new Poetry and Creative Writing Club. The club is a place for all students who want to explore and express themselves—to the fullest degree possible.

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Yaelle Frohlich, Editor-in-Chief



When you're working for a journalistic cause, deadlines can take on a sort of divine significance. And, as anyone who's ever had to hand in a sensitive topical piece knows, it can be difficult to get information and quotations from interviewees. Journalism code dictates that one may quote anything a person says, unless the person specifies that the remark is off the record *before* he or she actually says it. If you make this specification, however, a good journalist may try to coax you into relaxing your terms. Yet, many individuals—politicians and laypeople alike—are unaware of reporters' etiquette, pointed out Dr. Tsuriel Rashi, chair of the Department of Mass Communication at Jerusalem's Lifshitz College of Education, following his November 9 lecture on Yeshiva University's Wilf Campus.

Rashi's presentation explored the way mass media communications is viewed in Judaism. During temple times, our ancestors received messages from prophets situated beside the heavily visited Temple Mount during the three pilgrimages. They also heard the proclamation of death (a mandatory announcement) of idol worshippers leading the people on the same wrong path or a Sanhedrin member who deviated from the majority's ruling. During the Babylonian exile, the torch system alerted Israel of *Rosh Hodesh* (new month) at the first sighting of each new moon. Our generation has television and the Internet.

What interested me most, however, was Rashi's description of media integration in the contemporary Orthodox Israeli world. Only after the society-polarizing assassination of Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin, he argued, did the religious finally come to the realization that "there should be a journalist with a *kippah* [yarmulke], and there should be a journalist with a *sheitel* [wig]."

Other agenda-pushing parties long ago figured out the power of media. The seventh Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, said that anything—including concoctions of the communications world—could be used to sanctify God's name (which explains the earliness of chabad.

Off the Record?

org's creation).

On the opposite side of the good/evil spectrum are Hamas and Hizbullah, with what Rashi described as "labyrinths of communications" endeavors. What makes Hamas's media system more consolidated than Israel's is that one person (or media center) is in charge of each area. For example, Ramallah is under one center's sole jurisdiction, Bethlehem under another's. "Whereas in Israel," said Rashi, "everyone wants in on stories."

Only recently, stated Rashi, has Israel realized that it must catch up in terms of its international media campaign. The media war has become so crucial that high-ranking Israeli military leaders who are Orthodox are now *halakhically* (according to Jewish law) permitted to grant media interviews on Shabbat (at least to non-Jewish reporters). Ten years ago, the rabbis would have banned such practice, said Rashi, but nowadays Rabbi Elyashiv's son-in-law acknowledges that media plays a crucial role in psychological warfare.

But media studies are becoming—and rightly so—an important part of education within Israel's Orthodox community. Rashi has developed a media program for *dati leumi* (religious nationalist) grade schools, and is in the process of developing one for regular state schools.

However, Rashi noted that many leaders of *dati leumi* schools remain wary of the visual technological arts—film production. This is a result, in part, of a Maale Film School production on the controversial (and, so-believed, discussion-inappropriate) issue of rape in the religious community. Jerusalem-based Maale, the world's only religious Jewish film school, trains religious students for entering the world of media. Documentaries and fiction films created by its students span a diverse array of religiously or socially relevant subjects, from wedding nights and the emotional ramifications of *niddah* (restrictions on sexual relations with a menstruating woman) to aging and mental illness in Orthodox families.

Heads of grade schools may think that shutting out select aspects of technological education will shelter children from the big bad world of unpleasant information. However, I cannot think of a less effective solution to the indignity of suffering in shame and the stagnation of the religious-secular divide. An idea that has taken hold in some parts of the religious community in Israel and the Diaspora—and certainly in The Observer and other YU student publications—is that no subject cannot be tackled in a dignified—and, hence, modest—way. And in a world where anything not taught in class or at home can be accessed

freely on the Internet, it is arguably ludicrous and dangerous to deem any topic taboo.

And what about the laws of *lashon hara* and *rekhilus* (gossip and slander)? Says Rashi, even the Hafetz Haim, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan, knew that certain things had to be published for the public good, and therefore quoted Maimonides's rule that some things must be published, and if they are not it is a sin. Even without the horror stories of unchecked cases of pedophilia in the tight-lipped ultra-Orthodox community, frankness in classrooms and homes has the potential to strengthen Orthodox society by facilitating responsible media-aware discussion about controversial topics and allowing religious people to channel their inquisitive scientific and creative energies within a so-called safe environment.

I was dismayed last year when, in an Observer Features article about *kallah* (bride) teachers, several of the interviewed teachers were embarrassed to talk openly in the article about the pre-marital education they give young women. One believed that there were certain things unmarried women should not know that married women should, but declined to go into detail. Others shied away from questions in general. The article was an opportunity to inform young Orthodox women about a process that many of them will undergo. Many students at Stern College for Women, I dare assume, would rather hear the straight facts from a knowledgeable, observant woman than on the street or from hearsay, just as they would prefer to learn about health issues from a trusted doctor rather than from a Yahoo chat-room. In the long run, it will be a greater service to young religious people around the world for the administrations responsible for their education to loosen their chin-height necklines and get with the times. Yes, I said it. Silence, nowadays, is essentially subversion.

I do realize that people cannot be coerced into addressing topics with which they are uncomfortable. As with anything, comfort levels may take time to build. And ethically, Rashi explained in response to my question about the journalism code, you should explain unspoken quotation rules to people you interview beforehand.

The stakes are high in the communications game. To protect yourself, you must know what you are getting yourself into should you ever consent to a media interview. To protect the ideals of both a free and open society and preserve respect for a traditional Jewish way of life in the eyes of a highly educated youth, you might try not to be afraid of the microphone, the pen or the question.

The Yeshiva University

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NEWS

Election 2009 Coverage

Adina Brizel

The Republican Party celebrated two major victories in the November 3rd elections; their candidates became governors in states which voted for Obama just one year ago. In New Jersey, Republican challenger Christopher Christie defeated incumbent Democrat Jon Corzine by a slim 49% to Corzine's 45%. Corzine lost despite President Obama's participation in several political rallies in Camden and in Newark. New Jersey has not had a Republican governor since Christine Todd Whitman in 1992.

Less surprising was the Virginia governor race, where Republican candidate Robert McDonnell beat Democratic candidate Creigh Deeds by a 59% to 41% margin. Although the current governor is a Democrat, the state did not vote for a Democratic President from 1940-2008; yet it favored Obama over McCain. On Tuesday night, Republicans also won the state's races for lieutenant governor and attorney general, unseating the incumbent Democrats. President Obama did not participate in rallies in Virginia.

In New York City, Independent candidate and current mayor Michael Bloomberg narrowly defeated Democrat Bill Thompson by a 50% to 46% margin. This race was closer than expected due to the low voter turnout. Voters polled by *The New York Times*, attributed this to their resentment over the \$100 million spent by the Bloomberg campaign. Although Bloomberg lost the Bronx and Brooklyn, he prevailed in Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island. The poll also found that Bloomberg did well among Jews, white Catholics and the wealthy.

Although Republicans won some surprise state races, it remains to be seen whether this reflects a national discontent with the Obama administration's policies, the Democratic Party, or merely local discontent. The 2010 midterm congressional races will be a better harbinger of the electorate's position. 2010 will also be a contentious year in New York politics, with a potential split in Democratic party between New York State Attorney General Andrew Cuomo, who is backed by the Obama administration and is the son of former New York Governor Mario Cuomo, and current Governor David Patterson.

"How to Land a Job in Finance"

Hear from recent alumni!

Monday, November 30
8:00 PM

Furst Hall, Room 501

YU goes to DC for GA

Chana See

The 2009 United Jewish Federation General Assembly (GA), a meeting of professionals and leaders of Jewish organizations, was held on November 8-10 in Washington D.C. A group of thirty Yeshiva University (YU) students and alumni, made up the largest college delegation. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's Chief of Staff, took center stage at the GA in their discussions on American Jewry and its contribution to Israel. Other speakers included YU President Richard Joel, former Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Natan Sharansky, and Rabbi Ken-



YU students with Natan Sharansky at the Jewish General Assembly.

Chana See

neth Brander director of the YU Center for the Jewish Future. For many YU students, this was the first time they engaged openly with Jews from different backgrounds; "It really opened my eyes to the Jewish community and my bubble," noted Tzvia Berow, first year student at Wurzweller, (SCW

'09). "My bubble popped."

YU students were easily recognizable among the other participants in their "Ask me a question about Yeshiva University" sweat-shirts. Their representation of YU went beyond clothing, as students were challenged to speak for the institution in their individual panel discussions. YU students felt responsible to be the inspiration and outside voice from an unbiased perspective from among the participants. In a panel discussion, one YU student introduced himself by saying, "I'm realizing that if I want to be a Jewish leader I have to meet

with other kinds of Jews." He explained how he had lived a sheltered life, and now had a desire to understand other religious and political views. His introduction led the group from a discussion of Jewish leadership to the implications of theology of G-d.

While some of the speakers focused on the Jewish nation, Dan Senor, the author of the "Start-Up Nation," spoke about the Jewish state. Senor believes that the reason Israeli business experiments are so successful is because Israelis are taught by their society and army service how to take responsibility and fail. This attitude towards acceptable failure is very uncommon in most countries, Senor explained.

The GA is distinct from other Jewish experiences because it deals with Jewish issues without any input from rabbis. There were words of Torah in many of the speeches, but only to teach humanitarian goals rather to decide *halakha* (Jewish law). At the GA, there were no *roshei yeshiva* (yeshiva heads) to give a *halakhic* view, but there was a pervading message to love every Jew. Still, the Orthodox were not underrepresented; the Orthodox *minyán* (quorum) was packed on both the men's and women's sides. While there were clear divisions among different sects and participants, there were also moments of unity. One of those occurred when an audience member yelled at Prime Minister Netanyahu; the entire audience of 3,000 booed the individual, and cheered for the prime minister.

The subject which joined the different topics of the GA was Jewish innovation; with creativity bursting from Israel to college campuses, Jewish speakers explored their accomplishments in Jewish education, technology, psychology, business, political science, and more. The strength of the Jewish people and the freshness which they bring to their inventive work was inspirational to the students who are only beginning to think of the thousands of possibilities to contribute to the Jewish future.

The GA concluded with the announcement of the winner of the Jewish Community Hero competition when Ari Teman, a comedian, won \$25,000 to secure his future goals in JCorps, a community-service volunteer organization for young adults. With the sense of Jewish values heightened at the GA, the event was memorable as a unique time to be part of Jewish history. Thrilled to represent Yeshiva University at such a memorable event, YU students were given the opportunity to reflect on their responsibilities for ensuring a strong Jewish future.

Town Hall Meeting

continued from page 1

still struggles. "The economy apparently has given an excuse for lots of people to rethink the decision for going to Yeshiva [University]," Joel candidly declared. There are 116 students fewer than last year, though the numbers are not only low for Yeshiva University - spending a year in Israel is down 15% as well. With so many students switching to oftentimes-cheaper colleges, Joel emphasized the need to reassess why. "We have to answer the question of what's the value proposition?" he says, "Why can't you not afford to get here?" To go one step further, Joel noted that the root of the problem is not that people are not getting the financial packages they ask for, but that people do not even apply.

"It's not about the finances," proclaimed Joel, redirecting his focus, "it's about how do we work that people see the enormous satisfaction of the lives we're building here." With that, a sign-up sheet was passed between students who marked down their names and emails in efforts to contribute to a marketing crew built from within, including recruiting through example.

The second challenge is the issue of *yashrus* [integrity]. With the recent influx of negative Jewish press, some people feel a sense of disappointment, even shame, as a member of the Jewish nation, said Joel. In response to a particular Yeshiva College student's frustrations, Joel responds with an idiom he repeated throughout the rest of the meeting: "I don't think it's as important to make a statement than it is to be a statement." And for Joel, there is no better way

than by embodying that which YU stands for, by behaving like that which YU represents. "Otherwise you can all go to Queens," he said. "That's our mandate."

After relaying his views on these two issues, Joel opened the floor to the student body. Abbie Wasserman (SCW '10) asked whether there was any progress in a graduate program for arts and sciences. In his response, Joel made note of the increasing number of committed faculty who want to offer higher level classes to students. Programs offering master's degrees in sciences and economics do not cost a lot to add, he said. Currently, YU is looking over courses in which juniors and seniors can take that will be equated to the first year in graduate school, including some that will be degree granting.

In response to Nadine Dayan's (SCW '11) concern about cuts to SCW's joint FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology) program, Dean Karen Bacon explained that SCW has added a large number of new courses to the art department, including two never offered before. Additionally, an art therapy course will be given in the spring. The School of Visual Arts (SVA) asked for the opportunity to provide the course at Stern College in hopes of gaining Stern students for their graduate school, having noted the top caliber quality of YU alumnae.

Ilana Gadish (SCW '11), referencing the visit of Maharat Sarah Hurwitz, who came to speak at Stern College, asked Joel about the balance between yeshiva and university. There were students that did speak out against Hurwitz's visit; how might one keep an open

mind while maintaining this dichotomy? Joel encouraged hearing alternative perspectives that may disagree with mainstream beliefs on campus. He noted that Yeshiva University's rabbinical institution does not believe in ordaining female rabbis. "We don't take the position we take because we are not listening to other views," he says, "it's because we don't agree with them."

Laura Mitzner (SCW '11), a member of the Stern College Dramatic Society, questioned the opposition to coed theatrical performances, and wondered about the possibility of a coed play. After joking that he wanted "to complete his presidency without being killed," Joel explained that there were many *hashkafic* (philosophical) approaches within YU, and one must attempt to balance them without the alienation of any one view. He also referred Mitzner to Rabbi Ephraim Kanarfogel, chair of the Rebecca Ivy Department of Jewish Studies at SCW, for further discussion.

Running half an hour overtime and with audience hands still raised, Joel introduced the new chairman of the board of YU, Dr. Henry Chrisal, the first alumni to fill this position. With an illustrious career in science, including a degree from Harvard and MIT and 34 patents, he focused on why he decided to take this job. "I think YU is the single most important institution we have in the world today to further the mission and continuation of *yidushkeit* [Judaism]," said Chrisal, "and if I can help, that's what I'm here for."

NEWS

New Official Quidditch Team and Club at SCW

40 Girls Already Signed Up to Make the Roster

Estie Neff

When walking around Stern College for Women (SCW) during midterm season, it's no surprise to see students dazed and confused—usually the result of a lack of sleep combined with an overdose of mental activity.

But recently a new kind of confusion has crept into the small part of students' brains that was not crammed with facts and figures:

"A Quidditch club?"

That was Chana Salomon's dubious reaction to the campus-wide emails and brightly colored flyers that are proclaiming SCW's newest extra-curricular addition. No, your eyes are not playing tricks on you after hours of studying and galleons of caffeine.

"So," probes Salomon (SCW '11) in an Observer interview, "like, what does it do?"

Good question. The SCW Quidditch Club, brainchild of club heads Devorah Zharnest and Lauren Tessler, promotes playing Quidditch as a real sport. By default, it also serves as an events venue for Harry Potter fans.

"The purpose of the Quidditch team club is to provide Stern students . . . [with] an opportunity to participate in a sport that is revolutionizing the way college students think about and relate the genre of written fantasy," Zharnest explains.

Quidditch was created by author J.K. Rowling for her Harry Potter book series, a chronicle of the dangers and delights of the magical world—specifically those that surround Harry Potter, the books' protagonist. High school-aged characters in the Harry Potter books attend the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, where they study sorcery, boil potions, and play Quidditch—if they make the team.

Quidditch is a sport played in the air via flying broomsticks. Players on each team try to throw a ball called the "Quaffle" into the opposing team's hoop-like goal to get points; meanwhile, one player from each team is designated to catch the elusive "Snitch"—a small golden ball that is hard to spot and even harder to capture, but awards the victorious team with a large number of points. When a player catches the Snitch, the game ends, and the team with the most points wins.

To put it simply, Quidditch is a combination of kickball, basketball, soccer, and capture-the-flag on a flying broomstick.

"[The Quidditch Club] is also meant to give students, regardless of their athletic ability, a chance to be part of a team and participate in a competitive sport that, while silly and fun, is a legitimate form



Quidditch team founders Lauren Tessler and Devorah Zharnest make a toast on Butterbeer, a piece of magic created with cream soda, butterscotch syrup and a little bit of butter.

Tamara Freiden

of physical activity," Zharnest adds.

Indeed, Quidditch is becoming quite legitimate in educational institutions. According to the Intercollegiate Quidditch Association (IQA), an organization that seeks to standardize Quidditch as a serious college sport, over 200 colleges and universities have officially registered their Quidditch teams with the IQA.

Once registered, Quidditch teams receive the official Quidditch rulebook, adapted from the Harry Potter books by Alexander Manshel and written by Alex Benepe. According to the IQA's website, Benepe, a recent graduate of Middlebury College, became the Middlebury Quidditch Commissioner in 2006 and founded the IQA in 2007. The fledgling organization grew, to the extent that in October 2009 over 20 Quidditch teams played in an Intercollegiate Quidditch World Cup.

Manshel and Benepe's rulebook states that teams are made up of seven players: three Chasers, or offensive players; two Beaters, or defensive players; one Keeper, or goalie; one Seeker, whose job is to get the Snitch. Equipment includes three Bludgers, or kickballs; one Quaffle, or volleyball; and one Snitch that, according to the rulebook, is a tennis ball "which is at the bottom of a long sock that is tucked into the back of the Snitch Runner's shorts." The Snitch Runner wears all yellow and must have great stamina, speed, and dodging skills. Her job is to avoid the Seeker who must grab the sock-swathed Snitch ball from the Snitch Runner's shorts to end the game.

According to Zharnest, SCW's Quidditch team is registered with the IQA and therefore will adhere

to the IQA rules at tournaments.

"So, like, are they going to fly?" asks Salomon uncertainly.

Not exactly. The IQA rules state that players must have a broomstick inartificially suspended between their legs at all times; if not, a referee on the sidelines will call them out of the game. Grabbing or stealing brooms from other players constitutes a foul.

Zharnest notes that, for lack of funds and time, the SCW Quidditch team has a Bring Your Own Broom (B.Y.O.B.) policy that requires team members to bring their own brooms to matches. Students can purchase the IQA-endorsed Sienna Storm and Scarlet Falcon brooms—analogs to Harry Potter's Nimbus 2000 and Firebolt brooms, respectively. They are made specially for the game of Quidditch, and cost from \$30 to \$79. The IQA brooms are more sturdy and lightweight than regular brooms, which cost about \$20 in most stores.

Other suggested equipment in the rulebook includes protective sport goggles and mouth guards, for safety reasons. "We don't have any skelegrow to re-grow any bones broken from a fall," Zharnest correctly points out, "nor do we have Madame Pomfrey [the magical nurse in the Potter series] to patch up our scrapes."

SCW's first Quidditch practice will take place shortly after winter break, Zharnest estimates, in the gym. Since SCW is the only college with an all-women team registered in the IQA, it will not be able to play against other registered colleges, such as Princeton, Maryland, and Boston Universities. So for now, Quidditch scrimmages will have to do.

The SCW student body received the Quidditch Club warmly. About 30 students attended the first

YU Professors Fine and Tawil Make Mark on Jewish Studies Literature Scene

Yaelle Frohlich

Dr. Steven Fine, a professor of Jewish history at Yeshiva University (YU) and director of the YU Center for Israel Studies, was recently awarded a Jordan Schnitzer Book Award by the Association for Jewish Studies. Fine's book, "Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman World: Toward a New Jewish Archaeology," explores Jewish art and its relation to Jewish identity in the Greco-Roman period. Described as "the first historical monograph on ancient Jewish art in forty years," it won in the category of "Jews and the Arts."

The Jordan Schnitzer Book Awards, started in 2008, are funded by the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation of Portland, Oregon and are awarded based on the writer's "rigorous research, theoretical sophistication, innovative methodology, and excellent writing." The other winner for this year was the Jewish Theological Seminary's Benjamin, for "The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel" in the category of "Biblical Studies, Rabbinics, and Archaeology." Two winners in total are chosen from eight categories of Jewish studies each year.

Bernard Revel Graduate School's Dean David Berger explained that AJS, which grants the award, is North America's foremost academic organization in the field of Jewish Studies. Berger praised the quality of Fine's work, especially in terms of its incorporation of rabbinic literature in its evidence. "Prof. Fine's book is a

rare and striking synthesis of the study of Jewish history and Jewish art," said Berger. "Moreover, in a field where academics have often evinced little regard for the value of rabbinic sources, Prof. Fine's responsible utilization of those sources, marked by a sober balance of critical assessment and genuine respect, makes his work all the more important for the field as a whole and gives it special resonance in the community whose values are exemplified by Yeshiva University."

Award winners receive \$5,000, and the AJS will hold a reception in their honor at the AJS Conference on Sunday, December 20.

Meanwhile, Yeshiva College Professor Hayim Tawil's Akkadian lexicon, "An Akkadian Lexical Companion for Biblical Hebrew" is being released this month. The work demonstrates the relationship between Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic and Akkadian, once the main language spoken in what is now known as the Middle East. In an online YU article, Yeshiva College Semitic languages lecturer Dr. Richard White described the new work as the "greatest contribution to biblical study published in the past 100 years."

"Professor Tawil's lexicon allows certain expressions in Tanach to be elucidated by their parallels in Akkadian literature," continued White. "[It] provides a connection between the text of the Bible and the world in which the Bible grew up."

In the same article, Tawil articulated that Akkadian is significant for the study of Biblical Hebrew because, with a vocabulary of 50,000 words—compared to biblical Hebrew's 8,000—Akkadian can shed light on linguistic nuances in the Bible.

Tawil's second new book, coming out in early 2010 and co-authored with Bernard Schneider, is "Crown of Aleppo: The Mystery of the Oldest Hebrew Bible Codex."

Combining scholarly elements with mystery novel atmosphere, the book investigates the history of the Aleppo Codex (or, "Crown" of Aleppo). The Crown of Aleppo is a biblical manuscript from 930 C.E.—possibly the most authentic surviving text of its kind—that was housed for hundreds of years in Aleppo, Syria's Great Synagogue, smuggled out of Syria in 1958 with help from Israeli President Yitzchak Ben-Zvi and now resides in Jerusalem's Israel Museum.

meeting, and 40 women expressed interested in joining the Quidditch team. Even students who are not the Quidditch-playing type find the club useful as an outlet for school-induced stress.

"I personally am not sure I'd join the [Quidditch] team because it sounds really violent, but I think [the Quidditch club is] really cool," says Rivki Dobin (SCW '11), from Highland Park, NJ.

"Anything Harry Potter-related is long overdue on campus," declares Shosh Balk, (SCW '10). "Just because you're in college doesn't mean you have to grow up."

"Secretly, all I want to do is sit around and talk about Harry Potter for hours," confesses one student who wishes to remain anonymous.

Until Quidditch practices and games begin, the Quidditch club will host fun Harry Potter-themed events, such as watching Harry Potter movies and drinking non-alcoholic Butterbeer. Chocolate frog, anyone?

NEWS

Helping Others, Helping Ourselves

Students Helping Students aims to help attain scholarship funds for undergraduate students

Suzanne Mazel

A relatively new program called Students Helping Students (SHS) has come to campus. Started last year as the brain-child of Danielle Rohatiner, a Presidential Fellow who worked in Institutional Advancement, SHS intends to solicit donations from current Yeshiva University students towards scholarships for prospective YU students.

The program is currently headed under the guidance of current Presidential Fellow Avi Amsalem, Daniella Ginsburg (SCW '10) and Kyle Borenstein (SSSB '11).

Ginsburg described SHS as a "student-run initiative to tackle the modern day tuition crisis."

While raising funds is the main objective of the group, another is "to create fun, exciting out of the box events that will help create a strong positive relationship between the student body and the university as well as amongst each other," said Borenstein.

Started by a small group of students, the organization has grown considerably and fostered a need to include more volunteers than previously, helping contribute to

the goal of a more cohesive student body.

"Too often in YU are the students keeping to themselves and not interacting with one another in social circles not their own," said Borenstein. "[SHS] wants to facilitate a possibility for others to really get to know each other in different groups so that we actually have a united student body."

Borenstein praised the members of SHS. "The team which we have assembled to make our dream a reality," he continued, "is a really strong, creative and energetic bunch that are enthusiastic and excited to see this year as well as future years become successes."

Feedback has been positive, and the group has been quite well received.

Cheryl Noll (SCW '10) appreciates the new endeavor. "I think that it is an amazing organization that gives students a chance to give back to the Yeshiva community and give future students the opportunity to experience all YU has to offer, despite any financial obstacles," said Noll.

Josh Freundel (YC '12) thinks

this program demonstrates the gratitude of the current student body. "It is impressive that there is a student initiative to help other students afford college," commented Freundel. "It shows these students aren't taking their own education for granted."

Rena Kirshblum (SCW '11) corroborated this idea. "I think it's really amazing when students come together and put forth effort to help their fellow students," she enthused. "It really shows how much we care about our school and want others to be able to get as much out of it as we do."

Denying a student a YU education because of insufficient funds "is to limit the strength of the Jewish community in the future," said Ginsburg, a point she feels needs to be "ingrained in the student body," since it establishes "camaraderie" and serves to "remind each of us students the reasons we have chosen a YU education over any other."

Recognition of these concepts, said Ginsburg, "ensure[s] the delivery of these significant messages further into the future."



Rabbi Pesach Oratz (z"l) was a senior Judaic Studies faculty member at Stern College for Women for over 30 years, having first taught at Yeshiva College in 1961. He received the Professor of the Year Award from Stern's senior class three times and was a beloved teacher at Camp Morasha for 46 years. He passed away this year on erev Rosh Hashana and was memorialized by administration, faculty and students in an evening of remembrance at the Beren Campus on November 24, 2009. His inspiration lives on in his students.

Career Development Center Runs First Annual Yeshiva University Graduate School Fair

Mollie R. Sharfman

The future looked bright at Yeshiva University on Monday, October 26, at the first ever YU Graduate School fair run by the Career Development Center (CDC). The fair featured all YU graduate schools and joint programs, including Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Azrieli Graduate School of Education, Belz School of Music, Bernard Revel Graduate School, Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Columbia University School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Ferkauf School of Psychology, the Graduate Program in Biblical and Talmudic Interpretation at Stern College for Women, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), Sy Syms School of Business's Master of Science in Accounting program and Wurzweiler School of Social Work.

Representatives from each school attended the fair, including: Dr. David Schnall, dean of Azrieli Graduate School for Jewish Education and Administration; Dr. David Berger, dean of Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies; and Rabbi Shmuel Hain, *rosh beit midrash* (literally "head of study hall") of the Graduate Program for Women in Advance Talmudic Study (GPATS), who is also currently working to begin Stern's master's program in Biblical and Talmudic Interpretation.

Students might not realize the

rich opportunities they have in their own backyard and Terry Sabri, the recruitment coordinator and career advisor at the CDC, wanted to make sure students were aware of them. "YU offers so many different graduate options that students at Stern and Yeshiva ought to know about," she asserts.

Students interested in education found out about the exciting programs that Azrieli has to offer. Aside from their master's and doctoral programs in elementary and secondary education, there are two unique fellowships that truly caught the eye of Arielle Gorman (SCW '10), who hopes to become a teacher herself someday. "If I hadn't come to the YU graduate school fair, I might not have found out about the Legacy and Give Back Fellowships that Azrieli has to offer," she says. "I am so glad that the graduate school fair was early enough in the year that I could still apply to these promising programs."

Yeshiva University and Azrieli have created the Give Back Fellowship and the Legacy Heritage Teacher Training Fellowship to attract vibrant Jewish educators and leaders to the field of Jewish Education. The Legacy Teacher Training Fellowship's mission, as declared on their website, is a two year commitment that "aims to provide highly qualified college graduates with the opportunity to teach both formally and informal-

ly at a Jewish day school in North America." The two-year Legacy Heritage Teacher Training Fellowship includes: placement at a Jewish day school in North America, a full-tuition scholarship—including travel and housing expenses—to Azrieli Graduate School for three summer sessions in the M.S. program, on-site mentoring, professional development financial support, and ongoing support from Yeshiva University, including professional development conferences and materials.

"We are looking to provide YU and Stern graduates the opportunity to explore the field of Jewish Education in a meaningful way," says Joey Small, Project Manager for the Jewish Educator Fellowships. "We have had participants in our Give Back fellowship that took a year off before going to medical school."

The Give Back Fellowship is an opportunity for a graduate student to gain experience in Jewish Education by working in a day school for a year. As stated on www.yu.edu/azrieli, "Fellows will be exposed to the field of education by assisting with student activities, observing classroom teachers, learning with students and providing support to other aspects of school programming. The fellows will also serve as role models of Torah u'Madda for the students in their schools as well as the community."

For juniors and seniors, the B.A./

M.A. programs were advertised at the fair as well. The B.A./M.A. programs enable students to take up to 12 credits in their final year of undergraduate that count towards a masters. These programs are available through Bernard Revel Graduate School, Azrieli, and potentially the program in Biblical and Talmudic Interpretation.

YU's joint programs with Columbia University School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, and Wurzweiler School of Social Work were featured at the fair as well. Stern College offers two joint programs with the Columbia School of Engineering. In the 3-2 plan, a student would attend SCW for 3 years and may be admitted to Columbia for another two years. After completing the two years, the graduate would receive a B.A. from SCW and a B.S. from Columbia. Under the 4-2 plan, the student would spend four full years and receive a B.A. from SCW. She would then spend two years at Columbia and receive an M.S. in Engineering.

The nursing joint degree is a combined program with Johns Hopkins University. Students spend three years at SCW fulfilling college requirements and pre-requisite courses and then one year in an accelerated program at Johns Hopkins University. After completion, the student receives a B.A. from SCW and a B.S.N. from Johns Hopkins. A master's degree from

Johns Hopkins is also available.

Stern College also offers a five-year joint program with Wurzweiler School of Social Work (WSSW). After completing three years of college requirements and prerequisites at SCW, the student is then admitted into Wurzweiler for a two-year program. After the completion of the first year at WSSW, the student receives a B.A., and after the second year, an M.S.W.

The Kaplan Test Preparation and Admissions had its own table at the fair. The table featured information on the different course preparations they offer. They raffled off a free Kaplan course, gave out MCAT and law school preparation packages and pamphlets, offered a free LSAT for practice, and provided the opportunity to participate in a mock day at law school, in which students are set up to attend class at different law schools around New York.

All in all, the YU graduate school fair was informative and exciting. YU is at the forefront of secular and Jewish studies with their array of graduate programs and new fellowship opportunities. The CDC wants to best prepare the students of Stern and Yeshiva College for the next stage in life and this is one of the helpful ways in which they are accomplishing their goal. The CDC is located on the 12th floor of 215 Lexington.

Mollie R. Sharfman is a senior at SCW majoring in English Literature and Judaic Studies.

NEWS

Nazi-Hunter Efraim Zuroff Continues the Chase, YC's Simon Goldberg Takes on Holocaust Education

Yaelle Frohlich

At the release of his book, "Operation Last Chance," at the Wilf Campus on November 10, the 71st anniversary of Kristallnacht, Nazi-Hunter Dr. Efraim Zuroff articulated why it is still a moral imperative to bring Nazi war criminals to justice. Zuroff, director of Israel Wiesenthal Center Director, acknowledged that as Nazi war criminals age, some people may be tempted to say, "Why bother? ... These people are old, they've got families."

However, this excuse does not cut it for the Nazi-Hunter, a graduate of Yeshiva University and nominee for the 2008 Nobel Peace Prize. "The passage of time in no way diminishes the guilt of the killers," emphasized Zuroff. "If someone committed a crime in World War II and were not brought to justice, they're still as guilty as they were then...we don't believe people should be protected from prosecution just because they've reached an elderly age."

Zuroff launched Operation Last Chance in 2002 in an effort to bring remaining Nazi war criminals to justice. The program offers monetary incentives to Eastern

Europeans who are able to provide information that leads to the finding of Nazi war criminals who have evaded their due punishment. Since the launch, hundreds of new cases have been opened in the hunt for these murderers, camp guards, experimenting doctors and master-minders.

"There's not a single country in the world that has limited prosecution based solely on age," said Zuroff, asserting that the practical implication of such a system would be that if someone were smart or lucky enough to elude justice for many years, that person could rely on never being brought to justice. He also noted, in light of the Darfur genocide entering its seventh year, the inherent danger in countries where these criminals now reside failing to take action. "Their [Nazi war criminals'] presence in these countries is a form of moral pollution," declared Zuroff. "If you ignore these people, you say that the crime of genocide is not so terrible, because they get away with it."

The work has led Zuroff to incredible discoveries. In the search for Dr. Joseph Mengele,



Nazi Hunter Dr. Efraim Zuroff addresses YU students and faculty at the release of his new book, "Operation Last Chance."

Auschwitz's Nazi doctor known as the "Angel of Death" and for his gruesome experiments on twins, Zuroff discovered a collection in Yad Vashem of more than 16 million index cards listing people living in Europe during World War II. Most of the people listed, however, were non-Jews. Not only did the

cards contain each individual's place of birth, they also noted where these people had immigrated after the war. Nazi war criminals had entered countries around the world posing as refugees, but invariably under their own names. The names of 49 known Latvian and Lithuanian Nazi war criminals were found on these cards, along with the boat on which they left Europe, their new country, and, if they had gone to the United States, their first address in America.

In the U.S., Nazi war criminals cannot be prosecuted for their crimes. The reason: the crimes were not committed in the U.S., and were not committed against U.S. citizens. So how can the villains be brought to justice? Zuroff compared his method to the "Al Capone compromise." The FBI wanted to nail the early 20th century gang leader for murder, but could not prove murder sufficiently to proceed with prosecution. Instead, they jailed Capone for tax evasion.

Zuroff explained that Nazi war criminals lied about their activities during the war—for example, they might have been a concentration camp guard or part of a shooting squad—when entering different countries after the war. In these cases, Zuroff's team do not need to prove murder to the United States government; they just need to prove that the criminal lied on his or her entry documents. The individual is then deported to his or her country of origin to face prosecution. "To become an American you need to have good character," explained Zuroff.

The event was organized by SHEM, the Student Holocaust Education Movement, founded and led by current Yeshiva College student Simon Goldberg. Goldberg founded the movement with the knowledge that our generation is probably the

last to learn about the Holocaust from actual Holocaust survivors. With Holocaust denial on the rise and genocide in Darfur continuing without an end in sight, Goldberg decided that Holocaust education was "the beginning of the answer" to preventing genocide.

Goldberg plans for SHEM to eventually expand beyond the study and lecture halls of Yeshiva University and into the wider Jewish and non-Jewish community. It will begin as a more tightly focused effort in the Jewish community, as participating students will expose themselves to educational programs featuring guest speakers, museum visits, professional panels and classroom discussions," explained Goldberg. "It will draw strength from involvement in community-based projects, outreach initiatives, and genocide prevention campaigns, and will challenge, pursue, and ultimately seek to answer the long overdue questions that highlight both the frailty and magnificence of humanity."

"Once our network of student activists is firmly established on the national stage—built on a foundation of SHEM chapters operating across the country—" continued Goldberg, "we will seek to further our goal by fostering principled dialogue and inspiring students around the world to join our movement of building in the face of destruction. This will take shape in the form of widespread blogging, worldwide educational seminars and an enduring solidarity much consistent with our mission."

Goldberg explained why SHEM is unique among Holocaust education organizations. "The process of commemoration should be one that is constantly ensuing," he said. "And while the overwhelming

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NEWS

Harvard Professor Speaks of Economic Turmoil at YU Event

Estie Neff

Reports of the economic rebound in the United States have been greatly exaggerated, according to Harvard University Economics professor Dr. Martin Feldstein, who disputed those optimistic views in a lecture he gave at Yeshiva University (YU) on October 26th.

The current recession "has been the longest, the deepest, and the most damaging" of all recessions the United States has suffered in its history, said Dr. Feldstein. In his opinion, President Obama's \$800 billion-dollar stimulus package is the source of all the trouble.

The Obama stimulus plan was inspired by the idea of the "Keynesian Multiplier"—that the economy is best stimulated by government spending. This concept became popular after the Great Depression, when the American economy enjoyed stability as a result of increased government spending on World War II.

However, the Keynesian model will not prove successful as a reliable *modus operandi* for all economic crises. "For the typical peak-to-trough recession, the Keynesian Multiplier doesn't work," noted Dr. Feldstein. A peak-to-trough recession is when a strong economy rapidly descends into a recession.

When the Obama administration approved its massive stimulus package—essentially Keynesian economics—it failed to take the unique circumstances of the current recession into account. In Dr. Feldstein's opinion, consumer spending was nowhere near what it should have been to encourage such a huge government stimulus. He pointed to the fall in the value of homes, the weakness of the stock market, and the overall recession as causes for consumer depression and weak spending. Nor does he foresee a 2010 rise in consumer spending parallel to the government stimulus which could close the growing fiscal deficit.

Dr. Feldstein warned his audience not to be misled by the optimistic signs of a recovering economy, which have deluded many experts, including: a fourth

straight monthly increase in United States home prices; forecasts by economists that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the measure of the United States' economic performance, will increase in the next financial quarter; and a rebound in the stock market since its March 2009 lows. Two weeks after he spoke, the government released the GDP report, showing that it had increased 3.5%.

All of these factors create a positive economic facade, yet Dr. Feldstein is not excited. "I think there are significant reasons for concern—for doubt—for that outlook," he said.

Dr. Feldstein attributed the apparent economic recovery to government stimulus plans that are only temporary, such as the "Cash for Clunkers" program, which offers money to people who trade in their old vehicles for more environmentally friendly automobiles, and tax credits for new home buyers. These programs have stimulated consumer spending, but will not sustain economic activity enough to make up for the government's stimulus package, Dr. Feldstein said. The national unemployment rate was up to 9.8 percent at the time of the lecture (and has climbed to 10.2 percent since), incomes are declining, and recent surveys show that consumers feel negative about their financial situations. Dr. Feldstein saw these trends continuing even after the stimulus plan has been phased out, resulting in a second recession.

The combination of excessive government spending and weak consumer spending will result in another economic drop in 2010, predicted Dr. Feldstein. He said the government's plan to spend millions on national health care is risky; they should focus on increasing consumer buying instead.

Dr. Feldstein postulated a solution—that he suggested to the Obama administration as a member of the President's Economic Recovery Advisory Board—in the form of a public-private investment partnership between the

banks and the government. Banks are currently hesitant to give out loans because they are concerned about losing their capital in the rocky economic environment. If the government promises to make up for any capital the banks may lose on a loan, banks will be more willing to lend out money, thus stimulating consumer spending.

Dr. Feldstein said that the government was willing to follow his advice, but banks did not want government money because they feared restrictive rules and regulations might come with it.

Dr. Feldstein mentioned another obstacle in the way of a healthy economy, one that has nothing to do with numbers: politics.

As the economy recovers, he sees a struggle between the Federal Reserve, the United States' central bank and semi-autonomous institution, and Congress. At some point, the Federal Reserve will want to raise interest rates in order to slow down the economy and stabilize its growth. In contrast, Congress will fight this move because of stubbornly-high unemployment rates which generally worsen with greater interest rates. In Dr. Feldstein's view, Congress will argue that the government cannot raise interest rates while many consumers are still out of work, and to enforce their stance will restrict the Federal Reserve's authority.

Dr. Feldstein's audience was a bit disheartened by his dire prognosis. He stressed that he was only trying to be realistic. "I hope that I've been too cautious, too pessimistic," he said, to the wry laughter of his listeners.

Despite the bad news, the evening turned out to be a success for all who attended, including YU President Richard Joel, Stern College for Women's Dean Karen Bacon, and Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary Dean Rabbi Yona Reiss. Students mingled with economics teachers and professionals in the economics field. All the attendees were invited to participate in a question and answer session with Dr. Feldstein after his lecture.

Nazi-Hunter Efraim Zuroff Continues the Chase, YC's Simon Goldberg Takes on Holocaust Education

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concentration in this subject seems to lie in the facts and the figures, our focus is less on Holocaust history itself than it is on what that history means in the context of our lives today, and why it means just that. And if that sort of paradigm shift can take place, it will not only revamp the way the Holocaust is studied in our schools, but what impact its lessons have on bettering our humanity."

SHEM's last event of the semester will be a panel featuring a Holocaust survivor, a professional in the field of Holocaust studies/education and a rabbinic authority. Goldberg is also planning a YU Mission Trip to Washington, D.C.'s Holocaust Memorial Museum and a program that will train students to become middle and high school Holocaust educators in the New York area.

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FEATURES

The Legal and Halakhic Question of Medical Marijuana

Simi Lampert

The subject of medical cannabis is a controversial topic spanning the political, judicial, social, and moral domains. The stigma associated with this Schedule I drug is only one of many factors which complicate honest discussion of marijuana's medicinal benefits versus its potential for harm. The herbal form of the cannabis plant has several well-documented beneficial effects, including amelioration of nausea, stimulus of hunger, and a broader analgesic effect.

Rabbi Dr. Moshe D. Tendler, a *rosh yeshiva* (yeshiva head) at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary and the Rabbi Isaac and Bella Tendler Professor of Jewish Medical Ethics, said in a phone interview that in light of all the benefits provided by medical marijuana, the "concern [about medical marijuana use] is not adequate" enough to keep it from helping sick patients. In a 2004 poll conducted by CNN, 72% of adults age 45 and above agree with the statement that adults should be allowed to use marijuana for medical purposes, if a physician recommends it. Yet this drug remains forbidden to many sick people across America who stand to gain from cannabis treatment, including terminally ill cancer and AIDS patients.

"I think the government has much bigger issues to focus on," stated Dr. Brycelyn Boardman, a chemistry professor at Stern College for Women, "and it is these 'celebrity' issues that often overwhelm political platforms, and the media."

Presently, the legal status of medical marijuana remains divided, with the federal government declaring it an illegal substance even while fourteen states have laws allowing for the restricted use of cannabis for therapeutic purposes, and a number more are considering passage of such laws.

With the recent administration change, the government's policies have begun shifting. On October 19th, the Justice Department announced that it would no longer prosecute medical marijuana patients or distributors, provided they act according to their state laws. Previously, it was possible to raid marijuana distribution centers even while they operated under state law.

Perhaps even more significant is the recent decision of the American Medical Association (AMA) to support declassifying marijuana as a Schedule I drug. Under the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, drugs are assigned a level or 'schedule' in order to regulate controlled substances. While drugs such as cocaine and morphine are Schedule II, considered to have high potential for abuse and addiction but also medically legitimate, marijuana is grouped alongside LSD and heroin in Schedule I,

described as having "no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States" in addition to its potential for abuse. Advocates of legalizing medical marijuana wish to, at the very least, shift marijuana from Schedule I to II, and as of this month these groups have been joined by the respected AMA.

As with any medical ethical dilemma, the authorities' main struggle lies in attempting to balance the beneficence and non-maleficence of this drug. This means that the curative powers of marijuana must be weighed against its possibility to affect harm. On one hand, evidence exists that cannabis has been used for centuries for its ability to stem nausea, relieve pain, and even assist in weight gain, among other remedial faculties. In spite of these medical uses of marijuana, doctors are presently permitted to prescribe cocaine and morphine—but not marijuana. On the other hand, drugs from this class, cannabinoids, have been shown to negatively impact memory, perception and judgment, as well as cause respiratory diseases when ingested via smoking. In spite of all this, advocates point out that all pharmaceutical drugs have their risks and side effects that accompany their powers to heal and relieve pain.

Marijuana, however, is so commonly exploited as a recreational drug that the stakes are higher. The legalization or decriminalization of medical cannabis and the accompanying accessibility of the plant raises the concern of increased recreational use. Additionally, marijuana has potential as a "gateway drug" leading to interest in and possible addiction to other and worse drugs. The medical community is currently divided on whether marijuana itself is an addictive product. University of Maryland PhD candidate Laura Frank, who teaches medical ethics in Baltimore, believes that the medical benefits of marijuana far outweigh the risks. She maintains that there is no reason to bar the legalization of cannabis for strictly regulated medical use, and that the only reason it has not happened thus far results from stigma attached to marijuana. As she points out, even over-the-counter pain relief pills can lead to intense illnesses; everyday commodities such as cigarettes can cause lethal lung cancer, yet the only regulation on tobacco is taxation. The balance of potential benefits and harm of marijuana should be left to medical experts who are aware of the needs of each patient.

Contemporary *halakhic* (Jewish legal) thinkers must address many of the same issues as secular ethicists. In addition, since marijuana itself is still illegal under federal law and in most states, *poskim* (deciders of Jewish law) must con-

sider whether the principle of *dina d'malkhuta dina* ("the law of the land is the law") applies to the situation. This question alone is comprised of an assortment of other matters, such as understanding which laws are actually regulated by this *halakhic* mandate. Furthermore, should marijuana cure or even relieve pain, this allows for overriding legislative matters with the more important concern for an individual's wellbeing.

While *dina d'malkhuta dina* is pertinent specifically to marijuana, the remaining *halakhic* quandaries relate to other pharmaceutical drugs as well. Were it to be properly regulated, candidates for medical marijuana would be those suffering severe pain. Under Jewish law, the severe physical pain experienced by these patients is the same as illnesses that take precedence over virtually all Jewish laws, such as breaking the Sabbath in order to administer the drug.

What about the risks of marijuana, which are present even when regulated by medical and legal authorities? The Talmud, in discussing bloodletting, concludes that socially accepted risks, such as the potential harm involved with the side effects of medications, are permitted because "God preserveth the simple" (see Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 129b for further elaboration). While *halakhic* parameters seem to allow for allocation of medications, this must be understood alongside a key phrase in Rashbam's (Rabbi Shmuel ben Meir, 12th c. France) discussion on recreational drugs in Talmud Bavli Pesachim 113a. He asserts that any medication is to be avoided "unless there is no alternative available," as any drug can, as Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Itzhaki, Rashbam's grandfather) states there, become habit-forming and expensive. The legalization of medical marijuana needs "very strong support from the Torah community," Rabbi Dr. Tendler believes. "We have a specific *halakha* to alleviate pain."

One of the major issues currently impeding the progress of legalizing medical cannabis is the lenient and somewhat sloppy standard in California, the leading state in legal medical marijuana. Aside from properly licensed medical marijuana dispensaries, Los Angeles alone boasts approximately 1,000 illegally operated distribution shops. "There is a medical marijuana place literally a block away from my apartment at UCLA, it's VERY easy to get it," informed a college student at University of California Los Angeles. "You need a doctor's note saying you have a headache or PMS, or I think even stress can be a reason."

One Los Angeles Times journalist relates how he successfully applied for the required doctor recommendation needed to obtain the

Got Mechina?

Approaching the Needs of the Individual

Estee Goldschmidt

Basic Judaic Studies—or "*Mechina* (literally, "preparatory study") for Girls," as members refer to it—is a program at Stern College for Women (SCW) that provides high-level courses in Judaic studies for women with a limited Jewish background. Often, women come to Stern from public schools or after spending only one year in a Jewish environment. For those women, the Stern College experience is drastically different from the women who come to college after spending twelve years in a Jewish day school and a post-high school year in Israel.

Gabrielle Taeidkashani of upstate New York is a freshman in Stern majoring in speech pathology who comes from a less than typical background. "Coming to Stern College from a Catholic school, I did not know anyone," she says.

Liatte Tsarfati, a psychology and Judaic Studies major, notes her frustration upon arrival at college. "When I first came to Stern, I felt like a stranger in New York and lost in the system of the university," says Tsarfati. "Thank G-d there was BJS to give me a sense of belonging."

Mrs. Shoshana Schechter, current Director of BJS, relates how she got involved in BJS when she was a Stern Student back in 1991. "For me going to Yeshiva University was the natural progression," she says. "Only once I started writing for The Observer did I meet women who were coming from different backgrounds. Some of them did not attend Jewish day schools and came to YU without knowing anyone. I tried to imagine what the Stern experience was like for them. I was saddened when I thought of walking into the cafeteria full of girls and not knowing a soul."

That feeling is what motivated Mrs. Schechter to write editorials calling for the Stern community to reach out to women in college. To be aware of people who can use a friendly smile, a dinner partner, or even an invitation for Shabbat. "Women travel across the globe to inspire others, and that is extremely important," says Mrs. Schechter. "However, they don't realize that the woman who needs inspiration

most might be sitting next to them in class, might be living on their floor, and be their roommate."

Although there were always classes in Stern at beginner and lower intermediate levels to cater to women from weak Jewish educational backgrounds, there was no community, no extracurricular program, and no family for those women. Whereas men in Yeshiva College were (and are) placed into groups upon arrival, giving them a sense of community right from the beginning, these women were left to fend for themselves outside of classes.

Four years ago, Rabbi Dr. Ephraim Kanarfogel, chairman of the Rebecca Ivy Department of Jewish Studies at SCW, called upon Mrs. Schechter to create a program for these women within the Stern community. "It has been felt in recent years that it is especially important to reach out to as many groups of potential students as possible to bring them into the YU orbit and educational philosophy," says Rabbi Kanarfogel. "With the help of many throughout the university, we were able to expand and re-imagine the opportunities for students at these levels."

Thus BJS was created. This year, for the first time, BJS has its own student board, where students take on leadership roles, welcome new students and create a warm environment. A sense of community is created through *Shabbatonim*, extracurricular activities, student-mentor relationships, trips to Israel and *havruta* (paired learning) sessions.

BJS runs *Shabbatonim* off campus, where students from Stern College meet students with similar backgrounds from Yeshiva College. "My favorite part of BJS is the *Shabbatonim*; I learned so much from going to different communities and seeing how these families run their homes with Jewish values," says Jessica Wiesenberg, Vice President of BJS board. *Shabbatonim* are a great opportunity for students to get to know their teachers and rabbis in informal settings, to build connections, ask questions and discuss issues. Gabrielle Taeidkashani just attended her first BJS *Shabbaton*. "We all get

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drug from a dispensary. He went to an approved doctor with complaints of mild back pain, which he has been able to keep under control with occasional painkillers and some stretching. The doctor, a gynecologist who proclaimed he knew "nothing about backs," wrote him the recommendation after a 10-minute exam, during which the doctor never once rose from

his seat or touched the investigating journalist. Should America one day choose to legalize medical marijuana on a federal level, the government must take care to properly regulate the distribution of the drug to prevent exploitation for recreational use, and ensure that it gets to the patients who can benefit most from its therapy.

FEATURES

Bagels, Cream Cheese, and Shopping Carts Full of Old Clothes

Faige Seligman

This month, a small group of Yeshiva University students met with Rosh Pinah, a Conservative *haburah* (group), amidst lines of homeless people and piles of bagels and cream cheese. Sound novel, exciting, and even a bit startling at first? Welcome to the Yeshiva University Tolerance Club (YUTC).

As part of the Tolerance Club's mission to "raise awareness and offer new perspectives on a range of social tolerance issues," the club joined forces with Rosh Pinah to organize and execute a Breakfast Run. At the brisk hour of 8:30 AM the club was waiting with piles of breakfast-appropriate foods and plastic utensils while Rosh Pinah brought more food along with coffee, hot chocolate and bags of warm clothing. As the volunteers quickly set up tables laden with fruit, cereal, milk and more and passed out donuts to the patiently waiting homeless, the importance of the endeavor became more apparent than ever. The men and women were cold and hungry, and some of them also suffered from understandably low morale.

Tovah Silbermann (SCW '12), a YU volunteer, related how she had spoken to a man who was losing his longtime "home" at a specific station, and how devastated he felt to learn that he and his family would have to find a new spot on the streets to live. "That's when it really hit me," said Silbermann. "These people live on the street. Rain or shine. Every day." The man, looking out for his friends, wanted to know if it would be all right if he went to get his buddies so that they too could enjoy the hot coffee and warm sweaters being distributed. He was elated to hear that his friends would be welcome and quickly set off to notify them. Others in line were feeling upbeat and optimistic, joking with me, the vice president of YUTC, about their respective unusual names. All who were waiting, optimists and pessimists alike, were grateful for the kindness being shown to them. Some even offered to help set up and serve, and many of them came over to the volunteers to personally offer thanks.

The run was primarily organized by Miriam Gofine (SCW '11), the female president of YUTC, and co-headed by Avi Kopstick (YC '10), the male president of the club. Kopstick described the importance of the run. "We can't always help everyone who asks us," says Kopstick. "Out of guilt, and partly shame, we become accustomed to looking away from these people, ignoring them, and pretending they are not actually there, right in front of us. Over time, these individuals seem to lose all humanness completely." Kopstick believes that we must remind our-

selves of the humanity in these people and remember that each homeless person is a human being with a complex, deeply painful story. A homeless person is not an insignificant person, a member of a reputedly drug-crazed and mentally ill mass of people, as many have portrayed the homeless. Kopstick and the Tolerance Club believe that we must stop and talk to these people, even serve them breakfast if we have the resources to do so, in order to include them in our circle of humanity and to understand them better as fellow human beings.

According to Jeremy Lichtman (YC '12), another volunteer, the Breakfast Run was also a moral obligation. Lichtman joined in because he felt that to neglect these hungry people is ethically questionable, if not outright wrong. "We have a responsibility for the people around us," says Lichtman. "Giving food to people who need it falls under that category."

As Josh Miller (YC '11), male vice president of YUTC, sliced bagels and met people that most New Yorkers would pass right by without a second glance, he was struck by how orderly and patient the people were. Later that same day, Miller happened to run into one of the people whom we had helped. The man thanked Miller and told him that thanks to the hearty breakfast, he was focusing well, able to read a newspaper, and feeling great for once. All of the volunteers were engaged in one of the most meaningful, socially vital, and personally self-fulfilling activities—an act of kindness.

In the fashion of Emma Lazarus, a Jew who proclaimed in the name of America, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free," YU students seized this opportunity to give back, even just a little, to their brothers and sisters in need.

Were Holocaust Survivors Ever Really Silent?

Alison Silver

There is a popular belief that adults of the post-Holocaust period of 1945-1962 remained silent during the aftermath of the war. However, historian Hasia Diner explained in a November 16 lecture at New York City's 92nd Street Y that this notion is false. "The Jewish men and women involved in Jewish life...considered it to be their obligation to remember the people who were murdered," emphasized Diner, author of "We Remember With Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962" and professor of American Jewish history at New York University.

Essentially, the Jews of the post-war period felt they were alive by a miracle and they just as easily could have been among those who died; therefore, they were responsible for memorializing this tragic event, articulated Diner. Even though the memorials for the Holocaust were less organized in the 1940's than they are today, one should not assume that the survivors and the Jewish parents of that period were silent.

An element of why this myth of silence exists is because the word 'Holocaust' was not used during the immediate post-war period. "I saw no evidence that... they were troubled by not having a single word," refuted Diner. "They didn't indicate that the absence of one word made it difficult to talk about the Holocaust." From 1945

to 1962, people used many words to articulate what is now universally known as the *shoah*, or Holocaust. "Throughout the fifties and early sixties there's a jumble of language with regard to the Holocaust," stressed Diner. "It's in the late seventies and eighties that the word becomes crystallized."

The myth of post-Holocaust silence was solidified by the so-called next generation, the children of the post-war period, who blamed their parents for remaining silent, as they considered it, and asserted that they would speak out about the Holocaust. "The next generation had an idea of what it meant to speak forcefully," observed Diner. "They were making a clean break with the past and studying anew."

Diner noted that in the post-war period there were no Jewish history courses and that it was not until 1969 that the Association for Jewish Studies was founded. The new generation essentially blamed their parents for remaining silent, but it was not a matter of silence specifically; it was that organized Holocaust education had not been instituted yet. "It's like blaming their parents for not having Holocaust information on the Internet, but there was no internet," elaborated James E. Young, Chair of the Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Since "there is no monolithic survivor," according to Young,

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to talk and know each other in an atmosphere outside of school," she says.

"We create models of a Shabbat family," agrees Mrs. Schechter. "I set people up by neighbors, and on Friday night they eat by their hosts so that they see more than one family. When they come to our house for *Oneg* after the meal, every girl exclaims that she is staying by the best family."

Cheryl Noll, a senior majoring in history, remembers her first *Shabbaton*. "In the fall of my first year, Mrs. Schechter had an all-girl *Shabbaton* at her house, and that was actually the first *Shabbat* I'd ever experienced," says Noll. "I've been to her home for *Shabbat* many times since. I feel like I'm really a part of her family."

An extremely important component of *Mechina* is a program called "July in Jerusalem" where "we create the Seminary/Yeshiva experience in a month," says Mrs. Schechter. Mary Schwartz wanted to create a program in memory of

Got Mechina?

her late husband and July in Jerusalem seemed like the perfect project to invest in. Participating students receive college credit for the trip. "The advantage of learning in Israel is that one doesn't worry about requirements for their major, classes, school responsibilities," says Mrs. Schechter. "One cannot make up for twelve years of Jewish education in class alone. This program changed the face and quality of *Mechina*."

The program consists of learning in the morning, touring Israel and doing different acts of *hesed* (kindness) in the afternoon and lectures from famous speakers at night. Noll was a participant in July 2008. For her, it was a transformational experience. "July in Jerusalem literally changed my life," she says. "We didn't sleep for a month because there was just no way to get in all the touring and *chesed* and learning in a month. It made me realize that I am really a part of something that is so much bigger than me or Stern or YU. I came back a different person than when I went. There is just something about the land, the air, being in Israel that I never understood when I heard people talk about it before, and that I can't explain now, but it is powerful."

Sophie Lachmann is president of BJS. She loved learning *Bamidbar* ("Numbers") with Mrs. Schechter every morning in Israel. "The learning was so real," says Lachmann. "We learned about our ancestors coming to Israel and exploring the land; after that we explored the very same land ourselves. I felt a connection to my learning that I never felt before."

"July in Jerusalem" also gives students a better opportunity to relate to the rest of Stern students who spent a year of study in Israel. "It was a wonderful feeling to be able to finally study in Israel," says Alyson Jacobs, a former program participant. "When I came in as a real freshman, the first question girls would always ask me is what seminary I went to. My embarrassment grew with each new question. Now finally I can say that although I never studied a year in Israel, I did study for a summer on the YU Campus in Israel and it was a fabulous experience."

Liatte Tsarfati was inspired by "July in Jerusalem" to take a semester off from college study and is currently studying at Nishmat. "I hold the summer program responsible for giving me a thirst for *limudei kodesh* [holy studies] in the Holy Land that was only quenched when I decided to study in a *midrasha* [seminary] in Israel this year," she says.

In an effort to increase the interaction with the general student body regarding learning, a weekly *havruta* program has been set up

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FEATURES

Top Five Bookstores in New York City

Alexa Rosenberg

With the cold weather rolling in, plenty of people are looking to get away. Air travel is much too expensive for most, but luckily there is a cheaper way to escape, located right here in the city. Bookstores allow the shopper to go just about anywhere for the price of a paperback, and there are some top-notch bookstores in Manhattan. Whether you're in the mood for shivers or tears, inspiration or action, this city has something for everyone. Browse the shelves and turn the pages; you won't be disappointed! Here are just a few of the top choices:

1. J. Levine Jewish Books and Judaica:

Founded in Lithuania in 1890 by the current owner's great grandfather, this store has been in New York for over 100 years. Conveniently located near the Beren Campus, J. Levine Jewish Books and Judaica offers a great collection of *sefarim* (religious Jewish books). From Kabbalah to cookbooks this store has it covered, with more than a few extras thrown in along the way. The store is easy to locate, and extremely welcoming to Stern College students, with a discount to any student who stops by. Along with their very impressive collection of *sefarim*, the store offers a large collection of *ketubot* (marriage contract documents), and many other articles of Judaica, perfect for gifts and special occasions. To find out more about J. Levine Jewish Books and Judaica, go to their website, www.levinejudaica.com.

Address: 5 West 30th Street
Phone Number: 212-695-6888
Hours: Sunday: 10:00 am - 5:00 pm (except in July)
Monday - Wed: 9:00 am - 6:00 pm
Thursday: 9:00 am - 7:00 pm
Friday: 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

2. Books of Wonder:

Dive back into childhood with this enchanting children's bookstore. Books of Wonder is the biggest children's bookstore in the city, with sections for toddlers, young readers and teens. The store is divided into modern and classic children's books, making it highly likely that you will spot some old favorites from childhood on their shelves. A great place to go to shop for gifts, Books of Wonder also offers books for mature readers who are young at heart. The Harry Potter series, for example, has found its way into their stock. Books of Wonder also offers a selection of old and rare children's books for the true collector. These books include illustrated Grimm fairytales and classics like Winnie-the-Pooh, many of them signed by the author. A great way to put a smile on

your face, check out their website, www.booksof Wonder.com.

Address: 18 West 18th Street
Phone Number: 212-989-3270
Hours:
Monday-Sat: 10:00 am - 7:00 pm
Sunday: 11:00 am - 6:00 pm

3. Barnes and Nobles:

At 18th and 5th, this is the original Barnes and Nobles store. You may recognize it as the place you picked up your textbooks, but this store has a few more faces to show. The store offers an assortment of all sorts of books from fiction and mystery to study aids and textbooks. With an eye toward helping the city's students, any college student can purchase without sales tax. Even better, the store continues to offer deals on its website, some up to 85% off on various products. With valid college identification, the store also allows students to sell their textbooks back to the store at the end of the year. Go to their website, www.bnnewyork.com, to learn more about the variety of events they offer, from books signings to celebrity appearances.

Address: 105 5th Avenue
Phone Number: 212-807-0099
Hours: Monday-Fri: 9:00 am - 8:30 pm
Saturday: 9:30 am - 7:30 pm
Sunday: 11:00 am - 7:00 pm

4. The Strand:

The Strand is famous for possessing miles of books, according to their website—18 miles in total. This store sells new, used and rare books, in all genres. Any book lover can feel right at home browsing through their crowded shelves, and is almost guaranteed to find something that suits. Whether you are looking for a quick read or a long haul, it is unlikely that this store will disappoint. The Strand also holds many diverse events. In the past, the store has hosted band nights, book signings, author appearances and readings, just to name a few. Jhumpa Lahiri, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, and Gregory Maguire, author of "Wicked," are both members of the star-studded list of authors who have attended events at The Strand. For further details, browse their website, www.strandbooks.com.

Address: 828 Broadway at 12th Street
Phone Number: 212-473-1452
Hours: Monday-Saturday: 9:30 am - 10:30 pm
Rare Book Room Closes: 6:20 pm
Sunday: 11:00 am - 10:30 pm

5. The Mysterious Bookshop:

This spooky store exists just for the shivers. Specializing in mysteries, they offer new, signed and rare books. This is one of the oldest mystery bookstores in Amer-

Promoting Good Writing Skills: An Inter-University Event

Lauren Burstein

On Sunday, November 15th, the Writing Centers of Yeshiva College, Stern College for Women, and the Fashion Institute of Technology joined forces for a collaborative workshop. Tutors from each institution met at FIT, located on 27th St. and 7th Ave. During the three-hour meeting, each writing center delivered an original, interactive presentation that allowed for group discussion.

"There were a number of objectives for this meeting," stated Lauren Fitzgerald, co-director of the Wilf Campus Writing Center. "One was educational; we hoped that by bringing tutors together to see the differences and similarities between our centers, to share best practices, and to reflect on the work they do, they would learn more about themselves as tutors and about writing centers more broadly."

"Another goal," continued Fitzgerald, "was celebratory; we hoped that by talking with people in similar positions who are also excited about their jobs as tutors, everyone would come away more convinced than ever that their writing center work makes invaluable contributions to individual writers, their institutions, and to their tutor communities."

Members of all three writing centers sat interspersed throughout a room of circular tables. The first presentation was given by members of the Wilf Campus Writing Center. They handed out paper and crayons to all of the tables and instructed every person to draw their own conception of their respective writing center. Some members took the task literally and drew an inside view of their writing center. Others took a more abstract approach, and drew a picture that represented the most important aspect of their writing center. Cassandra Holden, a junior

at FIT and a Fine Arts major, drew a picture of a heart, because for her, the Writing Center represents a place of warmth, where people are constantly helping others. The task allowed for tutors to share their ideas about what a Writing Center means for them. It also allowed for tutors to realize practical differences between the different writing centers. For example, while the Stern and Wilf Writing Centers accept both online and, in the case of open time slots, drop-in appointments, the FIT Writing Studio only functions via a drop-in appointment policy. Members of the FIT Writing Studio gave the second presentation of the meeting. All tutors moved into the actual Writing Studio for this presentation. Everyone was split up into groups of three and instructed to complete a photograph puzzle. Missing puzzle pieces were interspersed throughout the different groups. The tutors were told to relay a memorable tutorial experience to the group that contained their missing pieces. This task placed heavy emphasis on verbal interaction. Tutors were able to relate to one another by hearing stories that were similar to their own experiences, creating bridges between members of different centers. The Stern College Writing Center gave the final presentation of the day. Four Stern tutors performed a skit, which depicted a woman who encountered three dreadful speed dates. The three "men" that she dated each lacked a distinct listening skill. After the skit, there was a discussion about what went wrong in each date. The tutors were again split up into groups and asked to revise one of the dates and enact the revision of it. The presentation focused on ways a tutor can be a good listener, and how poor listening skills can be eliminated. As in the other presentations, there was much discussion between the different campuses about the important qualities every tutor must possess.

Address: 58 Warren Street
Phone Number: 212-587-1011
Hours: Every Day: 11:00 am - 7:00 pm

workshop. "I personally gained so much from meeting tutors on other campuses," remarked Andrea Efythmiou, assistant director of the Stern College Writing Center. "Specifically, I enjoyed hearing how FIT and Wilf conceptualize space in their centers, making them fun and cozy spaces."

Brian Fallon, director of the FIT Writing Studio, was equally satisfied with the event. "The practice this past Sunday helped me to become more aware of issues I have begun to take for granted and learn new ways to make improvements in the way we do things here at FIT," he said. Allison Smith, assistant director of The Wilf Campus Writing Center, was also extremely impressed. "The meeting was such a wonderful learning experience," said Smith. "It gave tutors from FIT, Stern, and the Wilf Campus opportunities to discuss Writing Center work in general but also to hear about the diverse and particular ways that each center operates. Tutors from all three centers left with exciting ideas about what they might bring back to their own campuses."

Student tutors were excited about their experiences at the meeting as well. Mordechai Siev, a senior at Yeshiva College was happy to meet tutors from different writing centers. "My horizons were expanded by this meeting," said Siev, "as I learned about tutoring practices that differ from the standard *modus operandi* that we have set for ourselves in the Wilf Campus Writing Center, and I am considering ways to incorporate the FIT tactics into my tutoring."

Melissa Lowinger, a senior at Stern College, hopes to establish times for future meetings. "I hope that the Writing Centers of Stern College, Yeshiva College, and FIT will again collaborate in a similar forum to enable the tutors to further improve the services we provide to the students at our schools," remarked Lowinger.

Victoria Columb, a fabric styling major at FIT, was also excited. "I thoroughly enjoyed the con-

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YU and FIT tutors discuss their tutoring experiences working at three respective writing centers during a joint meeting.

Andrea Efythmiou

FEATURES

When Mom and Dad Can't Shoulder Tuition: YU Students Who Work Through School

Yaelle Frohlich

About 70 percent of Yeshiva University (YU) students receive some sort of financial aid, declares the YU website. With YU's tuition standing at \$15,797 per semester compared to the \$2,300 of New York's city colleges for in-state residents, most YU students and/or their parents must have strong motivation to join the so-called YU family.

Most YU students have their education paid at least in large part by their families. "I guess the truth is, if I were paying the bills I would most probably not be here," said one student at Stern College for Women (SCW).

However, there is a demographic of YU students who have chosen to attend YU despite being required to shoulder a significant portion of their own tuition or living expenses. Many of these individuals must work while pursuing full-time undergraduate studies. The Observer conducted a survey interviewing these students (whose names have been substituted by letters to protect their confidentiality) about this challenging experience.

L (Sy Syms School of Business (SSSB) '12) and L's parents split the cost of college fifty-fifty. L works about 10 hours per week as an office secretary for the non-profit organization Keren, and also tutors on Sundays for extra cash. "It is definitely more time consuming," says L about working, "... At times I can't attend something socially because I have other commitments, or other times I find myself too tired to socialize. My parents will not let me go 'penniless' and I have never found myself desperate at times, but trying to be more financially independent is tricky when I am a full-time student working a part-time job."

L received a large scholarship from YU and has taken out loans to help defer tuition costs. "After my scholarship," notes L, "YU was significantly cheaper than some other schools I had applied to."

P (SCW '10) is not financially independent from her parents. However, she says she feels obligated to work "to help defray smaller costs with one or two part time/temporary jobs," such as teaching at Hebrew Sunday school and substitute-teaching in elementary schools on Fridays and during college vacations. "During this recession, it was a question whether or not I would continue at Stern," recounts P, who is pursuing a career in Jewish education and maintains that she could not envision herself pursuing her B.A. anywhere else. "Thank G-d, my parents thought it worthy to pursue it and thanks to financial aid and student loans, G-d willing it is possible."

YU is the biggest supplier of financial aid for YU students, says

University Director of Student Finance Robert Friedman. While YU offers merit scholarships, the biggest chunk of aid is in the form of need-based grants that do not need to be repaid. Financial information taken into account when awarding aid includes: FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) forms, family income, family assets (such as trust and mutual funds), stocks and bonds, number of family members and number of family members in college at the same time. The university does not look at the value of the parents' retirement fund or home, but does look at the value of any second homes.

Friedman said that students who claim total financial independence on their aid applications are required to prove their independence. "It doesn't happen very often [that a student is totally financially independent], I'll be honest," said Friedman "...[but occasionally] there are situations that I wouldn't wish on anybody: orphans, wards of the court, mom and dad are incarcerated, deceased...Those people do get funded very well by YU and outside sources."

Friedman says that one potentially positive aspect of student loans—such as the FAFSA loans that automatically range from \$5,500 through \$7,500 per year from freshman to senior year—is that they can establish a student's credit rating. "Having no credit in this capitalist society can hurt you," elaborates Friedman. "But if you've had a loan and paid it on time, then you can borrow...Also, we find in statistical surveys that students that do borrow for their own education...they're perhaps taking their studies more seriously."

"[YU has] been totally involved in my ability to be here through extensive contact regarding Student Aid," says P. "They have been tremendously generous in providing scholarships and loans, and I am totally indebted to them for enabling my education here at SCW. Tuition prices are relative, so while they have reduced it substantially it is still a large sum, but thankfully much less than the "sticker price."

This is M's (SCW '12) first semester working while in school, and she has found it difficult to maintain her grades. "I started working this year," says M, now an administrative/research assistant for a psychologist in New Rochelle, "and intend to use the money I generate to cover as much of my basic expenses, i.e. travel and food, as I can."

She reports that YU has been generous with aid, but inflexible in light of her family's recent financial circumstances. "YU has kindly

subsidized half of my tuition from my first semester here until now," she informs, "but did not give me any additional financial help when my father's income dropped by 40% due to the economy last year."

J (SSSB '11), responsible for 80 percent of college costs, has a similar story. "[YU] helped tremendously, but when my family's situation got worse because of the economy, refused to adjust my financial aid package," J says. J works 10 to 12 hours per week and has never been in the situation of lacking money for basic expenses, but, like other students surveyed, reports that having a job during school "decreases social life time."

S, a 2010 graduate who attended a public high school, pays for all expenses independently, aside from tuition. S works 25 to 30 hours per week as part of the Federal Work-Study Program. "It is a huge part of my college life," says S about the job, "but I wish I had more time for my studies."

"I am great at saving," says S, a trait she credits with preventing the situation of ever being without money for basic necessities, "but I am always working to make money."

YU has helped S. "They [YU] have aided me so much, I am so thankful for scholarship and the work I have been able to attain through YU," says S.

The Federal Work-Study (FWS) Program, which is government funded, has no cap on the number of participants and can be entered by eligible students at any point during their college career providing that their FAFSA form is on file. The program encompasses both on- and off-campus work. FAFSA applicants are asked on their application to check off whether they would like a FWS job. If they are eligible, YU may offer them a Work-Study job even if they haven't checked off that they would like one.

During the 2008-2009 academic year, 370 YU students (110 women and 260 men) were working just on campus. However, "nearly everybody except for 3 [students] made less than \$2500 for the year," acknowledges Friedman, cautioning that the work-study program is not a viable option to cover any major tuition or living costs, or to make up for a family's financial support. "...Undergrad students are not able to supplement payments. If somebody loses a job and can't make payments, a student can't just get a job and make up for that, because they're earning \$75 to \$100 bucks a week... you only have five to seven or eight hours to work."

At YU, pay for work-study job ranges from \$8 (for clerks, for ex-

ample) to \$16 (for web design and database positions).

"We haven't seen spike in students getting jobs," says Friedman, "but we have seen a spike in financial aid applications." Friedman says that most students in need of financial aid do not turn to Work-Study. "Although I kind of wish they would," he admits, noting that YU competes against the less expensive community colleges, "because [otherwise] we may lose families completely to a lower cost alternative."

B (SCW '11) is an out-of-towner who decided to attend YU for its Jewish environment and events, as well as its challenging dual curriculum. "My parents can hardly afford to pay for a small amount of college tuition," she says. "The rest is student loans under my name."

B works as a children's tutor. "I go over homework and help reinforce what they have learned in their school," she says. "I work about four hours a week to cover the amount of money I need for travel, groceries and other basic expenses. I honestly enjoy my job, but sometimes there are activities organized by school or friends I'd like to participate in that I cannot because I need to work."

When B has not made enough money for the week or month, she takes out more on her loans. "I try to spend under \$200 a month, which may seem like a lot," she explains, "but travel for work and Shabbat is already more than half of that."

"Yeshiva University has been generous with financial aid," she says, "yet the amount that I am expected to pay is still immense."

H, another SCW student, has a scholarship that covers her tuition. While her parents buy her books, she is responsible for her own room and board. H works off-campus ten hours per week as an assistant for a retired professor. "I don't spend money on clothes" to cut expenses, says H, who pays YU \$400 per month.

G (SSSB '11), depending on the semester, is required to pay 40 to 50 percent of the tuition. G says his work is not measured in hours. "[I] organize a certain aspect of NY/NJ advertising for one of the big non-profit organizations," says G. "I also wait when I have a free moment to spare, and sometimes in Shabbat when I really need to (for events like *Sheva Brachot*, weddings, *kiddushes*..."

Like other respondents, G says that social activity takes the biggest hit from his schedule. "I never have a single moment to spare," G explains. "Zero social life whatsoever."

G's social isolation may be exacerbated by his living arrangements; he does not live in univer-

sity housing. "Dorming is far too expensive," he says. "I wish I could dorm. [However,] they [YU] have been relatively generous in regards to tuition."

"I am satisfied with the decision [to come to YU]," G adds, "and am glad I am here."

E (YC '13) student who is paying 40 percent of his way and whose parents pay 60 percent, is not required to work during school. Nevertheless, he waits and does NCSY advising. This work, he says, "provides a more social atmosphere," which helps his social life. He says YU has helped a lot with his financial situation.

N (SCW '10) is a graphic design major who takes out 75 percent of her tuition on loans. "I wanted to attend Yeshiva for the Jewish environment," she says about her decision to come to Stern College. "I also knew that they are very good about giving out scholarships."

In addition to her seven courses, N works ten or more hours a week as a freelance art director. "I'm responsible for every aspect of the graphic design and production of the advertising campaign," she says, describing her position, "including designing the look of the ads and posters, logos, and getting it all out to newspapers and magazines on a weekly basis."

Her job and full-time studies can be challenging to manage. "Sometimes it gets really hard to balance my work for work and my work for school," she says, "especially since my client is practically impossible to work with and extremely unprofessional."

"Yeshiva has been extremely generous with academic and need-based scholarships," says N. However N's job and financial aid package is no guarantee of freedom from financial pressure. "I'm actually worried about affording the tuition next semester," she reveals.

However, N does not regret pursuing her degree at YU. "Even though it's more expensive, I am very happy with my decision to attend Yeshiva because I absolutely love the classes, teachers and the friends I have made here," she says.

D (SSSB '10) is completely independent financially from her parents, on a full scholarship from YU and living in university housing. She works 20 hours per week as a marketing analyst, working from home much of the time. "Basically I just write reports," she says about her job. "It's very boring."

The imperative to work during the school year affected D's choice of field of study. "I chose the easiest joke major so I could work part time and have a social life and still come out with a B.A.," she states.

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FEATURES

"Just Ask Your Local Orthodox Maharat"

Jen Lazaros

On October 2, Maharat Sara Hurwitz gave an interactive lecture in Stern College earlier this month about the *halakhic* sources for her new position and its permissibility within the Orthodox community. Hurwitz is a full clergy member of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale (HIR), and the first woman to be a self-defined female Orthodox rabbi. The lecture was part of the TEIQU (Torah Exploration of Ideas, Questions and Understanding) Leqah Conversations series, which is dedicated to educated discussion of Jewish issues.

Hurwitz studied under HIR's Rabbi Avi Weiss and passed the rabbinical exams used for American Orthodox rabbinical candidates. Her current duties include officiating at weddings and funerals and answering *halakhic* (Jewish legal) questions. Hurwitz argues that her role as an HIR "co-rabbi" is one that is *halakhically* sound and supported by traditional Talmudic texts and classical commentaries. While Hurwitz is confident that in her community a maharat is now comparable to a rabbi, many in the Orthodox community contest her position.

Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) does not ordain female rabbis.

The title "Maharat" is an acronym for *Manhigah Hilkhaitit Ruhanit Toranit*, which roughly translates to mean a spiritual and legal guide. Hurwitz is heavily involved in a new school for women studying to become maharats with four students enrolled, including recent Stern graduate Gilah Kleitnik. Hurwitz said, "I think it's too soon to tell if maharat will take off and if other women who graduate will be called maharat, or if maharat is just a step to an alternate title." She considers the title to be a compromise, as it gives her an official title in which she feels more authoritative and trusted by her congregants, but simultaneously is not quite "Rabbi", which might upset many of her more right-wing congregants.

Hurwitz argued that Jewish women throughout the ages, such as Talmudic personalities Yalta and Bruriah, have acted as scholars. By using traditional sources such as the Birkey Yosef's commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*, Hurwitz noted that while women cannot serve as a witness or a judge, she maintains that a wise woman is fit to

"render a ruling." However, she acknowledged that a woman could not serve in certain religious roles, such as a prayer leader. Hurwitz does not claim to be able to issue *pesaks* (rulings) for specific, complex cases arising from in-depth readings of Talmudic sources, but points out that most male community rabbis do not issue formal *pesak* either, and revert to a more experienced *halakhic* authority.

Some students in the audience voiced the objection that Hurwitz's position breaks with the traditional role of women. Hurwitz countered this, saying, "We're used to seeing men and women functioning side by side and working side by side, so at least in our community I

don't think this argument of modesty holds so much water now." Although she acknowledges that in more right-wing circles the intermingling of sexes is still considered to be inappropriate, she considers her public position to be perfectly acceptable within the realm of Modern Orthodoxy.

Regarding the issue of *serara*,

the spiritual transmission of rabbinic leadership from male leader to male leader, Hurwitz pointed out that this tradition is not carried out today as it was in the times of the judges, prophets and rabbis that lived centuries ago. As such, women becoming part of the line is not a violation of the *semikha* model since it has already changed so drastically from the original.

Hurwitz made it clear that she did not assume her position to try to provoke controversy. "I love my job," she said "... Especially for women and for a young mother, it's not an easy job, but I do it because I love it and right now I cannot imagine doing anything else." To avoid creating conflict within her community, Hurwitz offers her congregants the option to choose between her and her male co-rabbi when it comes to officiating ceremonies or answering questions.

Hurwitz is hopeful that there will be many more women holding rabbinic positions. "I want girls in high school and women in college to understand that this is a feasible career and something reasonable for women to do," she said. "... I think there are people see women in positions of Jewish leadership, the more used to it people will get."

Reaping the Fruits of His Labor

Alisa Ungar-Sargon

The S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program arranged for a trip to The Morgan Library and Museum this month as part of this semester's cultural events series. Located at 36th Street and Madison Avenue, the library has been a main staple of the neighborhood since it was Pierpont Morgan's private residence and library at the turn of the 20th century.

The hour-long tour was a fact-filled summary of Morgan's life accompanying a breathtaking display of a true art collector's passion. In addition to the thousands of books and manuscripts being conserved, the building itself is a work of art, contrary to its discrediting exterior. Technique and materials were transported liberally from Europe and Africa to adorn the entrance hall, international library (three stories high, complete with secret staircases behind the bookshelves), and personal studies. The artwork is detailed to the utmost degree, consisting of homage to late greats and a cheeky sort of cheating blended in with it. Zodiac ceiling paintings, choir books visible from across the room, and an enormous tapestry mark the main library room.

The Morgan creates an interesting contrast between the dark rooms of preservation and its main atrium, which leads off into other aspects of the museum. The rather modern, light-filled entrance is made essentially of glass and wood floors, making the transition a bit jarring from the rooms of yore. As the tour guide put it, the enclosure forms a piazza of three buildings formerly divided: the Annex, the library, and Morgan's residential brownstone. The resulting structure is what actually transforms the buildings from a man's private opulence into an intimate public forum for culture, art, and local history.

The exhibits at the Morgan are mainly comprised from the museum's own collection, with additional material brought in to enhance them. The current exhibitions on display focus on Jane Austen (until March 2010), William Blake (until January 2010), and the Rococo movement (until January 2010). There is also an arrangement of original mementos, sheets, and playbills of Giacomo Puccini's operas in honor of his 150th birthday.

Admission to the museum is free on Friday nights from 7-9 pm. As several of the students pointed out, it could make for a pleasant trip after *oneg* (Shabbat evening Kumbaya).

Working Students

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R's parents paid the YU bills initially, but R (SSSB '08) must eventually pay them back. Now that he has graduated, R works over 40 hours per week. While he was a full-time student, he took advantage of the work-study program, working 15 hours per week as a Shabbat waiter and in the *beit midrash* (study hall) to earn money for food and other expenses. "I took light course loads," he says about his college years. He is able to keep his expenses to \$800 per month, including rent and food, outside of YU housing.

YU did provide financial aid to R, but R feels that the institution failed to take into account his family's unique circumstances. "They helped in some ways," he explains, "but did not understand that my dad was only working part time and mom was not working at all."

There was a time when R considered transferring out of YU. "I wasn't happy, but I went to Israel and I had too many credits to go elsewhere," he explains. "And my parents made me stay saying that they'd help with the rest."

C (YC '10), who also lives off-campus, has also experienced frustration with his financial aid package. "My parents do not support me at all," he says. "I pay it all out of my own pocket; any loans I take are my responsibility to pay."

C, who finds himself without enough money for basic expenses like tuition or rent, food and electricity nearly every semester, believes that the criteria for deter-

mining aid need revision. "While Yeshiva University has offered me aid every semester," C explains, "it has not taken the potential misrepresentation of actual finances as calculated from FAFSA results. Just because a student's parents earn a certain amount of money during the school year, by no means does that mean they can afford to give an electronically generated amount corresponding to their salaries. This may not be a problem limited to Yeshiva University, but it is something requiring investigation."

C works 15 hours per week as an intern for a Jewish organization and *leins* (performs the weekly reading of the Torah portion) every Shabbat to meet his monthly expenses. His financial responsibilities greatly impact several aspects of his life. "It [working and financial burdens] isolates me from the majority of my friends," he says, "as they do not understand and cannot relate to the stress I am constantly under. It also interferes with my ability to concentrate in class, as I am frequently tired from work and/or preoccupied with thoughts of food, rent, tuition, credit card bills and bounced checks."

Despite his struggles, C does not regret his choice of university. "I wanted to be part of a program which values Jewish studies and in which I could be openly Jewish without risk of malignance," he states. "At the end of the day, I do not regret going to Yeshiva University."



Alisa Ungar-Sargon
Maharat Sara Hurwitz spoke at Stern.

The Morgan Library & Museum

225 Madison Ave
(at 36th Street)

Tues-Thurs: 10:30am - 5:30pm

Fri: 10:30am - 6:00pm

Sunday: 11:00am - 6:00pm

\$8 for students

FEATURES

QUEST Leadership Fellowship Partners With the JNF in Order to Help Gaza Evacuees

Sarit Bendavid

In August 2005, the 8,000 residents of Gush Katif were evacuated from their homes and given temporary residences by the Israeli government. Instead of waiting for further governmental support, ten families of evacuees decided soon after the disengagement to rebuild their lives in Chalutza, a desert region close to the Egyptian border that had been barely farmed or settled since the beginning of time. They set up a community of tents, which eventually evolved into caravans, and will hopefully be replaced soon with permanent homes. The people of Chalutza established for themselves religious schools for their children, a *mechina*, or pre-army seminary for men, and a successful system of agriculture. There are now more than 160 families living in Chalutza, most of them previous residents of the Gush Katif communities of Atzmona and Netzarim, and two new settlements are currently being established in the region as well. While fifty families are on the waiting list to move into Chalutza, there are currently no available places for them to reside.

With the help of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), which has decided to help build the region, fellows of QUEST (formerly the acronym for Quality and Education Skills Training), a student leadership program run by Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future,

are currently raising \$20,000 in order to finance the construction of permanent homes, schools and community centers for the people of Chalutza. The development of the region is not only important in providing a place for Gush Katif evacuees to settle, but it is also critical strategically, acting as a buffer between Israel and Egypt that will hopefully deter trafficking of weapons through Egypt's porous border and into Israel.

The students chose to help the Gaza evacuees in Chalutza because this is the cause that they felt most passionate about. "Everyone remembers the tough time when Gush Katif residents were ripped from normalcy," explains QUEST fellow Josh Zimmerman (YC '11). "No matter what side of the argument one was on, the refugees were at the forefront of everyone's minds. Unfortunately, four plus years have flown by, yet these former Gaza citizens have been living in temporary homes in unstable states of mind. The Jewish National Fund (JNF) proposed this project and we accepted at once."

QUEST organized a College Comedy Night on Thursday, October 29th at the Schottenstein Cultural Center in order to raise money for their cause. The night was a great success with a packed house of over 350 students from NYU, Barnard, Columbia, Queens, Baruch, Touro, YU and Stern. The

performers were: Eitan Levine, Dan Hirshorn, Alex Edelman, Manashe Khaimov, Ari Temen and a grand finale by Dan Ahdoot, a professional comedian who was a contestant on NBC's reality TV show *Last Comic Standing*. Over \$4,000 was raised from ticket sales, and all proceeds will be donated to the residents of Chalutza.

The QUEST participants will also attend a mission to Israel in January sponsored by the JNF, during which they will visit the beneficiaries of their fundraiser and have the opportunity to help physically build the infrastructure there. In addition, the fellows will meet with various leaders who will continue to guide them in the development of their leadership skills. The trip to Israel is intended to be not just a culmination of the team's hard work, but a continuation of their learning experience as well.

According to program director Marc Spear, this is the first project that YU and the JNF have worked on as a team. While the JNF organizes many Alternative Spring Break Programs, in which the JNF partners with college students in order to help various causes, the directors of QUEST adjusted their specific program, utilizing it as an opportunity to implement certain leadership skills. Hence, while college students on the Alternative Spring Break Programs usually agree to individually raise a

specified amount of money, the QUEST program was reshaped into a team project so that the fellows work together to raise the money as opposed to on individual bases. QUEST directors also enlarged the focus of the program, creating it as a learning opportunity about fundraising and event planning in general.

Although QUEST had existed previously, the new QUEST, led by Marc Spear and Aliza Abrams, began last spring and is in its first year of existence. The program was revamped in order to focus on skills that are the most imperative for leaders in our society as well as how to implement them for the greater good. The goal of the program, according to its website, is "to inspire and train undergraduate students to better themselves as leaders and take an active role in the Jewish communal landscape." The first semester of QUEST, called QUEST I, is spent on practicing skills, such as public speaking, time management, and

team building. The second group of participants began leadership training in QUEST I this fall. The second semester of the program, called QUEST II, is still in its pioneer stage with its first group of participants, and is devoted to actualizing the leadership skills developed in the first semester, focusing on the charity project with the JNF. The program is open to students from all institutions, though the current group of participants, with one Queens College exception, is wholly comprised of YU students.

If you would like to donate and help the people of Chalutza rebuild their lives, please visit <http://support.jnf.org/goto/Chalutza>. Alternatively, donations can be directly given to any QUEST fellow, or made out to the Jewish National Fund and sent to: Center for the Jewish Future, Yeshiva University, 500 W. 185th Street, New York, NY, 10033, Attn. Aliza Abrams.

Meeting "Betty"

Michal Schick

On Wednesday, November 18th, several Stern College for Women students got an opportunity to explore the glamour of a fashion magazine, the cozy confines of a simple home in Queens, and the opulence of a mogul's lavish living space—all within mere feet of each other. The class got a tour of the set of ABC's popular comedy-drama "Ugly Betty," currently filming at Silvercup Studios East in Long Island City, Queens. The trip, arranged by Professor Eric Mintz for his "Writing for Television" class, was greeted with great anticipation by the participating students, and did not fail to live up to expectations.

Ali D'Arienzo, assistant to the line producer, graciously served as guide for the students' tour of Silvercup Studios. Ali led the group first through the upper level of the studio, which holds hair, makeup, and costume areas for "Ugly Betty", as well as dressing rooms for most of the cast. The group then had the opportunity to explore the three stages on which the show is filmed.

As many of the logistics of filming were explained, the students walked through the offices of Mode Magazine, one of the main sets of "Ugly Betty," where the stage is dressed in sleek Ikean perfection interrupted only by Betty's trademark pink stuffed bunny. After passing through the sumptuous apartment of Mode editor Wilhelmina Slater, the students had the opportunity to meet Lisa Schomas, who serves as the associate

producer and production supervisor for "Ugly Betty." Schomas is also something of a pioneer in her field, being responsible for coordinating the real-life tie-ins to the show, as well as supplementary media. Together, Lisa and Ali discussed their own paths within the television industry, relating the process of advancement and offering advice to the hopeful screenwriters. The two also described the day-to-day process of script development and episode production, and engaged in an enthusiastic discussion about "Ugly Betty" itself with several students.

To cap off the evening, the students were shown into the final soundstage. From mere feet away they watched as the cameras, sound equipment and lighting were meticulously arranged—an arduous process of about half an hour—in preparation for a short scene. From this vantage point, as student Lauren Burstein (Stern '11) commented, the impressive number of people involved in the show's production becomes particularly clear. The group was then arranged behind the director's chair and viewed the monitors while Betty (America Ferrera) and Matt (Daniel Eric Gold) took their places and performed their scene multiple times, until enough usable footage had been collected.

Their tour complete, the students left Silvercup Studios energized, and with a new appreciation of the effort and determination so utterly necessary to successfully produce television.



The set of ABC's "Ugly Betty"

Michal Schick

OPINIONS

Where Bodies are Bought

Ariella Lipetz

Human bodies displayed in disturbing poses. Intestines and organs decorating the countless walls. Bones suspended every few feet. Sounds like a scene from a Stephen King novel, but in reality this grotesque display is not found in a book. It is found a mere 30 minutes from Stern College for Women. The destination? South Street Seaport.

"Bodies: the Exhibition" is the latest craze to sweep the nation. Operated by Premier Exhibitions, Inc., the exhibit features real body specimens that have been dissected and preserved via a plastination process that prevents decomposition. Once plasticized, the bodies are strategically placed throughout the exhibit according to bodily systems, starting with the skeletal system and ending with the reproductive system. The exhibit contains a total of twenty complete bodies. Visitors learn about the structures and functions of the human body in depth. Although fascinating and captivating, the exhibit begs the question of where the bodies originate.

In 2008, New York State passed legislation regulating body exhibits. Sponsored by Senator Jim Alesi, the legislation requires any company that exhibits human bodies in a New York museum to produce a permit describing their origin. "None of the material [from "Bodies: the Exhibition"] came from criminal institutions or homes from the mentally insane," according to representatives at the Dalian Medical University Plastination Laboratories. Therefore, visitors were lead to believe that their admission money was going to an ethical company. Little did they know that their money was going to an exhibit rooted in the black market.

A report called the "Secret Trade in Chinese Bodies" was conducted by ABC's "20/20" soon after the release of Dalian Medical University Plastination Laboratories' statement. The report claimed that the bodies displayed at "Bodies: the Exhibition" were obtained from the black market for the nominal fee of \$300 a body. Further research led investigators to believe that the bodies were those of executed Chinese prisoners. No documents of consent for donating their bodies to science were recorded. Andrew Cuomo, New York Attorney General, completed the investigation of Premier Exhibitions, Inc. "Premier Exhibitions has profited from displaying the remains of individuals who may have been

tortured and executed in China," found Cuomo. "Despite repeated denials, we now know that Premier itself cannot demonstrate the circumstances that led to the death of the individuals."

Beyond the moral challenges posed by illegal attainment of the bodies, the exhibit also raises serious halakhic questions concerning the display of the human body in such a way. This debate dates back to the early twentieth century when the query regarding the use of cadavers for science research was posed. Rav Kook took a strong stance, asserting that, since there is an obligation to bury the dead, it is forbidden to benefit from the dead (*Shut Da'at Cohein* #199). However, Rav Kook did note that gentile cadavers can be used, since the prohibition of *nivul*, the unnecessary mutilation of a dead body, only applies to Jewish bodies. On the other hand, Rabbi Ben-zion Uziel, the Sefardi Chief Rabbi alongside Rav Kook at the time, claimed that Jewish and Gentile cadavers are on the same level and that if the bodies are treated respectfully, then they may be used. "Treated respectfully," according to Rabbi She'ar-Yashuv Cohen, current Chief Rabbi of Haifa, is not something that the bodies exhibit exemplifies. On the contrary, he maintains that the exhibit displays no dignity for the dead, which negates the fundamental principle in Judaism that all people are created in the image of G-d. This notion was the catalyst for a huge boycott of the exhibit when it premiered in Israel, where it remained open only for a short while thereafter.

Premier Exhibition firmly believes that their exhibition provides visitors with "definite proof that the body is a walking, living work of art." Most visitors would likely agree with this statement. However, what is the likelihood that the Chinese prisoners whose bodies are so gruesomely displayed would also agree? Not very high. "Bodies: the Exhibition" has accumulated much profit and popularity, but at the expense of lawsuits, ethical debates, and insult to various religions. Ethical and religious ramifications should be a concern to potential visitors, and a well thought-out judgment call should be made before supporting it. For those concerned with legally and *halakhically* protecting the sanctity of the human body, morally opposing "Bodies: the Exhibition" is a no brainer. Literally.

YU's Israel Advocacy Failure
(and How to Fix it)

Chana Scholl

On Tuesday, November 10th, Yeshiva University was privileged to have Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Ms. Gabriella Shalev, address the student body about the Goldstone Report. Certainly, at face value, this was a significant occasion, but to my mind it completely failed to fulfill its potential.

Anyone who was interested enough to attend the event most probably had a working knowledge of the circumstances surrounding, and the content of, the Goldstone Report, thus Shalev's fairly cursory presentation of these facts was rather disappointing. We needed, and rather expected, to hear more from her than that. In his closing remarks, Alex Fischman, the head of Student American Israel Political Education Club (SAIPEC) and coordinator of the event, came much closer to making the presentation resonant, but stopped just short of it.

The shortcomings of this event, latent with untapped potential, brought to mind the primary lesson I learned from participating in the David Project Campus Fellows Israel Advocacy and Leadership Seminar in Boston this past August, namely, that Yeshiva University hasn't been doing enough.

This is best illustrated by Alex's closing lines, in which he stated very eloquently that, as pro-Israel students, we cannot let ourselves fail to impact our fellow college students' perceptions of Israel. He argued very logically that without our intervention, our future leaders' views of Israel will be shaped by a much more anti-Israel educational climate than those currently in positions of power, but he neglected to spell out precisely what this duty entails.

Thankfully, the David Project spelled out very clearly what this duty entails, and it becomes even more crucial for YU students to understand and act on this given the recent U.N. affirmation of the Goldstone Report. In summary, we need not only to engender a feeling of responsibility on the part of students on this campus toward changing Israel's image, but also to stimulate action to this end.

Ultimately, the point of Shalev speaking was to emphasize to our campus how bad things are for Israel right now, and she should have capitalized on that not only by contrasting our cheering reception of her to the negative recep-

tion she receives regularly at the U.N., but by enjoining us to make greater efforts to change the status quo. We are fortunate in YU to have an overwhelmingly pro-Israel feeling on campus. However, this is both a blessing and a curse, since it shelters us from having to be aware of, or contend with, the real-world Israel sentiment. Thus, it is ironic that in YU, where we love Israel the most, we may have the least pro-Israel activity of any campus. Pro-Israel activity at YU is mostly comprised of the two lobbying trips a year, which is sponsored by the Yeshiva University Political Action Committee (YU-PAC), and it is not nearly enough.

It is essential that YU students understand that the negative perception of Israel on other campuses ultimately affects us as well, whether by simply producing a negative perception of Jews or the pro-Israel community at large, or in specific points of foreign policy implemented by the State Department, such as its policies regarding Iran or the Jewish settlements of Judea and Samaria. As such, we need to become cognizant of this negative perception by taking part in student activism on campus. Via participation in YUPAC, students may encounter apathy—if not exactly anti-Israel sentiment—while lobbying a pro-Israel agenda on Capitol Hill. Additionally, SAIPEC should recruit YU students to attend anti-Israel events outside of YU (such as Israel Apartheid Week) so that YU students can bear witness to the anti-Israel rhetoric being fed to students outside of YU.

Hopefully, such experiences could cultivate a greater sense of political responsibility towards influencing US-Israel policy. YUPAC should capitalize on this by sending out action alerts to students on campus to call, email, and write to representatives and the administration and sign petitions in order to influence legislation towards Israel, and perhaps even organize a third or fourth lobbying trip to Washington, D.C. each year. We need to understand that even if these efforts end up having no visible effect at all, at the very least, the numbers of phone calls or signatures creates data points which can be referenced in later action. Occasionally, there are successes. I personally can report one with my U.S. Representative Diane Watson, who, this past week voted in favor of House Resolution 867 which opposes endorsement or further consideration of the findings of the Goldstone Report and affirms Israel's right to self defense. This is a turnabout from last year, when Ms. Watson declined to vote in favor of House Resolution 34, which

emphasized Israel's right to defend itself during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza.

On the other hand, SAIPEC could capitalize on this newfound understanding of the hostility towards Israel on every other campus by recruiting students to collaborate with the pro-Israel clubs on these campuses via helping them organize events on their campuses and including them in the coordination of pro-Israel events on our campus. Additionally, they should create some kind of intercampus pro-Israel activity network and send out action alerts to all pro-Israel campus communities, including YU, so that students are aware of pro-Israel events on other campuses and are in attendance at other pro-Israel campus events to show their support and build a pro-Israel activism community.

Last but not least, apart from activism, it is incumbent upon us to educate ourselves about Israel, so that when we encounter hostility towards Israel we have the knowledge with which to combat it. When I participated in the David Project Seminar, there were four other YU students, and out of all of the schools that were represented, we were the most ignorant bunch. And this isn't an isolated incident, for I have found that most students on campus are pretty illiterate about the Arab-Israeli conflict in general. It is inexcusable that students of Yeshiva University, the majority of which have attended Zionist schools all of their lives, and consonant with the vision of the school, are supposed to be equipped to engage with, learn from, and influence outside society, are so sadly inferior in their knowledge of Israel's history.

As such, I propose that the administration make it mandatory for YU undergraduate students to take a political science class on the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict until today, since this knowledge should be part of the skill set of any Yeshiva University alumnus. Along with becoming more knowledgeable, we need to start approaching the Arab-Israeli conflict in a less black-and-white manner, which is part of the reason why the Psychology Club and TAC are collaborating on January 21st to present a screening of *Unsettled*, a movie about the forced withdrawal from Gaza, followed by a discussion led by a David Project representative.

Just because Shalev failed to say it, doesn't mean we're off the hook. It is our responsibility as Jews to step out of our comfort zones and change the current climate regarding Israel.

Please send comments and letters to the editor to

scwobserver@gmail.com

OPINIONS

An Open Mind, A Receptive Heart

Faigy Burekhovich

I wish to declare that I am an ardent supporter of autism awareness and activism. My younger brother, who has autism and who is the coolest person I know, led me to this path in life, and, quite frankly, shaped me into who I am today. His life is so intertwined with mine that my outspokenness and loyal dedication to his cause should come as no surprise. I firmly believe that those who remain silent about the experience of having a family member with autism should abandon this good-for-naught attitude and seek my preferred course of action: openness.

Many important reasons for this stance exist, and I will present but a few. Firstly, you are bound to touch someone's heart when you share your story. I know of only two fellow students who also have siblings with autism, but the frightening statistic that one in approximately every 150 individuals today is diagnosed with autism dictates that more siblings like us exist at Stern College for Women. I wish to extend my hand, voice, and heart to a kindred soul who faces the same challenges I face, to someone who truly and deeply understands what my life is like. Undoubtedly, I have the extraordinary potential to reach out and effect a positive change in someone's life. This ability, however, in no way applies uniquely to me; once you open up and are comfortable talking about your situation, you also acquire this exceptionally amazing power to help others who likely need it. You don't know whom you can touch. Of course, many students at Stern who have worked with autistic individuals can relate to this idea and have many stories of their own. Indeed, adventures and ordeals likely abound.

Autism is a developmental disorder that is characterized by repetitive behaviors, such as rocking back and forth and constantly looking at one's hand, as well as by an impaired ability to communicate. Other representative aspects present in many, though not necessarily all, people on the autism spectrum include various obsessions, such as with cars and trains, sensitivity to noise, improper use of pronouns, and self-injury. Diagnoses range from mild to severe, and intelligence and speech capability differ from person to person. Some form of mental retardation also affects many people with autism. The cause of autism is generally unknown, though many people attribute it to toxins in the environment and to the MMR vaccine, since symptoms of autism generally appear soon after vaccination.

One who has a sibling with autism (or another disorder, for that matter) should never, ever view

this as a taint, blemish, or anything negative along those lines. My humble opinion is that special needs individuals are inspirational gifts from G-d, but even if you do not agree, you owe it to both yourself and your sibling to disencumber yourself from such an old-fashioned and offensive viewpoint. If you feel embarrassed because of an autistic sibling, you most likely tend to feel low self-esteem in terms of how other people perceive you, but how does your sibling with autism feel? Your sibling looks to you for support and needs your love and assistance probably more than anyone else. You will help your sibling and be respected a lot more for simply dealing with your situation in a candid manner rather than by subscribing to apathy, denial, or reclusion. You will also unquestionably be a much happier and more fulfilled person once you relieve yourself of the massive burden of reticence. Finally, if you don't advocate and speak up for your sibling, who will? The time to take action is now.

I acknowledge that I was not always the open, contented sister that I am today. Although my precious brother Hershy achieved the lofty status of being my favorite person in the world probably from the moment he was born, I was not comfortable talking about him for an extended period of time. The only friends of mine who knew about him were the ones who had met him. I cannot precisely pinpoint the cause of my behavior, though I imagine shame played a pivotal role in shaping my actions. The process of opening up occurred gradually. I distinctly recall one of the turning points: while attending an "Eat Dougie's, Learn Torah" event at Stern, I mentioned to my 11th grade history teacher that my younger brother has autism. I surely surprised my teacher, but I probably stunned myself even more. I don't know what triggered that impulsive act of opening up, but I am grateful that it happened.

Looking at my high school years in retrospect, I realize that occurrences of this sort became fairly common afterward. When someone would ask me about my family, I would tell them about both of my brothers; many times informing the other person about Hershy's condition. I became so at ease about talking about Hershy that I even invited perfect strangers into my life, focusing on my life with Hershy in many of my college application essays.

In my college years, I expanded my horizons and delved even more deeply into my brother's cause. With the help of a dear friend, I started the first-ever Autism Awareness Club at Stern. The club

raised money for critical autism awareness and research and organized a team from Yeshiva University to walk in the 2009 Walk Now for Autism, with Hershy naturally leading our way. I must state that of all my activities, I take the most pride in my work relating to autism activism because it is so close to my heart. I know I am much happier because of it.

So how about breaking out of your shell and joining me for some autism awareness and activism? We'll have plenty of lively stories to share along the way. If you're willing to listen, I'm ready to go on and on...

Happy
Thanksgiving!

On Getting Into the Holiday Spirit

Hannah Robinow

Thursday, November 12, should have been a day just like any other day in midtown Manhattan. I'm a normal twenty-one year old college student, so my day progressed just like ordinary: I got up, bought a newspaper and a lattè from Starbucks, sat through my classes, then went to the New York Public Library after class to do research for a paper. There shouldn't have been anything out of the ordinary throughout my routine, except that a recurring theme kept cropping up, one that troubled me greatly: the season.

When I walked into Starbucks, every corner of the store was laden with paraphernalia trilling the message, "Be Thankful! Celebrate the Season!" Every inch was covered, from the barista's snowflake earrings to the Perry Como music on the stereo, intoning that it's the most wonderful time of the year. After I accepted my coffee cup from the cashier, I slipped a turkey-emblazoned sleeve on my cup and exited Starbucks to escape the brazen show of American commercialism that had inserted itself into my daily routine.

That experience would have been the singular anomaly for the day, except that every inch of 34th Street seemed to be obsessed with "The Season." From the enormous snowflakes covering the storefronts of my favorite shoe stores to the grocery stores offering discounts on enough plastic cutlery for a good-sized football team, every part of New York City admonished me that this was the time for celebration and giving. In fact, there were so many reminders on the street to "Be Thankful," "Celebrate," and "Come Together," that I began to wonder whether we have reached the point where we spend such little time celebrating what matters most to us that we need an eight-foot inflatable turkey on top of a Borders bookstore

to remind us to take time out of our busy schedules to spend time around people who infuse our lives with blessing.

This thought swirled through my head all throughout my classes and gnawed at me as I headed to the library. As I walked down 5th Avenue, I saw a mother and her little girl holding hands, ambling down the street at a languid pace. The mother pointed out the different buildings arching over their heads, and the child craned her neck in the direction her mother pointed, smiling at each observation her mother made. Their delightful insouciance was in stark contrast to the teeming crowd of New Yorkers. These individuals were too busy hurrying to their next destination, too engrossed in tapping away at their Blackberries to notice the joy apparent on the child's face and the mother's elated smile at being able to treasure this moment with her child. Evidently, I had found at least one person in Manhattan who knew the value in carving out even a few minutes from her day to reconnect with someone who matters in her life.

As I walked up the stairs to the library, my phone rang—it was my mother calling to fully disclose to me her plans for that upcoming Shabbat. She shared with me her excitement about the cousins who were coming over, the cranberry kugel she was making, and her plans to go to a *shiur* (lecture) on Shabbat afternoon with a friend she hadn't seen all week. As I listened to her voice, I recalled the visible bond I saw between mother and child moments before. My mother's plans for Shabbat reminded me that this kind of elevated connection does exist, without any contrived Thanksgiving cheer imposed by plastic Pilgrim figurines in K-Mart. We Jews experience it every week: it's called the Shabbat. We apportion 25 hours in our week

to enjoy food worthy of a Thanksgiving feast in the company of our families. On this day, we celebrate the aspects of our lives that mean the most to us.

Indeed, Rabbi Yechezkel Sarna elaborated on this point in the third section of "Daliyos Yechezkel." He wrote, "to be one who enjoys the physical of this world, does not depend upon enjoyment [...] but rather on the essence of the soul and its enjoyment, therefore the only way that leads to this is the rising up of the soul [...] because through this, one merits an expanse of the heart, freedom of the soul" (p. 24-27).

What lesson did I draw? Sarna believed that the physical enjoyment on Shabbat should be used to elevate the soul and open it to goodness and blessing. Therefore, the Jewish way to give thanks to G-d for everything and everyone in our lives does not necessarily have to be relegated to one day on the calendar in which we stuff ourselves full of turkey and doze on the couch in front of the Giants game. Not only do we murmur thanks to G-d every day in our *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer (the staple Jewish prayer containing 18 benedictions), but every Shabbat we take a full day to feast and praise G-d for the blessings in our lives that elevate our spirits.

So, next time you pass a plastic turkey, give him a smile. When you see a giant silver banner in the grocery store reminding you to "Give Thanks," wink at it. If you see a man in a giant snowflake costume in the middle of Times Square holding a sign that exhorts you to "Celebrate The Season," tell him you've got it covered—you have the Shabbat. Your heart is truly blessed, because you have time every week to renew your connection to the blessings in your life and enjoy what elevates your spirit.

OPINIONS

Obama: An Effective President?

Hana Hostyk

How does one measure the effectiveness or greatness of an American president? As the one-year anniversary of Obama's electoral victory recently came and went, the president's administration has come under even more scrutiny than usual. From almost every media outlet and in multiple personal conversations, I have repeatedly heard the viewpoint, mostly stated quite acrimoniously, that there has been a serious lacuna of fulfilled promises by the Obama administration. Adding insult to injury for many Americans, these claims were recently sharply underscored by a certain Norwegian accolade.

As an avid Obama supporter, these tirades hit me hard. For the first time since Obama entered the public stage, I felt a tingle of doubt. Perhaps I had been wrong about President Obama being the solution to the problem that was America in 2007? Perhaps President Obama's campaign was just a smokescreen of vivacious speech-making and electric magnetism? Although I suffer from a high degree of naïveté in my non-political love life, I doubt that I, and the rest of the American people, had been so similarly naïve in the political arena.

With these thoughts running through my head, I set out to find what determines a successful presidency. Has President Obama failed or succeeded in his presidential term thus far, and, more broadly, what makes a president efficient or great? Is it a victory in foreign wars, a thriving economy, a low mortality rate? Can success be measured by contemporary enumerative values, or is it based on tangible future progress?

Historians have grappled with this issue for almost as long as the presidency has been around. This issue gets messy when it comes to disparities in certain areas. If, for example, a president has an amazing domestic policy record, yet has been an epic failure overseas, what is the final verdict on his term? In my research, I discovered that, contrary to what one may have expected, historians do not break up the presidency by analyzing certain salient issues. There are no pre-set criteria for judgment. Rather, analysts look at the entire administration and its future effects as a whole.

This becomes extremely important when deciding what span of time must pass before judgments can be made. The student body here at Yeshiva University has weighed in insightfully on this issue. Baruch Kadish (YC, '11) opines that the effectiveness of both foreign and economic policy can only really be determined twenty to thirty years after the presidential term. Most political analysts echo this thought, and,

however mercurial historians are towards the judgment process, all agree it is nearly impossible to judge the greatness of a president during his term.

"How much people like the president is all that really matters," Kadish further states, "because it's otherwise impossible to tell how he is doing. Measuring his impact is almost impossible because of the complexity of society."

Dani Lent (SCW, '10) goes a step further by arguing that the essential role of the president makes him susceptible to biased judgment. "There is no standard way of judging a leader's capabilities and accomplishments," says Lent. "There is an inherent subjectivity due to what each individual perceives as good for himself and his community."

According to "Rating the Presidents: Washington to Clinton" by Arthur M. Schlesinger, popularity is no indication of long-term success, but it is a measure of short-term effectiveness. Schlesinger explains, "Harding was an immensely popular president. His death provoked an outpouring of national grief that observers thought unmatched since the death of Lincoln. Scholars [however] are unanimous in pronouncing him a failure." Another example appears when comparing FDR and Truman. By the end of his term, President Truman had the lowest popularity rating of any president (a disheartening 22% at its lowest), yet he is still viewed by many today as just as great a president as FDR, who had the highest popularity rating in American history.

Relating to Kadish's comment, however, popularity is a measure of short-term effectiveness, since popular sentiment is directly related to the strength of the country, as determined by economic and social factors. If the American people have belief in the President and the overall direction of the country, all wheels run smoother and more is accomplished on Pennsylvania Avenue, Wall Street, and Main Street. The feeling of the country is crucial and is a valid indicator of the strength of the administration. President Carter was despised both by the right and by the left, and those feelings made an obvious difference in the overall wellbeing of the country. A president's effectiveness is partly determined by his ability to rally and unite America.

Richard Norton Smith, a noted historian, corroborates this notion in his tool guide for passing judgment on past presidents. In "10 Ways to Judge an American President," Smith notes, "The challenge posed by any crisis is equaled by the opportunity for leaders to forge an emotional bond with the people they lead to gain moral authority and expanded powers." In

other words, while fixing national crises affecting the American public, a great leader will use the situation to connect to his people on an emotional level. Franklin Roosevelt, during the Great Depression, excelled at connecting to the people. Although he himself was not affected by the Depression, the people still felt that he cared and that he was trying to help their cause.

I personally think that that is the type of attitude one should have when judging the greatness of a leader. Was he there when his people needed him? Was he able to put his own ego aside and do what the job necessitated? Did he have the long-term vision to see in which direction he should steer the country? I believe that historians rate Lincoln as the greatest president because he fulfilled the above three tasks. Although more Americans were killed during his presidency than during any other president's term in office, he was still great, since he identified what America needed at the time, and he figured out a way to accomplish it. Specifically, America needed to stay united, and he succeeded in doing just that.

Applying all that we have discussed so far, I would like to transfer the conversation to President Obama. Obama has modified Roosevelt's evening radio talks to ensure that all Americans know he is campaigning for them, and he has managed to avoid the emotional disconnect characteristic of our previous president. Now, even while Obama's popularity ratings are at their lowest, he still has an approval rating of fifty-one percent. America had never felt more united in face of an internal crisis as we did when President Obama assumed office. According to both Schlesinger and Smith's hypotheses, this already deems him an extremely successful leader.

Furthermore, healthcare reform has been the subject of debate since the presidency of Lyndon Johnson, and, already within the first year of his administration, Obama has managed to rally Congress to construct a bill that has been a point of contention for years. Pretty amazing. Moreover, although he differs drastically in his ideology from the Bush administration, he has kept the ship on a steady course, and has not rocked the boat too much, too fast. Why? Because he knows that America is not ready for a sharp turnaround, so he is slowly adjusting us to the change we need. This puts him on the same level of greatness as Abraham Lincoln. Obama's reserve is a wonderful contrast to our past administration's frightening capriciousness. His team presents a nexus of diversity and talent, and President Obama him-

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

NaNoWriMo: A Cure for the Writing Blues

Ariella Gottesman

I know a lot of people who hate writing. Defenestration, decapitation, or both, are far more preferable to them than writing a paper.

I've never had that problem. Prose, elegant and disastrous, flows from my fingertips like ink from a leaky pen. This talent of smearing pieces of paper with the written word stems from two events that occurred to me two and three years ago.

I am a two-time winner of the annual National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) competition. It sounds impossibly prestigious, and it is. Few of the competitors win the prize. The goal: write a 50,000-word novel in the month of November. By scribbling incomprehensible fiction—1,667 words per day to be precise—a fervent NaNoer can, with the proper nerves and a nary-may-care attitude, achieve the glorified title of "novelist." The manuscript may end up the next "great American novel," lying somewhere in the slush pile of a publishing house, or, worst of all, gathering metaphorical dust in a computer's memory, never to see the light of day.

My first novel, written in 2006, falls in the latter category. It is 94 pages of plot holes, unmemorable characters, and atrocious writing. It is so terrible that I have tried, unsuccessfully, to forget that it exists.

My second novel, tentatively titled "The Shards of a Shattered Mind," is slightly better. The writing is still characteristic of a monkey on a typewriter, but the plot has some spark, some grain of possibility, buried deeply within the layers of word padding of Dickensian proportions. I hope to write the sequel one day, if I can

ever manage to complete the first, in what was planned to be a trilogy. I haven't edited in around two years.

While I cannot cite any scholarly opinion linking writing for quantity to a production of genuine quality, I can offer a personal opinion: writing fiction, even idiotic fiction, even fiction that will ultimately be scrapped, helps nurture the scholarly writing process that many students abhor. Writing stupidity opens the mind, so mediocre writing, or even brilliant writing, is suddenly easier to produce.

I hated writing papers until NaNoWriMo. The words never seemed to come out the way I envisioned they ought. I learned during NaNo to stop waiting for the proper phrase to suddenly exist within my mind. Now, I write knowing that I sound idiotic, thankfully aware that second, third, fourth, *ad infinitum* drafts can exist. As the drafts emerge, the writing ability evolves.

In honor of National Novel Writing Month, try writing fiction, even though it is too late to join the contest this year. Take up a story, knowing that your character is implausible and your dialogue stilted. It may open pathways that never existed before.

My current word count for NaNo '09 is a meager 1,872 words. I stopped after day three. I don't have the willpower to do it this year. Perhaps next year, I will summon the necessary courage to place life and liberty on hold for a month and will actually have a plot before 11:59 PM on November 30th, 2010. Yet, I maintain that two years of the mania of novel writing led to the opinion that you read today.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Radio on the Waves

Alisa Ungar-Sargon

"Pirate Radio," the latest British import from Richard Curtis – brought in, renamed and re-edited by Focus Films after a spectacular flop in the UK – is a story about childish offshore DJs putting their motor mouths to use in uptight 1960s Britain. Led by an American known as The Count (Philip Seymour Hoffman), the goal of this sea-bound musical crew is to broadcast long and broadcast hard in spite of whatever laws the British government (Kenneth Branagh and Jack Davenport) implements to outlaw them.

The first third of the film is an extreme revelry of words and brilliant British witticisms delivered at just the right intelligible speed. The whole script is almost ridiculously quotable.

In the second third, certain aspects of the plot turn out to be formulas and devices that we've all seen before. However, they somehow manage to utilize their triteness to create a space where the purpose, the absolute cliché, is virtually declared, thereby permitting it to unfold in a rather fresh way. The coming-of-age story, the long lost father, the multiple epiphanies of characters' own stupidity – all these bits turn out acceptable because it is as though the writers are saying, "Why yes, of course we know you know what's going on; but don't you like what we did with it?" As such, these little bits are presented briefly and, rather than focusing on the actual plot points, we focus on the emotions they generate. We forget the awkwardness of a character's previous actions and relish the moment in which he can handle himself ... So his father's onboard – but look at that moment, that moment! He comes to terms with it as his son is sitting in the room, their eyes locked on each other! ... Yeah, okay, so he realized he was an idiot when he got to the top of the ship's mast. But check that out, they just cut to him bruised, broken, and smiling, admitting he's wrong on the radio. That's pretty groovy.

The last third of the film seems a tad confused, as though it's trying to please too many audiences: the Adventurers, the Absurdists, the Hippies, and the Good-Hearted Consciences within Us All. They do try to ease the melodrama somewhat, with further witticisms that actually are pretty funny.

The best scenes are all payoffs, aftermaths of lazy setups and brief climaxes that present beautiful scenarios played out to satisfaction. The scenes play it as cool as the leaders of the group (Hoffman and Rhys Ifans), never getting worked up about anything that can't be fixed by one of the three cures, one of which is rock n' roll.

One gem of a scene is when Carl (Tom Sturridge), the young one

on the boat learning the ropes, has his girl (Talulah Riley) stolen away from him. He sits staring into space, accompanied only by background music until two other DJs (Will Adamsdale and Ike Hamilton) come to try and cheer him up. They wordlessly place tea and biscuits on the coffee table in front of Carl and wait for him to react. He doesn't. They wait a little longer, and still get no reaction. Finally they can't handle it anymore and start eating the tea and biscuits themselves. Then one of them offers Carl a biscuit, which he reluctantly takes, followed by an as-reluctant dip into the tea. His face involuntarily breaks into a self-deprecating smile and by the end they're all laughing as he takes the tea and drinks it straight.

Another great part is when the Count decides that he will say the world's favorite expletive on the air. His extensive introduction to the event is half apology, half pride as he describes his point in saying the said expletive, eloquently telling it like a noble mission in radio history.

The women in the film all portray a kind of effortless beauty when they visit the boat, hammering home the bygone era. Felicity (Katherine Parkinson), the "lesbian who cooks," is the only woman who is not unforgivingly gorgeous, a maneuver that was probably set to show her camaraderie with the men who are all similarly unattractive in their charismatically British way. This creates an interesting dynamic, but that could be just because Britain hasn't discovered the buddy comedy yet.

The soundtrack of the film is, of course, fantastic. Or rather, I expected it to be, and it seemed so. Going into the film I thought I was pretty well-equipped to appreciate it: I have my personal awareness of oldies, as well as friends who treat music from before the 80s like the word of G-d. I only recognized one song from the entire 115 minutes: a ballad of Dusty Springfield.

According to the film, though, this shouldn't be a problem. After an array of rock record sleeves, it calmly announces rock n' roll's good run – 40 years, give or take – and then announces "THE END." The end of rock has arrived, and this film is homage to those who fought for it. Sounds like a plan. Hopefully, when they make a movie about pop music in another 30 years, we'll still remember the lyrics to Britney Spears and Nickelback.

It's All in the Family

Anna Socher

Stern College for Women hosted the inaugural event of the Art History Club, in conjunction with the department of Art History, on October 28th. Professor Benjamin Binstock of Cooper Union gave a fascinating lecture titled "Who was the Milkmaid? Vermeer's Secrets Revealed" that focused on the historical accuracy of the attribution of certain paintings to Vermeer.

Johannes Vermeer (1632-1675) was a Dutch Baroque painter from Delft. He achieved moderate success in his lifetime, but after his death his works gave way to obscurity until his rediscovery around 1860. Vermeer was married at 21, and his wife gave birth to 14 children, 11 of whom survived childhood.

Vermeer had a hard time making ends meet to feed his large family. His mother-in-law, Maria Thins, largely supported them and, as such, Vermeer was obligated to paint her, which he did in *The Allegory of Catholic Faith*. It is a beautiful painting done with a sense of humor since Vermeer most likely converted to Catholicism in order to marry his wife, and so what he painted did not necessarily represent his beliefs. In this picture, Thins's head is theatrically thrown back, with her hand placed on her bosom, while the crucifixion takes place behind her. This type of religious painting was not what

Vermeer preferred to paint. He also did not enjoy painting Thins, and did so for monetary purposes only. He most often painted his wife, maid, and eldest daughter, the women he was able to study and look at the most.

There are 37 known paintings by Vermeer. Binstock makes an interesting, and convincing, argument that Vermeer did not paint a few of the works that we attribute to him. He claims that Vermeer's oldest daughter painted a few of them, based on evidence that the quality of work declined over time.

Binstock's argument is as follows: Take a look at *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, dated 1665-1667. In a recent novel, author Tracy Chevalier put out the fictitious theory that the girl portrayed in this painting was Vermeer's maid, with whom he had a love affair. In the book, Vermeer's jealous wife attacks her maid. In reality, Vermeer's wife was tired of being painted so often and instead he painted his daughter – not a maid at all.

The painting is stunning and loved by many. The girl's lips are full and red. Her eyes look longingly and temptingly at the viewer, as if to invite him or her in. She wears a magnificent, silk-looking jacket, and a brilliantly colored headscarf. In her ear hangs the

luscious earring. The background, a deep black, offsets the young girl's intense beauty.

Binstock turns to the next painting at hand: *Study of a Young Girl* is dated 1665-1674. This second picture, while still a good painting, is not of the same quality as *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. The setup is the same as its counterpart: a thin girl looking out at the viewer in the same general style and demeanor, also wearing a headscarf in the same manner, as well as an earring. Her lips are thin, however, and the black background makes her look pale, almost emaciated.

How could an artist go from painting *Girl with a Pearl Earring* to *Study of a Young Girl*? It is essentially backwards. The technique would have worsened over time. Binstock claims that Vermeer's daughter—the model for *Girl with a Pearl Earring*—painted the *Study of a Young Girl*. Most likely it is of her younger sister, another of Vermeer's daughters. It is still a wonderful painting; it simply is not up to par with the quality of Vermeer.

While many current scholars disagree with Binstock's controversial claims, and they may seem outlandish, the comparison of these two paintings points directly to his conclusion.



"The Allegory of Catholic Faith"



"Study of a Young Girl"



"Girl with a Pearl Earring"

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ISRAEL

Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations at YU

Elizabeth Bentley

International law will need to change in order to confront an emerging warfare of terrorists using civilians as human shields, said Israeli United Nations Ambassador Gabriela Shalev at Yeshiva University on Tuesday, November 10.

"This is... the modern warfare, where sovereign countries have to fight terrorist groups that use their own people, the people they have to protect, as human shields," she said. Shalev, the first female Israeli ambassador to the UN, cited terrorist groups including Hamas, the Taliban, Al Qaeda and the Islamic-funded Chenyan terror groups as combatants in this new warfare.

"You cannot apply the old norms of international law and the laws of war to this situation," she declared. "We need to know how to change... in order to face these challenges."

However, Shalev did not specify what changes should be made to international law. "This is something for the future," she conceded.

Shalev emphasized Hamas's use of civilian-based warfare tactics during last summer's Cast Lead Operation in Gaza, which has gained renewed attention since the release of the Goldstone Report. "Hamas used mosques, kindergartens, hospitals, schools and homes to put their own weapons and people and headquarters in-

side," she said.

The Goldstone Report continues to be a concern for Israel as it gathers increased support in the United Nations. The previous Thursday's endorsement of the report, carried by the vote of 114 states, permits UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to refer it to the General Council.

Shalev accused the report's authors of knowingly ignoring Hamas' civilian-based warfare tactics when charging Israel of war crimes. "Justice Goldstone admitted that they deliberately selected incidents so as to avoid the dilemmas of confronting threats in civilian areas," Shalev stated.

According to Shalev, several countries that did not vote against the Goldstone Report in the General Assembly privately sympathize towards Israel. "Behind closed doors they admit that they see eye to eye with us," she said. "This isn't how they vote."

Shalev praised the United States for its support. "Together with us was very important countries, the first one to be mentioned is your country," she told the audience of 250 students and faculty members. "The United States... stood firm with us... by standing with us very clearly and very firmly and voting against the resolution."

The ambassador claimed that the Israeli-Palestinian peace pro-

cess would be stalled as long as the Goldstone report is under consideration. "The adoption of the Goldstone report by the General Assembly is another blow to the peace process," said Shalev. "We are not going to sit as long as the report is on the table and we are accused of all these war crimes."

The consistency of the Human Rights Council's accusations against Israel prevents the nation from accepting the Goldstone report, said Shalev. "This council has adopted more resolutions against Israel than resolutions against all other countries put together," she iterated. "So how can we believe that this is an objective and fair council?"

According to Shalev, the council refused to look into the Hamas rocket attacks that spurred Operation Cast Lead. "These eight years that we in Israel and especially the people in the Southern part of Israel suffered almost daily attacks of the Hamas and terrorists, mortar shells and rockets into these areas, the Human Rights Council rejected any investigation," she recalled. "At that time, our rights of life and dignity and self defense did not count in the eyes of the council."

Shalev questioned the integrity of most countries belonging to the Human Rights Commission. "The Human Rights Commission

is known to be... dominated by non-democratic countries, many of whom are hostile to Israel and... and are not the greatest champions of human rights," said Shalev.

The ambassador stressed the morality of the Israeli army. "I know personally that our army has a moral code," she avowed. "And there is no soldier in the Is-

raeli army who did all the terrible things that are attributed."

"The Goldstone Report... denies our human right of self-defense," Shalev asserted. "As a lawyer, as an Israeli, as a Zionist, as someone who is trying to read it analytically, I cannot see it as honest and fair fact-finding."



The Observer
Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Gabriella Shalev addresses YU students on November 10.

Defining Our Identity: 2009 General Assembly

Hannah Robinow

Identity holds great power over our lives. That's what we have been taught since the minute we were born, when our wrists were tagged with our names, weights, and dates of birth. Identities allow us to stand up and declare that we know who we are and from where we come. They allow us to unite with other individuals who share our values.

At the 2009 General Assembly of the Jewish Federations of North America, identity was the theme that united the myriad of speakers, panel discussions, and workshops that I attended. As a member of Do the Write Thing, I was part of a group consisting of student journalists interested in honing their writing skills for the sake of Israel advocacy while working on the sidelines of the GA. Thanks to the World Zionist Organization, the main sponsor of my group, I connected with my fellow collegians on this topic. Our main goal of strengthening *hasbara* (advocacy) efforts on our respective college campuses would not be possible unless our Jewish identities were strong and informed.

The conference began on Sun-

day, November 8, with the first plenary session of the 2009 GA. The keynote speaker, Ambassador Michael Oren, drew upon his experiences as the current Israeli ambassador to the United States and as a noted scholar of Middle East history in his address to the more than 3,000 attendees packed into the ballroom at the Wardman Park Marriott in Washington, DC. During his speech, he made the point that one of the main tenets of Jewish identity is faith in G-d, which "began when an obscure tribe of nomads living 3,000 years ago suddenly devised the notion of a single G-d [...] These nomads became a people who conveyed these concepts to other faiths that today account for more than half of humanity."

Oren went on to discuss the historical legitimacy of Israel and international Jewry's efforts to combat the threat Israel faces from worldwide denigration. However, the point that resonated most strongly was that Jews are at their strongest and can be the greatest force for change in the world only when they determine a set of common principles around which to unite.

The next day began with a whirl-

wind of speakers, presentations, and panel discussions. We heard from a panel of Israeli journalists about the process of reporting the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within Israel. We listened to Yuli Edelstein, Israeli Minister of Public Diplomacy and the Diaspora, speak about the necessity of a strong relationship between Diaspora and Israeli Jewry. In addition, we interviewed a group of American students who had just completed a course of study in Israel thanks to a program called MASA, which is funded by the Jewish Agency and the Federations of North America. The entire day's activities were designed to teach us what comprises Jewish identity: a connection with our fellow Jews, a solid foundation of knowledge about Israel's historical legitimacy, and an affinity for the culture of Israel and its people.

However, the moment that infused our activities with a sense of purpose occurred during Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech. He focused his address to the plenary on his vision for the future of Israel's place in the world and on how world Jewry can help the State of Israel face down existential threats and assure its

role as a paragon of free enterprise and peace for the world. His speech was eloquent and effective in articulating his ideas regarding what has made Israel great as well as what will make it even better in the future. One line in his speech especially stood out: "Only an Israel that can defend itself is an Israel that can take further risks for peace."

After spending the hours leading up to the prime minister's speech learning how to use the power of communication to defend Israel, this statement echoed the lessons that we had learned that day. Though Netanyahu's intended meaning of "defense" was to communicate the need to guarantee Israeli safety against physical threats from terrorists, it could also imply the same message that my fellow students and I had learned earlier that day: Israel must be able to defend itself in every regard, including through *hasbara* efforts in the international media. This speech added a new layer of meaning to the lessons taught during our prior sessions. Not only is a strong Jewish identity vital for reinforcing the connections between every Jew, but it also gives Jews the background

knowledge necessary for defending Israel against its detractors.

On Tuesday, we welcomed Galia Albin, an Israeli news personality and entrepreneur. She offered a spin on *hasbara* efforts that was completely different from the other perspectives provided by the experts throughout the conference. Whereas other experts discussed the need to emphasize the liberal values that Israel brings to the outside world, she proposed that we promote Israel by emphasizing the practical ways it benefits the world. For instance, Israel is one of the most technologically advanced countries in the world and is a leader in promulgating new technologies. It also hosts high-tech corporations like IBM, Motorola, Intel, and GE Healthcare. The country boasts more scientists and engineers in proportion to its population than any other country on earth, as it has 145 such professionals per every 10,000 people.

Furthermore, Israel supports a nascent venture capital market, having attracted \$1.7 billion worth of local and foreign investment in 2007, which was spread throughout 462 Israeli companies. In comparison, it took 1,169 California

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SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Swine Flu Update

Rachel King

In case you've been living in a bubble, you are hereby informed that the influenza season is upon us. In particular, you may have heard of the virus du jour, the H1N1 virus, colloquially dubbed "swine flu." While in many ways H1N1 is very similar to the seasonal flu, there are several key differences between the two. Getting the facts on swine flu straight will help you stay healthy this season.

The disease has spread swiftly throughout the United States, prompting President Obama, at the end of October, to declare it a national emergency. This new status means that the Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, now has the authority to define new, temporary regulations that will alleviate overcrowding in emergency rooms and prevent the spread of disease in hospitals.

On the individual scale, though, swine flu is not as scary as the public's reactions make it seem. The main concerns about swine flu are how quickly it spreads and that it affects healthy adults nearly as much as the elderly, the chronically ill, and children. However, swine flu is preventable. Even if you do get sick, as long as you are treated properly you probably will have nothing to worry about.

Swine flu manifests with symptoms similar to those of the seasonal flu. Besides fatigue, sore throat, coughing, and sneezing, a sick person may experience muscle aches, and chills. One of the hall-

marks of the H1N1 is a high fever (over 100° Fahrenheit). Also, swine flu can sometimes be characterized by breathing difficulties. This is especially dangerous for people with pre-existing respiratory conditions (for example, asthma or severe allergies), and should be addressed immediately. In addition, people with compromised immune systems should be particularly vigilant, since the virus can escalate quickly and dangerously if the patient can't properly fight off the infection.

If you suspect you have swine flu—or seasonal flu—go to the doctor. That's right. Skip class. Tell the professor you can't make the meeting. Give the movie tickets away. The best way to recover from swine flu is through treatment and rest. If you catch the virus in the first 48 hours, your doctor may prescribe Tamiflu, an antiviral medication that can reduce the duration of swine flu by one to two days.

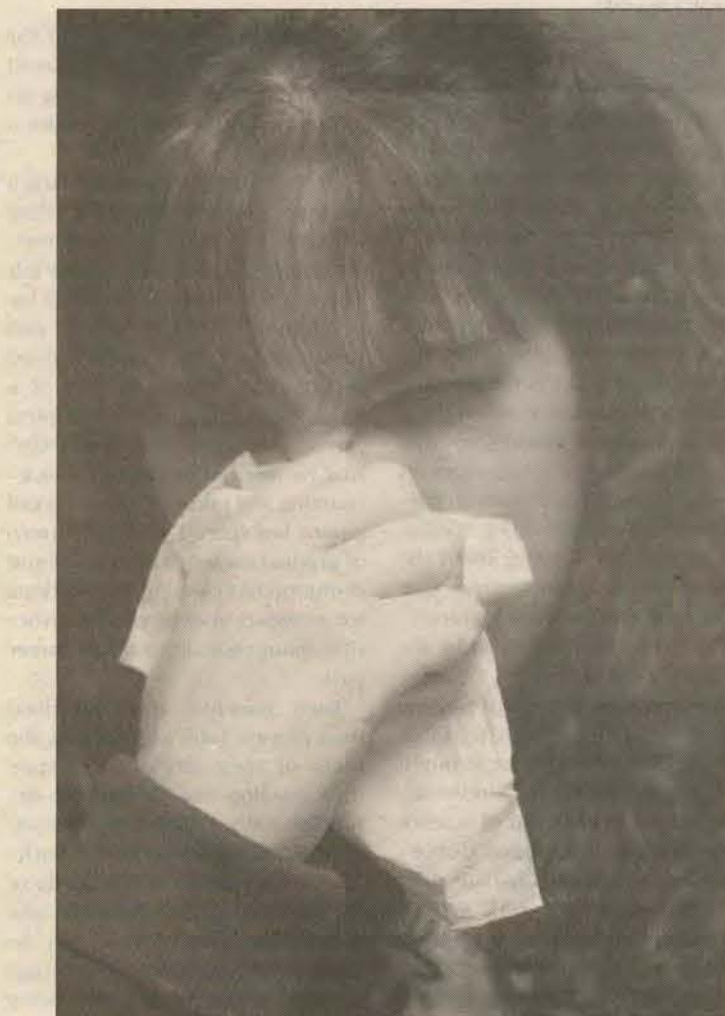
It is also important that ill people stay away from others in order to prevent the spread of the disease. If the Health Center feels that it is necessary, sick Stern College for Women students will be assigned a dorm room where they can be quarantined for a few days. This not only gives students a chance to rest and recover completely, but also limits their roommates' exposure to the virus.

Preventing swine flu is very similar to preventing the spread of any disease. Wash your hands

frequently, especially after being in a public place, and always before eating. Purell dispensers have sprouted like weeds in the school building—take advantage of them! Use them after typing on the school computers, handling equipment in the gym, or even after pushing elevator buttons. It's also important to stay in good general health, by eating well, exercising, and getting enough sleep. In addition, vaccines are offered for both the seasonal and swine flu on the Stern campus, for \$18 and \$5, respectively. It is recommended that every student receive both vaccines, which can be given as a shot or a nasal spray. There is a small risk of side effects from the vaccine, such as fatigue, runny nose, coughing or headache for 1-2 days after receiving the vaccine. People who have already had the swine flu should not take the vaccine.

As you may have noticed, the Yeshiva University's Health Department is taking student health very seriously in order to prevent an outbreak of the disease. In addition to the Purell dispensers and vaccines, little reminders have popped up around campus, nagging students to wash their hands, cover their mouths when coughing, and to stay at home when sick. Furthermore, the Office of Student Affairs has dubbed November "Health Awareness Month." Check your e-mail regularly to find tips on how to stay healthy at Stern.

Whether you are sick or not, you can find more information on YU's



Dina Horowitz
Flu season has hit; wash your hands, get your vaccines and keep your tissues to yourself.

Health Alerts Blog, www.yu.edu/healthalerts, as well as on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's website, www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu. Understand your risks, do your part to stay healthy, and

flu season will fly by before you know it.

Rachel King, a junior, is a biochemistry major at Stern. She's had both her vaccines, and can't get enough of the Purell dispensers.

Health Awareness Month: A New Beren Initiative

Rivkah Rogawski

Throughout the month of November, daily health tips from the Office of Student Affairs have mingled amidst the deluge of Sstuds that fill the Stern student's inbox. With perky titles like "Stress Less Tip #1," these emails are one facet of a Health Awareness Month initiative on the Beren campus. The program is composed of an online newsletter, email tips, and OSA (Office of Student Affairs) partnership with various other clubs and departments for weekly events.

Ariella Ross, the OSA staffer who is spearheading the program, explained that it has been in the works since last semester. The Beren staff chose to have their Health Awareness Month flow naturally from Breast Cancer Awareness month, which is October. The program also coincides with midterms at Stern and Sy Syms, a time when students are stressed and overextended as they attempt to simultaneously study for midterms and

keep up with their other classes.

The main goal of the program is to raise students' self-awareness about their health by bringing in all aspects of staying healthy in a stressful college atmosphere. Each week has a different theme—the first week was Nutrition Week; the second, Winter Weather week; the third, Stress-Less week; and the final week will deal with some aspect of overeating in the holiday season. During Nutrition week, OSA promoted an event on navigating the college cafeteria with the fledgling Nutrition Club, and during Stress-Less week a yoga-relaxation event was held with the Counseling Center. Other events include a showing of "A Beautiful Mind" with the Psychology Club and a swine-flu awareness event with students in a Sy Syms management class.

Aware of its audience's hectic schedules, the program makes every effort to package their information in a readable manner. The emails contain four line-tips such

as: "Think positively and surround yourself by others who think the same. Avoid the trap of demanding too much of yourself. Get help if tasks are too big. Accept that you can't control every situation and learn to be flexible." The tips are all easily implemented and require no large lifestyle change, merely serving as a reminder of important, healthy habits that are crucial to surviving the college pressure cooker.

Ross states that she has received positive feedback about the emails from student thanking her for the tips, and most students would admit that they would welcome reminders about such simple acts as remembering to breathe and relax. "I enjoy reading the Health Awareness tips because I find them interesting and cute," says Esti Feder, a pre-med student majoring in biology. To complement the emails, OSA has also published an online newsletter focusing on proper nutrition, stress and the swine flu season. A link to the newsletter,

titled "Living Healthy at Beren," is included at the end of the daily health emails.

For students looking to make small, positive changes, the newsletter is another source of helpful tips. However, some students feel that the tips are obvious and the emails superfluous. "None of the information is ground-breaking, and I've already heard these tips in one form or another," said one pre-health student who wished to remain anonymous. "I think that most people are unhealthy because of their workload and because they just don't care". One might wish that the initiative took a more concrete form, such as nightly exercise classes in the gym or a nutritionist available on campus for students feeling the Freshman Fifteen. Despite these shortcomings, though, reminders are always welcome, and the program represents a positive step for both the Office of Student Affairs and for the student body.

"Never put the cooked turkey on the unwashed plate that previously held the uncooked turkey"

-- Health Awareness Month tip of the day

SCIENCE AND HEALTH

The Chemistry of Leadership

Rivkah Rogawski

"Are you pre-med?" For many undergraduates at Yeshiva University, this question is the first that follows their declaration of a science major. Those not necessarily interested in the field of health science often find themselves a lone and confused voice amidst a sea of hopeful future doctors, dentists, therapists and engineers. On November 12, 2009, the Yeshiva College (YC) Chemistry Club organized a panel discussion titled "The Chemistry of Leadership" that focused on diverse science careers ranging from flavor science to patent law, thereby providing a valuable forum for learning about the myriad career opportunities that await motivated science majors.

The event, co-sponsored by the YC Dean's Office, the YC Chemistry Department, the Stern College for Women (SCW) Chemistry Club, and the SCW Deans Office, brought together five fascinating individuals working in the field of science for a lively and engaging discussion moderated by Chanan Reitblat, president of the YC Chemistry Club. Along with his fellow officers and the Center for Career Development, Reitblat began planning the event in September, "just calling or emailing [the speakers] out of the blue". The result was a unique mélange of science professionals, each of whom shared with the audience their career path, what inspires them in their daily work, and their advice to future scientists. The panel included Elaine Kellman-Grosinger, a flavor scientist at Citromax; Dr. Deborah Schachter, a principal scientist at Johnson and Johnson; Yedidya Saiman, an MD/PhD candidate at Mt. Sinai Medical School; Dr. Yosef Crystal, a patent lawyer at Goodman Proctor; and Dr. Lawrence Kobilinsky, Chairman of the Department of Sciences and head of the Forensic Science department at John Jay College.

As the panelists described their scientific journeys, one could not help but be struck by the varied career paths that each had taken to reach their current employment. Ms. Kellman-Grosinger found her way into flavor science while between jobs after completing an undergraduate dual major in biology and chemistry. She decided to work as a lab technician for International Flavors and Fragrances, and discovered that she had a natural talent for flavor chemistry.

Dr. Schachter initially completed her bachelor's degree in chemistry while expecting her second child and was wholly disinterested in pursuing a Ph.D. After an interlude of several years, during which she taught science at Bruria High School and had three more children, she changed her mind and returned to Rutgers for a Ph.D. in chemistry. Before arriving at John-

son and Johnson, she worked for Union Carbide and encountered the distinct challenge of "being on a construction scaffold in a skirt, a *sheitel* [wig] and a hard hat".

Dr. Kobilinsky was completing a post-doctorate at Sloan Kettering when he decided to go into forensic science, mainly because he felt that it had interesting potential for developing research methods and future careers. Dr. Crystal arrived at Goodwin Proctor by way of a Ph.D. from Columbia in chemical physics, deciding after graduation that he was not interested in specializing and taking a job at a small patent law firm. The clear pattern of gradual career development and evolution has calming implications for stressed undergraduates worried about choosing a single career path.

Each panelist also described their current jobs, highlighting the parts of their work that inspire their passion. Ms. Grossinger enthusiastically described herself as a flavor "ghostwriter" - working with a palette of hundreds of chemicals and aromatic oils, she formulates aromas that can be incorporated into extant beverage or food products that are being developed by other major companies. While she never sees her company's name on a finished package, she admitted to feeling a frisson of excitement when her product is advertised on billboards across the country. In addition to making and tasting fruity synthetic flavors, Grossinger also deals with governmental agents, customers, sales agents, and panels of testers from the product's target audience. Grossinger emphasized the creativity and "out of the box" thinking needed for a successful flavor science to mix the perfect taste.

Dr. Schachter's current job heading an internal R&D team takes her all over the world as she both develops and brings in innovative biomedical technology platforms for the myriad companies under the Johnson and Johnson umbrella. As Dr. Schachter moves from the academic seminar to the

corporate boardroom, she especially enjoys the innovation and multi-disciplinary collaboration.

Dr. Yosef Crystal stated that although he was originally told that patent law combines the driest aspects of science with the most boring parts of law, he has found that patent law requires strategic planning using both his science and legal expertise. Dr. Crystal deals with pharmaceutical companies, advising his clients on patent formulation, infringing patents, and patent litigation, and finds that these activities require the full strength of an excellent science background, legal and public policy knowledge, and sharp communications skills.

Dr. Kobilinsky's daily work is perhaps the most sensational, because, in addition to his duties as a teacher, researcher and department chair, he practices consulting work in forensic science for both indigent defendants and major media companies such as CBS, for which he was a consultant on the widely publicized O.J. Simpson case. Dr. Kobilinsky emphasized that forensic science combines many fields of science with excellent analytical skills and people skills, all of which he uses on a daily basis.

Yedidya Saiman, the only panelist still in school, explained the challenge of being a researcher in terms of the drive required to continue the endless process of learning and generating data. The synthesis of experimentation, brainstorming, and literature review is to him what makes the life of a graduate student so fascinating.

Students were also able to talk to and network with the panelists after the formal portion of the evening was over. One student was offered an internship at Citromax while another received the names of forensic laboratories at John Jay College to contact. Hearing from these panelists was both informative and inspiring to the science student who may, as one biology major put it, "don't know what I want to do with my life".

A Noble Lecture

Faige Seligman

On Wednesday, November 18, Dr. Martin Chalfie visited Yeshiva University. Dr. Chalfie received the 2008 Nobel Prize in Chemistry alongside Roger Y. Tsien and Osamu Shimomura for discovering and developing the green fluorescent protein (GFP). GFP is now one of the most commonly used reporter molecules in laboratories worldwide, and it has enabled a myriad of new techniques and discoveries in fields such as cellular and molecular biology.

In addition to its practical use in scientific research, GFP has also provided much entertainment in various other forms. It has been used, for example, in the artworks of Julian Voss-Andreae, an artist who creates protein sculptures and has used GFP as a model, and it has also been used in the creation of transgenic animals, as in the case of Alba. Alba, developed by artist Eduardo Kac and geneticist Louis-Marie Houdebine, was a rabbit genetically modified to incorporate the GFP gene. As a result, Alba would literally glow green in the presence of blue light, thanks to the GFP in her cells. Dr. Chalfie spoke about his co-development of this amazing protein, with so many uses both practical and amusing.

Dr. Chalfie received his undergraduate degree and PhD in neurobiology from Harvard University, and he is currently the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Biological Sciences at Columbia University and the chair of its department of biological sciences. He listed and showed pictures of the many people who had contributed to his discoveries—the undergraduates who had come up with ideas, the graduate students who had helped him refine mechanisms, and the many people who helped him begin the project in the first place. Chalfie told the crowded room of the journey that brought him to where he is now in his life

and the accomplishments that he has achieved with a warm sense of humor, humanity and utter lack of pomposity.

But what really enthralled the audience was Chalfie's captivating story.

Dr. Chalfie did not take a direct route to becoming a research scientist; as an undergraduate at Harvard, he had a miserable and disheartening experience in a summer lab and came to the painful conclusion that research was simply not the field for him. He graduated and, without a real plan for the future, took odd jobs as they came up and his financial needs required them. He went through various jobs that included being a janitor for a while and selling dresses for a month or two. At some point, he ended up teaching high school, which took care of the school year quite nicely, but left his summers wide open with no source of income.

Motivated by financial need, Dr. Chalfie took a job in a research laboratory, where he at last found himself succeeding. The experience re-ignited his love for science. Following this burst of inspirational success, he went back to Harvard University and obtained his PhD in neurobiology, at last finding a career in which he was both self-fulfilled and demonstrably changing the world for the better. He then traveled a slightly more traditional path to discover and develop GFP, a path riddled with potholes that held him back for periods of time, along with springboards that gave him just the inspiration and luck needed to make significant discoveries.

It was truly an honor having Dr. Chalfie speak at Yeshiva University about his story of becoming a research scientist and Nobel Prize winner. Moreover, his down-to-earth approachability and genuineness surely inspired more than one attendee that evening.

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SCIENCE AND HEALTH

It's Elementary: Lithium

Juliet Meir

The entire universe is comprised of the elements, which lend their particular characteristics to everything from food to colors. Lithium, which gives fireworks an amazing red glow, is just one example. Lithium is the lightest metal on the periodic table and is denoted by the atomic number 3. Its name comes from the Greek word "lithos," for "stone." Unlike other alkali metals, such as potassium and sodium, which were first isolated from plant and animal tissues, lithium was discovered in mineral stones. It can be extracted naturally from rocks, animal and plant tissues, and the ocean. Johann Arfvedson discovered lithium in 1817 in the midst of his analysis of petalite ore, but it was not until 1855 that Bande and Davy first isolated lithium from lithium oxide.

Lithium has many important practical applications and is especially significant in modern medicine. Its therapeutic powers, although never documented, have been known since the 19th century, and lithium salts have been used medically for approximately 150 years. Lithium was placed in springs and used in spas to induce a soothing effect, and doctors have since used lithium to control hyperactivity. The Australian doctor John Cade was the first to implement lithium as a treatment for manic depression in 1949. Interestingly, at that time cardiac patients were actually dying from lithium chloride prescribed as a dietary alternative to sodium chloride, also known as table salt. Nowadays, lithium is used in the form of lithium carbonate to treat bipolar disorder and major depressive disorder. Although the route that lithium takes in the body is still unclear, its therapeutic effects are probably related to the body's electrolyte balance of potassium, sodium, magnesium and calcium ions.

Lithium also has other important practical applications. Because of its large specific heat capacity, it is used in heat transfer applications like ceramics. Lithium also has relevance in astronomy and space exploration, an application relevant to the Stern College for Women Chemistry Club's theme this year. Lithium hydroxide is used to remove carbon dioxide from the air in space shuttles. In addition, astronomers have noticed that the sun has less lithium than do sun-like stars that have no planets orbiting around them. Why this is so is a question that has yet to be answered.

Even with all the information modern chemists have about elements like lithium, including their properties and uses, their full use and composition remains a mystery. New innovations and applications for elements are being discovered every day, and it is through recognizing and studying their mystique that one can constantly refresh one's understanding of the natural world.

Artificial Sweeteners:
Not Such a Sweet Deal After All

Audrey Cantor

Aspartame. Sucralose. Saccharin. Acesulfame K. Hidden in many of the foods Americans consume are artificial sweeteners designed to flavor food without expanding waistlines. As consuming excess sugar has been linked to obesity, the launch of sugar substitutes should therefore have positively affected obesity rates. However, no such impact has been seen. Rather, these artificial sweeteners are believed to have brought on an extensive list of side effects ranging from depression, headaches, seizures, and cancer.

Unfortunately, few Americans heed the serious health concerns associated with these chemicals. The FDA does, after all, approve these substances. Therefore, they lavish their coffees with calorie free sweeteners, consume sugarless chewing gum and pop mints featuring all of the sweetness but none of the carbs, bake "sugar-free!" cakes and cookies—all thanks to our supposed good old friend, the artificial sweetener. The recent vilification of carbohydrates has only contributed to this sugar-free sweetener craze.

But are artificial sweeteners as sweet a deal as they seem? The topic is a loaded one, with proponents on both sides. The safety of these sweeteners has been the subject of many studies, all of which have come to different conclusions. One sweetener in particular, aspartame, has been the subject of much discussion and questioning.

Aspartame, first concocted in 1965, was discovered by accident.

A chemist by the name of James M. Schlatter was working on an anti-ulcer drug when, upon mixing aspartic acid and phenylalanine (two naturally occurring amino acids), he stuck his finger into the mixture and licked. "I licked my finger and it tasted good" were the words he used in his later account of the discovery. His accidental action sparked the development of what is now one of the most controversial food additives in the industry.

Following what was purported to be thorough testing conducted by Schlatter's employer, a pharmaceutical company by the name of G.D. Searle & Co., aspartame was deemed fit to be manufactured. Searle sought the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approval for the marketing of their new product, presenting the FDA with research that had proved aspartame to be safe.

While at first the FDA was prepared to approve aspartame, subsequently raised safety concerns delayed the additive's approval. In response to such concerns, the FDA announced a hearing and established a public board of inquiry to look into the safety of aspartame as a food additive. Suspicion regarding Searle's earlier studies, which had been used to deem aspartame safe, began to surface. Dr. Jacqueline Verrett, a former FDA toxicologist and FDA task force member, stated in her testimony that Searle's tests were a "disaster" and should have been "thrown out." Dr. Marvin Legator, professor of environmental toxicology at the University of Texas, described them as "scientifically irresponsible and disgraceful," going so far as to say, "I've never seen anything as bad as Searle's."

One of the many who testified in the FDA hearing was the late Dr. M. Adrian Gross, a former senior FDA toxicologist, who state in his testimony that Searle's studies were largely unreliable and that "at least one of the studies has established beyond any reasonable doubt that aspartame is capable of inducing brain tumors in experimental animals... therefore by allowing aspartame to be placed on the market, the FDA has violated the Delaney Amendment," which makes it illegal for any

residues of cancer-causing chemicals to be permitted in foods.

Dr. Gross concluded his testimony with the following question: "What is the reason for the apparent refusal by the FDA to invoke for this food additive the so-called Delaney Amendment to the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act?... And if the FDA itself elects to violate the law, who is left to protect the health of the public?" Despite these strong objections, aspartame was released to the public in the form of NutraSweet.

Since the commercial release of aspartame, it has been subjected to numerous studies, funded by both the food industry and private grants. Interestingly, all of the industry-funded studies have concluded that aspartame is safe while almost all of the independently funded studies have come to the opposite conclusion.

One reason why researchers might conclude that aspartame is safe is that they ignore the many sources from which people consume aspartame. For example, some experiments operate on the basis that people's only significant source of aspartame is from soft drinks like diet soda, ignoring other common sources such as sugar free or reduced sugar chewing gum, yogurt, frozen yogurt and candy. Additionally, these studies do not investigate the effects of long-term aspartame usage from infancy to childhood or the effects of aspartame on unborn children. Theoretically, the negative effects on children and developing fetuses would be magnified due to their small body mass.

Aspartame is merely one example of a potentially dangerous artificial sweetener that has passed by the FDA. Without the FDA to protect American consumers, consumers must take responsibility into their own hands. Serious medical conditions linked to aspartame and other artificial sweeteners often go unnoticed by the general public. These stories are not reported on the news, and it is easy for doctors and naysayers to dismiss the connection and blame something else instead. But it is important for people to be vigilant when they buy and consume manufactured food products, because artificial sweeteners are lurking now in more foods than ever before. And despite all their sweet promise, they have done little to solve the problems of obesity. While a calorie count of zero may still be tempting, it is important to remember that when something is too good to be true... it usually is.



Artificial sweeteners may not be as sweet as they seem.

Dina Horowitz

STYLE

Let Them Eat Cupcakes! The Sweet Trend Giving The City Muffin-Tops

Talia Kaufman

We all love cake. It's the sweet bread of celebration. Cake can turn any gathering into a party and ends any meal as a feast. But, as Americans, we struggle with our desire to partake in the delicious tradition of digging in after the birthday wish and the guilt of tipping the scales after our slice was a bit too generous. Although it seems like an innocent tradition, it is our ambitious American nature that craves the entire cake, and makes our favorite pastime a quick route to obesity. We struggle to enjoy our indulgences while still exercising self-control.

And then cupcakes came into vogue, the sweet trend that allows us to have our cake and eat it too. The craze originated here in New York when boutique cupcakeries began sprinkling the streets and lines began swirling around the block. Pretty soon cookbooks, blogs, and t-shirt companies began licking the batter of the sweet craze and milking the butter cream for all it is worth.

But is the gourmet cupcake the next Krispy Kreme donut? The trans fat-laden mega-trend went stale quickly, leaving only cellulite and sticky fingers. This short lifespan was due to brand mismanagement, aggressive overexpansion and the then trend diet, carb-hating Atkin's.

Rachel Kramer Brussel, one of the three cupcakes queens and uber-bloggers behind the trend, cupcakestakethecake.com told *The Observer* that the cakes are here to stay. "Cupcakes just sell themselves...because the trend is always evolving," said Brussel. "There is plenty of room for innovation." Innovative is certainly one word that can be used to describe the cakes she has tasted, which include nacho-flavored, lemon art. choke, pulled pork and cookie cupcakes with holes for milk.

However, Rachel is apparently not the only one who loves cupcakes. The tiny treats became even hotter once the recession hit. Gourmet pastries are an affordable luxury that many consumers turn to once they cannot afford to splurge on larger luxury items.

Magnolia Bakery cupcakes are considered to be the butter cream de la crème. In 1996, the bite-sized bakery had a bit extra batter and decided to bake some cupcakes. And what came out of the oven was the million-dollar and billion-calorie worth craze. When the woman of *Sex and The City* began accessorizing with the cakes, the media began to see a sweet star on the rise. Soon after cameos in tabloids, on *The New York Times'* best sellers list, hit films such as *The Devil Wears Prada* and even *Saturday Night Live*. In the Inter-



New Yorkers can taste the cakes at Buttercup Bake Shop.

Buttercup Bake Shop

net phenomenon "Lazy Sunday," Andy Samberg and Chris Parnes give the sweet cakes a bit of sweet cred: "Let's hit up Magnolia and mack on some cupcakes."

No doubt that bakery's got all da bomb frostings. "I love those cupcakes like McAdams loves Gosling."

The retro chic bakery now has three different locations, and four different cookbooks, which feature the Southern Mother style recipes for banana pudding, peanut butter blondies and pumpkin cheesecake. However some say that the bakery's sugar rush is all hype. Once blogger complains of the Magnolia Mania, "You people need to go back to the suburbs ... Seriously, bunch of grown up New York City residents obsessing over a cupcake shop. I miss the gunfire and crack heads." Although the skinny half of the city may be puzzled by the bakery's cult following, they definitely haven't had a fingerful of the cream cheese frosting from Magnolia's red velvet cupcakes.

Magnolia founder Jennifer Appel found true niche in the kitchen when she broke away to start afresh with the quaint little cupcake place, Buttercup Bake Shop. A former clinical psychologist, she feels that the two fields are very much connected. Jennifer tells *The Observer*, "Both psychology and cupcakes are about making people feel good. They bring the sweetness and happiness to help people get over a New York City day." They can even bring love. "We have had many young men woo their wives with our cupcakes. Some even request that we inscribe on the cakes for their proposal!"

Baby Bakes NYC bakery proves that cupcakes can not only be sweet, but sensitive too. Founder Erika McKenna makes sure that even if you are allergic to sugar, flower and all of the other wonderful things that fill the rest of us

with empty calories and joy; you can still take part of the bite-size bliss that is a fresh cupcake. Baby Cakes only uses the freshest ingredients because they know that love doesn't come in a box with instructions and preservatives, and neither should pastries. All of the treats in this bohemian bakery are 100% vegan, kosher, Gluten-Free, Refined Sugar-Free, Wheat-Free, Soy-Free, Egg-Free and casein-free. The only think that Baby Cakes aren't free of is taste. When asked what makes cupcakes so popular General Manager Emily Woesthoff tells *The Observer*, "I believe they bring joy, escape and comfort all in one little package."

Although Baby Cakes may be free of just about everything that Betty Crocker is made of, when most of us sink our teeth into that butter cream the amount of refined sugar in our palms won't enter our minds until the pastel paper is licked clean. Cupcakes have the ability transport us back to our childhood, a world of calorie free-bliss. We're not about to forget that feeling for a rice cake. They seem so sweet, petite and pretty; how can they be bad for you? But folks, these cakes definitely won't look as cute as they do in their little white boxes as they will stuck to your hips.

Charles Stuart Platkin, or "The Food Detective" did a little snooping around a few of our favorite gourmet bakeries for NPR and what he found was very pretty, even with a couple of sprinkles on top. A Magnolia Bakery vanilla cupcake is 389 calories and nearly 19 grams of fat. That's comparatively dainty to the uber-trendy Crumbs version, which weighs in at about 780 calories and nearly 36 grams of fat. But how do we enjoy our favorite cupcakes without ending up looking like one?

But even if they may lead to muffin-tops, comparing a cupcake

Pretty Thrifty In The City

Aimee Rubenstein

The plaid print of your rain boots may look like that of the British Brand; but if they could talk they might say that you may have paid less for them; perhaps at Payless. But no need to worry, they look so real nobody will even give them a second look, unless it's with a look of envy. Today's economic recession has crashed not just America's economy, but our dreams of shopping and splurging. Fifth Avenue has given a whole new name to window-shopping. Even Audrey Hepburn, known for her window-shopping hobby, would be mixed among wealthy company. With the same dreams, fashionistas all around still want their brand-names on their bags, even if they might have been glued on by a vendor in China Town. But before you call Frauda, Vintage style has given Thrift stores a whole new name, and enterprise.

Girls are "thrifting" around town to find looks that are "cool," "urban," and "eclectic." Confidently, such shoppers brag, "It's vintage!" There is no shame in shopping at thrift stores anymore. People want to shop without burning a hole in their pocket. Suddenly that \$5 bag, yes \$5, is praised for its frugality. The wrinkles and ragged edges are reminiscent of a smile worn by its previous owner. There is just something about it being rough and even frayed that seems inviting. Worn items have a history.

A story of their own. It's not just about being frugal; it's being smart and stylish!

Even celebrities shop at these trendy spots. While thrifting in Los Angeles this past summer, I myself bumped into Jessica Biel. In a world where the economy seems to be on a merry-go-round, we can't risk buying the new Chanel bag or Hermes bangle. It may even be cooler to tote a "previously used-Louis Vuitton" or even a fake, as it might really be called. You'll be saving wads of cash, while not sacrificing style. And hey, nobody has to know. However, steer clear of the Real Vintage out there. Vintage boutiques sell classics for high-end prices. They are no thrift stores. Think holey, bleached jackets for double the price, even triple. An essential piece that has been worn, preserved and then worn again, gives its new owner an aura of power that might have been worn by the buyer before.

As long as it suits you and your wallet, buy it. You're guaranteed to be on the "hit list" while pricey tags will be a major "Miss" this season. Imagine walking around in an original. The Recessionista struts down Fifth Avenue with a flair that is both Chic and Cheap!

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

The Cupcake and The Calorie Counter

Half Your Cake and Eat it Two:

When we divide our desserts it cuts the calories in half without splicing the flavor. The first bite is always the best and often our sweet teeth are satisfied soon afterwards. So by splitting our sweets we will have more to munch on next time we are craving cupcakes.

Sharing is Sweet:

Splitting our treat with a pal is not only sweet but will cut down on each of your intakes.

Tea Cakes:

Often, bakeries will serve teas to accompany their deserts. Once you begin your munching and the sugar rush kicks in, satisfy your

urge to splurge with a sugar-free hot or iced tea.

Change of Cakes:

Constantly switch up your order and try new treats. Boredom will cause you to become less satisfied and more likely to overindulge.

Never Splurge When Starving:

Never lead yourself towards the path of temptation on an empty stomach. That will cause you to make poor choices and fill up on empty calories.

Listen To Your Tummy: It is healthy to periodically give in to your cravings. When you deny yourself what you truly love it will cause eventual calorie over-consumption.

to a muffin is like diehard Bruce Willis to present day Bruce. Once you go bald, you just lose the cuteness (or in Bruce's case, your wife to a trucker hat-wearing man-boy). Whether super-trendy or classic vanilla, there is just something special about those little cakes; they evoke nostalgia of childhood birthday parties and licking the batter with Mom. The cupcake trend is more than just a craze; it is a sweet comfort in these uncertain times. It's simply an irresistible little escape. This sweet trend is getting the better of all of us. You know you're craving one right now.

THE OBSERVER

2009 General Assembly

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companies to raise \$10.8 billion in financing. Though investment in Israel paralleled only seven percent of American financing, the fact that so much money was raised in Israel despite its smaller number of companies suggests a great deal of untapped potential in Israeli tech companies. "The only way we can... explain our existence is through *hasbara* and quantitative, cost-benefit analysis," explained Albin.

Albin concluded her presentation by exhorting us to learn all that we can about the practical benefits that Israel and its economy provide so that we can present a solid, well-argued defense of Is-

rael on our college campuses.

When the General Assembly ended, my fellow participants and I returned to our respective universities having gleaned a wide range of knowledge about Israel from the conference's expert panels. When we finished the last session of the program, we left the conference room infused with a renewed sense of connection to our fellow Jews in both Israel and the Diaspora. Though this conference only lasted from Sunday morning until Tuesday afternoon, I know that the lessons I learned will always be relevant as I grow into my role as an adult advocate for Israel in the world community.

Got Mechina?

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together with student leaders to learn with women in the BJS program. Leya (Eisenman) Thurm is a Judaic Studies major at Stern College who learned with Noll weekly. "We met on a weekly basis to study laws of prayer, kashruth, and other random topics," says Thurm. "The relationship that we built was so inspiring. I never saw such a thirst for Torah knowledge before. I hope to keep in touch with Cheryl [Noll] after I graduate in January."

Alyson Jacobs studies with Aliza Rabinovich. "I enjoy learning from a pupil who is so brilliant and so exemplary in the teachings of the Torah," says Jacobs. "It's my first time studying on a steady basis with anyone and I'm proud to say

that we still study every week in the *Beit Midrash*."

The BJS program for women transformed the Stern experience for many students, and has become a sort of family for women within Stern College. Alyson Jacobs spent two years at Stern before hearing about BJS. Beforehand, she didn't feel like she belonged. "As a sophomore, having spent two years never knowing about the BJS program, I was ready to transfer [to a different college]," she says. "Rabbi [Professor Lawrence] Hajioff introduced the 'July in Jerusalem' program to me and I ended up going. The trip changed my life for several reasons, the most important being it finally connected me with the Basic Jewish Studies program."

As current Vice President of Basic Judaic Studies, Jessica Wiesen-berg also wants to partake in the further development of the program. "We want to focus this year on expanding and making a variety of events that will give everyone the chance to be part and feel what Jewish life really is," she explains.

"I would love for the women who can benefit from our program to join," says Mrs. Schechter. Some women are placed into advanced classes since, having Israeli parents, they can read Hebrew fluently. Many of them went to public school and are lacking fundamental Jewish education. They can benefit tremendously from being part of BJS. As Cheryl Noll approaches graduation, she looks back at BJS and the influence it had on her.

"I can't really separate Mechina from the rest of my experiences at Stern or from my Judaic growth," says Noll. "I am who I am because how all of these things have influenced me these past five semesters... One of the wonderful things about this program is that there are girls from every background imaginable, and girls of every different level of religious observance. Without Mechina, I never would have been able to stay at Stern. Mechina gave me classes I belonged in and a group of people who understood where I was coming from."

Jacobs agrees with Noll. "I am obsessed with Stern, and I owe this entirely to BJS," says Jacobs. "BJS gave me two years of absolute bliss because of inspirational classes, a group of solid friends, and role models who will hopefully stay with me for my life."

An Effective President?

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self constantly proves that he is no dilettante in terms of political maneuvering.

In conclusion, only time and history will tell whether Obama's administration was a success. However, based on the criteria discussed, I believe he is definitely an effective president thus far. Personally, I am going to ignore the petty knocking of doomsayers and look at the big picture, critically analyzing each measure and action as it comes. One cannot pass final judgment yet, and, for now, the economy is on an upturn, a healthcare bill is being guided through Congress, there is a deadline on withdrawal from Iraq, Guantanamo Bay is set to close in January, torture has been banned, and international approval ratings of the United States are higher than they have ever been in the 21st century. This sounds all right to me. The Obama administration is keeping our country together and is progressing on issues, slowly but surely. President Obama still represents change we can believe in, and, more importantly, he awakens the need to facilitate that change in ourselves and in the surrounding world.

Promoting Good Writing Skills

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ference FIT hosted with the writing consultants from Yeshiva and Stern," said Columb. "It was great to compare and contrast the other consultants' experiences. It was a treat just to meet the other consultants as well. They all seem like great people."

A universal goal that all three centers share is to eliminate any fears that students have about writing. They hope to communi-

cate with their respective student bodies that writing is another form of communication; it is not some scary entity that is separate from daily life. Both the Writing Centers and Writing Studio encourage students to schedule appointments either online in person during office hours. More information about the centers can be found on each university's website.

Giving Thanks by Anna Nimus

When the Pilgrims, fleeing their king, landed At Plymouth, 'twas a haven From religious persecution. Their descendants, free of England, did Then fittingly engrave in Their new country's constitution That all men had equal ranks And for this we must give thanks:	For their farms were not producing. And though Liberty is noble, Yet it wouldn't help to feed 'em. And the outlook was a li'l grim If you were a Plymouth Pilgrim.	Squanto saved those early Yanks And for this we must give thanks. We repaid these noble savages, With many a pretty trinket And the White Man's burning water (Though too prone to all its ravages, The Red Men loved to drink it.) Yes, we thanked them, as we oughta. For those trifles from their hand:	Our survival and their land. Well, our destiny was manifest Our freedom-founded nation Soon went on to greater glory And so we yearly plan a fest In joyous celebration Of our Cinderella story: For that early, timely food, For the riches that ensued, For the harvest that we had us, For our superpower status, For the corn and turkey shanks That we ate on Plymouth's banks, For our warplanes, bombs, and tanks, For all this we must give thanks!
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