

The Yeshiva University OBSERVER

WWW.YUOBSERVER.ORG | VOLUME LXI ISSUE III | OCTOBER 2015/ CHESHVAN 5776

Stern Students Respond to Violence in Israel

Hilla Katz-Lichtenstein
Staff Writer

Several weeks ago on October 1st, Eitam and Naama Henkin, residents of the community of Neria in the West Bank, were brutally murdered as they were driving from Itamar with four of their six children sitting in the back seat. They were shot by terrorists who opened fire on them as they drove by.

Rav Eitam Henkin was the son of Rabbanit Henkin, founder and director of the Nishmat Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies for Women in Jerusalem, and Rabbi Yehuda Henkin, author of the responsa *Benei Vanim* and a Modern Orthodox posek.

Rav Eitam himself was on the faculty of Nishmat and could often be found studying in the Nishmat beit midrash. To commemorate Rav Henkin and his wife, Nishmat held a tikun on the night of HoShana Raba - a night of learning in their memory.

The following quote from Rav Sperling, a member of the Nishmat faculty, is an exemplification of the life of Torah that Rav Henkin and his family led:

"I spoke on Shabbat to Rabbanit Henkin...She would like us continue and increase in our learning of Torah. Because the Torah is a tree of life to those that grasp it. Because the more Torah there is in Am Yisrael the more life there is in Am Yisrael—and while the evil in the world strives to diminish our lives, we will increase it. Because the Torah is light. Because the more Torah we learn the more light there is in the world – and while the darkness of evil tries to extinguish the light, we will increase it. Because Eitam and Na'amah lived a life of Torah, for Torah, and in their merit we will continue and increase Torah."

Miriam Pearl Klahr, a senior at Stern College and an alumnus of Nishmat said, "Thinking about the pain she and the entire Henkin family are experiencing is heartbreaking and almost impossible to imagine, since to me she epitomizes ultimate strength."

This attack on the Henkins was only the first of what

has been a continuous series of terror attacks in Israel, mainly in Jerusalem. On October 14th, a woman was injured in a stabbing at the Jerusalem central bus station and was moderately wounded.

On October 13th, two Israelis were killed and fifteen injured in a stabbing and shooting attack on a bus in Southern Jerusalem. Israeli police killed one attacker and managed to take the other into custody.

Additionally, on October 11th an Arab-Israeli drove his car into a woman and stabbed three other victims at Kibbutz Gan Shmuel.

In Ra'anana, four people were wounded in a stabbing attack at a bus stop outside the Beit Loewenstein Rehabilitation Center on Jerusalem Street while earlier that day an Israeli was wounded on Ahuza Street in Ra'anana.

In response to these attacks, Israeli police have sealed off certain Palestinian areas in East Jerusalem. Additionally, several Israeli military units have been deployed to reinforce Israeli police.

Stern students have been rallying behind Israel in many ways; with tehillim and tefillah sessions, public rallies, and staying informed and aware of the tense situation. Many students are also left wondering how to move forward from here.

"In regards to moving forward," said Klahr, "I am learning a few perakim of Tanach for a siyum for the shloshim [the end of the first thirty-day period of mourning]. I also spoke to the students of my high school, SKA, about Rav Eitam and Rabbanit Henkin to help personalize the tragedy and hope to help plan some sort of Stern BMC event in their memory on the night of the shloshim."

May their memories be for a blessing, and may their families be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.



A "Beta" Way to Learn Torah

Ruthie Klein
Staff Writer

Imagine a cutting-edge, innovative new app that allows its users to access one of the largest libraries of Jewish texts available. That's exactly what Josh Herzberg and Noah Santacruz, seniors majoring in electrical engineering at The Cooper Union, did.

While working on a final project for one of their classes, they realized that they could use this as an opportunity to create something beneficial that other people could gain something from. Thus the idea for their app, "BetaMidrash," was born.

BetaMidrash contains millions of Jewish texts, many of which are paired with complete English translations. Tanach, Tosefta, Talmud, Midrash, Halacha, Kabbalah, tefillah; and commentaries such

as Rashi, Ramban and Radak are just some of the sources one can access through the app. Sefaria.org, a website with extensive Jewish resources and texts, provided the texts featured on BetaMidrash.

Herzberg and Santacruz made every effort to ensure that BetaMidrash would be convenient and user friendly. BetaMidrash allows users to jump from text to text, so if one is reading a verse and wants to see the commentary on it, her or she is able to do so easily and painlessly.

This took many hours of work, far more time than they had initially intended to spend working on an app for a mere class project.

Josh described how he and Noah worked hard on making BetaMidrash really powerful. "We spent lots of time tweaking the app to make sure the user interface was intuitive and powerful, and making sure it was fast and responsive," Josh said.

One issue that came up while creating the app was how to make the search engine of BetaMidrash as fast and accurate as possible. "We saw that in many similar types of apps the search engine wasn't that powerful,"

The Modest Problem

Avie Herman
Staff Writer

I have a bone to pick with dressing modestly.

I'm a huge fan of *tzniut*, so much so that I have an outfits page on my website, www.fashionably-frum.com, which provides modest fashion inspiration to over 1,500 followers several times a week. It's something I care about.

To me, *tzniut* should never mean frumpy. Dressing in a *tzniut* manner is about looking like a daughter of The King – a princess, if you will – and representing our glorious people. It means dressing beautifully, flatteringly and stylishly, in a way that expresses who I am, as a unique woman and as a Jew. Wearing aesthetically pleasing clothes, *tzniut* outfits are the best way I can think of to beautify God's commandments and make a big *kiddush Hashem*, just by leaving the house. Sounds great, right?

Except it seems to me that dressing modestly is at risk of being the definitive female mitzvah. I find this ironic since it isn't even one of the three specific feminine mitzvos, which are lighting Shabbat candles, keeping a kosher kitchen and observing the laws of *taharat hamishpacha*. While the

specifics may differ by gender, *tzniut* isn't even a solely feminine mitzvah – men must adhere to the laws of *tzniut* as well.

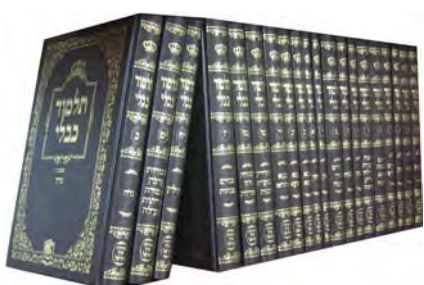
These laws are in place to shield our dignities and they pertain not only to attire but also include speech and action. But in the wrong hands these beautiful laws become a means of objectification by placing an inappropriate emphasis on the female body and narrowing our valuation and evaluation of Jewish women to the dimensions of our skirts, our tights (or lack thereof) and the lengths of our sheitels.

But can the dimensions of my skirt encompass the dimensions of my soul? That's not my modesty. I refuse to think that's what God meant by this mitzvah.

Attire is an easy target for our focus because it is so visible, so external, and so easy to assess and judge. Through appearances, we cast judgments about who's who.

"Oh, she's wearing pants, she must not be frum." "She's fully covered, she must be a *tzadeket*."

These thought processes are damaging because looks can be deceiving.



If You Want the Truth, Become Your Own Journalist

Makena Owens
Editor-in-Chief

The way I see it, we readers now have to do more journalistic work than the reporters who are commissioned to do that work for us.

In the past month, Palestinians have initiated attacks on Israelis every single day, murdering innocent civilians at knifepoint, driving cars through bus stops and a myriad of other violent terror attacks. Video footage recorded by bystanders and foreign correspondents alike reflect the horrifyingly true events transpiring on Israeli streets today.

And yet, despite the footage, despite the witnesses and despite the truth, much of the American media has conducted egregiously biased reporting on Palestinian terror attacks in Israel.

Headlines blare that tell only half of a brutal story: “Multiple Stabbings in Jerusalem After Weekend of Deadly Clashes” (CNN); “Palestinian Teen Killed, New Stabbing in Israel” (The New York Times); “Two Palestinian Teenagers Killed, Two Injured By Israeli Police (The Wall Street Journal).

Individual reporters have also been using their careers as a platform to propagate their own biases. Take MSNBC/NBC foreign reporter Ayman Mohyeldin who claimed that a Palestinian running toward the Damascus Gate “did not appear to be particularly armed” and “did not have a knife.”

He was interrupted by his corresponding news anchor, Jose Diaz-Balart, who looked at the footage from the scene and said, “Now hold on..we can clearly see the man...with what appears to be, in his right hand, a knife.” All of this occurred live on the air last week.

In his article for The Atlantic titled “What the Media Gets Wrong About Israel”, writer Matti Friedman addressed the recent headlines.

“There are banal explanations for problems with coverage—reporters are in a hurry, editors are overloaded and distracted. These are realities, and can explain small errors and mishaps like ill-conceived headlines, which is why such details don’t typically strike me as important or worth much analysis...A few years on the job changed my mind. Such excuses can’t explain why the same inflations and omissions recur again and again, why they are common to so many news outlets, and why the simple “Israel story” of the international media is so foreign to people aware of the historical and regional context of events in this place. The explanation lies elsewhere.”

The explanation is that certain media outlets have made it clear that their “angle” is to report the tragedy of Palestinian deaths that occur on Israeli streets at the hands of the IDF—to “expose” the IDF for what it truly is—knife-wielding and gun-pointing aggressors aside.

Their “beat” is not the daily struggle of the Israeli civilian who is told by his or her employer to come to work armed in case of a terrorist attack, but of the Palestinians who perish at the hands of said Israelis after

threatening their lives.

As a journalist myself, I don’t want to hear that an irresponsible headline or story is just a result of “the angle”; “the beat” or “the spin” of a given network or newspaper. These words are just ways to hide a bias behind a veil of industry buzzwords that attempt to conceal what is simply bad reporting.

Perhaps some want to chalk all of the gross reporting up to money. When writing is commoditized in the form of journalism, words aren’t written to tell the truth, but rather to garner clicks, comments, readership and conversation. If headlines are all just going to compete in a popularity contest, then their writers are going to dress them in the most controversial words they can write. Once again, as I journalist, I don’t want to hear it.

Unfortunately, journalism is no longer an industry in which many writers and editors strive for pure truth. Clearly there are few reporters left who understand the responsibility they have to the public to provide information in the most objective way possible. Instead of placing the public’s need for truth at the forefront of their career, they have begun to see the media as an avenue for their own opinions.

When a network or publication does not draw a hard and necessary line between news and opinion, bias seeps into every word and the media just becomes a rusty pipe filled with holes and leaks. And when that happens, as it is happening right now, the burden of honest reporting is shifted from the journalist and onto the reader or listener.

This fact is troubling. To think that we cannot always rely on the people who are hired to tell the world’s story is uncomfortable, infuriating and may leave many of us at a loss. But just because the truth is not being told in print or on the air, does not mean that the truth does not exist.

The American media has made it implicitly clear that if we want the truth, we need to go out and get it ourselves. As readers and listeners we are now charged with the responsibility to fact-check for ourselves. We must call upon our own sources and conduct our own interviews. We must do our own research and watch our own footage. And without a deadline hanging over our head, we can spend the time necessary to uncover what is really happening in Israel and beyond.

Be your own journalist and do the work that others have failed to do. And when you find the truth, share the facts.

The Yeshiva University
Observer

Editor-in-Chief
Makena Owens

Managing Editor
Esti Hirt

Layout
Raquel Miller

Web & Social Media Editor
Navah Maynard

Business Manager
Michal Adler

News
Meira Nagel
Masha Shollar

Features
Sarah Katz
Miriam Pearl Klahr

Arts & Culture
Shira Huberfeld

Opinions
Menucha Lowenstein
Miriam Renz

Science & Technology
Tamar Levy
Ahuva Muskat



Founded by the women of Yeshiva University’s Stern College in 1958, The Observer is the official newspaper representing the student body of Stern College and Yeshiva University. The Observer is an independent student publication, self-funded, and published on a monthly basis throughout the academic year. Views expressed in The Observer are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board or the student body, faculty, and administration of Yeshiva University. All Observer content is copyrighted and may not be reprinted without permission.

Want to write for The Observer?

Email makena.owens@mail.yu.edu

Students Struggle to Find Political Footing at SCW

Meira Nagel

Editor

This semester, the question of who will be the next president of the United States is one that a good number of students here feel personally about—particularly because of the tenuous situation in Israel and how the presidency will affect it. But there are differing opinions around Stern regarding political involvement as a college student. Some feel passionate that students should be involved and take initiative to do so, while some feel that being in Stern does not lend itself well to political discussion.

“I believe universities in general should take a neutral stance on politics and give students the ability and opportunities to form their own opinions through intellectual discovery,” said Shira Huberfeld, SCW ’16. “Certain stances become the norm in Stern, particularly regarding Israel, and begin to seem like the only valid opinion—preventing students from really researching what is happening and forming individual opinions.”

“The lack of open political discussion and basic political knowledge at YU is embarrassing. Many members of our student body cannot even differentiate between Republicans and Democrats,” agreed Michelle Sabbagh, SCW ’16. “It’s important that students are aware of the political climate beyond the scope of Middle Eastern politics.”

Most Stern students find that they are not really able to find the time to read or discuss the political events going on around them at Stern. “I don’t know anything about politics,” said Elicia Bessaleli, SCW ’16. “I would love to know but there

is no easy way to get involved or know what is going on—and I just don’t have the time for it.”

“Stern is, simply put, not a diverse place when it comes to political opinions,” claimed Estee Levi, SYMS ’17. “It’s just hard to get acquainted with differing political opinions when most people are only exposed to one strain of thought. I just wish people would learn enough to defend their own opinions; really think them out instead of blindly following the opinions of those around them.”

Some students who feel passionate about being aware and involved when it comes to politics are taking initiative and becoming a part of the political landscape. Ariana Kaufman, SYMS ’16, worked on Ted Cruz’s campaign in Houston, Texas this past summer.

“Working for Ted Cruz for President was a life-changing experience,” she said. “I was surrounded daily by mentors and advisors who put their high powered jobs on hold for a cause that they truly identified with,” said Kaufman.

“I would highly recommend any Stern woman who is interested in devoting their lives to public service to get involved in the 2016 election with a candidate that they strongly identify with,” she continued.

“This is an opportunity that we need to utilize while we are still able to control our schedules and careers. Our dual curriculum is the perfect training for a campaign environment, and if I’ve learned anything from my classes here, it’s that Stern women know how to speak their minds,” Kaufman said.

Several students attended an event for presidential candidate Marco Rubio this past Wednesday. “I’m not necessarily endorsing Rubio but I am interested in his platforms and his candidacy,” said Esti Hirt, SCW ’17. “I thought working at the event would be a good opportunity for me to see what he’s like in a more personal and smaller setting—I love politics and am excited to be involved in the process any way I can,” she said.

Other students who attended this event agreed with Hirt. “College is all about learning, becoming informed, and getting involved,” said Lizzi Peled, SCW ’17. “Becoming a part of a presidential campaign in any way is so crucial for our generation—we should stop being apathetic, because it are these upcoming years that are really going to affect us. Additionally, when we show we care, it shows our presidential candidates that they should be thinking about us, and their policies can shift to help us with what we need.”

YUNMUN 2016 Preparations Well Underway

Masha Shollar

Editor

This February, 450 students from 50 religious high schools across the country will convene in Stamford, Connecticut for the 26th annual Yeshiva University National Model United Nations (YUNMUN). From Sunday through Tuesday the high schoolers, who will each be assigned to a delegation chaired by three YU students, will attend a General Assembly at which they will debate the best method of tackling the issues their delegation is up against. The ultimate goal for each delegation, says Danielle Orenshein, a senior double majoring in Political Science and Business Intelligence and Marketing Analytics, and the YUNMUN Secretary-General, is for the delegates to pass a resolution amongst themselves.

Preparation for the event is well underway already, with applicants flooding in. For Orenshein, the high number of applicants and small number of available positions is tough, but also exciting.

“It’s cool to see how people jump at the opportunity to join in,” she said.

While she isn’t involved with selecting the high schoolers who will make up the delegations, it is her charge to ensure that the committees, and the three college students who will run each one, are in the best shape possible come February twenty-first. That means selecting students who are passionate and excited to throw themselves into the work.

And it’s not only Political Science majors - Orenshein

says that a new committee, The Commission on Science and Technology for Development, was formed at the behest of three undersecretaries, all of whom are biology majors, and wanted to see their field of study represented. YUNMUN is for everyone who enjoys “thought provoking, intellectual debates,” said Orenshein, regardless of their major.

While this is model UN, it should by no means be thought of as small time. The three day conference is one that the students - both high school and college level - will have spent several months preparing for. Business attire is required, and each delegation chair will choose one standout delegate as the recipient of the ‘Best Delegate’ award to be handed out at the Tuesday morning award ceremony.

The students will also have spent time working on a position paper, which they will present ahead of time to be submitted online, giving them and everyone else the chance to see how delegation members of other countries are proposing to solve the issue set to them.

While all this groundwork is a necessity, the delegates will also be expected to learn how to adapt and think quickly. Orenshein said that each delegation chair announces a “breakdown crisis” at some point during the conference - a crisis that the students have not expected or prepared for.

Orenshein added that these crises aren’t merely announced: for some delegations, a chair runs into a room

with a dramatic announcement, others learn via an email, and still others - usually the Security Council, a highly coveted delegation - are woken during the night to be told of an imminent threat to global security which they must deal with immediately. It’s up to the team heading each delegation, says Orenshein, to decide precisely what the crisis will be, and how and when they will inform their delegates of it.

Orenshein said that the bulk of her role as Secretary General takes place in the months leading up to the conference itself. She, as well as her three undersecretaries Racheli Weil, Tzvi Levitin, and Avi Strauss, will help each delegation prepare for the General Assembly to come. Once they arrive in Stamford, Orenshein says she will be on hand to troubleshoot if need be, but that the student teams heading each delegation will take the reigns.

Orenshein added that positions for the Junior staff and media center are still open. Joining YUNMUN is a chance, she said, to join a special “community within the school,” learn a great deal, and meet like-minded people from across the country.



A New Year of Shield News

Meira Nagel
Editor

Shield News, the YU and Stern video news broadcast, is starting this year with a fresh perspective and hope to continue to keep the students informed.

Executive Producer, Sarah Shandalov, SCW '16 said the whole staff of Shield News is "very excited about this new year of Shield News." The staff has some old faces as well as some fresh ones—Ariane Pinchot, SCW '16, Yehoshua Zirman, YC (?), and Binyamin Zirman, YC (?) are joining anchors from last year, Akiva Marder, YC '16, and Abby Adler, SCW '18. "With new anchors comes a fresh style and new feel to Shield," said Shandalov.

In addition to the new members of Shield News, they are adding a Macs Live sports segment for all the avid sports' fans on both campuses. The collaboration between Macs Live and Shield News sports writers Binyamin Zirman and Ariana Macir "should be an amazing success," Shandalov added.

This year, Shield News is planning on featuring some fun and informative human interest pieces, which will hopefully educate viewers on all of the news, clubs, and exciting events taking place around campus. Viewers can look forward to more of what they call "Shield in the field," which is where the anchors of Shield News report from where the news is actually happening. "Our main goal is to keep the students of Yeshiva University well-informed," said Shandalov. "Each week we strive to do just that. Between our news segment, events segment, and sports segment, viewers have the opportunity to learn about all that is taking

place on campus. With our talented director Akiva Schick and assistant director Ariela Greengart, we're hoping to make this year as original and exciting as possible."

As a student, it is often difficult to find the time to find out everything that is going on around campus. "Knowing what is going on around campus is an incredibly important aspect of being part of a university," Shandalov explained. "Whether it's knowing what events are taking place or knowing what is going on behind the scenes of YU, we at Shield want everyone to know and be aware of as much as we can report, which is why we present students with succinct videos and clear information to help them stay informed in a fun and exciting way, without having to sift through the hundreds of sstuds and ystuds they get a week. And that's what we plan on accomplishing this year."

If students want to get involved, they can shoot off an email to theshieldnews@gmail.com with quotes about current news and events, information about a great club or new fundraisers, or new and exciting human interest pieces. Shield News is also planning on being much more active on social media this year with new social media manager Alex Gordon, SCW '16, and can be followed on Facebook, Instagram, or subscribed to on YouTube.



What Were All the Cameras About?

Esti Hirt
Editor

On Tuesday, October 13th, the Beren campus was bustling with Stern students adjusting back into school after an extended holiday break. However, Stern women were not the only ones on campus that day: a film crew was on campus as well. The cameras captured students' normal day at Stern College: talking in the hallway, waiting for the elevator, eating in the caf, and sitting in class.

The footage was commissioned by YU's Office of Admissions, and will be used to update their recruitment video to be shown at Stern College's Open House on November 15th. According to Matthew Schwartz, admissions' Associate Director of Operations, the admissions department updates some of their content every few years. This includes brochures, different "giveaways," and other materials.

This year, the department chose to redo the video as the previous one was filmed about four years ago and was outdated. The video aims to relay a glimpse of what Stern College is like on a day-to-day basis, and the SCW of four years ago certainly is not the same as it is today.

About 20 hours of footage was taken in all. Schwartz explained that this is due to the unique nature of YU. It is such a complex place with a lot to it, and the crew wanted to capture what the real experience is about. They made sure to interview students from many different backgrounds, faculty from across departments,

and multiple administrators.

The tough part will be narrowing down all the footage into a five-minute commercial of sorts for the university.

While the purpose of filming was primarily for the open house video, Schwartz revealed tentative plans to produce more than one video with the footage. The Office of Admissions may choose to produce more focused videos on certain aspects of the university to be released throughout the year. This way the hours of footage will be utilized in an efficient, productive manner.

The admissions department hopes that the film will impress prospective students and encourage them to apply or at least consider the school more seriously. The students and the dedication of the faculty and administration impressed the videographers. So, hopefully they will have a hit on their hands.

Oregon Shooting Prompts Varied Opinions Among Media and Officials

Shira Krinsky
Staff Writer

On October 1, a 26-year-old man opened fire at Umpqua Community College in Rosewood, Oregon, killing nine people and injuring nine others. After being wounded by police during an exchange of gunfire, the gunman, Christopher Harper-Mercer, ran back into the classroom where he had done most of the shooting and killed himself.

According to the New York Times, law enforcement officials said Harper-Mercer was carrying three guns. Witnesses report that the shooter asked about people's religion before firing, but authorities have not provided a motive.

The recent shooting has begun another round of debate on gun control, with strong opinions all over the board, beginning with Harper-Mercer's parents. CNN reported that Harper-Mercer's mother, Laurel Harper, had posted comments online complaining about states that consider a loaded magazine in the house the same as a loaded gun, stating "I keep all my mags full. I keep two full mags in my Glock case. And the ARs and AKs all have loaded mags. No one will be 'dropping' by my house uninvited."

Ian Mercer, the shooter's father, said that the shooting would not have happened if his son had not had access to 14 guns, all of which were confirmed by federal officials to have been bought legally by Mercer or a family member in the past three years.

Senate Democrats have begun the push for new gun control laws. Their bill package includes expanding background checks, and not allowing a purchase to go through before a background check is complete - a sale can go forward if a background check is not completed within 72 hours according to current laws. "Congress has become an accomplice in these murders," Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut said at the press conference where he announced the new legislation.

Many of the presidential candidates have much to say about this matter. Dr. Ben Carson made some of the more controversial remarks when he told ABC News that he "would ask everybody to attack the gunman," and said on "Fox & Friends" later that day that "I would not just stand there and let him shoot me."

The Huffington Post reported that Carson defended his statements later, saying, "I want to plant in people's minds what to do in a situation like this," and that there is a need to address the amount of gun violence in the US, perhaps by enacting stricter gun control laws for people with mental illness.

This has also reignited the conversation on mental illness and the correct way to deal with it. In an interview for "Meet the Press," Donald Trump, in response to President Obama's statement against gun violence after the shooting, said "Guns, no guns, doesn't matter. You have people that are mentally ill and they're going to come through the cracks and they're going to do things that people will not even believe are possible."

John Oliver, on his show Last Week Tonight, took an opposing stance to Trump. "The aftermath of a mass shooting might actually be the worst time to talk about mental health," he said. "The vast majority of mentally ill people are nonviolent and the vast majority of gun violence is committed by non-mentally-ill people. In fact, mentally ill people are far likelier to be the victims of violence rather than the perpetrators."

The shooting has had ramifications all over the country, including here at Stern. Over vacation, all students received emails about tighter security measures that would take effect once students returned to campus, including most dormitory buildings being locked. Students must scan their IDs in order to open the door, instead of it being unlocked and students showing their ID to the guard as they walk in.

At orientation this year, there was a mandatory active shooter training. Many students at the time were probably sitting there just wondering when it would be over. In the light of these recent events, however, it was definitely a good thing to make students attend. "I'm grateful now that I was forced to sit through that," one student said. "You never think something like that could happen here, but you just never know. The students in Oregon probably never thought that it would happen there, either."

NEED TO TAKE THE

GRE

OR

GMAT?

Learn from better instructors and get more for your money than in any other test prep program, **GUARANTEED!**

- Ivy League Instructors
- A Tailored Approach
- More Class Time
- Key Resources

CLASSES RUNNING THROUGHOUT THE FALL



**LEARN FROM THE BEST
TEST PREP**

800.311.PREP

TheBestTestPrep.com

Stern Students Respond to Violence and Terror in Israel

Natasha Bassalian

Staff Writer

Since its declaration of statehood in 1948 Israel has been subject to an exceptionally rich history of war and violence, especially for so a young country. It faces harassment from the outer world, as well as, most threateningly, from within. Tension and hostility constantly hang at a loose thread that sometimes snaps leading to outbursts of attack and terror.

On September 13th, the day before Rosh Hashana, Israel raided the Temple Mount, and foiled a terror plan. Israeli police forces confiscated pipe bombs, firecrackers and stones that Arabs of East Jerusalem had prepared in order to attack praying Jews on Rosh Hashana eve. This invasion triggered extreme responses from Palestinian leadership along with mainstream and social media. Palestinian masses were upset and infuriated as they were led to believe that their holy sight of the Al Aqsa mosque was in danger.

On the first of October 1a horrific act of violence took place. While driving on a road in the West Bank Rabbi Eitam and Naamah Henkin were shot dead by a Palestinian gunman in front of their children's eyes. Shortly afterwards, violent outbursts of murderous stabbings and violent attacks became a daily occurrence throughout the country. These attacks are undoubtedly instilling great fear in Israelis. In his condemnation of the violence, Lars Faarborg Anderson, current EU representative to Israel stated that these attacks "undermine trust ordinary citizens feel for the passersby in the streets, let alone trust needed as communities if there is to be any prospect of peace."

Feelings of helplessness, pain and anger are prevalent within Jewish communities forced to watch the unjust, irrational violence from across the ocean. Many students of

Stern College for Women feel a specifically deep connection to Israel, after having lived there during their seminary year. An anonymous student who spent this past year studying in Israel, expressed her distress. "Ammunition hill is right next to my seminary, and now also the sight of violent attacks. It unnerves me to think that I used to walk their often, and even more so that my friends are still there and in danger." Regarding the worry she now feels for her friends she added, "I used to not understand my parents' worry for me, but now I do."

Tsvia Beck, a Junior majoring in political science expressed her concern for both sides. "It pains me that the escalation of terror in Israel has made people into what they may not have been otherwise. Israelis are becoming citizens of hate and vengeance, while Palestinians and Arab/Muslims around the world are being stereotyped as "violent." Tsvia further analyzed that "the stereotype itself might be causing some individuals to be pressured into acting violently."

On Sunday October 11th, an organized support gathering of song and dance in solidarity with Israel, took place in Times Square. Molly Procrass, a senior at Stern College, spoke of the importance of such events. "Through events like this in public places such as Times Square, we are given the opportunity to change the very skewed and misinformed public opinion." Molly expanded on the event itself, describing that "It was amazing. Everyone was singing and dancing, there was no anti-Arab/Palestinian talk, just pure love and support; which leaves a positive impact on all those watching." Molly also believes that although Stern students are physically very far from the conflict, they can still take action. "We must try to combat the media bias, and can do so by writing pieces for the

newspaper in support of Israel."

Kayla Mogil, a former soldier of the IDF, and Freshman at Stern College, feels deeply connected to the terror that is striking Israel. "It hits close to home for me as I served in the army and my boyfriend is currently there and in danger." She explained that "The situation doesn't make me sad or worried, just angry. There is a lot of injustice served at Israel. Israel condemns terror, whereas terrorists are glorified as martyrs by their families. Attacks are at defenseless people, which has no purpose but to terrorize. I had to wear a bulletproof vest in war at the Gaza border and it's not fare for regular civilians to need to wear this to feel safe." Kayla also attended the Times Square event and believes that it "shows people that Israel is made of love." She also expanded on the self-harm the terrorists are inflicting. "They are harming their own people who hold jobs and good lives. Their actions will inevitably lead to a huge crackdown."

Talia Molotsky, Senior and president of TAC at Stern College, commented on an event held on Tuesday, October 13th in Weissberg Commons at the YU campus titled 'Jewish Response to Terror'. "I felt that this served as an outlet for students to think and feel about what has been going on in a meaningful way." There were two speakers, one of whom shared with the audience an idea of what students can do moving forward. Rabbi Schacter said that to take upon oneself something small in light of the events can actively ignite and maintain sensitivity. "The Israel Club has been busy empowering students to take action, but the focus of this event was about spiritual and emotional reactions, which is so important, too."

New Clubs On The Block

Sarah Katz

Editor

As someone who looks forward to the first day of school, (yes I know, can there really be such a person?) getting the familiar Sstuds and Ystuds sent to my YU inbox, is a friendly reminder that school will soon be in full swing. There are emails sent to remind students about new security measures, the theme for the coming week's Shabbat, and an overwhelming majority of emails urging students to sign up for clubs on campus. As always, there are the familiar emails from popular clubs such as TAC and the Israel Club, known for bringing exciting and unique events to campus. But what makes YU so distinct is that there are so many club options. By just reading one's Sstuds and Ystuds, a student can learn about the variety of clubs offered on campus and see just how diverse the YU community really is.

For those students who feel that our school days can use a bit of magic, the Disney Club, one of the many new clubs on campus this semester, is aiming to bring a little bit of charm to the worked packed schedules of YU students. Shaina Drazen, president of the Disney Club, wants to share her love of Disney with the student body. She said that "all we needed was faith, trust and pixie dust." After all, who doesn't feel better when watching a Disney favorite from his or her childhood? A student's life is filled with studying and writing papers, leaving limited time for relaxation and enjoyment. Drazen, who plans on hosting movie, trivia and karaoke nights, feels that with all

the stress college students face, a night of singing Disney songs along with their fellow students can bring some much needed fun to their routines. As of now, the club does not have any board positions available, but they may in the future, once the club is more established.

Living in Manhattan, a Yeshiva College student may feel that he or she is in the center of a thriving Jewish community. After all, the communities of Washington Heights and the Upper West Side boast strong and vibrant Jewish communities. However, Netanel Paley, a student at YU, felt that there was more to be done in terms of helping the other Jewish communities in Manhattan. Paley has started a new club this semester called TheEruv which aims to help the Jewish communities right next to YU and Stern. Paley explains that, "As students of one of the oldest and most prominent Jewish institutions in Washington Heights and greater Manhattan, I believe we have the responsibility to not only actively engage with the neighborhoods around us, but to also lay the groundwork for a unified Jewish community." TheEruv plans on bringing after school programming, Torah classes, and shabbatonim to children at Breuer's, Jewish day schools in Manhattan and the YM-YWHA. The club plans on sending YU students to visit these Jews in hospitals, come to their weddings, and just build relationships with them. All board positions are full for this club, but students are urged to sign up and volunteer for this important cause.

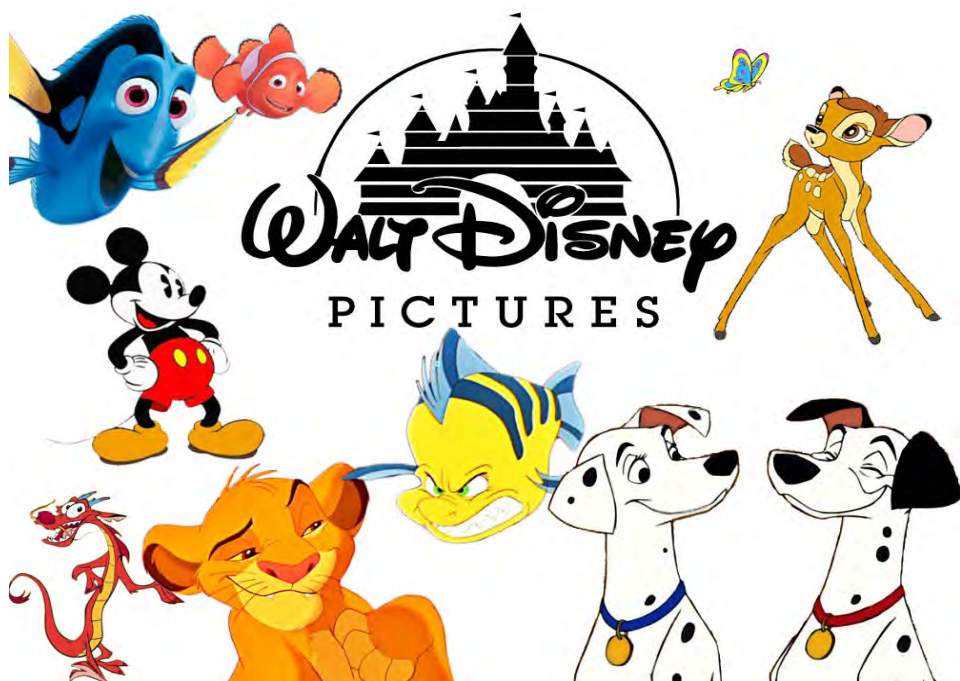
Another new club emerging on campus, is bringing the world popular Bnei Akiva youth movement to the YU. Dovid Simpser, a student at Yeshiva College, and Maia Wiesenfeld, a student at Stern, have started the club in order to show that "Bnei Akiva is much more than a summer camp or extracurricular activity. It is a lifestyle based on religious Zionist ideals, promoting Torah observance and values, a devotion to the land of Israel, and social and political activism." The club plans on following the setup of other Bnei Akiva clubs and have many co-ed events

which will bring together the YU community. Simpser says, "Our events will contain informal educational components related to Bnei Akiva's values, and will provide a fun, open setting to be with friends and meet others." As of now all board positions have feel filled, but Simpser says that everyone should feel welcome to ask if there is any way they can contribute to the club, since Bnei Akiva values unity and working together.

Think that sports is pure fun, with no educational value? Well think again. The Sports Analytical Club, another new club on campus this year, aims "to provide a dynamic platform for sports fans, fantasy sports fans and overall business-minded individuals alike to explore a booming industry from both a business and recreational perspective," according to the head of the club, Yeshiva College student, Jakob Finkel. Finkel described how it is very hard to go anywhere these days without seeing some type of advertisement or commercial for fantasy sports. He says he "...saw an opportunity to both educate interested students about the inner-workings of the industry and work together on learning about potential trends, ultimately formulating our own insight and ideas." Students have the opportunity to discuss their favorite sports, fantasy sports teams and companies, and also engage with their fellow classmates in learning about the business side of this industry. Board positions have all been taken, but students should sign up in order to be involved in the many great events that the club is planning.

The YU Cancer Society, is another new club to look out for this semester. Kelley Tripp, a Stern student, values how important it is for students on the Beren Campus to understand and be aware of this horrible disease. Tripp says, "As a pre-med student, I am adamant that the Beren campus students become more aware of cancer, its effects on society today, and prevention methods." The club plans on holding monthly cancer awareness weeks. It also hopes to bring in speakers, including both medical professionals and cancer survivors to share their experiences with the student body. There are many ways students can get involved with The Cancer Society on campus. Students can visit cancer patients, spread the names of people with cancer who need our tefilot, and research and present their findings on cancer.

This article highlights just some of the many news clubs students should expect to see on campus this semester. To learn more about the upcoming events of both these clubs and the hundreds of other clubs YU has to offer, keep checking your student Gmail and look out for flyers around school.



The Children without a Face

Dvorit Faust

Staff Writer

The children of Syrian refugees are at risk of becoming 'nowhere babies'—babies without an identity.

Time: 12:45 a.m.

Location: Killis State Hospital in southern Turkey

Iman Hamid has been in labor for the past 6 hours. Finally, she hears her baby's first cry. As the doctor hands her her newborn son, she looks to the left where her husband should be standing— but he is not there. And the beautiful baby boy that she is holding in her arms— he is no one.

When the Syrian Civil war started in 2011, over 6 million refugees escaped to other countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq. Since then, over 100,000 babies have been born. Most of these babies are what are called "Stateless children"—children born without a nationality. These babies are born with no identity. They have no past and no future. This is the start of the lost generation.

Syrian law does not recognize a mother's right to pass on her nationality to her children. Therefore, in order for a newborn to receive Syrian nationality, the family needs proof of the father's nationality. But what about during a war where husbands are killed, are missing or are fighting? What does the mother do then?



In countries such as Turkey and Lebanon, tens of thousands of births are occurring without a father being present. These children are unable to get Syrian citizenship, which means that they cannot get a birth certificate, a passport, or any legal documentation at all.

In many of these countries, the women are treated very poorly, especially if they do not have a husband. Many of these women are susceptible to underage marriage, sexual exploitation and polygamous marriages. These ways of marriage are illegal in Syria.

When a baby is born in one of these circumstances, he or she is usually born in someone's home rather than in a hospital. If the government finds out about these illegal marriages, the parents can be prosecuted, and their child can be taken away. The births are therefore kept secret, and without documented proof of the father's nationality or any other hospital records, it is nearly impossible to identify that child's nationality. These babies are stateless.

There is also the case of the father forgetting or losing his proof of citizenship. When this happens, the parents can register their baby for citizenship. But this can take years. Over 92% of refugees are not able to complete the legal and administrative steps to register the birth of their children.

Registering costs money that the refugees do not have and, therefore, they are unable to access the resources that should be available to them. Most refugees do not speak the language of the country in which they are living, and the thought of going to government offices terrifies them. For the small percentage of families who can register their child, the government rarely gives the baby citizenship of any kind, which leaves these children nationless.

These children are being born without a future. Without any documents they are unable to access any education, healthcare or social services. Similarly they cannot apply for a legal job or travel anywhere freely.

One of the biggest fears that parents of a stateless child have is that when the time comes to return to Syria, they will not be able to take their child with them. These children also have a high risk of trafficking or child recruitment by violent groups such as ISIS. These children have no chance of life.

For those of us who are fortunate enough to know our nationalities, we do not think twice about what that nationality is.

When asked where we are from we do not even think before answering. But, imagine having no answer. We identify ourselves by our nationality. Who we are is based on where we were born and to whom we were born.

We know our past and we get to choose what our future will be. These children don't have a choice. So we must ask ourselves—what is going to happen to this lost generation in the future?

A "Beta" Way to Learn Torah

Ruthie Klein

Staff Writer

cont'd from front page

said Josh. "It's actually very hard to make a fast search on a mobile device without taking up lots of valuable extra storage space on the phone. We saw this as a problem that needed to be solved, so we spent some time thinking about it, and developed a specially designed algorithm which allows a powerful search which is fast and has advanced options."

BetaMidrash is a free app. This, Josh explains, was to "make a better Torah experience." Though their website has links to donate money to the cause, they would rather people learn and use the app without feeling any pressure to donate.

Working on a Torah-related computer project is not a first for either Josh or Noah. They have created a program which can take a picture of a page of Talmud and then convert it into a digitized version of the page. Josh also

created Torahsummary.com, which contains summaries of the Torah according to the breakdown of both the chapter and verse, as well as page-by-page summaries of Gemara.

Josh and Noah now work for Sefaria.org, a relationship that was formalized through their use of its texts for BetaMidrash. "Ultimately we see BetaMidrash as an important point in both of our careers which will hopefully help us to work on more Torah projects in the future," said Josh. "This is not the first Torah project the two of us worked on and it won't be the last."

The Pope Pays a Visit

Esther Hirsch

Staff Writer

Last month America was graced with a visitor that rode a personalized mobile, kissed the heads of babies and encouraged Americans to care more deeply for their environment.

Pope Francis, 78, is the first pope from Latin America and the third pope ever to visit the United States. He made a six-day visit to America lasting from September 22nd to September 27th, making stops at Washington D.C., New York City and Philadelphia during his stay.

The pope's visit heralded the reawakening of a religious spirit within Americans. For some Stern students, the sight of the country so anticipating the pope's arrival was refreshing. "It's nice to see Americans care so much about religion and religious leaders for a change," said one student.

The pope began his trip with an arrival at the Andrews Air Force Base just outside of Washington, D.C., after a four day visit to Cuba. There to greet him was President Obama, Vice President Biden, their families and crowds of cheering Americans. The pope was then welcomed at the White House with a special ceremony where he gave his first address to the American people, touching on issues and themes that would come to define his trip.

Identifying himself as the "son of an immigrant family," the pope expressed a connection with the American nation, a country "largely founded by such families." The pope also commended President Obama for his efforts to combat climate change and emphasized the importance of taking action to maintain the environment for the future generations. A parade through the National Mall followed, after which the pope led a midday prayer service and mass later that day.

The highlight of the pope's second day in D.C. was his speech in Congress in which he quoted Martin Luther King and Abraham Lincoln, urging congressman to unite to serve the common good of society. "Our efforts must aim at restoring hope, righting wrongs, maintaining commitments

and thus promoting the wellbeing of individuals and of peoples," he said.

Since his appointment to the papacy in March 2013, Pope Francis has stood out from past popes by taking a humbler and less

cont'd from front page

formal approach to his papacy. His teachings emphasize mercy over morality, compassion and love over condemnation.

While he hasn't changed the official doctrine of the Catholic Church regarding issues such as abortion, homosexuality and birth control, the pope has taken a more compassionate and accepting approach towards people contending with these issues.

Perhaps that is why so many Americans—of different religious affiliations, cultures, and socioeconomic statuses—have found themselves enamored by the pope. Catholics and non-Catholics alike have been drawn toward the leader's warm and caring nature, his messages of unity and inclusivity and his open heart.

Yet others see the pope as too liberal. The cover of Newsweek's September 18th issue displayed a picture of the pope alongside the question, "Is the Pope Really Catholic?" In the past, the papacy has always assumed a conservative position, protecting the Church's teachings. Francis's choice to openly confront social issues such as capitalism and the environment has made people wary of his religious observance.

The second lap of the pope's journey took place in New York City, where ticketholders lined the streets by Central Park to catch a glimpse of the beaming pope in white as the popemobile rode towards 60th street. The pope later paid a visit to the September 11th memorial and museum where he met with relatives of the fallen, offering words of comfort and support. He also gave an address to the United Nations General Assembly and visited the Our Lady Queen of Angels School in Harlem.

The day came to a dramatic close with mass in Madison Square Garden where 20,000 people were present.

In the city of unbridled commerce and capitalist success, the pope encouraged Americans to seek the welfare of the less fortunate who are falling through the cracks. "In big cities, beneath the roar of traffic, beneath the rapid pace of change, so many faces pass by unnoticed because they have no 'right' to be there, no right to be part of the city," he said.

"They are the foreigners, the children who go without schooling, those deprived of medical insurance, the homeless, the forgotten elderly. These people stand at the edges of our great avenues, in our streets, in deafening anonymity."

The pope's final days in the States were spent in Philadelphia where he visited Independence Hall, led mass at the city's Catholic basilica and attended the World Meeting of Families.

Though Pope Francis has bid the country farewell, his impassioned words and historic visit have yet to be forgotten.



There's No Need to Fear the "F" Word

Masha Shollar
Staff Writer

At a large gathering this summer, I got into a conversation with a young man about sexism. When I said that I thought sexism was so institutionalized, he expressed surprise and disbelief, saying he always viewed it as more of an unfortunate anomaly, to which I responded, "That's because you're male." After the conversation ended, one of the other women leaned across our table and asked with a slightly concerned smile and in the sort of tone one might use with an overwrought four-year-old, said, "Masha, do you think there is a war on women?"

I was surprised by the question. No matter how you phrase it, I think sexism still exists in many places. And because it does, I see the need for feminism.

Yet I am continuously confused by how many religious women feel uncomfortable identifying themselves as feminists. They seem to think that the label flies in the face of Orthodoxy, Halakhah, and tradition. Furthermore, some believe it is immodest or incorrect for them to speak out against sexism. In truth, feminism is neither immodest nor a violation of Judaism.

Sexism clearly does still exist—just ask any woman who has ever been catcalled on the street, patronized simply because of her gender or has had to work doubly hard as any man to achieve the same goal. In her book *Men Explain Things To Me*, author Rebecca Solnit recounts an experience at a party in which a man explained the plot of her own book to her—which he clearly hadn't read, despite the fact that she tried several times to tell him she was the author.

During my summer internship as I wrapped up an interview, my subject asked if I was in college. When I affirmed this, he asked with a smile that indicated he thought he was being funny if I was studying for an MRS degree. His implication that I chose to attend college simply as a means of snaring an eligible bachelor made me feel devalued; viewed, not as a whole, autonomous person with a mind I seek to expand and grow, but as merely someone's future wife. This is not to say that I view marriage and having a family as unimportant. On the contrary, for me, both are a vital part of living a full and wonderful

existence. However, I will also have an identity outside of being someone's wife or mother.

Every woman is entitled to personal fulfillment, as seen in Adam's naming of his wife, Chava. She is called both "the mother of all life" and "the woman." She is the source of all life *while still being her own person*, with all of her own thoughts, needs, opinions, emotions, and capabilities—creating and maintaining a sense of self.

To me, feminism means respecting the divinity and humanity in all people, regardless of gender. Feminism and halakhah are, to me, a natural pairing. The Hebrew Bible speaks of many strong, outspoken, even trailblazing women. Miriam the Prophetess, brave enough to rebuke Pharaoh at the tender age of five; Yael, who assassinated the Philistine general Sisera, ensuring a Jewish victory; Deborah the Judge, who ruled in an era renowned for lawlessness. One will not find any "Yes, dear" meek obedience. Rather, one finds strong women with their own voices and minds.

The biblical matriarchs were equal partners with the patriarchs—not waiting for some outside person to tell them they were powerful, but striking out to take positions they felt were faithful to God's will. Exempli gratia: Rebecca overrode the decision of her husband Isaac, and sent Jacob in subterfuge, to take the birthright instead of Esau.



A friend recently shared with me her worry of expressing her convictions certain topics because she fears others will view her as less religious than girls who may be quieter or less opinionated. In this day and age, why should any of us feel the need to prove that we are not irreligious for having a brain and an opinion?

So ladies, there should be no need to fear the moniker "feminist." As someone who has been called that many times, often in exasperated and even accusatory tones, I wear the label with pride. We should not be limited in what we choose to do because of our gender. Women should not hesitate to express opinions, ideas, or arguments. We should not fear that we are being inappropriate or immodest for choosing to speak out when we feel passionately about something. We are, in fact, following and continuing in the rich tradition of the righteous women who came before us.

The Modest Problem

Avie Herman
Staff Writer

cont'd from front page

Yes, the outer expressions can both reflect and affect the inner balance, but on its own, appearance does not portray a full picture. A woman may do few other mitzvot besides dressing modestly, with the intent of blending into the frum community. Is her modest attire valuable? Of course. Every single mitzvah a Jew does has immeasurable value to God, independent of any other mitzvot that person does or does not do. But to merely glance at this woman and assume you know her story is preposterous.

Likewise, there may be a God-fearing woman who does a multitude of mitzvot with a smile, and she walks around in pants or tank tops or short skirts.

Another woman who dresses modestly and appears to be fully observant, texts on Shabbat when no one's looking.

Which of these three women is objectively better? I'm not God, so I can't judge. Even more so, it would be absurd to make an evaluation based on nothing but the clothes these women put on one morning. And yet, most of us are guilty, on some level, of doing just that.

I think this mitzvah gets extra attention, in schools especially, because of its visibility. Emphasizing dress codes is an easy way to impose order and conformity because unlike many other mitzvot, it is simple to measure and regulate. It seems more practical to make a girl change her top or put on tights than it would be to send students to the office for not praying with enough focus and intent.

Strict rules may also reflect that for school-aged girls, clothing choices are an easy, highly visible way to rebel against the rules. Perhaps the phenomenon is even in reverse — girls rebel in the arena of attire due to the emphasis that authority figures place on it. Maybe they would rebel either way. But because we place such strict confines on Jewish girls' attire, we make *tzniut* feel like a chain bound tighter than the high-collared Kiki Riki shells around their necks.

In doing this, we forget that *tzniut* is meant to glorify, sanctify and dignify women's bodies. We instill shame and secrecy, rather than the sense of pride and privacy that I'm sure God wants us to bestow on our beautiful bodies that house our

incandescent souls.

When we focus so many glares at Jewish girls' and women's knees, we objectify them. Defining women so wholly by our attire, and thus our bodies, takes focus away from our minds, our actions and our words. When we focus so intently on women's clothing choices, we take the importance, power and responsibility away from all the other choices women make.

Another trap of overemphasizing on women's *tzniut* is when it is made to center around men. If Hashem had intended for women to dress modestly for men's sake, I believe He would have made it a mitzvah *bein adam l'chaveiro*, an interpersonal mitzvah between us and our fellow Jews.



But it isn't. Because it isn't primarily about relationships between women and men.

I don't believe that God commanded women to dress modestly to protect men from us or from themselves. God made it a mitzvah *bein adam l'makom*, between us and God. As in, it isn't some man's business how I dress, it isn't about me and a random fellow Jew on the street; it's about my personal connection to God.

This focus on female modesty for the sake of men is just as harmful to men as it is to women. It implies that men are animals who cannot control themselves when it comes to women's bodies and sexuality. It does not give men enough credit for their ability to temper their desires and behavior.

Isn't self-restraint an important part of Jewish character development? This kind of logic makes women responsible for someone else's actions.

In a very socially relevant way, this thought process screams of blaming the victim. If a woman is assaulted by a man (no, our community is not immune to this) this logic can be used to protect the man and blame the woman. It also sets girls up to potentially fear men because they have been taught that men cannot control their instincts and that, when acted on, that those instincts may prove dangerous.

We do not want to create an environment in which questions such as, "Was her skirt too short?" and "What was she wearing?" become the norm. These are the wrong questions. Men must be accountable for their actions, and for this to occur we cannot have low expectations of their self-control.

Women are commanded to dress modestly, but when it comes to our interactions with men, the onus is not on the women to cover what should be covered, but on the man not to look in an inappropriate manner.

Modest attire is meant to provide a boundary between a woman's body and the world, yet when it is so heavily and so consistently emphasized it serves instead to invite much scrutiny of our bodies. Dressing in a *tzniut* manner is a beautiful, important mitzvah that plays a large role in my life. I only wish we could learn to value and embrace it without placing so much weight on this single facet of Jewish women's limitless strengths and capabilities.

Miracles in Traditions: Nissim Tawil's War Story

Allison Tawil
Staff Writer

After watching Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' powerful new video on Jewish identity titled "Why I am a Jew," I am reminded of a time when I wasn't alive in a place I've never been to. Echoes of the past sound softly in my ears, words that I have heard told over so many times that it is as if I heard these words at their first utterance. They are the words of my grandfather, vouching to save the lives of Jews he has yet to meet.

My grandparents, Nissim and Esther Tawil, were living in the port town of Kobe, Japan for their business. Nissim, who was born in Jerusalem, married Esther Tawil from Syria in 1937 and moved to Kobe after the wedding. There were about thirty Jewish families living there at the time, both Sephardic and Ashkenazic, all there for business. My grandfather was able to help set up a shul to help organize the small Jewish community and maintain their observance in such a remote place. My grandparents recalled having a good life in Japan. This was before the war.

Throughout World War II, the Japanese government was living in a state of constant paranoia. Although the Jews, including my grandfather, were mostly businesspeople, they were constantly accused of spying for the U.S. and England. In my grandfather's words, "we suffered during the war." But they soon realized that they were well off compared to Jews living in European countries. Not long after my grandparents arrived, the remote town of Kobe became a safe-haven for hundreds of Jewish refugees, all of whom fled the Nazis and the terror of the Holocaust.

One day, my grandfather received a summons for a meeting in a government office. Naturally, he was nervous – he had heard the stories of people who were summoned to a meeting like this and never returned. After all, this was a wartime. Nevertheless, my grandfather met with the officials who explained to him the following: A group of Jews were gathered in the Russian city of Vladivostok, which is on the border of Japan. These Jews had some sort of visa, but the Japanese consulate needed someone to agree to sign their papers and guarantee them, allowing them access to Japan. If not, they would be sent back to Germany or Poland.

My grandfather, who was known by the government as being one of the leaders of the Jewish community in Japan, was asked if he would sign for these Jews. True to the words of Rabbi Sacks, "our nation, though at times it suffered the deepest poverty, never gave up on its commitment to helping the poor, or rescuing Jews from other lands, or fighting for justice for the oppressed, and did so without self-congratulation, because it was a mitzvah, because a Jew could do no less." My grandfather agreed to the task.

This response made the government officials angry, as they began to shout at him. "Now we know that you are very unreliable, Mr. Tawil. You're willing to sign these papers without knowing who and what these people are? How can



you take such a responsibility upon yourself?" My grandfather explained to them that he was doing just what they would do. "Suppose the people by the border were Japanese. Would you send them back to Germany or Poland to be killed, or would you sign for them? This is the reason that I want to sign."

Apparently they didn't understand this analogy. I'm not sure if they would have done the same based on what they replied. "We don't have all the information for these Jews, we do not know all of their names, so we need to send them back. However, there is another group coming from Siberia, so you can sign for that group." Understandably, my grandfather was distraught by this suggestion.

As Rabbi Sacks noted, "The Judaic tradition shaped the moral civilization of the West, teaching for the first time that human life is sacred..." This is certainly what my grandfather displayed in this situation. He told them he must have them in Japan, so he would sign the papers without their names, and when they came in, they would fill in their names.

This triggered shouting again. "How can you sign a paper without knowing what kind of people they are? These people are spies! They don't look like the Ashkenazim and Sephardim who live here – they have beards and *peiot*. We suspect they're not Jews."

Due to the fears that these refugees were spies, my grandfather made a deal with the Japanese that people from the community would go to interview the refugees on their boat to see if they were Jews or spies.

And in the end, they weren't spies. Far from it.

These Jews were all rabbis and students from Mirrer Yeshiva, and among them was Rav Aharon Kotler, the founder of Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, New Jersey. My grandfather had the privilege of learning with these men twice a week in his home. There were six or seven groups of refugees who made their way to Kobe within six months.

We were always proud of my Grandpa Tawil's Japan story. But it wasn't until I was older that I realized the story's deeper message. My grandfather risked losing the trust of the Japanese during a time that his relationship with the government was his only lifeline in order to save people that he had never even met. The Japanese could not even comprehend this mentality.

While at times I may feel like I do not have a connection to most Jews, or when there are those rare Jews that I wished I was not connected to, I then remember that these are Jews that my grandfather would have saved, and these thoughts are eliminated. It is with this mindset that I am able to fulfill what is said in "Why I am a Jew":

"The dreams and hopes of my ancestors live on in me, and I am the guardian of their trust, now and for the future." This dream of *ahdut*, a feeling of unity among Jews, surely was one of my grandfather's, as demonstrated by his actions.

I imagine my grandfather ending off his story with similar words to those that Rabbi Sacks used: "This, then, is our story, our gift to the next generation... Take it, cherish it, learn to understand and to love it. Carry it, and it will carry you."

The Perks of Being Alone

Menucha Lowenstein
Editor

Going to a concert alone is not as scary as it sounds. Trust me, I've gone and I'm still here to tell the tale. It occurred to me recently that my enjoyment of spending time with myself – visiting museums, going on walks, or aforementioned concerts – was something that needed an explanation; a reason to not spend time with others.

A self-proclaimed extrovert, I do have my share of fun with friends. I love hanging out one-on-one, or being out and about with a large group of boisterous friends. But there is something unique and thrilling about planning a trip for myself.

Though my experience is limited to fairly local day trips and the thought of traveling does sound enticing, they



never cease to excite me and awaken this visceral feeling of peace. There is a difference between being alone and being lonely: Whereas the former represents unsuccessfully seeking the company of others, the latter is when one celebrates her solitary status.

I recently experienced what I'd call 'harmonious consciousness' when I attended the Brooklyn Book Festival on my own. I had originally invited two friends – cool people who would appreciate attending New York City's largest free annual literary event. Both cancelled within a few hours of each other. I bear no grudge, knowing their excuses were genuine.

Oh, and I was excited to go alone.

One friend immediately felt guilty when she heard that the second friend, unbeknownst to her, had also cancelled our afternoon plans. She was shocked that I went to the fair alone, thinking that once both partners had canceled, I would have preferred to stay home than attend the fair. She was wrong.

The fair was delightful. Hundreds of vendors: publishers, poetry groups, libraries, books stores, all handing out free bookmarks to eager hands. I loved that I could pick which panels to attend without worrying about coming to a compromise with another's wishes. I reveled in the fact that I could spend forty-five minutes reading on a stoop outside the Brooklyn Historical Society (not loitering; I was waiting on line for a popular event from which I worried I would be turned away) whilst really eavesdropping to two hipsters' conversation with one another.

To be alone is to realize what makes you 'tick'. What makes you happy? What makes you think, "I am happy in this moment. This is a positive experience that I will look back to with joy." The trick is that you must *be* in the moment to appreciate it.

Of course, there's nothing like telling a good story to a friend, but there's also something to enjoying an afternoon to yourself without constantly posting updates of where you are, who you're meeting; a commitment to live presently, waiting to accept what the day has to offer.

To have a day trip with oneself is a luxury for some. I see it as a necessity. Because the truth is, you're not really alone. As Henry Thoreau once wrote, "I am not alone if I stand by myself."

Fellow students: challenge yourselves to go to an exhibit, a play, or even dinner, alone. Watch what happens not just to the people around you, but make sure to pay attention to the person of the hour: You. You might find yourself uncomfortable with the silence, the nakedness of the moment, bare without conversation to freckle it with stories. Take a deep breath and be present to your surroundings. Be present to *you*.

As poet Tanya Davis says in her viral YouTube video, *How To Be Alone*, "Cuz if you're happy in your head then solitude is blessed and alone is okay."

Boxed In and Standing Out: The Problem of Self-Definition on YUConnects

Ariella Lunzer
Staff Writer

As I try to pick one option, it amazes me how much anxiety one little drop-down menu can induce. All they need to know is my “Religious Orientation”. It shouldn’t be too difficult to find a box to put myself in, right? Especially given how big the boxes we call “hashkafic labels” are. The slight complication, however, for myself and many others, is that I can’t hit control and select more than one option. The site isn’t programmed that way, nor are the labels we use.

A recent conversation with a friend on the aforementioned topic resulted in my decision that if my parents’ encouragement that “I can be anything I want to be” holds true, then I choose to be in the Flying Dinosaur category.

My friend supported this decision, the YUConnects drop-down menu did not. Please don’t take this as a criticism of YUConnects, a truly amazing resource that I wholeheartedly support (mostly in the form of member dues). This is not a problem they created nor one that they solely contend with.

I’ll admit, this is weighing heavily on my mind currently because I just made a major life move and switched labels, on YUConnects and on myself. When I first created my profile, after some deliberation, I decided to put myself in the “Modern Orthodox (Machmir)” box.

Modox-Machmir (it has a nice ring to it, doesn’t it?) is a good, socially acceptable label that defined me decently enough...maybe. I made sure to write a long exposition explaining that I wasn’t really Modox-Machmir in the classic sense, but rather towed the line between Modox-Machmir and Modern Yeshivish and gave examples to indicate such.

Why not just choose Modern Yeshivish you may ask? Well, apparently Modern Yeshivish is the only label with a clear cut, specific definition. And it doesn’t mean being between Modern and Yeshivish. Go figure. I may not have an available box I fit into, but it definitely isn’t “Modern Yeshivish”. Unfortunately, Modern Yeshivish but not “Modern Yeshivish” isn’t an option on YUConnects.

And now we come to the events of one fateful night a few weeks ago. I logged into my account after a relatively long hiatus and decided some tidying up was in order. The soul-searching opportunity provided by the High Holidays had helped me conclude that in the months between setting up my profile and now, I had decisively stepped out of any box beginning with the word Modox.

Which left me stranded; box-less.



I tried (not for the first time) to get a concrete definition of what the label “Yeshivish” meant, to no avail. It seemed that every person who I asked either gave me a different answer or shrugged and said they really couldn’t define it. When a friend asked me what it meant, I said the same thing. So I figured that if nobody could state the parameters there’s no reason to say I didn’t fit in them. More importantly, “Religious Orientation” is a mandatory question.

So with a deep breath and burst of courage, I climbed into the Yeshivish box and plastered the label on my forehead.

I can’t say that I feel any more comfortable in the

Yeshivish box than I did in the Modox-Machmir box. For both I feel like asterisks and explanations were needed. While I’m proud of myself for reaching this point, stepping out of the Modox box section feels a little like sailing in uncharted waters. And even though I’ve been moving towards Yeshivish for some time now, this just made it official, even if the jury is still out on whether or not I made landfall.

Now comes the big question: Why do I care so much? Husband-hunt context aside, does it really matter how I hashkafically define myself? And the even bigger question: Are hashkafic labels a necessity to begin with?

I don’t know that I have the answer to all my questions, but I do have a thought. We, as social beings, like belonging; not just being a fringe member of the group. The ability to conclusively state which box we belong in means that, by definition, we have a box where we belong.

There’s a lot of comfort in boxes, that’s why we always played in them as kids (or still do. This is a no judgement zone). We don’t want to be that weird shaped kitchen tool that sits by itself on the Pesach shelves next to all the dishes packed away neatly in perfectly sized boxes.

Would it be possible to find other uniquely shaped kitchen supplies in all those boxes that could fit in their own small box with the sad and lonely apple corer and peeler thing? Yes, it would. But that would require a lot more manpower, abstract thinking and boxes which may not be available. It would require an entire new system for packing dishes into boxes and singles into SimchaSpot posts.

Making shidduchim is as difficult as parting the Red Sea to begin with. So for now, I’ll continue aspiring for the day when I can just be Ariella (last name pending), and in the meantime work on my petition to YUConnects to add Flying Dinosaur to the list.

Genetic Testing: More Than A Privilege, Less Than A Dream

Miriam Renz
Editor

I never knew her. I’m named after her—Deborah—but we never met; never shared in the bond of aunt and niece. We never could. She died before I was born of a disease called Cystic Fibrosis—a genetic disease which affects the lungs, pancreas, liver and kidneys, amongst other organs. It creates an excess amount of sputum in the lungs and makes it very difficult to breathe. People with CF (mostly of Northern European descent) take daily antibiotics to support their compromised immune systems, some receive lung transplants, but all live within limits. There is no cure for CF and the average life expectancy is between 35–40 years old.

Debbie, having suffered from CF left our family with quiet memories of a young adult that I would fictionalize into adulthood. She is the reason why I praise, avoid and fear genetic testing.

Debbie was 30-years-old when she died; engaged to her longtime boyfriend; awaiting the birth of my older sister. It was February of 1992. She was young.

My sister was born the following August, not knowing that she had been present for Debbie’s last moments, if only in-utero. I, however, never stepped so close as to feel her presence, although I carry it with me every day in my name.

This tiny memory that I keep of my deceased relative, my father’s sister, means something more. It means that I will never know a part of my father that existed before she died. It means that my grandmother has experienced loss that is unfathomable to many people. It means that I have the awareness that a deadly disease runs through my family’s genes. It means that I can envision losing a child when I don’t even have one yet.

My first year at Stern College, my roommate—planning to find a spouse through the *shidduch* (match-making) system—put her too-heavy winter coat on and asked me if I would be joining her in Koch Auditorium for a free genetic testing event. With an adamant “No,” she looked at me quizzically, a bit offended and left the room.

When she returned from having her blood drawn, our conversation recommenced and she asked me why I had protested to learning the possible fate of my children. I explained to her that although I will take advantage of this medical advancement later in life, as of now I have no desire to sit with the worry that I may carry a deadly gene.

Genetic testing, however accurate it may be, provides young adults with information that need not concern them prior to marriage and procreation. This is not to say that genetic testing should be made completely unavailable to unmarried adults, as I know that people such as my former roommate found this resource to be helpful in her search for a spouse. For people pursuing early marriage and early parenting, I encourage that this step be taken in preparation for beginning a family.

For myself, however, I intend to find the ‘right’ person before I concern myself with the potential diseases that could be produced. I have lived with the knowledge that I potentially carry

the CF gene, but I do not want that to be my ice-breaking fact when I meet my future spouse. For me, the exploration I want to do is more about the partner than the negative potential we have together. Having lived with this fear, I have decided to numb myself of the uncertainty until it is absolutely relevant.

Then again, because of this knowledge I have long admired adoption as a method of parenthood and have researched it as a serious option. Perhaps it is dishonest to blind myself of my own reality rather than confronting it, however, I choose to approach this issue with caution and sensitivity. I do encourage genetic testing, but I also encourage taking the time one needs before even discussing the “best option.” If I do not carry the gene, then I will simply have more options for methods of parenthood. If I do carry the gene, I will face this challenge alongside the support of my partner.



“Going Green... Literally”

Esther Deutsch

Staff Writer

Abraham Lincoln, Leonardo da Vinci and Mark Twain were all strict vegetarians. Famous author Shel Silverstein composed a poem titled “Point of View,” describing how a Thanksgiving turkey must feel before getting slaughtered and eaten. Throughout the centuries, countless people have traded in their hot dogs for tofu dogs and chicken for “ficken.”

The question to address, then, is why? What makes vegetarianism so appealing?

Many vegetarians believe that exploitation of animals is at the heart of the meat-eating business. Vegetarians usually do not believe in eating meat, fish, fowl, or, in some more extreme cases, any food derived from animals.

There are six basic groups of vegetarians, the most common one being vegans who avoid all foods or products of animal origin. Lacto-Ovo Vegetarians avoid meat and animal flesh but eat fish and dairy products. Many do not believe in the mystical or “spiritual” ideology some people attach to vegetarianism, or the belief that killing an animal- like killing humans- can only be justified in extreme circumstances. Not all believe that consuming a living creature for its enjoyable taste, convenience, or nutritional value is inhumane.

Nonetheless, a study done by Earth Save shows that over 1.3 billion human beings could be fed each year from the grain and soybeans that go to livestock in the United States. This means that the entire US population could be fed and there would still be enough food left over to feed one billion people. In a world where millions of people die each year of starvation, that type of food surplus and wastefulness is highly inefficient and unethical.

Rena Thomas, an Israeli student studying at Stern College, has been a loyal vegetarian for two and a half years. After taking an environmental science class in school and learning how energy-inefficient it is to eat animals, Rena decided to become a vegetarian.

“Economically, being vegetarian is very costly, since it takes many more vegetables to be full than proteins such as chicken or meat,” Thomas remarked. “But it’s precisely this corruption and animal barbarity that lowers the cost of chicken and meat.”

The “corruption” that Thomas referred to is the business of eating animals and using animal products. Thomas claimed that nowadays slaughtering animals is only about increasing a person’s financial status and making money. “People call themselves vegetarian just because they don’t like animals,” Thomas states. “But I consider it a religion.”

Paula Cangialosi, an employee at Luna Communication Inc. in downtown Manhattan, said she became a vegetarian almost twenty years ago after hearing about the horrors of factory farming. “I believe that it is wrong to harm another being if it can be avoided,” stated Cangialosi.

“I thought that humans can do better than raise animals in gruesome surroundings only to slaughter them. It’s not hard to keep a meatless diet at all. I love vegetables and am a good cook.” Cangialosi said that over the

years she’s become more interested in the health aspect of going meatless as well as the economic consequences of factory farming.

Tony Zackin from New Paltz, New York, said in regard to being a vegetarian: “Overall, I feel better eating a mostly vegetarian diet, as they say, ‘You are what you eat,’ so I would like to think that my avoidance of animal products and the associated fats, hormones and antibiotics is a good thing. Granted there still are pesticides in most of the vegetables I eat. Nonetheless, I think the ‘dangers’ of a vegetarian diet pale in comparison to meat-eaters.” Perhaps this is what Albert Einstein (who is himself a vegetarian) meant when he said, “Nothing will benefit human health and increase chances for survival on earth as much as the evolution to a vegetarian diet.”

Vegetarian foods are finding their way to younger diners as well. The School Nutrition Association found in its 2009 research that the number of schools offering vegetarian meals rose from 22% in 2003 to 64% in 2009. 20% offered vegan options. An article in FoodService Director quoted Tony Geraci, Director of Food and Nutrition Services for Baltimore, Maryland, schools said “School districts just starting to think about offering more vegetarian choices should just do it ... They’ll be surprised by all the support that comes out of the woodwork ... Operationally it’s nothing they’re not doing already.”

Because interest in vegetarian eating continues to rise, business people can cater to this need and build demand by offering delicious, convenient, and affordable plant-based foods. Vegans are usually loyal, enthusiastic customers who generate word-of-mouth recommendations, not only to other vegans but also to the full spectrum of vegetarian eaters. A 2004 Los Angeles Times article noted the influence that vegans have had in the automotive field: “Pleasing vegans, the theory goes, is key to reaching a wider group of consumers-affluent shoppers who worry about the environment and who are willing to pay extra for food, clothing, and even automobiles, if they are made in ways that do less harm to the planet.” Although health foods stores and the natural foods chains Whole Foods and Wild Oats led the retail vegetarian and soy foods movement, these foods are now commonplace in supermarkets, discount stores such as Wal-Mart and Target, and warehouse or club stores.

From the local grocer and restaurant menus, to office cafeteria lines and schools, the range of vegetarian options is increasing. As aging baby boomers become more concerned with food’s role in preserving their health and people of all ages become increasingly focused on the implications of meat production for animals and environment, the opportunity to produce and serve vegetarian foods should continue to build. Allrecipes.com termed ‘veganomics’ as one of the “most compelling emerging trends in 2010”. The growing market has attracted more competition, including competition from major corporations. These new players, as well as established providers, have supported the market’s expansion with new products and advertising. Large or small, the



companies that will be most successful are those that give shoppers and diners the tasty, affordable, convenient meal solutions they seek.

Over the years, it’s been proven that keeping to a vegetarian diet can benefit the individual as well as the animal rights campaign. Vegetarians tend to eat much more fruits, vegetables, and other natural products than non-vegetarians, and vegetarian diets are lower in saturated fats and cholesterol and higher in foliate and anti-oxidant vitamins like C and E. Overall, vegetarians have substantially reduced risks for obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and some forms of cancer, particularly lung cancer and colon cancer.

An article in the Science Daily states: “It is the position of the American Dietetic Association that appropriately planned vegetarian diets, including total vegetarian or vegan diets, are healthful, nutritionally adequate and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases. Well-planned vegetarian diets are appropriate for individuals during all stages of the life-cycle including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, childhood and even adolescence.”

So, interested in becoming a vegetarian? Nava Atlas, vegan chef and author of countless cookbooks, featured in numerous publications, and most recently in the New York Times, created a website called “Veg Kitchen”, which features all sorts of vegan recipes and information on how to become a vegetarian. There are many other websites around now, like GoVeg, VegCooking, and VegetarianSociety that can also help you get started. Authors like Peter Singer, and Scott Young have written many books on vegetarianism which can be helpful resources for “new” vegetarians.

Whether you’re a current vegetarian, striving to be a vegan, or an avid meat-eater, know that ultimately “it’s the stomach that rules the mind,” and that eating your food with the proper outlook is an important goal that takes a lifetime of work to be “meat” with success.

How Your Roommates Affect Your College Experience

Ahava Muskat

Editor

Think back to your first day at Stern, when you moved into Brookdale and met your roommates for the first time. While many of us recognize that roommates are important, I contend that none of us fully appreciate the power of roommates to transform our college experiences.

It is well known that the people we surround ourselves with can have immense impacts on us, but this influence is intensified during the first year of college when students are learning to transition from high school or seminary into the newfound independence, stresses, and responsibilities of college life. Allison Ryan, an associate professor of education psychology at the University of Illinois, emphasizes the significance of college freshmen’s roommates. She believes that because first year students are learning to “build their own identities [they are] especially impressionable to a roommate’s sway.” A plethora of research studies have discovered that freshman roommates exert

influence upon a person’s weight, emotional disposition, study habits, academic achievement, and political attitudes.

A study of freshmen roommates was conducted at Marquette University. The study sought to determine how the weight of one roommate affects the weight of the other. The results revealed that students with heavier roommates gained less weight than students with thinner roommates. While the latter on average gained two and a half pounds during their freshman year, students with heavier roommates only gained about a half a pound.

The researchers’ theoretical explanation for this phenomenon hinges on the fact that four-fifths of the heavier roommates were constantly dieting and exercising. The constant dieting and exercising created a weight conscious environment which subsequently led the study subjects to watch their weight. This discovery is especially crucial for female college students, as women between the ages of seventeen and nineteen are highly susceptible to developing eating disorders. Students who live in a strict weight conscious environment are particularly at risk.

Nicholas A Christakis, who co-authored “Connected: The Surprising Power of Our Social Networks to Shape Our Lives,” observes that “each happy friend a person has increases that person’s probability of being happy by nine percent and each unhappy person decreases it by seven percent.” Clearly, emotions and moods are contagious. This was studied by Daniel Eisenberg, a professor at the University of Michigan. He surveyed 1,600 freshmen in both public and private universities. Interestingly, male students are more susceptible than females to the emotions of their roommates. Specifically with sadness, male students who have depressed roommates feel sadder themselves. However, Eisenberg noticed that this effect was more apparent

when roommates kept their emotions bottled up.

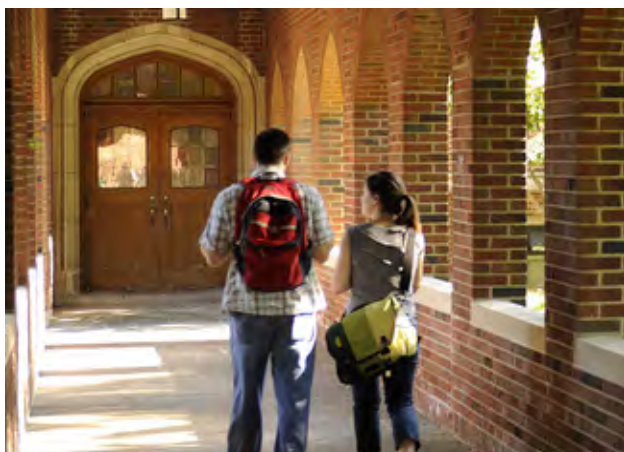
The X-Box Effect was studied by Professor Todd Stinebrickner of the University of Western Ontario. He surveyed roommates at Berea College in Kentucky and found that students whose roommates brought video games to college actually studied a half hour less a day than students whose roommates did not bring video games. And as would be expected, non gamer roommates earned a 0.2 higher G.P.A score than gamer roommates.

Another interesting phenomenon that was studied was the effect that race of ones roommate had on the other. Academics at the Ohio State University noticed that black students who scored high SAT and ACT scores actually earned higher G.P.As if they roomed with a white roommate as opposed to a black roommate. The possible reason suggested for this trend is that having a white roommate, in a university in which the majority of students are white, helps ease the social and academic transition into college.

Studies at Ohio State and Indiana University Bloomington found that while biracial roommates were more likely to separate after their freshmen year, the effect of living with someone of a different race reduced prejudices. A study conducted with 1,000 freshmen showed that white students who roomed with black students agreed more strongly with diversity policies.

And thus it is evident, that one’s college roommates can greatly impact, not only one’s college experience, but also one’s later life as well.

The Science of Roommates
By ABIGAIL SULLIVAN MOORE



The “Drinking” Brain

Miriam Stock
Staff Writer

The National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIH, defines addiction as “a chronic, relapsing brain disease characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences.” The definition becomes murky as scientists attempt to unravel the brain and explore the biology of the brain that is behind this behavior.

Before biologically discussing why a person becomes addicted, it is important to discuss the factors that determine whether a person becomes addicted. Every person makes a decision by initially choosing to try drugs or alcohol. Brain imaging studies have shown physical changes in regions of the brain responsible for judgment, decision making, learning and memory, and behavior control after continual substance use. The question that remains is why and how do some brains become altered while others do not?

While the NIH maintains that the answer to this question varies on an individual basis, it does cite 6 risk factors that increase the chances a person will develop an addiction, as well as 6 protective factors that decrease these same chances. Risk factors include aggressive childhood behavior, lack of parental supervision, poor social skills, drug experimentation, accessibility to drugs at school, and poverty levels.

While these factors alone cannot serve as predictors of addiction, there is a correlation between the amount of risk factors a person has and her chances of becoming addicted. Protective factors that have been correlated with lower chances of the development of addiction include good self-control, parental presence, positive relationships, academics, school drug policies, and good surroundings. The other important factors at play are an individual’s genetic predisposition to addiction as well as the environmental factors contributing to the expression of these genes, which the NIH cites as being as high as 40–60% of an individual’s overall vulnerability to addiction.

Understanding the biology of the brain is crucial in this discussion. The three areas of the brain that are involved are the brain stem’s control of critical bodily functions, the limbic system’s control of the reward system, and the cerebral cortex’s control over our senses and decision making. Neurons communicate between brain regions by using electrical signaling as well as chemical signaling by way of neurotransmitters. It is known that substances, including alcohol, interfere with the brain’s chemical signaling by either causing a release of higher amounts of natural neurotransmitters or by interfering with the brain’s neurotransmitter recycling system.

Dopamine, a neurotransmitter involved in the pleasure center of the brain, has long been implicated in addiction. In the general addiction model, the substance being used causes an increase in dopamine levels, which produces a pleasurable effect. Eventually, an individual develops a tolerance towards the drug, meaning she must use greater amounts of the drug in order to produce the same level of pleasure. While scientists have unraveled much about the brain in recent years, much about the “drinking” brain is currently being uncovered.

Jun Wang, an assistant professor in the Department of Neuroscience and Experimental Therapeutics at Texas A&M College of Medicine, and his research lab recently published their findings on how drinking alcohol alters the brain structure, specifically focusing on the neurons in the dorsomedial striatum, a region of the brain’s reward system. This region is filled with two types of medium spiny neurons, D1 and D2 neurons. These two neurons differ in the type of dopamine receptor they have. D1 neurons promote action, such as the act of consuming another drink, while D2 neurons halt action.

Wang’s study found that drinking large amounts of alcohol excites D1 receptors which then produce the sensation of craving. The drinker is encouraged to act and continue her drinking. Once she continues to drink, the D1 receptors are more easily activated, causing her to drink even more.

Using mice models, Wang found that the experimental, alcohol-consuming, models showed biological differences as compared to the control models. In the alcohol models, there are shown to be a greater proportion of mature medium spiny neurons with longer branching than the control group that has a greater proportion of immature, mushroom-shaped neurons. Additionally, D1 neurons are a subpopulation of neurons involved in learning and memory and Wang implicates their biological changes in the pathology of alcohol consumption.

A significant finding is that suppression of D1 neurons showed a marked decrease in the desire to drink alcohol. Stimulation of D1 neurons led to an increase in the desire to drink large amount of alcohol. Interestingly, stimulation and suppression of D2 neurons did not produce the same effect suggesting that there is a unique relationship between alcohol consumption and the D1 neuron population.

Wang reflects on his accomplishments as he says, “we’re now able to study the brain at the neuron-specific and even spine-specific level.” By identifying a subpopulation of neuroadaptational neurons that are involved in alcohol craving, Wang’s research provides many avenues for future research. These new findings, along with the many environmental and genetic factors, further add to the complexity of the “drinking” brain.

Sources:

<http://news.tamhsc.edu/?post=alcoholism-a-step-toward-a-treatment>

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain>

Wang J, Cheng Y, Wang X, Hellard ER, Ma T, Gil H, Ben Hamida S, and Ron D. Alcohol Elicits Functional and Structural Plasticity Selectively in Dopamine D1 Receptor-Expressing Neurons of the Dorsomedial Striatum. *J. Neurosci.* 2015; 35(33): 11634-11643.



Israel’s Progressive Will to Survive

Malka Katz
Staff Writer

The State of Israel would be nonexistent without its persevered will to survive. Along with every will, there are mechanisms set in place to foster that commitment to survival, and often times, those are which ultimately determine it. Israel’s ongoing fight for survival has proven that the only way to ensure existence is by being at the top of it’s game in military defense and weaponry.

This tiny country in the Middle East has paved the way to some of the most remarkable advancements in technology on national security and defense to date. Of course, conjuring up the best takes progress, and Israel’s early history is no different.

Already by 1945, Jews started to suspect that at any moment, they would have to be ready to fight for their independence against the Arabs, and to do so would be no easy feat. Different Jewish underground, military groups such as the Haganah and Lechi (Stern Gang) organized themselves and realized that the few pistols and bullets they stole from the British during the Mandate just wouldn’t cut it if a full-fledged war was close to inevitable. These realizations led the Haganah to establish a hidden ammunition factory, which they called “Machon Ayalon” (Ayalon Institute) which would produce the much needed bullets, in the advent of a war. Located on a kibbutz in Rechovot, this top-secret factory was built right near a British headquarters, literally undermining the authorities beneath their noses.

Everything about this mission made it seem unlikely that it would be able to remain secretive. And yet, the factory members were capable of keeping this factory disclosed from the public for three years until after the War of Independence. The most dangerous part was the knowledge that at any moment factory workers may get caught, let alone the fear that the gun powder they were encasing into the bullets would cause a massive explosion.

The different materials needed to create the ammunition were the metal alloy, bullet casing and gun powder which were all imported into the factory and then assembled there. Encasing the gun powder into the bullets was the most dangerous job, and yet not once did an explosion occur, due to their careful handling – encased by the female members of the Haganah.

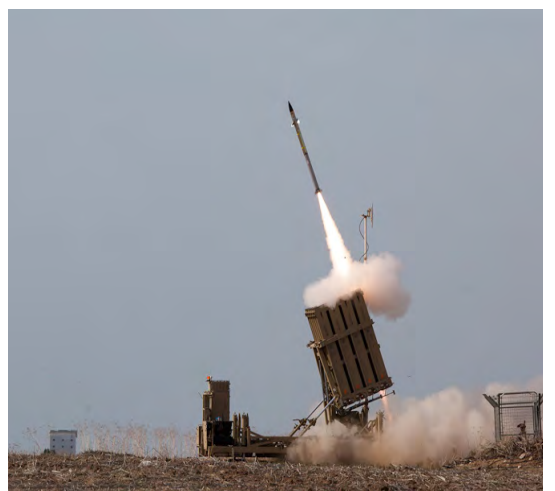
This is, but a glimpse at the world of Israel in it’s infancy, certainly doing whatever it could to stay afloat. At one time, Israel had to rely on European countries like France for weapons, and while today Israel still does trade with many countries, most of it’s military manufacturing and engineering takes place domestically. Today, the milestones Israel has reached in land, water and air defense is quite overwhelming. The Iron Dome Missile

Defense system since being implemented in 2011 has saved tens of thousands of lives. This advancement alone has made the world look at Israel with mouths wide open, incredulous of what Israel’s top aerospace engineers created, an advancement that shoots down enemy missiles with the upmost precision. This air-defense system is designed to intersect short-range missiles (up to forty three miles away) with an unbeatable accuracy of 90%, and has started a new trend to create other advanced military defense systems such as the Iron Beam and David’s Sling.

Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) is Israel’s primary manufacturer of the most sophisticated missile defense systems. Because aerospace and aviation are the new wave of maintaining security via monitoring and surveillance, IAI has produced a line of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), also known as drones, to keep an eye on Israel’s cities and population to detect any suspicious activities, as well as to collect intelligence from down below.

These aircrafts can range in size, from about a yard to those the size of mini-jets. The possibility of having no pilot on board, yet retain complete control via remote control and satellite, shows that Israel is trying to create safer and more secure methods for the military as well as for the civilian population. In place of a fighter jet, UAV’s can carry out armed attacks and target specific locations, without the attached fear of a pilot not making it back.

These are just slivers of the rich history that Israel stands to testify in it’s remarkable story of courage, where before her birth in 1948, Jews managed with whatever little they had to fight off her aggressors. Today in 2015, while the aggressors look eerily familiar, Israel is fierce and is ready to show it.



No Limits

Nili Greenberg
Staff Writer

Golda Aharon, a junior at SCW planning to major in mathematics, has started a new club on Beren Campus called “No Limits.” She chose this unique moniker for the club based on the mathematical concept of limits in calculus. Yes- you guessed it- it is a math club. However, it also has another purpose-- to raise the confidence of women when it comes to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) subjects, particularly in math. The Observer sat down with Golda to talk about her club, why she started it, and what she plans to do with it.

The Observer: What motivated you to start “No Limits”?

Golda Aharon: Last year, I received an email from the YU Club about a trip to the Math Museum. I thought it sounded really cool, but I couldn’t go. I emailed the head of the club, who happened to be a YC student, explaining that I couldn’t go on this trip but I was excited to be part of the club’s other activities. I never got a response from him. I later realized that there was no representation for this club on the Beren Campus. It was never featured at any of the clubs fairs, and there were no events here. The women were never even invited uptown for events.

I then read an article about Israeli gender bias in math by elementary school teachers. Based on the evidence, it seemed teachers expected girls to be worse at math than boys were. They subconsciously graded the girls’ tests more harshly, producing the results they expected. I was shocked that gender bias had such a real effect in classrooms. I was trying to figure out what I could do to help this gender bias. I realized society wouldn’t think women were equal in math and STEM ability if women didn’t believe it themselves. I thought of some of my friends who have low confidence in themselves when it comes to math and are intimidated when approaching something that involves math, even if it’s only a little bit. I really wanted to change that.

O: What do you think holds girls back from pursuing STEM?

GA: I don’t know about the biology or psychology behind it, or whether girls have a different skill level than boys. And I don’t really think that it matters, nor that it’s such a big difference that it would account for the bias. I think that teachers don’t encourage girls. Girls aren’t even encouraged with their toys- I read an article about a mother who sent her daughter to LEGO camp, and she was the only girl there. She also wrote that LEGOs are marketed as boys’ toys in almost all stores, and the “girls LEGO” are “LEGO friends-” building cafes and malls. It’s not the huge sets where you can build spaceships, a model of the Empire State Building, or a really incredible bridge.

I’ll also add that it’s a societal thing that it is very accepted for girls to say that they can’t do math. It’s a thing that “girls can’t do math,” so from a young age people get the impression that this is something they can’t do, and there’s nothing indicating to them that that’s not true.

O: So how do you plan to use this club to change this perception?

GA: I think that this club is going to help to casually incorporate math and STEM into our lives. That math and STEM do not necessarily have to

seem like this “other-” this other brand of intellect, or this other capability that some people have and some don’t. I want it to be something that can be fun for everyone, and interesting for everyone, because it’s relevant to everyone. Even people who don’t go into math or STEM will encounter it at some point, especially with the technology that’s booming now. I’m hoping to make it seem less intimidating, make it seem approachable, and make it seem interesting. And something that is a “girl thing” too.

O: What kind of events do you have planned for No Limits?

GA: In the future, I’d like to have a career panel about jobs in STEM. I’d hope to include women who don’t necessarily see themselves as “math people,” but who are interested in STEM because they are passionate about it. I also want to include people who are in STEM jobs that are also meaningful in society, like environmental engineering. For this semester, I’m hoping to run an event called “Easy as Pi”. We’d give out the ingredients and recipes for no-bake pies, but the recipes would be written in simple math problems. Participants would be using math in a casual way for a fun purpose, and doing something that’s actually relevant to their lives. I feel like that would be a fun way to incorporate math. I also thought that in the future, we could do things with younger girls also. Middle school is the age where a lot of insecurity about STEM develops, so I’d love to work with younger girls. There will also hopefully be other fun, hands-on activities as well, like in engineering- building circuits and things.

O: What first sparked your interest in math? What made you decide to pursue it, despite the challenges you described?

GA: I always liked math, but I never realized that I loved math until I got to college. Then in retrospect I realized I had always written “math” when asked about my intended major. I realized I’d always loved math. I feel very lucky that I had teachers who I really enjoyed learning from. My family encouraged me to pursue STEM. I have female role models in my family who majored in math, so that was a big form of encouragement for me.

O: Anything else you’d like to add about the club?

GA: Ideally, I’d love for this club to have people from all majors. I especially want people who aren’t interested in STEM and don’t like math, and also people who just have no relationship with math-who don’t love it or hate- it to get involved. I’d love for the club to have people from all perspectives and backgrounds. Since we’re a club that wants to cater to many different types of people, it would be great to have all of those people giving their insight. Also, it’s supposed to be a math club, in addition to the confidence aspect. What’s great about that is that we can have a broad spectrum of activities – those that apply to people who are interested in STEM, and for those who aren’t.

Golda, we applaud you! Thank you for taking the initiative, for giving us a place to express a different side of ourselves and embrace it in a light and fun manner. We can’t wait to see what you have in store!



Fad Dieting: Why You Shouldn’t Take the “Easy Way Out”

Reva Schlanger
Staff Writer

It’s that time of the year again. The holidays are over and we are left wondering how all of our clothes “shrank in the wash.” Yes, it was worth having seconds of that apple kugel and the desserts were amazing. Hey, it’s not our fault that there is so much good food on the holidays! At the same time, no one likes the subsequent weight gain that the holidays bring. So, the mass dieting begins.

Unfortunately, in this age of instantaneous gratification, there are so many misleading advertisements, schemes and products on how to lose the most weight in the shortest time. These claims that diet companies and magazines make are so tempting; it’s hard not to want to try them. Everyone wants the simple fix, but the reality is that there is no quick fix. Fad diets can be extremely dangerous and often prove to be ineffective for weight maintenance in the long run.

Fad diets often promise dramatic results. These diets typically don’t result in long-term weight loss and they are usually unhealthy. In fact, some of these diets can actually be dangerous to your health. Any weight-reduction diet that eliminates one or more of the essential food groups, or recommends consumption of one type of food in excess at the expense of other foods, cannot be a healthy plan. Fad diets rarely follow sound nutritional principles for weight loss, which usually focus on ingesting fewer calories and/or exerting more energy through exercise. In addition, medical professionals and the institutions generally do not endorse fad diets.

Many of these diets help you lose weight quickly, but there are many dangerous side effects that they can have on our bodies. For example, the majority of the weight you drop when you lose weight too quickly tends to be water weight. This can lead to rapid dehydration. Our bodies need water desperately so dehydration can put our bodies in distress.

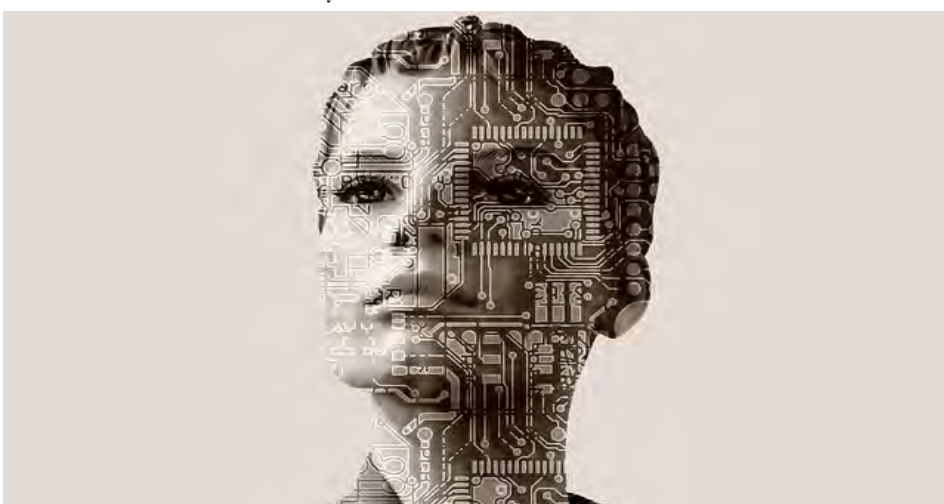
A lot of fad- dieters also tend to suffer from lack of energy. Fad diets involve depriving yourself of calories. However, calories are what translate into the energy your body needs to get through the day. If you fast, or eat significantly less than what your body requires in order to lose weight quickly, you’ll find yourself feeling fatigued very often. Losing weight too quickly can also lead to severe diarrhea, followed by constipation. If this persists over time it can lead to intense dehydration—a condition that can be life threatening.

Crash diets and fasting are dangerous because they restrict you from consuming fats and carbs, but they’re also unsafe since they prevent your body from getting the vitamins and minerals it needs. If you restrict your body from its normal caloric intake over a long period of time, your body will be deprived of its essential nutrients and you can become severely malnourished.

Permanent weight loss is not something that a “quick-fix” diet can achieve. Instead, think about weight loss as a permanent lifestyle change—a commitment to replace high-calorie foods with healthier, lower-calorie alternatives. A commitment to reduce your portion sizes. And especially a commitment to become more active.

“I don’t ever advocate dieting. Diets don’t work and the only way to ‘lose weight’ is to get healthy and make a lifestyle change,” said Dr. Angela DeBord Henriksen, a family medicine physician at Indiana University Health. Losing weight in a healthy, sustainable way takes time. It requires patience and commitment. Extreme diets may promise rapid results but they’re more likely to leave you feeling cranky and starving. And to make it even worse, eventually you will gain back more weight. We have to think of lifestyle change rather than dieting, by replacing high calorie foods with healthy alternatives, limiting portion size, making better choices, and remaining active.

So it’s OK to have the kugel for the holidays, but try a vegetable kugel instead of noodle, have a portion of brisket the size of your fist, maybe some quinoa with sautéed mushrooms, and some fresh fruit with just a spoonful of dessert. Not bad, right?



Walking Through the Phantasmagorical Garden of *Threatened Beauty*

Chana Miller
Staff Writer

Andi Arnovitz's current art show is a beautiful conflation of color and expressions of political turmoil. A progressive, feminist artist based in Israel, Arnovitz captivates her audience with paintings that are both enlightening and unnerving. *Threatened Beauty* is the title of her new exhibition, which is on display until January 2016 at the Yeshiva University Museum in downtown Manhattan. The exhibition features thirty-three exquisitely crafted collages depicting Middle Eastern tumult and religious tradition. Her colors are bright, bold, and riddled with threatening imagery. Thus, the juxtaposition within the title of the show is most fitting.

In one piece, "8,000 Books," Arnovitz uses jewel-like watercolors, collage, threads, and pages from Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, to document ISIS's violent campaign to destroy the libraries in the northern Iraqi city, Mosul.

Arnovitz combines political turmoil with art, in an abstract sense, evoking fear and thoughts about the future. Kundera's book holds a deep, personal meaning for Arnovitz, and this particular book acts as a surrogate for the many manuscripts depicted in the piece. These manuscripts, worth thousands of years of tradition, are reduced to ashes. Book burnings, which are relevant to the Jewish experience in Nazi Germany, are also recognized as a sign of metaphorical genocide, and the deliberate control and decimation of one culture over another.

An artist of exceptional acumen, Arnovitz personally tore up Kundera's novel, one of her favorites, to place herself within the angst of the upheaval.

The plaque accompanying this piece reads, in Arnovitz's own words, "A passage towards the end of Kundera's book still haunts me with its clarity, even 31 years after first reading it. Bits and pieces of this passage have been sewn into the tiny books in this work; words from it are floating in the background: '...and to keep up with events, to leave none of them out, its pace growing faster and faster, until finally the Grand March is a procession of rushing, galloping people and the platform is shrinking and shrinking until one day it will be reduced to a mere dimensionless dot.'"

In another piece, "Ecclesiastes 3:19," a collage crafted with watercolor, Arnovitz elaborates on the Biblical verse, where she cites, "Man's fate is that of the animals; the same fate awaits them both: As one dies, so dies the other. All have the same breath; man has no advantage over the animal. Everything is meaningless." The piece presents all of her original work, in fragments, deteriorating into dissolution and destruction.

As a female artist and self-proclaimed Jewish Orthodox feminist, Arnovitz excels in her talent. Her work reflects a myriad of fears, including the threat of a nuclear Iran, and a cause dear to her heart—women's rights. There is a sense of empowerment that shows in her work, as she is enthusiastically painting the female struggle, depicting it with pain, yet refusing to let that female voice become silent.

As a woman, her art demonstrates the challenges, myths, and expectations of women in today's society. The struggle she depicts opens a conversation about the women's issues she is striving to portray, and raises awareness about

the feminist cause.

As quoted in an article on JewishArtSalon.com, Arnovitz says that her works in *Threatened Beauty* "reflect this tension, the majestic beauty, the riot of color, the magnificent decoration, the meticulous craftsmanship...There is a kind of terrible beauty here, a paradox, a collision of the past and the present, good and evil, a looking forwards and backwards all at the same time."

Arnovitz's artistry is intertwined with personal inflections and sensitive messages. Messages of pain and destruction resonate in the pieces, "Heavy Water," "The Tipping Point," "Thirteen Boys," and more. Arnovitz's gift includes a sentimental ability to present harsh realities and moral issues with heartfelt grace and clarity.



All That is Precious, Threatened Beauty by Andi Arnovitz

Hagit Lalo: A Painter Who Begins at the End

Miriam Rubin
Staff Writer

The Tel Aviv Museum of Art exhibit titled “Hagit Lalo: A Painter who Begins at the End”, is a comprehensive showing of the works of the Israeli abstract expressionist who died young but not before making a name in the world of Israeli expressionism. Though Lalo died before reaching the age of thirty, her paintings possess a distinct style and breadth of skill.

Shown at this particular exhibit were paintings thematically and formally similar: large square canvases in thickly and easily applied paint. She painted large swaths of overlapping and juxtaposed colors. Some of the works were reminiscent of distorted landscapes.

But for the most part they appeared entirely abstract, representative of nothing, and drew my attention to her intuitive understanding of color and texture. Her paintings didn’t express meaning; they demanded not to be understood, but experienced.

As Lalo’s paintings are untitled, this notion of anti-representation is all the more clear. Perhaps they draw inspiration from real nature, but the representation is so diluted on the canvas that Lalo creates a language that is entirely her own. She communicates in the experience of color and texture, speaking in paint, thinking in color relationships, but never through straightforward representation.

The hand of the artist is evidently clear, and perhaps it is only my own experience in painting that enables me to envision her looking at her canvas from twenty feet back, trying to place that missing link that will complete the image, that will create a painting that possesses a logic entirely its own.

In that sense, I see Lalo’s work as expressive of the very essential nature of painting.

She speaks in a language that is purely the interaction of color and shape. It is intuitive and experiential, and perhaps fundamental to her work as well, it is beautiful in its simplicity. To ascribe a reason, a logic to the painting, that is beyond the paint itself, beyond what Lalo put to the canvas, seems futile, when her work is so eloquently its own meaning.

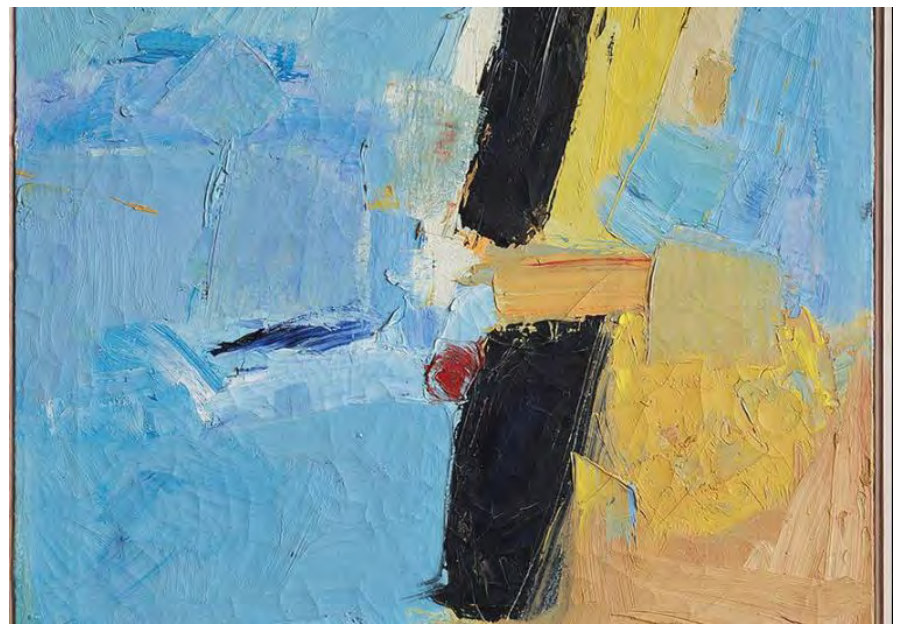
Lalo is a standout example for the merits of abstract painting. To limit art to what we understand is to ignore the remarkable sensitivity that artists like Lalo have to the very physical and experiential qualities of painting.

Color, shape, texture—these are features that are self-sustaining in their meaning. Like anything in the natural world, they have the ability to give pleasure to people, to stimulate thought, emotional response, even just pure appreciation of the physical world. That one can experience a painting the way one experiences a beautiful view is certain. Both can both be breathtaking. I saw this in Lalo’s work, whose

paintings made the value of abstract art eminently clear. The beauty in her work was made evident with her were ability to create something that seems so casual, but is precise in its harmoniousness. Every square canvas had its own set of rules, a balance that was sometime precarious and thrilling, sometimes chaotic, sometimes relieving and cathartic. Her paintings are articulate in their empathetic

use of color, seeming to create both open and intimate spaces for the viewer. She creates infinite moments of contemplation in her haphazard or careless seeming juxtaposition of colors. There is no one meaning in her works, and so her works can mean anything and everything.

To look at the work of a painter that understands paint, that communicates in a language of experience, is to understand that the most arbitrary (dare I say, meaningless) forms of art are the most essential to understanding the value of creative work. Lalo evokes emotion, experience, sensation through her indecipherable, imageless works. To say that her paintings are abstract because they have no meaning is to choose to see nothing where one can see everything.



Hagit Lalo

Society in the Mirror: A Review of Jonathan Franzen’s *Purity*

Shira Huberfeld
Editor

When acclaimed author Jonathan Franzen publishes a book, people perk up. And review it. Heavily. *Purity*, his latest book, has been reviewed in the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New Yorker*, and *New York Magazine*, among others. Numerous copies of the book adorn the windows of bookstores/coffee shops (because who just goes to a bookstore without coffee anymore). Though clearly over-reviewed, the book deserves yet another one. It’s just that compelling.

What strikes the reader most remarkably at first is the book’s relevance. As opposed to another Holocaust historical fiction or another Hollywood celebrity memoir, this book deals with some of the central issues that are really facing society.

Pip, the nickname for the main character named Purity, lives in a house with Occupy squatters in Oakland and works for an Assange-like figure named Andreas Wolf on his Wikileaks-esque Sunlight Project. Franzen acknowledges this connection by mentioning Assange multiple times in the book. He understands that we will see the similarities. In fact, he expects it.

One interesting part of Franzen’s writing is his perspective style. When he writes, he writes only from the perspective of the character that is the focus of that moment. This is significant when there are multiple subplots that merge together. The reader finds out information by piecing random parts from different narrators’ brains together, but the narrators are unaware of the information. The reader gets to watch the characters discover what they already know. The reader

knows the answers to Pip’s quest before she does and gets to watch her piece together certain things. Additionally, towards the end, someone lies to Pip about something of major importance and the reader realizes this while Pip does not. As far as the reader knows, Pip goes on living her life with this lie and not knowing it’s a fallacy.

Another technique that Franzen uses to compel the reader is his use of backstories when the plot is about to get exciting. When Pip is about to embark on her journey to work for the Sunlight Project, Franzen goes on a detour to explore the backstory of Wolf, the leader of the program. Again, when the action is about to heat up with Pip, Tom and Leila, the text goes into Tom’s backstory. This way, Franzen

can keep you on your toes because you’ll sit through another one hundred and fifty pages if you’re curious to see what will happen.

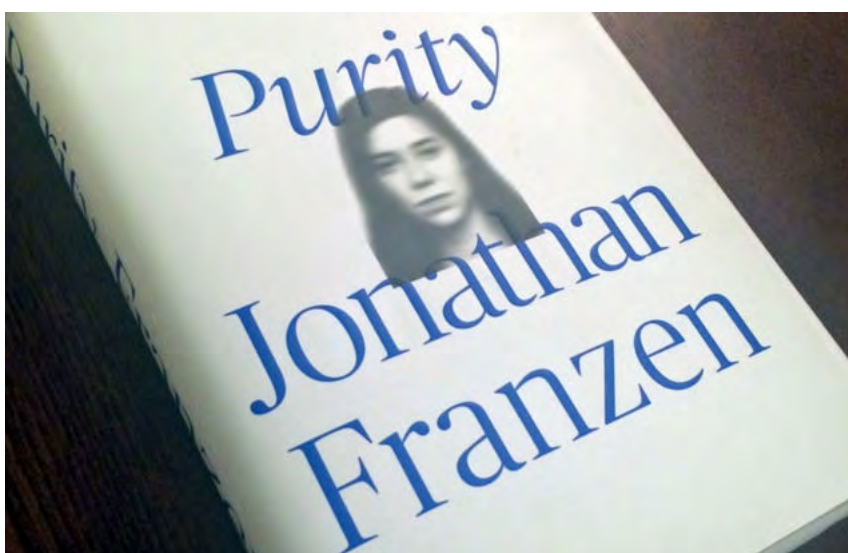
This is also evident in his use of overarching mystery. Pip’s lineage is confusing, how Annagret convinces her to join the program is odd, and why is she even there to begin with. These are all issues that Franzen keeps looming in the background, waiting to weave in with increase prose and dexterity. I can’t explain it because it would spoil the book, but it’s worth the read.

Where Franzen sometimes loses the reader is when his main characters all sound just like him. When reading *Purity* next to his last book, *Freedom*, it becomes apparent that some of the major characters are thinking alike, and they’re matching Jonathan Franzen. There’s even a minor character in this book who’s trying to write a grand novel which he insists must be quite long. That can certainly be true of Franzen, whose *Purity* is 563 pages.

Additionally, some of Franzen’s own opinions on social media, big government, politics, marriage and other issues come out through his characters. It becomes less clear to the reader over time who is speaking to you—the characters, or the characters as Jonathan Franzen.

Overall, this book was a fantastic read. With beautiful prose and a compelling plot line, Franzen looped me in and took me for a wild ride. Though there were parts in this almost 600-page epoch that weren’t as page-turning as I may have liked, after a certain point, the plot demanded my attention and involvement.

Through its relevance, backstories, and perspective, *Purity* lured me in to take a look at America through the eyes of a just-graduated college student (a position not far from my current one). Pick it up and you won’t put it down.



Accepting Dining Club Card

TIBERIAS

**WHAT ARE
YOU
EATING
TODAY?**

SUNDAY - WEDNESDAY
8am - 2am

THURSDAY
8am - 4am

SATURDAY
all night