



The Yeshiva University

OBSERVER

VOLUME LV, ISSUE V FEB 11, 2010

Academic Integrity Discussed by Faculty and Students

Tamara Freiden

The Center for Jewish Ethics at Yeshiva University together with the deans of Yeshiva College, Stern College for Women, and Sy Syms School of Business held a paneled discussion on Academic Integrity on February 1 in Schottenstein Residence Hall. The panel featured Rabbi Yona Reiss, dean of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS); Sheldon Gelman, dean of Wurzweiler School of Social Work; Dr. Victor Schwartz, university dean of students; and Ellen Schrecker, professor of history at Stern College.

There were little more than 25 in attendance at the event, the majority professors, to hear an issue

with which Yeshiva University has been particularly concerned about over the last several months. Adrian Asch, director of the Center of Ethics, introduced this panel as the first of many in addressing issues having to do with the meaning of integrity including two others having to do with integrity in the economic and political setting. Her colleague David Wasserman moderated the discussion.

Rabbi Reiss was the first to step up to the podium introducing a religious perspective to the issue, remarking that it is our responsibility "to live in accordance with the highest ideals of Torah education, and if that does not mean

acting in a fashion which represents the utmost integrity, [than there is] no justification in us being here." He addressed many of the respected *poskims'* [Rabbis who make authoritative decisions] dismayed opinions on the matter, namely Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.

Gelman focused on narrowing down the issue to a question of principle. "Part of the dilemma is what's the role of education?" said Gelman. "Is education a quest for knowledge, for exploration, for an exposure of new ideas, or is education a means to an end?" He went on to emphasize the Internet's role in making the ability to

cheat that much more accessible, while acknowledging its positive uses as well.

When addressing Yeshiva University's stance on the matter, Gelman makes it simple. "The university has taken the position that there are no gradients of misconduct when it comes to cheating," stated Gelman. "You do it, you get caught, you suffer the consequences."

Several students in the audience felt that there were professors who simply do not take the issue seriously enough. "I came [to the panel] because a friend of mine was in a class where there was cheating and someone from the

class came forward and reported it to the dean," says Nicole Grubner (SCW '10). "A retest was given, and the student who reported it expected a dean to be present. It was the same professor giving the same test, and only that professor was present."

Another student voiced her frustration regarding a similar issue: the teacher's own lack of concern that such an infringement on integrity is taking place under their nose. "I have actually seen people cheating during tests," said the student. "The first time I went to my teacher and she didn't really care, and after that you kind

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Torah Activities Council Treasurer Change

Hannah L. Golden

Stern College for Women's Torah Activities Council (TAC) introduced its board members at the start of last semester by posting their photos on the TAC bulletin board; it introduced its newest member, Channah Yudkowsky (SCW '11) who replaced Stephanie Kimmel (SCW '10) as TAC treasurer, the same way.

Kimmel quietly stepped down as treasurer at the end of the fall semester, and the board scrambled to replace her. "It needed to be done quickly; it was just before reading week," explains Ruthie Braffman (SCW '10) TAC President.

Given the time constraints and difficulties in arranging a new election for treasurer, the board chose to handpick a new member. "We put a lot of thought into what would be best for the student body," clarifies Braffman. "What's best for the student body is that TAC becomes even stronger... it had to be someone the board could work well with."

In addition, the new treasurer had to be part of "a coalition of student leaders whose mission is to facilitate Torah life and learning at Stern College for Women," as declared in the TAC mission statement.

The enthusiastic Yudkowsky had worked with the TAC board as co-head of the Erev Shabbos Preparation (ESP) Club. ESP runs a monthly Thursday night *shiur* (lecture) with Hassidic-style *tisch* (spiritual sing-song/storytelling) and cholent. "Channah is proficient and competent and this was

her first year on campus," assessed Braffman and the TAC board, so they offered her the position of treasurer.

"I'm still learning the job right now," says Yudkowsky, whose current duties include paying TAC reimbursements and being a liaison between TAC and some of its clubs. "Being treasurer isn't all with money or math," explains Yudkowsky smiling broadly. "I get to be part of all the activities on campus."

Yudkowsky first became involved with TAC when she began Stern this past fall. "I came to Stern and I was bored out of my wits," she recalls. "And I said to HaShem 'Please give me something to do.' And He did." She emailed TAC, asking about the available position of co-head of STIR, which has since evolved into ESP; she got the job. "I was running ESP," Yudkowsky says cheerily. "I got involved with stuff when I came here and I became friends with everyone at the board and went to all the activities." Yudkowsky worked on ESP programming and is also responsible for the ESP posters - exhortations from the Shtetl Rebbe, a picture of dancing Chasidim, and even a directive from Uncle Sam - that have lined the stairwell. "I like spreading propaganda over the school," allows Yudkowsky. She still works as a co-head of ESP with Traci Levine (SCW '10) and Hadassa Klerman (SCW '11), in addition to being a board member.

Hannah L. Golden

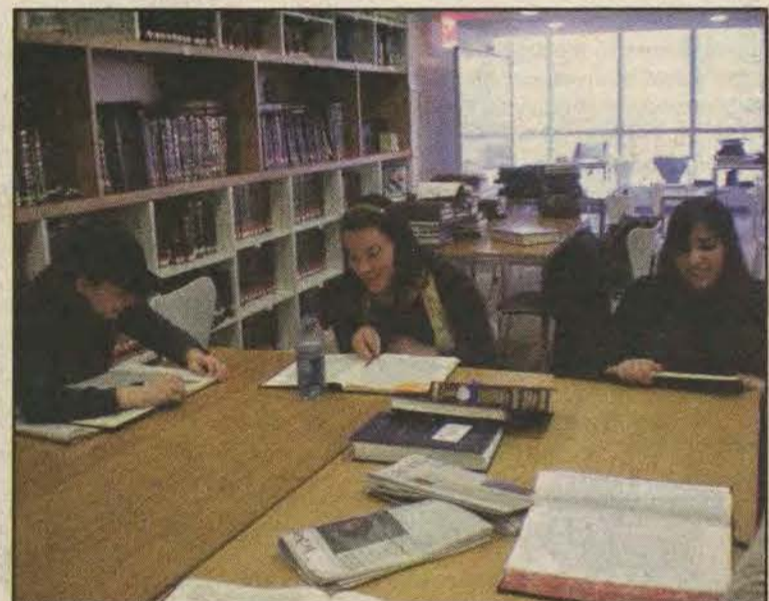
Stern College for Women launched its first *daf yomi* (literally "daily page") program at the start of the spring semester. The Bavli Baboker program, designed to complete a *masekhet* [book of Talmud] per semester, was initiated by Ilana Hostyk (SCW '11). Meeting daily in the Eisenberg *Beit Medrash* before classes begin, Bavli Baboker is taught by Talia Cottrell Furleiter and sponsored by the Center for the Jewish Future, the Stern College for Women Judaic Studies Department, and Torah Activities Council (TAC).

"Previously, there was no chance for undergraduates to learn Talmud on campus outside of the classroom," says Hostyk, "so if you couldn't fit the class into your schedule, or wanted to learn *Gemara* in a more relaxed environment, there was no opportunity to do so. Bavli Baboker was created to fill that void, and provide a setting where women could get together to learn daily *beyahad* [together]."

The hour-long *Gemara shiur* [class] is conducted, like most *daf yomi* classes, so that learn students learn breadth, *bekiyut*, rather than depth. Although the women learn approximately a page of *Gemara* daily, it does not follow the standardized seven-and-a-half-year *daf yomi* cycle.

Talia Cottrell Furleiter, a second year student in the Graduate Program for Women in Advanced Talmudic Study (GPATS), leads the program. "What is fantastic about the program is the way Talia has managed to construct it," continues Hostyk. "She has managed to create a style of learning where

Bavli Baboker



Ilana Hostyk
Talia Cottrell Furleiter, Ruthie Braffman, Estee Goldschmidt learn *daf yomi* as part SCW's new Bavli Baboker program.

women who have never opened a *Gemara* before, and women who have been learning for years, can learn side by side, without compromising anyone."

Cottrell Furleiter, who plans to teach college or adult Jewish education after GPATS, prepares the program so that the students will finish *Mesekhet Megilah* by the end of the semester. "I think if we did a full *daf* [page] a day it would be too much," explains Cottrell Furleiter. "This way, we have enough time to talk about the issues." The students range in their *Gemara* background, and the program stresses that all women are

welcome. "The material is important, but [learning] the skills is just as, if not more, important," emphasizes Cottrell Furleiter.

There have been other obstacles to the program, including timing. Every morning the *Beit Medrash* is dim and nearly empty when the *shiur* begins, but as they work their way through the *Gemara* the room brightens and the windows catch rays from the rising sun. "I'm sure many women are unfortunately deterred by the 7:30 AM start time," empathizes Hostyk. "But life gets in the way at any hour. If we thought more women

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THOUGHTS OF STUDENT LEADERS

Un-muddying the Reputation

Yaelle Frohlich, Editor-in-Chief



The "Being Gay in the Orthodox World" panel and its presidential, rabbinical and student responses have dominated Yeshiva University conversations and debates since Belfer Hall overflowed that Tuesday evening in December. The blogosphere was nattering, administrators chattering, and thousands of Orthodox Jews were left wondering where homosexuality would leave mainstream *halakhic* observance. Sex—perhaps even more than compassion—sells, even though the debate about the extent to which homosexual partnerships were implicitly referenced (or not referenced) during the panel discussion rages fiercely.

The self-consciousness exhibited by the Yeshiva University administration and faculty in the form of statements, *shiurim* and worry over student newspaper content attests to the significance of the panel discussion. Almost all significant developments, good and bad, undergo some sort of official denunciation.

Another serious *halakhic* issue that has been dealt a fair amount of attention this year is the challenge of academic integrity at Yeshiva University. In this issue of *The Observer*, we have two articles about the (filthy dirty) cheating that goes on in our institution: Tamara Freiden's coverage of the scantily attended February 1 academic integrity panel and

Leah Avner's Opinions piece about cheating in the context of a religious Jewish institution.

What's clear after years of this problem is that it's time to stop assuming that nice Orthodox Jewish YU students can be trusted on an exam-related honor system, or indeed that they actually care enough about intellectual morality to pay attention to official crackdowns and panel events on cheating. Psychological, religious and ethical guilt over cheating risks appealing first and foremost to those students who have never actually cheated, rather than those who have learned to live with any semblance of cheating guilt (if, indeed, they actually feel bad about it).

Below, you can read Yeshiva University's new, strict Academic Integrity Policy, which requires the dismissal of anyone caught cheating on an exam. I am in favor of this policy, as I do not believe that cheaters have a place in this university. I recommend the article on Rabbi Jeremy Wieder's 2007 lecture, "It Can Happen Here, Too" (locatable on *The Commentator's* website), about this subject.

Now that this new policy has been established, the next step is for Yeshiva University to institute testing procedure that prevents cheating from occurring in the first place.

Here are my suggestions:

1. All professors must require students to deposit their belongings at the front of the classroom prior to an exam to prevent students from accessing their notes or other materials. While some professors do currently enforce this practice, not all do.

2. No student should be allowed to use a laptop to take an exam without medical confirmation of motor disability or another medical condition that inhibits efficient hand-written work. Professors, don't you know how easily you let your students cheat on their exams when you allow them their computerized notes, email and gchat? If, for some reason, a student must use a computer, the student should be placed beside the professor during the exam, so that the professor has full view of the screen. Alternatively, school computers set up to provide access to only Microsoft Word, and an exam document could be printed at the end of the exam hour.

3. Professors should actually walk down the aisles between desks while the exam is in session.

4. Desks should be spaced far enough apart so that a) professors can walk down the aisles b) students are not close enough to their friends' desks that they could exchange their innermost secrets without anyone noticing.

Setting standards governing actual exam taking will serve to enhance the academic integrity of YU. Then, maybe next year, I won't hear from a friend about how an entire class of hers spent their final exam cheating off their laptop notes. In light of recent events, YU students know that they can mobilize to discuss difficult issues and defend their personal convictions, remaining true to what they believe. Former complaints of student apathy have been rendered false. Academic morality is ours too to reclaim for YU, if we choose it.

Bavli Baboker

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would commit at a later time, then we would switch it. But for now, it is working really well for those who have decided to wake up, and it is a really nice way to start the day."

Ten women arrived for the inaugural *shiur*, though the number of daily participants has decreased to a core of five participants. "I didn't want to commit to attending because I thought I couldn't wake up on time to make it," recalls Estee Goldschmidt (SCW '11), a regular at the *shiur*. "On the first day I woke up early, so I decided to attend. I haven't skipped a day yet. I would like to improve my *Gemara* skills and gain an understanding of a *masekhta* in *Shas*. It is a revolution in the Jewish world to have a woman teaching women *Gemara*, and I am happy to be a part of it."

Fellow *shiur* participant and TAC President Ruthie Braffman (SCW '10) also became enthralled with the program; "The first time I went because it was exciting, and it was just an awesome way to start the day," she reports.

"At Stern you're not paying for the classes, you're paying for the college experience," states Braffman. "And with *daf yomi* you have the experience starting the day off with learning." The experience of Bavli Baboker is evolving as students shape it to their needs. "I was just saying what Rashi said," remarks Cottrell Furleiter of her first few days teaching in the *Beit Medrash*, where she is usually the student. Then, a student requested that the *shiur* read Rashi's commentary in the text. Breaking with traditional *daf yomi*, Cottrell Furleiter now selects comments of Rashi to be read together. She hopes that the program will continue to change as new people join; "Even if they haven't been there from the beginning," she emphasizes, "they're welcome to come try it out."

peal and will consult with the Chair of the Academic Integrity Committee. He may, in his discretion, interview the student, but will not conduct a new hearing. The standard for review will be whether the student received appropriate notice and had an opportunity to be heard (i.e. whether there was a fair hearing), and whether the school followed its procedures. The Provost may designate the Dean of one of the graduate or professional schools of Yeshiva University to act in his stead. The Provost, or his designee, will notify the student in writing of the decision in a timely fashion, but no later than three weeks from the receipt of the appeal. This decision is final.

Records- Copies of the final decision (after appeal) will be sent to

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YU's Updated Academic Integrity Policy

Sent to "The Observer" by Provost Morton Lowengrub, January 13, 2010

The cornerstone of our mission at Yeshiva University is to provide students with an education consistent with the values and ideals of traditional religious learning combined with contemporary academic secular study. As such, academic dishonesty violates the fundamental principles, both religious and secular, upon which our institution is founded. Cheating is an affront on academic integrity and an outright rejection of *halakhic* norms and the Jewish code of ethics. Any instance of dishonesty cheapens not only the work of the perpetrator, but the work of innocent classmates and the institution in which the offense was committed.

Accordingly, students who act in a dishonest manner by cheating on written exams are subject to penalty under the following procedures¹:

Notification Process- A report of cheating on a written exam may be initiated by any member of the Yeshiva University community. The

complainant should send a written report to the Associate Dean or Administrator of the school in which the student is enrolled. The Associate Dean will then submit to the student a written copy of the charges against him/her. If the student initially admits to the allegations, he/she will receive an "F" in the course in question and may request a voluntary withdrawal in place of a mandatory dismissal outlined below.

Hearing- If the student denies the allegations, the Associate Dean will convene the Academic Integrity Committee, a three-person committee comprised of impartial Yeshiva University faculty, for a hearing. The Associate Dean will notify the student in writing of the date, time, and place of the scheduled appearance before the committee. The student may bring written materials and witnesses, but no advocates or advisors (including parents and attorneys).

The Committee will consider all of the facts and circumstances,

may ask for further information from the relevant parties, and will determine whether the student committed an academic integrity violation. The Committee will provide a written summary of the hearing and findings along with its recommendation to the Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled.²

Decision- The Dean may accept, reject, or modify the Committee's recommendation, and will notify the student in writing of the decision. If the student has been found to have cheated on a written exam, he/she will receive an "F" in the course and will be dismissed from Yeshiva University unless an appeal is filed pursuant to this policy.

Appeal- The student may file an appeal within ten days from the receipt of the Dean's letter by submitting it in writing to the Provost of Yeshiva University. No appeal will be considered if received after the ten-day deadline. The Provost will consider the merits of the ap-

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NEWS

Timeline of YU Homosexuality Discussion

Tova Greenbaum and Yaelle Frohlich

Following articles published by *Kol Hamevaser* and *The Commentator* in February, October and November 2009, December saw the public discussion of homosexuality—controversial due to the incompatibility of homosexual behavior for the first time at Yeshiva University.

December 10, 2009 – Stern College for Women's Torah Activities Council shows "Trembling Before God," which is followed by a discussion with Rabbi Dr. Aharon Fried. Full report published in *The YU Observer* (<http://media.www.yuobserver.com/media/storage/paper989/news/2009/12/21/Features/trembling.Before.GD.At.Tac.Event-3851373.shtml>).

December 22, 2009—A panel discussion entitled "Being Gay in the Orthodox World" is hosted on the Wilf Campus by the YU Tolerance Club and Wurzweiler School of Social Work. Four panelists—three YU alumni and one current YU student—describe their personal experiences and struggles of being Orthodox Jews and homosexual. Moderated by Rabbi Yosef Blau, who advises that *halakhic* implications of homosexuality are not part of the panel discussion and requests that the speeches not be recorded, the event draws a crowd of approximately 800.

December 22, 2009 (later)—A full, printed transcript of the panel event is posted on the Curious Jew blog with a disclaimer that it should not to be quoted for official purposes. Six videos, including speeches of three panelists, are uploaded to <http://vimeo.com/user2852589/videos>. Articles about the event are later published by *The Jerusalem Post*, *The YU Commentator* and other online publications.

December 24, 2009—Rabbi Yona Reiss, head of YU's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), and Rabbi Mayer Twersky, a rosh yeshiva at RIETS, address their *halakhic* ramifications of the panel on the Wilf Campus. The lecture later appears online on Torah Web (http://www.torahweb.org/audioFrameset.html#audio=rtwe_122809).

December 25, 2009—*The YU Observer* publishes a statement of YU President Richard Joel and Menahel Rabbi Yona Reiss addressing and asserting the religious proscription of homosexual activity.

December 29, 2009—Rabbi Mayer Twersky delivers the lecture he gave at the Wilf Campus to over 70 students at Stern College for Women. He asserts that any sympathy to the point of dismissing the *halakhic* proscription of homosexual relationships is misplaced. Rabbi Twersky says that he does not believe the audience, organizers or panelists had anti-halakhic intentions, but that the event had a "gay pride" atmosphere. While a homosexual person's parents, siblings, close friends and religious mentors must respond sensitively and compassionately to the homosexual's struggle, argues Rabbi Twersky, the matter should be addressed privately and with modesty. Rabbi Twersky acknowledges that he did not attend the panel event.

Reverberations from the panel and its response are still present on YU's campuses. Time will tell whether and how the conversation continues.

Academic Integrity Discussed by Faculty and Students

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of just stop caring."

The Dr. Monique C. Katz Dean of Stern College for Women Karen Bacon makes it clear that there is always something to be done; one must report it to a higher authority if necessary. "You have to keep going until something is done about it," said Bacon. "You cannot feel victimized and in some way demeaned by this. It's unacceptable."

Miriam Schechter, director of academic advisement at Stern College, noted that the students' hesitation when giving names makes the problem that much more difficult to resolve.

When Schwartz speaks about the issue, he takes it as a psychologist would, emphasizing modern society's role in contributing to the new way we have come to view ourselves. "Cheating is taking something where you don't, in a sense, deserve that level of return, and saying, 'of course I'm owed that because I'm me and everyone's always told me how great I am,'" explained Schwartz, adding that success is increasingly defined by externals such as the amount of money one makes, and when that's the case, the ends will always justify the means, no matter if integrity is sacrificed.

Last to approach the matter, Schrecker rounded off the panel by discussing academic integrity and professionalism within the faculty in particular on a broad range of topics, including defining the expectations of the class for the student, sexual misconduct, indoctrination versus assigning controversial texts, and allowing students to state their own ideas in the classroom.

While the discussion covered a spectrum of concerns and various perspectives of them, students and faculty alike united to talk about the problem of academic integrity. While the room was not exactly filled to capacity, it was an important step nonetheless in addressing the problem. "If our institution wants to take pride in it being a serious learning institution, when there are instances of cheating happening, they need to take it seriously and act accordingly," said Grubner. The panel discussion was meant to do just that.

YU's Academic Integrity Policy

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the Dean of the school in which the student is enrolled and to the Office of the Registrar.

Readmission—Students who have been dismissed as a result of this procedure may apply for readmission after one semester of non-attendance. An application for readmission should be made directly to the Dean or Associate Dean of the school from which the student was dismissed (not to the Admissions Office). The application should state the reasons for readmission and include a statement of steps the student has

taken or changes he/she has made to merit readmission. Any readmission may require conditions of probation and/or academic or other counseling.

This policy applies to the following schools and programs: Yeshiva College, Stern College for Women, Sy Syms School of Business, all Undergraduate Jewish Studies Programs including the Mazer Yeshiva Program, Irving I. Stone Belt Midrash Program, Isaac Breuer College of Hebrew Studies, and Mechina Program: James Striar School.

The Deans of the respective schools will cooperate as necessary in implementing this policy.

19 YU students spent their winter break on the Center for the Jewish Future's Coast to Coast mission, volunteering in Jewish communities in Kansas, Nebraska, and Colorado.



Coast to Coast 2010 visits the Rocky Mountains.



Shabbat in the Boulder Jewish Day School.

FEATURES

Intercession Exotica

Yaira Dubin

Winter break is a time to escape icy, freezing New York City and explore the world, particularly sun-drenched, exotic locales that free you from the heavy coats and boots that have dominated the life of every Manhattanite since November. Despite the recession, Stern College students managed to create incredible winter break trips that brought some color back to their faces while staying within a reasonable price range.

Everyone wants to be splashing on gorgeous, far away beaches, but sometimes even Florida can be extremely appealing, especially to last minute planners. Dorian Gordon (SCW '10) chose Florida as the site of her winter break vacation. She spent her days biking, hiking, and exploring a national park. Playing football on the beach and wading in the ocean were easy ways to create lasting memories. While many adventurous vacationers struggle with *kashrut* and end up surviving on canned tuna and crackers, being in Florida made the food issue easy. "We were staying at someone's grandparents in a beautiful apartment, so *kashrut* was not an issue," she says. Despite the cold weather that took over Florida during her vacation, Gordon says she would do the trip again if given the choice.

As much fun as Florida can be, sometimes it's just not far enough. Mollie Sharfman (SCW '10) chose a different venue for her winter break adventure. In early December at 2 A.M., she and her friends realized that they wanted to spend their last winter break in Stern College doing something spontaneous. Within the next 24 hours they booked a five-day cruise to the Bahamas on Royal Caribbean's Majesty of the Seas. Every day on the cruise was spent doing something different and exciting, stepping over boundaries and escaping the ordinariness that fills semes-

ter life. "The two things I loved most were getting up and doing karaoke, and driving a moped," she says. "It's one of those things you do when you're young and not thinking about all the factors and why it's a little dangerous and you want to do it because you want to experience it. Driving over the Paradise Island Bridge with wind flying in my hair was an incredible feeling I will always remember. It's something I won't do when I'm 45 so I'm really happy I did it now."

Kashrut was made easy by an extremely capable and pleasant crew, who provided pre-packaged kosher food, plus double-wrapped and cooked anything and everything, such as potatoes, salmon, sea bass, and tilapia. Along with all the different positive experi-

ences, there were some unexpected challenges that cropped up during the trip. "In the beginning, the ship was really rocking because no one ever tells you that the Gulf is very rocky," she remembers. "So if you're going to go, just be careful because it's a bit nerve-wracking. You think that it's going to be like that the entire trip and we were all really bummed, but the captain informed us it was just over these specific waters and we all felt better, but it was a scary beginning." When asked if she would do the trip again, Sharfman laughed. "Hell, yes" she replied.

Sherri Bavly (SCW '10) also chose an unusual location for her winter break trip, which not only filled the gap between semesters but also doubled as her honeymoon.

She and her husband chose to explore Peru together for two weeks. While there, they went sandboarding on an oasis in the desert, a sport similar to snowboarding but done on sandy dunes instead of snowy mountains. They also biked, white water rafted,

hiked, explored the Galapagos Islands, and participated in historical city tours.

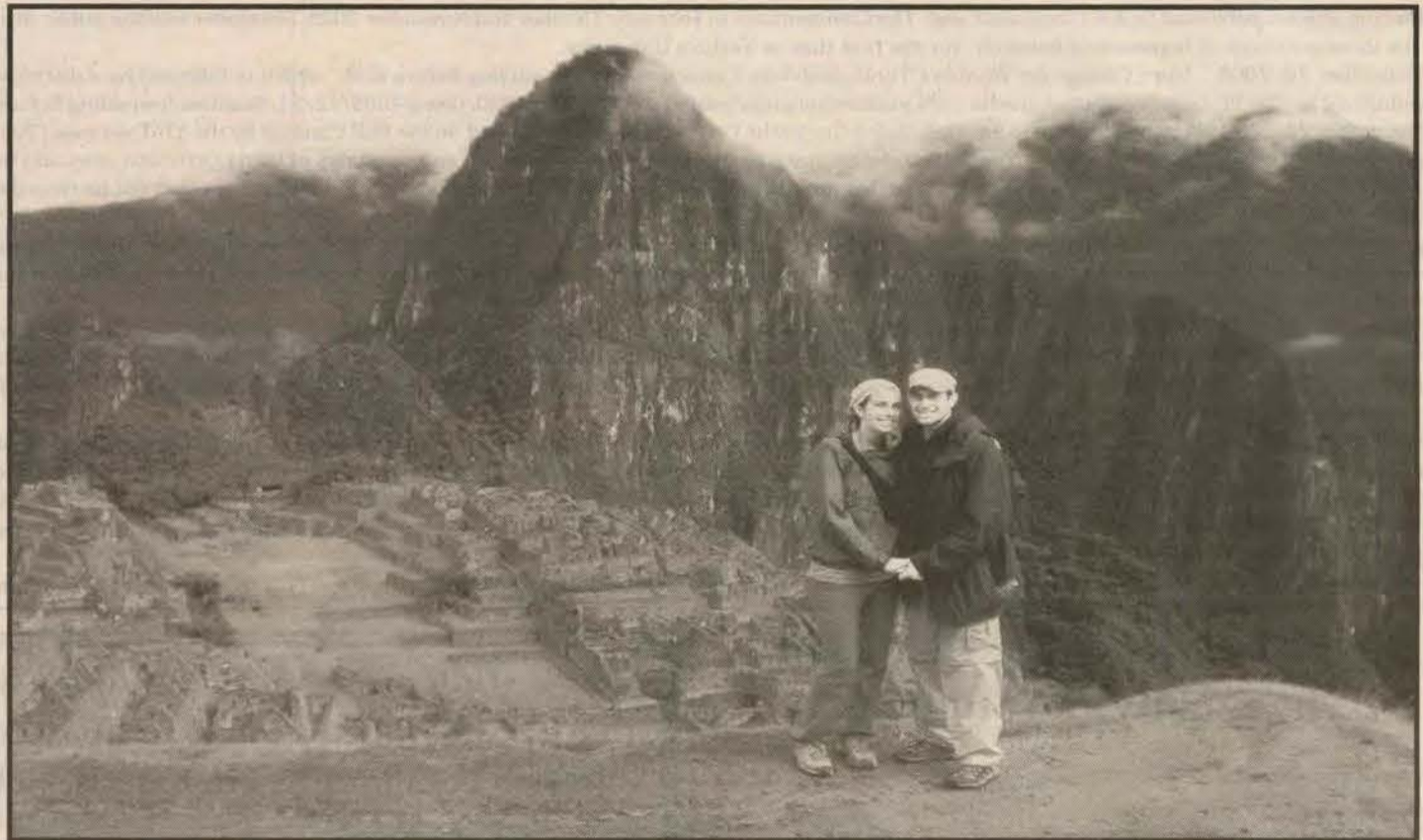
Part of the Bavly itinerary included a four-day hike to Machu Picchu, which supposedly possesses breathtaking views, but Bavly didn't really have the chance to appreciate that. "We spent four days hiking there instead of taking a bus," she comments wryly. "It was really cool but by the time we got there we were just exhausted and it was hard to appreciate it and really care." She particularly enjoyed her second Shabbat in Peru. "We were in Lima and we ate with families in the community and were introduced to Peruvian food," she explains. "At the Shabbat table there was English, Spanish, Yiddish, and Hebrew being spoken at once which is really cool that we were all around the same table coming from such different places and backgrounds sharing one shabbat." The whole trip cost about \$750 a person, including plane fare, and overnight stays at hostels. Tips about keeping *kashrut* in Peru are available at kosherperu.com. Some problems arose along the way, such as expired bug repellent leading to hundreds of mosquito bites, and a broken rice cooker, but Bavly says she would definitely explore a different area of South America again, like the Amazon or Brazil.

Beth Japhet (SCW '10) spent her vacation backpacking through the tropical rainforests of Costa Rica. The trip started off as being slightly disappointing, as her first stop, Arenal Volcano, was cold, rainy, and windy. The trip quickly improved though as the group traveled to Manuel Antonio, on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica,

surrounded by beaches and rainforests. They saw wild monkeys, went horseback riding, snorkeling, and kayaking. The excitement escalated as they went ziplining through the rainforest. "The views were unbelievable," she describes. "You could see the Pacific Ocean and we were literally going from one mountain to the next, on twelve different ziplines, literally going over the trees and mountains, through the rainforest."

Parts of the trip were difficult, like living out of a backpack and constantly switching to different youth hostels. Keeping kosher was also hard, as they had to live on tuna packets and protein bars, never eating real food. But Japhet adored the experience and says she would love to spend time seeing the rest of Costa Rica that they didn't have time for on this trip. "I think it was so refreshing and exciting to be in a different culture," she says. "Everyone was so friendly and relaxed. They're not in this constant race that Americans are in, that rat race. It was a completely different culture. I had also never been in a rainforest. In that tropical climate, we saw sloths and toucans and monkeys, animals you don't see if you hike in the States."

Everyone needs a break. That's why colleges invented winter break. Don't waste it. Whether you decide to take one of these vacations, or create one of your own, make the most of your winter breaks. When you hit real life and join the work force, these two weeks are going to disappear. So take advantage of them now and spend them doing the craziest, most exciting vacations you can possibly imagine.



Sherri and Yuval Bavly honeymooned at Machu Picchu during winter vacation.

Courtesy of the Bavly newlyweds



Lizzie Bentley, Aviva Feuerstein, and Beth Japhet spent their winter vacation in Costa Rica.

Courtesy of Beth Japhet

FEATURES

Dating Abuse in the Orthodox World

Estee Goldschmidt

"Dating is an overture to marriage," says Joseph Ciccone, M.D., a psychologist who practices within the Orthodox community. An overture is a short piece of music that is played by the orchestra as an introduction to a play; if one listens closely, one can pick up on motifs pertaining to the entire concert from the overture alone. Likewise, dating is a prelude to marriage. With care, one can pick up on details and predict what the relationship will look like when it progresses. If one pays attention to the details during the dating process, and recognizes signs that are indicative of abuse, one can prevent the relationship from turning abusive either by terminating it, or by healing it through therapy in its early stages.

Many Stern College for Women students are dating seriously or are searching for a relationship. Therefore, the topic of recognizing abuse in dating is particularly important for anyone trying to build a healthy family. Ariella Zirkind is a senior at Stern College and a Judaic studies major who is the current president of the Social Justice Society. "Most daters will probably never interact with full-on abusive relationships," she says. "But there are smaller issues and warning signs that indicate potential for unhealthy relationships." When asking students and recent alumni for interviews, most refused and some preferred to remain anonymous because of the shame and sensitivity involved.

Although physical abuse is easier to identify because of its clear ramifications, emotional abuse is more prevalent in the Jewish Orthodox community, where *halakha* (Jewish law) prohibits physical contact between members of the opposite gender before marriage. "I think emotional abuse

can be even worse [than physical abuse]," says Dana Adler (SCW '09). "Because no one can see the bruises."

Most people are at their best behavior at the beginning of a relationship. Only after some time passes does the "true self" of the person come through. Usually, this happens after both parties are emotionally invested in the relationship. "Abuse is a battle for power, for control," says Benzion Brodie, who is a rabbi and therapist at the Mental Health Clinic of Bikkur Cholim in Rockland County. "In an abusive relationship the abuser wants to make sure that the victim is under his or her thumb through breaking down the self esteem of the partner, by being extremely jealous," states Brodie. "Therefore, when the victim tries to break free of the relationship, they are at a great risk of

even death. Abusive relationships are a real danger. The battle can be physical or emotional."

Gila Manolson is a dating coach within the Orthodox community. She is the author of "Head to Heart"—a guide to dating. "The key to the 'correct' response [from a partner] is respect—for one's independence and your boundaries," writes Manolson.

Neal Davis, (YC '08) has a close friend who was a victim of an abusive relationship. "At first, my friend didn't pick up on it," he says. "But when the teasing turned into ridicule, which then became criticism, she realized that she was being verbally abused."

Talia is a biology major who asked to remain anonymous; she shared her experience of being in an abusive relationship with *The Observer*. "Looking back now that I am married and know what a healthy relationship looks like makes it very easy to pinpoint the signs of an abusive relationship," says Talia. "When I was dating E. I cut off all communication with my friends, both male and female, depriving myself of a support system that I had prior to the relationship. The reason for this sudden detachment were the projected feelings of jealousy that E. expressed to me, in a rather unhealthy way." Talia remembers what the relationship turned into. "There were constant fights and accusations of me being 'flirtatious and inappropriate' with other guys, with no room for discussion," she says. "Also, he constantly controlled

" I think emotional abuse can be even worse [than physical abuse], because no one can see the bruises "

where I was and with whom."

Brodie explains this from the abuser's perspective. "Its an 'If I can't have her, no one can' attitude," he says.

Adler recalls how she knew that her friend from high school was in an abusive relationship. "She no longer sounded like herself, didn't make her own decisions, and the life seemed to drain out of her," says Adler. "That's how everyone knew. Her vibrant personality was completely gone."

Adina Chevins is a senior at SCW majoring in education. "I was dating a certain guy, when he breached the laws of *negiah*," she says. "I thought that I will lose him if I remained *shomer negiah*, so I compromised on my values for the sake of preserving a relationship which wasn't healthy in the first place."

Emotional abuse can be overt

and covert. Overt abuse is clear, where one person puts another partner down through criticism or even threats. Covert criticism, however, is a subtle form of abuse, that can span from frequent interruptions that make a partner feel insignificant, to excluding the partner and making him or her feel isolated.

Zirkind points out abusive signs she recognizes. "Abusive relationships I have seen have been qualified by uncomfortable comments or behavior that makes the other person feel insignificant or afraid," says Zirkind. "I have seen boyfriends criticize or dictate food consumption, fashion choices, gym attendance, etc. This kind of emotional manipulation quickly deteriorates self confidence and the ability to make independent choices."

Talia adds another trait. "When one partner tries to actively cut the other one off from his or her support system, that is abuse," says Talia, "[as well as] when one uses religion as a tool for manipulation."

Dave Barry is a humor columnist for *The Miami Herald*. In his column, he stresses the importance of someone being kind not just to the person he or she is dating, but to surrounding people as well. "If someone is nice to you but rude to the waiter, they are not a nice person," he writes.

Rabbi Dr. Aharon Fried is an associate professor of psychology and education at Stern College. He relates a story about a young man who showed up for a date an hour late and didn't apologize. Although the young man was extremely bright and had merits, Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach discouraged the shidduch from proceeding, because the young man showed disrespect towards

the woman he was dating and that character trait was bound to cause pitfalls in the future. "Women feel as if the 'shidduch market' is a men's market, because of the so-called shidduch crisis and upper hand that the men have," says Rabbi Fried. "Therefore, women allow themselves to be stepped upon and allow the men to get away with too much."

Rabbi Fried notes the emphasis seminars place on finding a *zivug* (partner) with the right *hashkafa* (philosophic outlook). "*Middot* [character traits] are most important," states Fried. "If one sees behavior that shows disrespect and disregard, they should run in the other direction." Rabbi Dr. Fried brings an example from real life to illustrate his point: "A young man had promised to call the girl he was dating; he called only three weeks later and offered

Seven Stories

Simi Lampert Eisenman

On January 26, on an atypically warm night, two other Stern College for Women students and I joined thousands of other HOPE (Homeless Outreach Population Estimate) volunteers in walking the city streets to help count the homeless of New York. Last year, we were informed at the orientation, was "so damn cold" that the volunteers were asked to wake the men and women they found; there was a very real risk of freezing to death on the streets that night. This year, the usual policies were to be followed: all of us were to split into groups, walk once down each street to which we were assigned, and give a short survey to anyone who seemed homeless and would answer the questions. The goal of the night was "to assess the number of individuals living in New York City's public spaces," according to the program's website. Using the estimate, the City of New York is able to then ascertain how best to help its homeless.

My group leader was Peter, an amiable middle-aged man in a beige, cable-knit sweater who told us he's been taking part in this annual survey since 2001. The first year he did it, he was accompanied by a fully-armed policeman and a cadet. This year, his group consisted of himself and three nice Jewish girls. We set off at midnight for our HOPE Area, the few blocks around Columbus Circle, an area characterized by high-end retail and expensive real estate. Pedestrians passing us wore enormous fur coats and held the leashes of miniature purebred dogs; it was easy to spot the streets-hardened homeless wrapped in layers of blankets and pushing garbage bins containing all their worldly possessions.

We met seven people that night, and though I know none of their names, we learned a part of each person's story.

Rain began falling as we approached the first people in our

area that we suspected may be homeless. Two men in their sixties walked side by side in mismatched, worn—but warm—clothing. One had a cane and, when he opened his mouth to speak, revealed a set of gums with few teeth left. He was more than happy to answer our questions, and then some. He told us he used to be homeless, but was now living in a former hotel converted into housing for the formerly homeless. His only problem, he said without too much umbrage, was that there was no good security. "Can't leave anythin' in your room," he kept repeating, shaking his head emphatically.

His companion watched us closely throughout our exchange. He stood a step behind his more garrulous friend, and peered out from under his hat. Peter directed some questions at him, and he answered readily enough in a thick Ukrainian accent. "I am staying with friends," he insisted. "I have a place to go." He wore a long patterned winter coat that may have belonged at some point to a church-going man who donated it when it went out of style. We marked him on our form as Homeless. The pair continued on together, comfortably slow.

Another man we came across was elderly, but he was less willing to talk. Hunched over, he stood less than five feet tall, and he carried with him a few tattered shopping bags, the universal sign of the homeless man. He seemed befuddled by our questions, and muttered to us—or himself?—as he scurried away, avoiding eye contact. At this point it was one in the morning, and he probably had no warm bed wherever his final destination may have been. He looked to be the same age as my grandparents.

Denial of homelessness proved to be a recurring theme of the night. One person, the only woman we encountered, sat outside an upscale apartment building smoking in her slippers. Were it not for

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some lame excuse. The woman should not have made up excuses for him having finals, she should have hung up the phone.

Often times, partners are too involved in a relationship to walk away. "Only at the point where the arguments started to involve my religious freedom, did I understand that the relationship was abusive," says Talia. "The argument that led to the final break-up involved the question of a woman's role in Judaism. E told me that I should in no way be allowed to take *Gemara* [Talmud] classes, or else he would break up with me. And so he did," sighs Talia. "Unfortunately, this relationship lasted longer than I wish it had—a year and two

months."

Zirkind advises people to have an outsider's opinion to prevent them from getting involved in abusive relationships. "It's important to date with outside input," says Zirkind, "There needs to be someone that you talk to you who can tell you when something doesn't look right. You should never feel that who you are is compromised or that your standards are being negotiated in a relationship." Neal Davis agrees. "Just keep your eyes open, and if something seems off, speak with someone you trust," says Davis.

"Don't ever feel guilty for walking away from a situation if you feel uncomfortable," adds Adler.

FEATURES

Sense, Sensibility and Logic: Professor Margarita Levin

Suzanne Mazel

Interviews are like a box of chocolates – you never know what you're going to get. Simple questions often receive surprising answers. Talking to Dr. Margarita Levin, a professor in the philosophy department at Stern College for Women, revealed a completely different person than might be guessed from her classroom persona.

This past summer, Dr. Levin toured England as part of a Jane Austen trip, looking at historical houses. If this seems unusual, it's "de rigueur" for the Jane Austen Society of North America, in which Dr. Levin is a lifetime member.

The reason Dr. Levin likes Jane Austen so much is "because she's so smart!" She elaborated that the initial impression readers have of an author that merely writes love stories is "not what [Jane Austen's] about." There is an "irony running under things," observes Dr. Levin.

The organization is quite serious. It hosts meetings, discusses papers, and throws a ball. Dr. Levin got into the spirit and not only participated in the dance, but also dressed up in costume.

The trip she joined this summer was a ten-day tour visiting houses built in Austen's time, as well as houses of Austen's family and places she visited. "[I now] know more about her family than I do about my own," laughs Dr. Levin.

Her own family has a very mixed background, with roots in Spain, Cuba, and the antebellum South. Dr. Levin's great grandfather came from Spain to Louisiana before the Civil War, working in the tobacco industry. After the war, the family left to Cuba to try to recoup their losses. Her father later came back



Courtesy of Prof. Margarita Levin
Professor Margarita Levin at a Jane Austen Society ball in summer 2009.

to America and lived in New York, where Dr. Levin has since lived.

She grew up in Washington Heights, north of the museum complex. After attending high school, Dr. Levin went to City College of New York for her bachelor's degree in mathematics.

In graduate school, Dr. Levin looked to further her education in mathematics "but to get a Ph.D. in math, you have to prove an original theorem," says Dr. Levin. "I started to realize that was not something I was going to be doing," and that she had "reached the limit of what I could do in math." Dr. Levin remains interested in mathematics, appreciating its beauty.

"Once you get past the basic stuff there's an aesthetic to mathematics that most people don't get to see. It's quite intriguing and in-

teresting," says Dr. Levin.

After choosing to leave mathematics, Dr. Levin turned to logic since "logic is the bridge between math and philosophy." The transition between the two, she says, was a little difficult.

"It's funny to go from a field where you have certainty, the kind of certainty you have in mathematical proofs, to a field where hardly anything is certain, and issues are still being discussed after 2500 years," says Dr. Levin.

She first started at Yeshiva University in the fall of '86 teaching logic uptown at Yeshiva College. Then she taught at both YC and SCW, and eventually taught exclusively at SCW.

"Just last semester, I had an experience I had been dreading," says Dr. Levin. "A student came up

to me in logic and said 'you taught my father'... I thought 'oh, gosh,' but it was bound to happen."

Dr. Levin says she enjoys the fact that Stern has few layers of bureaucracy, so that decisions can be made more quickly and easily.

The students, she says, are very good. "They come ready to work," comments Dr. Levin. This is especially important for philosophy, Dr. Levin says, because few students have had a class like it before.

"Years ago I was told by a student at the end of the semester 'you know, this class isn't like any other because I feel like I know less than I did when I started,'" says Dr. Levin. Dr. Levin took the student's comment as a compliment. "The whole point of philosophy is to make you aware that you may not have such a strong explanation for what you think you believe," she explains.

"Indeed you don't walk away [from a philosophy course] with a body of knowledge that's been definitely established, you walk away more with questions and methods for tackling the questions," she says.

As for students who may feel philosophy will challenge their beliefs, Dr. Levin thinks those students just will not take philosophy.

"I think the students I take are naturally either secure or more open to discussion," she says. "As John Stuart Mill would point out, if you don't examine and respond to challenges then your beliefs get kind of hardened, they are not really alive for you. But if you think of [one's opinions] and how to defend them, then they're more real for you."

One downside to Stern College, according to Dr. Levin, is that the year in Israel might be better for

junior year rather than freshman year.

"The students get rusty," she observes. "The freshmen, or so called sophomores arrive and some of them haven't written a paper for 18 months and they're terribly rusty. At that age if you don't keep up with the skills they kind of go. But I know there are reasons for it being the way it is."

Though some do get back into the swing of things quickly, "there might be something to be said for holding [off on taking philosophy] until you've had English comp," she suggests.

One other thing she wishes could be different is the freedom students feel to get up and leave during a class.

"The very first time it happened, I thought, 'was it something I said, did I say something offensive?'" she says. "Then I realized it was the combined effect of Starbucks and Poland Spring."

"Once or twice when a student is headed out the door, I'll say something to the class deliberately, 'now the following is very important' to see if she turns around," she laughs. "But I have a feeling this happens less in logic."

When Dr. Levin was younger, she thought she might want to be an astronomer, but a summer program at the Museum of Natural History stole that desire from her.

"At the end I knew I did not want to be an astronomer, which was a good thing to learn early on," says Dr. Levin. "I went into math because I enjoyed it."

But her favorite class to teach is logic. "I think I'm very looney-goosey in that class because I love it so much," she smiles. Lucky students to have a professor so enthralled with her subject matter.

Seven Stories

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the bags at her feet, or the slightly unkempt look to her dyed blond hair, she could have been a resident out for a midnight smoke. As we walked up, surveys in hand, she eyeballed us sharply and called out, "I aint homeless!" The group reconvened in the middle of the street to debate how to fill out her form, and we decided to ask the doorman. He had never seen her before. We agreed: Homeless.

A man sat beside her on the bench, with his own bags, and layers of clothing concealing much of his face and body. He appeared as if he were trying to make himself invisible. We filled out a form for him too: Homeless.

Only one man frightened me that night. This man strode toward us, unshaven, and smoking a cigarette. When we timidly piped up, before the rote questions could come rolling out, he barked out, "Got any cash or food?" When we,

as the rules of the survey dictated, demurred, he puffed smoke at us, bit out "Then good night," and strode off brusquely. It wasn't his lack of genteel manners that left me cold; it was whom he represented. This man was probably in his twenties—living on the streets makes age much more difficult to determine—and he was angry in general, bitter at life and at his circumstances. He reminded me of people I know, and it was that, out of everything I saw that night, which made homelessness very real.

On the other hand, one man we questioned endeared himself to us with his cheerfully friendly banter. His long beard and hair, his wild eyes, and his overflowing garbage pail, all fit the stereotype of the menacing homeless man, the one you hope won't look your way as you avert your own eyes. Yet we passed him a number of times as

we crisscrossed our area, and by the end he was calling to us, "You again!" in mock exasperation. He refused our offers of shelter—"I'd be the last one!"—and instead made himself comfortable huddled under his many blankets next to a dumpster.

The numbers are promising—HOPE results show a drop from 4,395 homeless in 2005 to 2,328 in 2009—as well as discouraging. Statistics show disheartening amounts of families, including children under five, living on the streets, some turned away from food shelters for want of enough food. I have no life lessons or any moral to my stories. I invite you to draw your own conclusion, and allow these men and women to stay with you. I am sure that this was a night I won't soon forget, not as long as the pavements of New York remain home and bed to people just like these seven.

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FEATURES

El Salvador: Bridging the Barrier

Tamara Freiden

The single most surprising thing I saw in El Salvador was not the dust-strewn shacks made of thin slabs of aluminum hardly able to keep a drizzle out, let alone the downpour that struck them during the rainy season. It wasn't these sorry substitutes for what they called home, containing little more than a hammock to sleep in. Nor was it the emaciated livestock in the backyard which would ultimately determine whether they made a living these next couple of months. It wasn't the barefooted kids running in the street whom you knew should have been in school, either. It wasn't the poverty; we expected that.

It was the sense of pride despite it.

There were sixteen of us who spent our winter break in Ciudad Romero, a small community in El Salvador named for the Archbishop Oscar Romero, who devoted his life to finding peace during the civil war which plagued the country approximately three decades ago. Rabbi Yosef Blau, mashgiach ruchani at YU, accompanied the mission, serving as a halakhic resource in areas like kashruth and Shabbat, as well as a mentor. While most of us had this or that volunteer job during high school, or an entire afternoon devoted to *hessed* [kindness] during our year spent in Israel, the bulk of us have never been immersed in a situation so foreign to us, both culturally and economically.

When we stepped off the plane into the Salvadoran heat, we brought along with us much more

than our bag of necessities, which included several changes of clothing, face wash, and iPods. We brought along societal standards, preconceived notions, ideals, and expectations. How we would break the barrier was questionable. If we could break the barrier at all was perhaps a better question. Could people so different, with so little in common, find common ground nonetheless? Would they be able to see the support we came overseas to bring, or would we be just another humanitarian group staying just long enough to be able to say we did it and then be gone, taking from the experience far more than we were actually giving?

Ciudad Romero didn't want our American pity, sympathetic sighs exchanged behind the back, or anything of ours, really. Never once had they asked us for a piece of our food, a bracelet we wore, or one of our frisbees. In fact, oddly enough, it seemed the opposite. They were the ones who took the initiative in giving. What little they had to offer, they did. And because they didn't actually own very many things, they showed it with actions instead.

There are two moments in particular which epitomizes the kind of giving I refer to above. Both were small gestures with an infinite amount of meaning behind them.

Each day at the worksite, our job consisted of mixing the sand, water, and rocks to form the cement, and then laying it across

bricks which would eventually form the latrine we were meant to be building. The mornings were particularly hot, and we weren't the most coordinated latrine-builders, while that might surprise you. The woman for whom we were building the bathroom never stood aside and watched. While I am sure she wasn't a professional latrine-builder either, she would plunge headfirst into the work we flew six hours to do. In one particular instance, I was attempting a rather sloppy job of brick

“ Could people so different, with so little in common, find common ground nonetheless? ”

layering, and, seeing my struggle, she pushed me out of the way to take over. She immersed her bare hands into the cold cement and flattened it out neatly. In a last effort to do my part, I threw off my own work gloves ready to join her. She wouldn't allow it. My hands were too delicate. Her coarse skin was used to the work, and I would have to sit beside her and watch.

The second moment involved her daughter. The whole family was gathered in the front yard with us as we exchanged good-byes. The little girl—she couldn't have been more than nine or ten years old—skipped away from the crowd, returning with a beat up plastic lawn chair. After insisting I sit down, she promptly made me

get back up again. Without saying a word, she dragged the chair into the shade, and pointed at it one last time. Now it was ready for their guest.

Both times, these simple acts of kindness caught me by surprise.

But should they have? When one thinks of the poor, perhaps not on purpose, they often become dehumanized. Why should they have anything on their mind but food and shelter? They don't need self-respect or pride when they have much larger problems to deal with, after all. Let's worry about providing them with the necessities, and leave it at that. It's simply not our responsibility to go beyond.

I learned something about the people of Ciudad Romero while only there for a week. They became more than the picture of a little girl with big white eyes and scraps for a dress on the cover of *National Geographic*. They are a people that appreciate their culture and heritage despite the long history of abuse from their government. They are a people who are in love with their land and could not imagine living anywhere else, even if that means living in substandard conditions. They are a people who left together, as a community of approximately 300, to Panama at the start of the civil war because their bonds with one another were stronger than the desire to be responsible only for themselves.

They are a people with a sense of pride who happened to be dealt

a rough deal in life, and are still suffering the repercussions because of it.

They do not give up, though. They know they need our help and they accept the resources we have come to offer. Yet, they insist on proving that they deserve it, and do so with certain subtleties. It's the smiles despite the hardships, the dirt underneath their nails, the respect they have for God, the dreams of an education, the sense of pride in their families, and the glint in their eyes as they tell us the stories of their past.

And so are we really so different? On a material scale, the spectrum is vast and the distance between us immense. But when we strip away the superficialities, and concentrate on the essence of their character as fellow human beings, we couldn't be more similar. Is their Salvadoran pride not reminiscent of our Jewish sense of identity? Despite the suffering, they pick themselves up again and are stronger because of it. They remain in the land because they believe in it. They work hard despite the hurdles that have barricaded their way so often in the past. Looking back, we had far more in common that I ever thought imaginable. And it's this bridge that was there all along that should further strengthen the responsibility we have for others in this world, who are first and foremost human beings than a torn up dress, a dust-strewn house, a statistic, or a burden.

Trapezing Through Midtown

Hannah Robinow

Pop quiz: What do you usually do on Saturday nights? If you are like me, then your choices might alternate between finishing homework, going out to dinner with friends, or going to the movies. However, if you would ever like an opportunity to do something extraordinary, build up a set of skills you didn't even know you had and have some fun, check out the New York Trapeze School on W. 30th Street and 10th Avenue.

Upon walking into the building of the Trapeze School, the first sight you will behold is an enormous net with a small platform suspended 23 feet above it, with some ladder safety lines hanging around the two. Once lessons begin with a training group, the three instructors assigned to each group explain that the wires are hooked onto each student via a belt around their middle, and remain on them the entire time. "Safety is just as important as having fun around here," says Brett Hendricks, a trapeze instructor. Once the student is on the platform, one of the in-

structors trades those safety lines for a second set. After this, the prospective trapeze artist grabs onto the trapeze bar. Then, he or she leaps off the platform and performs aerial tricks like hanging upside-down from the bar, backflips, jumps, and so forth.

Over the course of two hours, the class masters basic steps such as the correct standing position for catching the bar, recognizing cues the instructors use to tell when to jump off the platform, and how to properly hang by your knees while flying through the air. While on the trapeze, a person accrues so much momentum as they swing through the air, that bringing their legs up to the bar isn't difficult as long as his or her body is positioned properly. The class also practices hanging from a static bar, which is a trapeze bar suspended six feet above the ground used for practicing the proper position and tricks prior to using the real thing.

"When I first saw people swinging on the trapeze, I thought there was no way I could do this," says

Kesha Johnson, a Manhattanite taking the class for the first time.

After rehearsing these techniques with my class, I climbed the ladder up to the platform, excited to implement it for my first swing. First, I assumed the proper posture on the platform so my spotter could hand me the trapeze bar by placing my feet shoulder-width on the edge of the platform, extending my right hand toward the bar just like we practiced on the ground. Then, my spotter held the back of my safety belt, enabling me to lean forward and bring my left hand off of the safety rail and onto the trapeze bar. Then, with a final hop, I stepped off the platform and arced through the air, with only my hands gripping the trapeze bar and the belt around my waist to remind me that I hadn't sprouted wings and taken flight.

At that moment, I didn't even know it was possible to feel as alive as I did when I took that first hop off the platform, because there is nothing more thrilling than the first moment when you're swing-

ing through the air, and anything is possible—from a back flip to a twisting layout. After I performed my first trick, which was to hang upside-down by my knees and then do a back flip off of the bar, I landed on the net below with just one question remaining in my mind: when could I go again?

The New York Trapeze School has indoor and outdoor locations in Manhattan—one in Midtown and the other on W. Houston Street—and offers classes for a variety of skill sets and scheduling preferences. Signing up for classes is an option, as well as party planning, and gift certificates. Its website, newyork.trapezeschool.com, bills it as a "fun, healthy, and safe sport." Billy Travers, one of the instructors, raved about the school. "It's a great bonding experience for friends, family members," Travers said. "People find that flying is so exhilarating that they aren't afraid one single bit."

I learned all of this firsthand from one lesson, while also learning that you never know how much

fun you will have if you're open to adventures and want to learn new ways of conquering your fears. After all, the main header of the Trapeze School's website is, "Forget about the fear. Worry about the addiction." Thanks to my experience on the trapeze, I've learned that nothing is more fun than challenging yourself and your preconceptions about what you are and aren't capable of achieving. Wouldn't you like to do that, too?

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OPINIONS

The Cheating Problem

Leah Avner

I have to say that I am pretty surprised and not in a good way. Cheating is something that I always thought most people never thought of as a possibility. However, this past finals session, my naivety was in for a horribly rude awakening.

While sitting in my Bible final, minding my own business, flipping through my *Tanakh*, a pink Post-it caught the corner of my eye. I quickly glanced over and noticed that the student sitting next to me was flipping through a rather "special" *Tanakh*. Hers did not have English translation—that is not allowed—but it did have about ten Post-it notes stuck on approximately ten consecutive pages.

I tried to give her the benefit of the doubt. I assumed that they were just place markers. However, my assumption began to seem flawed when I noticed that she was copying the words written on the sticky notes into her test booklet. Now I can assure you this was not a difficult test: the culprit really did not need to cheat in order to do well. Most Stern College students will admit that that particular

class is one of the easiest classes offered in the entire school.

After noticing her behavior, I began to internally struggle with the question of whether it was my responsibility to alert the teacher. I didn't say anything, because I didn't feel that it was my place to do so. However, I disbelievably discussed it with my fellow students. "Can you believe it? She was cheating right in front of the teacher!" One student told me that she was not surprised at all. "Of course there's cheating," she replied. "Isn't Stern kind of known for that?" Another said that she had gone through a similar experience.

Well I'll be darned. Who knew that we have so many students like this in our school? Once I realized that there is a problem, I began to seek a possible solution. One friend told me that the cheating instance in my class (with the sticky notes) was the teacher's own fault.

"My teacher checked all of our *Tanakhs* before we began the test," she reported. "We all had to quickly flip through them for the professor." I thought that was a good

idea, so when I mentioned the idea to my friends and asked them what they thought of it, I was surprised when one said that it was a very "high school-y" thing to do. True, it may be very juvenile, but maybe that is how we deserve to be treated. Maybe we should have to submit to "*Tanakh* searches," and maybe we should not be allowed to take tests on laptops, since they facilitate cheating.

Maybe the problem is that students do not understand the consequences of their dishonesty. Before administering a particular final, a professor told his class that if he caught any cheating he would immediately tell the administration, and the student would fail the course, assuming that she was not expelled. When the students heard this, their jaws dropped, quite literally. One girl got bug-eyed and looked as if she was just made aware that she had studied all the wrong material for the test. Students were scared! Maybe the scare tactic should be employed more often.

Personally, I find the whole issue to be unbelievably embarrassing. Cheating is a problem in

Yeshiva University!? Let me stress the *yeshiva* part of our university's name. Shouldn't we as Jews strive to set an example for the world? Aren't we commanded not to cheat or take advantage of others? How can a person claim her grade to be her own, when she achieved it so falsely?

One non-Jewish professor told my class that when he once caught a student cheating in Stern he was very bothered. He explained that he expected students in other colleges in which he taught to try to cheat, but he thought that students in a religious college were better than that. Yeah, so did I.

Cheaters are hurting the rest of the students. When I hand a potential employer my resume, I do not want him or her to look at my GPA and wonder how valid it is. I do not want him or her to consider the possibility that I am a cheater, simply because other people in my school are. It is one thing for Yeshiva University to be known as a school full of students who are crazy overachievers who always get As. It is another thing entirely for YU to be known as a school full of cheaters who always get As.

Dialoguing With the "Enemy"

Chana Scholl

During winter break, a group of approximately 40 undergraduate Yeshiva University students on the Center for the Jewish Future Shabbat-focused Israel trip traveled to Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Israel, to participate in a course called *Hidabrut*, meaning "dialogue." From what I understand, the course functions such that Israeli students from all denominations, including *dati*, *masorti*, or *chiloni* (Orthodox, traditional and secular, respectively), meet weekly to dialogue about fracture points in Israeli society. For our visit, a program was prepared that magnified *dati* and non-*dati* tensions in Israel and also incorporated the theme of our trip—Shabbat.

I felt absolutely terrified as I walked into the classroom in which we were to dialogue. During the week prior to this particular session, both the male and female YU Shabbat groups were inundated with presentations and material regarding Shabbat observance in contexts as diverse as the Holocaust, the Israeli Defense Forces, Shaarei Tzedek Hospital, and Kibbutz Lavi. For me, this total immersion in exploring the parameters of the singularly Orthodox experience of *halakha* (Jew law-abiding) Shabbat observance produced a kind of xenophobia toward those who could not relate to that experience—namely, anyone not *dati*. I almost forgot that non-Shabbat observers are Jews like me. Instead, I perceived them as opponents who make it so difficult to have a *halakha* state and to keep the character of Shabbat intact in Israel.

I entered that classroom expecting to be hated on sight. I assumed that they would automatically associate us Orthodox Jews with that same religious establishment in Israel that makes their lives so difficult, whether with respect to conversion, the parking lot protests, or even the lack of public transportation on Shabbat. I was afraid to face them. I expected them to challenge everything I said, and I felt that I had to defend the integrity of the Torah and prove why, whether they believe in it or not, they *must* conform to the ordinances of *halakha* in the Jewish state.

Once in the classroom, the YU students sat on one side, the Bar Ilan students on the other. We listened to introductory remarks and then broke into small groups made up of YU and Bar Ilan students. We received directions to create a budget for an imaginary, self-reliant Israeli city by determining what expenses should or should not be included in the budget. First, we

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In Judgment of Snow

Hadassa Klerman

Winter is definitely upon us, bringing with it below-freezing temperatures, biting cold winds and, of course, that strange phenomenon called snow. I should preface my remarks by saying that I am originally from Los Angeles, where anything below 65°F is considered cold and where Uggs are for fashion only. If you grew up in L.A. as I did, all those winter clothes—like boots, scarves, knit hats, down coats and even cashmere sweaters—seem like unusual and unnecessary novelties at first, the types of things you see in catalogs and ignore. To see white particles floating out of the sky is as exciting and nonsensical as seeing the aurora borealis or a UFO, unless you are accustomed to gray slush on sidewalks and shoveling out your car while your hands freeze under your gloves.

This time of year, I hear grumbling from natives and non-natives alike about the weather. Winter is depressing, winter is difficult, the cold is almost unbearable, and humans are not meant to live in such weather. I agree with all of the above. I agreed with it even more when I saw the number of patients in the emergency room where I volunteer swell when the season's first snowstorm hit New York City. It is not easy to be poor or homeless in the winter. Simply being human is made more challenging by winter weather. Injured ankles and legs dotted the charts of the nurses' station that first weekend,

thanks to slips and spills on ice or snow. Unkempt and unstable individuals were brought in, too cold for a night in the park and looking for food and a warm bed. Snow and winter are definitely hard on people. The grumbling is not out of place.

Yet, perhaps we can take some good from the snow, at least in terms of lessons learned. How about working on our appreciation for the roof over our heads, sheltering us from the worst of the elements brought by winter? How about extending that appreciation by giving to the homeless and helping out the less fortunate, those who have not been blessed with that which we take for granted?

Boldly, I argue that we should continue such a train of thinking. Let us not omit even small examples. With a little bit of thinking, we can all find the silver lining in this shining white cloud of snowflakes that blankets the ground every now and again. We can begin by being grateful every time we do not fall walking outside to class. We can continue by being grateful for warm clothing, waterproof boots and even for overheated classrooms and dorm buildings. Even if at times we do not find snow to be fun, we can smile at the sight of children making snowmen and snow angels and tossing snowballs at each other.

Granted, sometimes it takes a change of perspective to see the good in something like snow. We can adopt the innocence of a

Southern Californian and view snow as a ridiculous thing, an aberration of nature and an amusement in its white crystalline wonder. We can assume the role of scientists and marvel at the exact temperature that allows for water to freeze yet still precipitate—and as tiny symmetrical crystals, rather than as freezing rain or hail. We can become artists and delight at how snow perfectly covers every surface with a thin or not so thin coating of white. We can become engineers and consider the ideal slope of a rooftop to allow for snow to slide off as much possible. We can become poets and musicians and find inspiration in the snow. Some people manage to find snow romantic or even beautiful. Until you try to do the same, you cannot disagree with them. You may never believe that snow is truly remarkable and, as such, deserves at least grudging admiration, but you ought to give room to that thought.

What else can we gain from snow? Snow teaches us to be patient, to walk more carefully, and to take our time. We can notice our surroundings, both the nature and the people. We can appreciate the resiliency of the human body to cope with such extreme weather conditions (and silently smear on the hand cream, face moisturizer and lip balm). We can capitalize on the new opportunities to help others: in walking in a particularly slippery spot, in shoveling the path or in bundling up against the cold. We can be grateful for warm

hearts of family and friends, even if they come with cold hands. We can appreciate our appetite for hot foods and better enjoy our soups, hot cocoas...and ice creams. We can relish the opportunity to wear winter staples such as fuzzy wool, plush velvet and coats with ticklish fur trim (better make that faux fur for PETA's sake). We can laugh at how winter makes everyone look *frum*, as long sleeves, higher necklines and longer hems come into style to ward off the cold.

And when all else fails or when we cannot shake the cold out of our bones nor the snow off our boots, we can all move to Los Angeles. Where it only snows in the mountains. Where the question is whether there will be weather. Where there are two seasons—rainy and not rainy—but since it hardly ever rains, there really is only one season. Where the climate is wonderful, but where there is no variety. Where you might long for some precipitation, like a downpour of little white crystalline UFOs, even just a little one, to break the monotony of beautiful sunny days and clear blue skies, or the monotony of endless school days. Evidently, it is all a matter of experience and perspective. So, when you are done learning the lessons of gratitude and attitude taught by those little white snowflakes, you can pity those who live in Los Angeles for what they are missing. Those poor Angelenos have never experienced a snow day. Now *that* is a reason to be grateful for the snow.

OPINIONS

PA versus GPA:
A Matter of Priority

Aviah Saltzman

Sunday, December 27, 2009, coincided with the fast day of *Asara B'Tevet*, the tenth day of the Hebrew month of Tevet. The fast commemorates the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem that ultimately culminated in the destruction of the First Temple. Occurring in the middle of finals, that Sunday constituted both a vital moment in determining YU students' GPAs, as well as an important event in Jewish history.

As students were studying their brains out, a group of anti-Israel, pro-Gaza protesters, decrying Israel's anti-terrorist activity in Gaza, made their way around New York City all afternoon long. The marchers held signs that read, "Zionism caused 60 years of bloodshed in the Mideast," "Criminal Jews did 9-11," "Free Palestine Demand the right of Return," and "Israel = Racism and Terror." Several children held signs that read, "Stop killing Palestinians and stop taking their organs!" Even though the YU student body had been informed of this rally, there was little representation on the counter-rally side. Perhaps the YU student body forgot why they were fasting.

While an individual's school-work is important, the Jewish people cannot forget about each other. One individual student may

have used December 27, 2009, to study and get an "A" on a test. Subsequently, he or she may be admitted to the graduate or doctoral program of his or her choice and achieve professional success. However, who will support this individual? If and when these pro-Gaza idealists achieve their political goals, where will this "great achiever" go? The Jewish nation's homeland may no longer exist; the Jewish people may not have supporting power of "great" individuals. Being part of a community means looking out for the wellbeing of others in that community. Being part of the Jewish community means looking out for the wellbeing of the Jewish community. Putting finals aside for four hours and representing the truth of what Israel really stands for is far more important than any grade on any test will ever be. School comes and goes, and grades are only significant for about four years, but the Jewish people's connection with the Land of Israel is eternal. What good is fasting for a whole day if one fasts without feeling the meaning of the act?

For more information about the rally, please see: <http://thesilentmajority.wordpress.com/2009/12/29/part-3-free-gazaanti-israel-leftists-counter-by-israel-supporters/>



Aviah Saltzman
As YU students studied for finals on December 27, pro-Gaza protesters in NYC carried signs accusing Jews of orchestrating 9/11 and Israel of killing Palestinians to harvest their organs.

Dialoguing With the "Enemy"

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introduced ourselves, and suddenly everything changed. The tension disintegrated. They became real people—students like us and Jews like us. We began discussing the budget—whether funds should be allocated for recreation centers, a Torah learning center, a sports stadium. Without much struggle, my group voted against funding a public disco. Government funding for public transportation on Shabbat and holidays was not given any consideration at all. Instead of feeling self righteous, I felt gratitude and awe. My non-*dati* peers were exceptionally gracious, accepting, and forgiving.

We decided unanimously to keep the cultural center—theater, philharmonic orchestra, library and museum—open on Shabbat. Whether to provide for a sports center that would be open on Shabbat was more complicated, but I eventually conceded that it should also be open on Shabbat. Engaging in an intellectual conversation about the imposition of *halakha* on the non-observant majority of Israelis is fundamentally different than discussing with people your own age, and with whom you share a friendly rapport, what they are left to do on their only day off, since you are adamant that their sports centers and amusement parks must be closed on Shabbat.

The female Shabbat group left *Hidabrut* on a high. We may not have convinced any of our non-observant peers of anything. In fact, some members of our group encountered marked hostility to-

ward the religious agenda. The act of dialoguing gave us invaluable insight into the experience of those markedly different than ourselves as well as recognition of the importance of being able to understand other's reality.

After *Hidabrut*, I thought about the "Being Gay in the Orthodox World" panel that took place during reading week and how the panel would never have been necessary if there had been some kind of dialogue beforehand. I did not gain access to hear the panelists speak live, but, from what I gathered by watching the videos and reading the transcript of the event, one of the panel's goals was to raise awareness of the fact that people who are gay are human too, and that their challenge is incredibly difficult.

The event aimed to put a human face to people's suffering and thereby force the YU community to acknowledge that people who are gay are not monsters. They are humans, and they were created by G-d in His image. The program caused many people to appreciate the timeless proverb, "there but for the grace of G-d go I," that regardless of your assumptions about the origins of homosexual orientation (they are all assumptions, since science has not conclusively demonstrated the origins), you could have been gay, and this could have been your trial.

A paramount objective was to give voice to people who felt like they were carrying burdens that they could not bear alone, a con-

sequence of our community's inability to distinguish between the sinner, or person oriented toward a particular sin, and the sin itself. I believe that a long term program of dialogue along these lines can and should be instituted to greater effect. I believe that it is possible to validate a person's experience—that is to say, acknowledge and try to understand another's experience—without sanctioning it, and I think that the best way to strike this balance is through dialogue.

I consider it as important to dialogue with gay people in the Orthodox community as it is to dialogue with non-*dati* people in Israel. It is extremely important to understand where the other person is coming from, to understand the reality of his or her situation, and to validate his or her experience, regardless of whether one agrees with the other or will be able to impact his or her thinking. This does not mean that I do not condemn the behavior of a secular Jew when she drives on Shabbat or of a gay man when (or if) he engages in *mishkav zakhar*.

However, whether it is regarding the *masorti* Israeli boy whose mother's conversion was recently declared illegitimate or the man who goes through the charade of dating for years on end in order to escape wagging tongues and is condemned to never have a loving relationship with a partner so long as he is a card carrying member of the Orthodox community, it is high time for some serious *hidabrut*.



Yu Students discussed the implications of Shabbat with Israeli students of all affiliations during the recent CJF Winter Break Mission to Israel.
Chana Scholl

It's almost Adar.

Do YOU know what your costume is?

Anna Nimus

Here's a brief instructive verse on Proper use of second person

"You" is strictly for referral To a group of *objects, plural*.

(Likewise so if thou art speaking

The Odd Verser

To the sort of "royal we" king.) Anyone who's not a king'll Take a "thee," as *object, single*.

Subjects: "Thou," for less than two guys. Two or more: Instead of "you guys."

"Ye"'s the case thou shouldst address in. That concludes this little lesson.

Anna N., who writes the odd verse from time to time, does not actually talk this way.

ARTS AND CULTURE

An Informal Affair

Yael Schick

On Tuesday January 26th, the Stern College Dramatics Society presented its second annual Talent Show. Hosted and organized by Hannah Tessler and Alisa Ungar-Sargon and produced by SCDS Vice President Shira Sragow, it proved to be an entertaining, lively, and, most importantly, dramatic evening.

Featuring fifteen performances, the endearingly informal show brought applause, laughter, and more than one standing ovation to Koch Auditorium. Departing from last year's more mild, straight-singing approach, the performers upped the theatrics immensely. Rebecca Grazi and Rachel Nemer's cover of "Take me or Leave me" from the musical "Rent" was surprisingly, and hilariously, faithful to its original source, while Chana Gila Ovits's performance of "All that Jazz" from "Chicago" was done with all the sass, flamboyance, and guts that one would expect for such a song. Similarly, Ailene Rosenberg, delivering one of the most original acts of the night, performed Pink's "I'm Not Dead" with the exact edge such a song requires. Debra Strashun was a most convincing Elle Woods in her performance of "So Much Better" from "Legally Blonde: the Musical." Likewise, the most dramatic Jane Kitaevich ensured that

her audience would be able to fully understand her presentation of "An Unfinished Romance" despite the obvious language barrier.

Those showcasing their original songs brought on other highlights of the night. Reminiscent of her performance in last year's show, Lauren Tessler performed a lovely and inspiring creation of her own, "Vi'ahavta." Likewise, Shlomit Friedman performed two of her own original songs, "One Time" and "Savior," showing off her skill as a songwriter as well as a performer.

However, it must be noted that the night was lacking the diversity required for a talent show. In fact, it would have been more accurate to call the performance a "Cabaret." Hannah Tessler's energetic opening to Ke\$ha's "TiK ToK" was the only dance number in the entire show, and Shifra Elzas's darkly humorous monologue, entitled "Origami," proved to be a welcome breath of fresh air amongst the overwhelming number of musical numbers. This is not to say that these musical numbers were not phenomenal. Some of the best parts were Chaya Kessler, who was truly delightful singing "Not for the Life of Me" from the musical "Thoroughly Modern Millie," and Nurita Abramowitz, who gave an equally beautiful performance



(from left) Lauren Burstein, Laura Levin-Dando, Chaya Kessler, and Lauren Tessler perform a song from "A Very Potter Musical" at this year's SCDS talent show.

of Kelly Clarkson's "A Moment Like This." Elizabeth Penn, tackling Madonna's "Like a Prayer," seemed like a true pro up on stage and brought audience members to their feet, and Hannah Tessler, accompanied by guitarist Alisa Kaye, gave an impressive and creative medley of Lady Gaga songs. A surprising standout among all the pop and Broadway ballads was

the performance by Stern's Choral Ensemble, and closing the show were Chaya Kessler and Lauren Tessler (also featuring Lauren Burstein and Laura Levin-Dando), performing the both hilarious and heartwarming "You're Not Alone" from the cult fave "A Very Potter Musical."

Ultimately, the show succeeded in its intent: to provide a fun and

entertaining opportunity for Stern students to showcase their talent. Despite its limited performances and its sometimes overly self-indulgent nature, the show was most certainly enjoyed by both performers and audience members alike, and is hopefully on its way to becoming a standing event here at Stern College for Women.

Art with Jewish Heart

Emunah Danziger

Last month, artist Tobi Kahn guided Stern College for Women's S. Daniel Abraham Honors Program students through an exhibit of his own work, "Sacred Spaces for the 21st Century," at Manhattan's Museum of Biblical Art. The exhibit was comprised mostly of prototypes for the art he created for the synagogue of Congregation Emanu-El Bne Jeshurun in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and represents his exploration of how to properly adorn a sacred space.

Kahn uses religious art to achieve his artistic goals in general. He describes himself as "interested in people that care about art being redemptive," and states that for him "art is about taking you on a journey." His exhibit attempted to take its viewers on the redemptive journey of realization by conveying Kahn's distinctive appreciation of religious rituals, concepts, and values.

One of his most memorable pieces is a large "sefirah counter," a huge grey-silver mounted sculpture with forty-nine three-dimensional pieces jutting out across its entire surface. At first glance this piece looks like a cubist sculpture composed of a jumble of shapes, all contained by a rectangular setting. Yet the

pieces come out and the core of each different shape is an identical square that fits into the larger board. The three-dimensional shapes are removed initially from the setting. During the period of *sefirat ha'omer*, the 49-day count between Pesach and Shavuot, one is placed each day into its niche in the setting, marking the day of *sefirah* that has passed. This

stimulates awareness of the significance of the passing time, by paralleling it with a progressively growing structure in space.

Beyond playing a ritual role, this piece conveys Kahn's understanding of some general religious values. The unique form of each three dimensional shape is meant to correspond to the uniqueness of the individual. The part of

each shape that inserts into the setting is painted gold, representative of the purity of the souls at the core of these individuals. The unity of the final structure signifies the unity achieved by unique individuals participating in a society. Each shape is meant to enhance the appearance of those around it, conveying the belief that individuals are enhanced by

their communal interactions. Perhaps symbolic of where this society will find its ideal expression, the disparate shapes are also meant to conjure the image of Jerusalem rooftops, the structures upon which the design of the piece is based.

As an observant Jew, Kahn also has to take into account certain restrictions on his art, specifically ones that revolve around the prohibition of making forms imitating the vessels of

the *Beit Hamikdash* (the ancient Temple in Jerusalem) exactly. His art easily meets this requirement, but he makes his own additional distinctions. Instead of making one menorah for the *shul* in Milwaukee - as there was during most of the Temple era - he made two. To decorate the Torah scrolls he designed breastplates reminiscent of the *hoshen* (the breastplate of the high priest), but he made the stones on each plate monochromatic rather than different colors, as they would have been during Temple times. This carefully thought-out detail was an inspiring reminder of the need to maintain a distinction between our present state in exile and the redemption that we await.

Although Kahn was working as an artist, his career making religious art began informally with ceremonial pieces that he made for his family. His wife requested that he design their *chuppah* and later asked that he make the baby-naming chair for their child. Eventually, a museum asked to showcase these and other ceremonial objects Kahn had created. It was then that his artistic career, previously focused on creating general art pieces, shifted to making religious ones.



Tobi Kahn demonstrates the use of his sefirah counter in his exhibit at the MOBIA.

Alisa Ungar-Sargon

ARTS AND CULTURE

Dance with the Devil

Alisa Ungar-Sargon

Usually when a character enters a new world, especially when that other world is inside his mind, there is a clear sense of good and bad, of right and wrong. Terry Gilliam's film "The Imaginarium of Dr. Parnassus" is no exception. The premise is based on various bets between The Devil and his opponent, depending on the imaginations and choices of people who enter said Imaginarium. What's fascinating about this story, though, is that the decision of who wins a soul is based on a choice made by the person while he's in the Imaginarium. The audience is generally kept in the dark regarding what's good or bad, watching events unfold contrary to expectations.

Doctor Parnassus (Christopher Plummer) once believed that he and his fellow monks held up the world by telling their story, isolated from everything else in a monastery at the top of a blistering mountain. Mr. Nick (Tom Waits), also known as The Devil, arrives in the monastery, bent on proving Doctor Parnassus wrong. This begins a confounding relationship in which they make a number of bets based on who can acquire a decided amount of souls, luring people in through the Imaginarium. Doctor Parnassus, ostensibly the hero in this cosmic clash, is a gambler who keeps getting taken in by Mr. Nick's betting offers. He drinks to forget his crimes - including that of betting and losing his only daughter, Valentina (Lily Cole) - and then enters into even more bets, believing he can win back what he lost and outsmart Mr. Nick.

Comparably, Mr. Nick is portrayed as a competent man with a mission. When he lets Doctor Parnassus win the bet that will give him immortality, it's almost as if he did so in order to gain an equal, someone who can match him at his own game. He feels no joy when he beats Doctor Parnassus, and even tries to manipulate the results to give Doctor Parnassus more chances. The connection between these two characters is like a two-way addiction, as though they must balance each other out or face the combustion of nature.

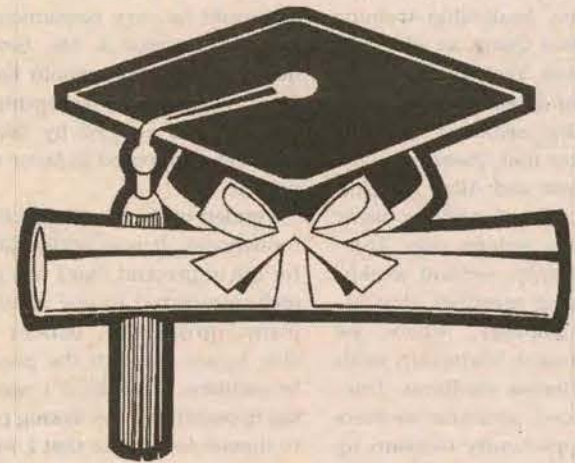
The rest of the characters are no less complex. The viewer is presented with the cast of personalities, who take center stage most of the time: Valentina, the headstrong and inexperienced beauty who dreams of living a domestic life; Anton (Andrew Garfield), the buffoonish hero who is in love with Valentina; Percy (Verne Troyer), the dwarf whose inexplicable purpose in life is to follow Doctor Parnassus through time and attempt to keep him out of trouble; and, of course, Tony (Heath Ledger in his last role, Johnny Depp, Jude Law, and Colin Farrell), the lost rich

boy who reinvigorates the stage of the Imaginarium. The audience is told precisely what each character wants and what they hope to accomplish on their individual journeys. But as the film progresses it becomes evident that their actions cannot be explained by such straightforward goals, and there is more than a whisper of further objectives - conscious and otherwise - that motivate them.

Oddly enough, the characters are allowed to be selfish; Valentina's desires are centered entirely on herself within a different framework. Dr. Parnassus, though he pays dearly for his achievements, moves between states of mortality and immortality to satisfy his current life situation. Tony is the only one who does not get off scot-free for his self-serving behavior, his own imagination coming round to bite him in the butt. The fact that his final portrayal is through the eyes of Valentina and Doctor Parnassus is probably what prevents him from being considered sacrificial, but in reality his actions are only worse than the other characters' because he steps on them to achieve his goals.

Gilliam's Wonderland-like treatment of the Imaginarium is entertaining (not to mention trippy), if a tad literal and tongue-in-cheek. Giant designer shoes, ladders climbing into the clouds, and faces that change from trip to trip (well, he did have to compensate for Ledger's death somehow - hence Depp, Law, and Farrell) are not the most original interpretations of a person's innermost dreams. They do, however, present prime opportunity for all the shenanigans and self-imposed trials of this motley cast. The audience, like Gilliam, cannot help but delight in the setup and result of the many different manifestations.

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ISRAEL

The Internal Quest

Devora Rahimian

Whenever I express my religious views and my views on Israel to my friends, they ask me whether I spent my year after high school in Israel. I tell my friends that I didn't and they tell me that that's why I have those views. My friends claim that had I made the decision to go to Israel in one of the hundreds of Zionist seminars out there, I would be a different person today and would not dare make those "ridiculous" claims.

This past winter vacation I went on the "Alternative Winter Break" sponsored by the Jewish National Fund and the Center for the Jewish Future of Yeshiva University. This trip was the culmination of a two-semester leadership-training seminar called Quest, in which 12 students from Yeshiva University and one from Queens College participated. Our semester was the first semester that Quest, directed by Marc Spear and Aliza Abrams, was being offered and we were, in effect, the guinea pigs. During that semester we had weekly, two-hour-long meetings that alternated campuses, where we learned different leadership skills through different mediums. During our second semester we were given an opportunity to team up with the Jewish National Fund and raise 20,000 dollars for a cause of our choice in exchange for a subsidized trip to Israel. We accepted

the offer and decided to raise the money to develop a new settlement in the Negev called Shlomit.

Our second semester began with us learning about our cause and different fundraising techniques. One of the rules that we quickly learned was that fundraising is usually more effective if the fundraiser is passionate about the cause. That was a problem for me because I am not passionate about Israel. I don't feel a connection to the land and I would definitely not call it my home. Plus, I have several ethical and personal issues with certain attitudes over there. When they gave us this assignment, our Quest leaders assumed that we all would be very passionate and motivated about it. Me, foolishly not thinking that I would have to face my issues by accepting this mission and enticed by the idea of a free trip, voted in favor of the project.

I ended up having to pay for my foolishness. It was really difficult for me to pretend that I was genuinely interested in our cause and many prospective donors were able to see through the pretense. In addition, I felt as if I was acting hypocritically by asking people to donate to a cause that I, myself, would not donate to. I went along with it, however, because I really loved Quest and the learning opportunity it had granted me until

then and I wasn't willing to give up on this experience for some minor reasons such as my personal conflict.

Our trip finally began. As I look back in the rigorous log that I kept I see that I was very excited and nervous. I was excited to be given this opportunity, and I knew that we were going to be doing great things according to the outline that was handed out to us. At the same time, however, I knew that part of our trip would consist of visiting Sderot.

I have a personal dilemma with the idea of people living in Sderot. I think that the value of a human life is worth more than the value of any land, no matter how holy. Many people in Sderot stay there because they cannot afford to move out. Others, like my friend and fellow Quester, Ethan Wasserman (Yeshiva University '11) believe that the inhabitants stay because, "giving into terrorism only promotes more violence by showing it can succeed. By living here, these brave people are showing that terrorism won't work". A lot of the people living there along with those who support them also believe that the land belongs to them, absolutely based on the writings in the Torah. I understand these viewpoints, but at the same time I feel that it is not worth sacrificing the lives of people and the psychological well being of them and their children for such a cause.

One of my most moving experiences while we were in Sderot was visiting the Hesder Yeshiva. There, Yoel Sterman, a student at the yeshiva, taught us about

how the yeshiva was founded. We toured its various rooms and watched the students learning. Yoel explained to us how the yeshiva had miraculously never been attacked directly and how the students of the yeshiva envisioned this magnetic-like shield formed from their learning that protected the yeshiva. Their symbol was an image of the yeshiva with a Torah scroll wrapped around it, protecting it from rockets. We then went upstairs to the roof of the yeshiva and encountered a strange sight. Before our eyes stood a seven-foot tall menorah made entirely out of rockets that had been shot into Sderot. Yoel explained to us the ideology of the yeshiva: "We build with what they throw at us." They had made the menorah as a symbol of their perseverance, a symbol of hope. As I looked around at my fellow Questers, I noticed from the expressions on their faces that they empathized with Yoel and had been moved by his lecture. I, at that moment, felt very alone amongst my friends. I was the only one who could not see the beauty of the menorah and only saw weapons of hatred in place of what normally is considered a symbol of light. As my loneliness grew stronger, our tour guide pointed out across the horizon to a tree. He explained to us that that tree was the border between where the Jews and the Arabs live. I then separated myself from the group and walked around the rooftop. I looked down on all the houses and wondered what the people living there were thinking, what kinds of lives they lived and what the real truth was amidst the

destruction. I then looked across the distance at the large, old tree where all the rockets were shot from and wondered if there was another tour guide, another person like me looking back from the other side and whether they were different from their group or had doubts about what they were being told. I thought of how the living tree was tragically a divide that separated the Jews from the Arabs instead of being at the center of a city or park where it could provide shade for people and be revered for its age.

I left Sderot silently meditating in my thoughts and putting it all together. The day prior to visiting Sderot we had visited a high school in Chalutza, one of the several new settlements in the Negev that were being built for Gush Katif evacuees. We spoke with the girls there and I learned that that area was also one of conflict. The girls told us (in Hebrew) about their lives a little and how rockets would explode close to where they lived. They placed great emphasis on the aspects of the threat by passing around pictures of explosions and destruction and defining words such as "Red Alert" and "Qasam" for us. Afterwards, I spoke to the teacher privately and she told me about how she used to live in Chalutza but moved because her children were developing anxiety due to the rocket sirens and explosions. The following day, when we were in Sderot, we volunteered at the large indoor playground that was built to be a safe haven for the children who lived there. I remember thinking that while it is nice that they have a playground and that supporters of Sderot donate money to it, it is only a temporary solution; the playground is not going to cure traumatized children. However, removing the source of the trauma might.

I came back to America feeling satisfied and confused. I felt satisfied because I was proud about what I had accomplished while I was in Israel. Our rigorous daily schedule showed me how much I am capable of, and the intense physical labor brought out an agrarian side of me I never knew existed. We spent the week conversing with various leaders in many different fields, learning valuable skills from them directly and then immediately applying those skills in our volunteer work in Israel. Through this we gained first hand experience about what it means to be a leader and we will now be able to apply what we learned to our future endeavors.

At the same time, I still felt very conflicted about my views on Israel. Our trip was not a typical "Winter Break in Israel" trip. I saw and learned things that many other people who go to Israel do

My Defining Moment

Mollie Sharfman

At age 15, I fell in love with Israel. I always knew about it and was taught it was our homeland, had blue and white cupcakes on Yom Haatzmaut, and I finally visited when I was fifteen with my family. We were in Tiberias about to get on a boat when we heard that there was a suicide bombing in the heart of Jerusalem. It was the number 2 Bus coming back from the Kotel (Western Wall) on Saturday night after Shabbat. My heart sank. I knew suicide bombings went on but it never hit me like this. I was in the north, having a blast with my family and friends while people were hurting in Jerusalem. But I pushed it out of my mind.

When I returned home to Baltimore, Maryland at the end of summer vacation, I heard that there was another suicide bombing. This time, I got angry with myself. Why am I here, living my life and my own people are hurting so badly in Israel? It doesn't make sense. It wasn't fair. I was frustrated. I wanted to help. But how? I used to pace around my room trying to figure out something to do. I was filled with these guilty and angry feelings. In my journal, I wrote, "12 killed in a suicide bomb in Israel. It makes no sense. I need to take action." And then right below

it, I wrote, "I like this boy, but he doesn't like me, and another boy likes me, but I don't like him, and this girl is really annoying...just went to see "The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants" movie...I want to go do something fun...Baltimore is so boring." Back to my defining moment—I thought I would be like this forever, having all of these ideas but never doing anything about them.

On a spring day in one year later, four of my friends and I stood around just shooting the breeze, enjoying life when one of them said, "Let's start "America Eats for Israel." Let's get kosher restaurants across the country to give money to Israel on one specific day of the year." We looked at him and laughed. Really hard. Are you joking? We can't accomplish something like that! We are too young. No one is going to take us seriously. We were all about 16 or 17. It is going to take too much time.

We laughed though, because deep down we knew we had the power to do something like this. In the movie "Coach Carter," one of the characters proclaims, "Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure." We all had the same desire. We could not

stand by and watch our brethren in Israel hurt without doing something about it. We did not want to look back and say that we just stood by and watched. But no one expected us to help. Our teachers thought it was a cute idea but never thought we could actually accomplish this. You should have seen their change of heart when all of the press came in. But we turned to them and said, "You taught us to be this way. You taught us that if we see something unjust or not right, we need to step up and take action."

Needless to say, we did it. We spent our year planning America Eats for Israel. Over 180 restaurants and 50 high schools participated across America. We raised over \$30,000. I learned from this experience that you need to be confident in what you believe in. You cannot let others bring you down. If you have a dream or a goal, it is your responsibility to make sure it happens. I wanted to talk about this because I was sixteen when I did this. I was full of idealism and hope. I remember someone telling me, "Wait till your 40 years old and

jaded. When I was your age, I used to go to rallies to get the Jews out of the Soviet Union...now look at me." But it can happen much earlier, even at our age, when reality sets in. When it is time to go off into the real world. I have heard too many times, "Get in touch with reality. Stop putting so much effort into causes like this. You need to focus on your future."

But, as my principal from High School, Rabbi Howard Bald, said to me when I lost a student council election, "Leaders will always find a way to lead." I am 21 years old now. I am graduating from college. America Eats for Israel was my defining moment, but it happened five years ago. When I leave the doors of Stern College for Women, where will I go? How will I take all of my ideas and experiences in Jewish leadership and make something of them? While I may not have the answers to all of these questions just yet, I do know that I need to hold on to my idealism and continue to have the faith that I have been holding onto for so long.

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ISRAEL

An 'Unsettling' Reality

Lauren Burstein

On Thursday, January 21st, members of the Yeshiva University Undergraduate student body gathered in Yagoda Commons for an event co-sponsored by TAC, SOY, SCWSC, the Israel Club, and the Psychology Club. The event featured the award winning documentary, "Unsettled," created by Adam Hootnick, as well as a discussion headed by Casie Squires, The David Project coordinator of the NY/NJ region.

"Unsettled" focuses on the many issues raised in Israel during the disengagement from Gush Katif in August 2005. It features interviews with six young adults, all of whom were involved with the disengagement in one way or another. One of the interviewees, Tamar, who was 21 during the filming of the documentary and a soldier in the Israeli army, expresses her struggles with learning how to evict people from their homes. On the other hand, another interviewee, Neta, who was 20 during the filming of the documentary and lived in Gush Katif, adamantly expresses her desire for soldiers to disobey orders. Hootnick captures the hardships and varying opinions of the Israeli citizens with footage of the actual disengagement. Clips of crying civilians and soldiers, and footage of people leaving the only homes they know are some of the more memorable moments in the film.

This event was part of the monthly MTV, Marvelous TAC Videos, which was founded by Estee Goldschmidt and Esti Arfe.

Chana Scholl (Stern College for Women, '10), co-organizer of the event and co-president of the Psychology Club, feels that the most moving aspect of the film is seeing the gentleness that the Israeli soldiers displayed towards the civilians that they were evacuating.

Eemunah Danziger (SCW, '10) felt that the film helped increase her knowledge of the issues surrounding the disengagement. "I think the film allowed me to see the disengagement less one dimensionally," says Danziger. "For the first time I appreciated some of the justifications for pulling out and I left with much more respect and admiration for the army that had to execute it. Even though I left still feeling that in retrospect the disengagement was not a productive action, I feel that understanding the political and emotional complexity of the issue will prevent me from casting aspersions on the Israeli government and the army that they may not deserve."

Following the film, Squires moderated a discussion that was supposed to have engaged both sides of the heated issue: Was Israel correct in withdrawing its citizens from the Gush Katif settlements? Squires began the discussion by asking the audience what they felt about the film. Many

of the students seemed to believe that the Israeli government made the wrong decision, and that Israel should never give away any land, no matter the reasons. A minority of students, who were not able to voice their opinions as strongly, disagreed. They believe that Israel made the decision for extremely valid reasons.

Estee Goldschmidt (SCW, '10), vice president of TAC and co-organizer of the event, aimed to establish a setting where topics of this nature would be discussed. "It is highly important to address and discuss issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict although most students on campus pro-Israel," states Goldschmidt, "because once students will graduate and enter the larger world, they should know how to confront issues and defend their positions from an intellectually honest standpoint."

Scholl agrees with this sentiment. "The purpose of this event was to raise an awareness on the Beren Campus about the reasons that Israel disengaged from Gaza," she opines. "I feel as if, for the most part, opinions on our campus are black and white. Part of the process of being in College is being able to go out and speak about our opinions. Most of the time we will realize that there is a lot of grey area to consider."

Ayala Kurlander, co-president of the Israel Club and co-organizer of the event, was very pleased that the film was shown to the student body. "Discussion of Israel's disengagement from Gaza is a topic that is not frequently approached at YU," explains Kurlander. "The viewing of 'Unsettled' was very moving and enlightening for many students who weren't previously so knowledgeable about what happened. I believe that this should be the start of a long discussion among the student body to really understand the intricacies of what happened in Gaza in August 2005 and how that has affected Israeli society, specifically, the youth of today in Israel."

While all of the students appreciated Squires' efforts to lead a discussion about a topic that many students are extremely passionate about, many of the students felt that she was unable to moderate the discussion fairly. Alana Himber (SCW, '11), SCWSC treasurer, feels that Squires wrongly expressed her own opinions on the matter. "I think that the movie was excellent, very engaging," says Himber. "It was the perfect impetus for what could have been a wonderful and explorative discussion. However, the moderator expressed very strong opinions inappropriately. The majority of the audience was very right wing, and the moderator expressed her agreement with this majority."

Ariella Levkovich (SCW, '10) felt

Aimee Rubenstein

She walks in with a disguised strut. Palestinian. Waiting to hear the "enemy's" voice, we hold our breaths. Arab. Her hair, inked from our eager pens, borders her sunken eyes that seem to be all knowing. Muslim. She begins with explaining how it may be "harsh to hear" what she is about to say. I laugh it off. Sure, a room full of seminary girls studying at Midreshet Lindenbaum in Jerusalem shouldn't be ready to bolt as an Arab who supports Hamas begins to tell her story.

Nadia Harhash is like any other mother I know. A smile stretches her wrinkles of happiness when she tells us of her three children, the oldest my age, eighteen. It seems ironic that we're her audience, nothing like her teenage daughter. She's a ripe thirty-seven and an activist. Her foreign beauty is surprising with her cut up words. Her hollow cheeks tell the memories of Palestinian motherhood. As soon as words escape her mouth my eyes widen and undivided attention has invaded the room. In 2008, during my year of studies at Midreshet Lindenbaum, I decided to take part in a program funded by The David Project after feeling ignorant in my arrival to Israel. The David Project supported an educational organization that promotes a fact-based understanding of the Arab-Israeli conflict, delivering a class once a week of factual information or abstract concepts. However, this Israel-Arab Studies program enables students to see both sides of the spectrum of beliefs, enabling them to make their own conclusions. This meeting with an Arab, in particular, couldn't have been a better way to kick off the year and learn how wrong the preconceived notion that "all Arabs are terrorists" really is. Her presence was welcomed in our school for a peaceful discussion. Maybe we would be able to work together to

that the discussion did not help increase her understanding of the crucial issues. "The movie was amazing but the discussion could have been a lot better had we spoken more about other opinions," says Levkovich. "In Stern, many of us believe there should not have been a pull-out. However, once we leave these walls, we will have to strongly defend that opinion to those with opposing opinions backed up by good arguments. I still don't feel prepared to do that."

Himber, too, felt frustrated when she left the event. "I walked away from the discussion feeling very devastated about the state of the Israel-Palestinian conversation on this campus," reports Himber.

First Impressions

eliminate the fear held inside each of us.

Of course, I know that, as Harhash proclaimed, "Jerusalem is a holy place." However, I wasn't expecting to hear the latter part of the sentence: "because of Muhammad."

Beginning with the history of Islam, Harhash, a Palestinian professor, spoke with her obvious accent. The harsh way her tongue hit her mouth's palate and the straining of her throat usually would have brought me anxiousness, but I tried not to judge her. She spoke of the history I have learned every year in school. But hearing it from her perspective seemed like she had been reading from a different textbook. She spoke of a different people. Yes, the Jews' presence in the Koran is repeated as she asked, "Why would God mention the Jews so much?" She never once puts down the Jews' importance, although not acknowledging us with the same status today. And the Koran speaks of killing non-believers, she bluntly states, but it is almost always taken out of context, when used as propaganda. Just as Hashem commanded the Jews to wipe out Amalek, this can be perceived in the wrong eye. Neither religion can be based on one line. Her points were valid and seemed to burst the bubble some of us seem to live in. After she gave a summarized history, she confessed, "Maybe I'm not so good," referring to her lack of religious ways. A brief giggle flooded the air. I think we all feel we could strive to be better and more observant in different ways of serving God. The relief was the perfect segue from history to present.

Nadia then had an open floor of questions. Questions we'd all had in our heads, but never had the opportunity to ask. Do you feel guilty? Do you agree with terrorism? Have you witnessed terror? Have you thought about being a

"Very intolerant and racist things were said. This campus needs better run and more active discussions about this issue because it is lacking."

While many of the students were unhappy about the way the discussion was carried out, all students agree that the film enables its audience to view the events from the perspectives of the six young adults whose lives were changed in the summer of 2005. They are the basis of the film; they capture the hardships and the strength of Israeli society. Hopefully, SCW will continue to host such thought provoking events that allow the student body to discuss, discover, and experience.

terrorist? Have you been hurt by terror? Is peace possible?

Luxury. The way Nadia speaks of how she is lucky to be able to even come and talk to us after being shunned by certain people is the least of the surprises she has yet to unwrap. She lives in a town in Jerusalem called, *Beit Chaninah*, and she is clearly educated. As she begins to see our hopeful hearts opening to her, her thin, long piano-like fingers move in motions and sway with her words of her own fear and happiness. She feels a strong connection to the land we both dwell in. Especially Jerusalem, for it is the center of the land and serves as an attraction. Just as with Abraham, for Jesus it is a "holy country." She fears that the separation between Jews and Palestinians will destroy the country and scares us with her words of voting for Hamas. She believed that neither party was offering a "normal life" and everyone just voted for fundamental reasons. She does not necessarily support Hamas, but she felt she was left with only one of two bad choices. She even understood suicide bombing—until it happened near her daughter's school. She understands being humiliated to the point where you are nothing and you have nothing left to do in what she calls the "dirty political game." However, after her own blood was in danger, she would never ever, she says, take part in that inhumane act.

Harhash visited our school for discussion a couple more times that year. Her stance had not changed, yet her voice became etched familiarly in my mind.

She began to be greeted with a "Hello!" from my fellow peers. Although she does not regret voting for Hamas, she is sorrowful about the present.

Communication is the first step in every relationship. Now I correspond through email with Nadia, updating her on my activism as well as inquiring her about her "normal" life.

"I don't blame Israel...it's only a component," assures Nadia. The couple of hours that we spent together bonded us in an unimaginable way. Awareness is key now in Israel. I do not ride public buses by myself or walk around my homeland completely free. The world needs to sit down and speak.

After living for nine months in Jerusalem, I believe that my meetings with Nadia have definitely made the biggest impact on me. Touring and learning matured my knowledge, but speaking freely with Nadia, an Arab woman, has broadened my horizons. As she constantly repeats, "We don't know what will happen...what will be the end."

We can only start here.

SCIENCE AND HEALTH

The Mystery of the Disappearing Bee

Audrey Canter

The next time you take a bite out of an apple, consider the millions of bees vital to the pollination of your fruit. Sounds too boring for contemplation? Well, perhaps this will pique your interest: those bees are mysteriously disappearing. No one knows what is causing millions of bees around the world to literally disappear in droves. It is an agricultural conundrum that has left scientists and beekeepers alike scratching their heads. Theories have emerged demonizing everything from cell phones to bee imports from Australia, only to later be dismissed or disproved. Many beekeepers have been forced to quit the business due to unsustainable losses, while others are seriously concerned for their future. But it is not just the bees and the beekeepers that will continue to be affected. It is you, your apple, and the world's food supply.

Bees pollinate about a third of foods, including fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. This pollination is an inadvertent side effect of the bee's scavenging for nectar. As they fly from flower to flower in search of the sweet stuff, they transfer pollen from the male parts of the flower to the female parts of the flower. And while many insects are capable of pollinating plants, honeybees are convenient, efficient, and passionate about their job. They will go to great

lengths to get their nectar, with the end result being that a single hive of honeybees can cross-pollinate twenty-five million flowers in only one day. The average honeybee spends its life fertilizing America's crops. Therefore, in a world where honeybees shape the food market, when the bees start disappearing, the world should pay attention.

Beginning in the fall of 2006, the large-scale disappearance was originally termed "fall dwindle." It was later renamed Colony Collapse Disorder, or CCD, to better reflect its severity. While bees contend with their share of viruses and pathogens, such as varroa mites, this new disorder is unlike anything the world has seen before. The sheer magnitude of deaths from CCD over a short period of time far surpasses losses from any other disorder. Colonies with CCD can seem healthy until as few as three weeks before collapse. But the swift nature of the disorder is not the strangest part. It is the uncharacteristic behavior of the bees that is most puzzling. Adult bees "disappear" from the colonies, abandoning a box full of honey, pollen, capped brood (bee babies), a queen, and even worker bees. This goes against the nature of bees, for they will not normally desert a hive until the entire capped brood has hatched. Clearly, something is affecting the bees on a behavioral level.

One possible explanation is pesticide exposure. Bees depend highly on their memory and organization and if something disrupts either of these factors, the whole system collapses. This is what happens when bees are exposed to toxic amounts of pesticides. They become disoriented and suffer memory loss, rendering them unable to return to their hives. While one dose of a single pesticide may not be enough to cause neurological damage in bees, a heavy dose of a combination of pesticides may suffice. Pesticide regulation in the United States is governed by the EPA, the Environmental Protection Agency. Alarmingly, the EPA has never studied the effects of mixing pesticides. They rarely test pesticides at all, relying on the companies that manufacture them to do their own testing. And those companies never test for interactions, nor do they study the effects of sub-lethal doses. Individual farmers are permitted to use any legal pesticides in any combinations, and often create pesticide "cocktails" to ease the spraying process.

Despite this suggestive evidence implicating pesticides, it is still too early to make any definitive statements regarding CCD. Scientists are investigating many other potential causes, such as known bee pests and diseases, and are also looking for possibly undis-

covered pests or diseases. Some believe that the style of feeding bees and types of bee foods are to blame, while others cite genetically modified crops as a potential cause. Genetically modified seeds are dipped in systemic insecticides before planting, and these insecticides later appear in the plant's nectar and pollen. CCD is most likely a combination of many factors. As Rowan Jacobsen points out in his book "Fruitless Fall," an exploration of the bee crisis, "Trying too hard to find a single cause of CCD misses the point. CCD, like varroa, is a symptom of a larger disease—a disease of fossil fuels and chemical shortcuts, of billion-bee slums and the speed of the modern world." Jacobsen touts sustainable agriculture as a possible solution, maintaining that "until local agriculture replaces global agriculture, there will always be another parasite, another virus, another mysterious collapse."

One positive result of the severity of the bee crisis is the considerable amount of media attention that CCD has garnered. Haagen-Dazs, the well-known ice cream company, started a "Haagen-Dazs Loves Honeybees" campaign to promote bee awareness and raise money for further research. They even created a special ice cream flavor, Vanilla Honey Bee, from which proceeds will go toward funding honeybee research. And

all the media interest may help shift the public's attitude towards bees. "I used to view bees as an annoyance, trying to dodge bees at Sukkoth meals," comments Ilana Wilner, a junior at Stern College for Women. "Now I understand the importance of bees in our daily life, not just on Rosh Hashanah, when we need them for their honey."

Wilner isn't the only one reconsidering her perspective. "I never gave much thought to the role bees played in so many of the foods I eat," admits Samantha Greenbaum, another SCW junior. "I only ever really associated bees with honey. I definitely have a new admiration for them."

Both women wonder how the bee crisis would affect them. If bees continue to disappear at these rates, the result will be increased food prices and decreased food availability. In order to truly solve this crisis, though, relying on scientists and beekeepers to find a "miracle cure" may not be enough. The bee crisis is merely one symptom of a public disconnected from its food source. As Jacobsen writes, "We need to re-envision the place of beekeeping and farming in our culture...If we don't, then not just our orchards, but all our efforts, will be fruitless."

"What Einstein Told His Cook": Scientific Adventures in the Kitchen

Helen Unger

Have you ever wondered what makes lettuce green and carrots orange, or pondered the purpose of marinating a steak overnight? Does food science tickle your fancy? If so, this month's featured read, "What Einstein Told His Cook," is sure to please. Written by University of Pittsburgh chemistry professor Robert L. Wolke, this intriguing book answers any question that may come up in the kitchen.

The book is written in question-and-answer format and covers all realms of cuisine. Individual inquiries are organized into ten separate chapters on topics that range from sugars, meats and produce to microwave technology. Scientifically, Wolke tackles problems from the simple—"Does eating ice cream in hot weather cool you off?"—to the biochemically complex—"Why do cured meats have a bright pink color?" Wolke does a fair bit of myth-busting as well, finding the truth behind old wives' kitchen tales such as whether adding baking soda to water helps to soften dried beans (it doesn't). The

book is peppered with recipes that demonstrate the author's chemical concepts in a hands-on manner.

One might think that all this biochemistry would make for a difficult and dry read, but Wolke presents his science with clarity and humor. His wit is evident in his chapter titles and in "Foodie's Fictionary," a fictional dictionary at the end of each answer; for example, he defines the pigment carotene as an "adolescent carrot". Wolke uses diagrams astutely, ensuring that they are simple and easy to understand for the general public. It is no wonder, after reading this book, why Wolke has earned awards from both the James Beard Foundation and the American Chemical Society for his writing. Ultimately, you don't have to be an Einstein to read "What Einstein Told His Cook." You just need a curious mind and a good appetite.

Helen Ayala Unger is a freshman at SCW from Cleveland, OH, planning to major in Biochemistry. She enjoys caramelizing soy milk sugars and testing the effects of capsaicin on her roommates. Go Cavs!

The Internal Quest

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not see or learn, and was given a new perspective on Israel that I did not have before. While many of my previous negative preconceptions of Israel were confirmed, my experiences in Israel disproved some of those beliefs. I learned about a more humanitarian side of Israel that I hadn't seen before, and I saw a new xenophobic side of Israel that I didn't know of before. I definitely walked out with more knowledge and understanding of Israel and believe that I have become more tolerant of Zionists than before. For example, I see no rational basis for someone to live in Sderot, but now that I have interacted with those who actually live there, I can understand more where they are coming from. When my friends claim that I would have been different had I spent the year in Israel, I shrug my shoulders and leave the calculations to them. There is no way for me to know for sure what would have happened and thinking about it just leads me to the topics of nature vs. nurture and predestination vs. free will, which have no set answers. One thing that I do know though is that conflicts and doubts will always be a large part of me and I have learned to embrace them.

STYLE

We Want to Dress The Part of It, New York New York! Street Style In The City That Never Sleeps

Talia Kaufman

There are approximately 1,537,195 New Yorkers on the island of Manhattan. We are 1,537,195 of the world's most infamously outspoken, posh, bizarre and snobbiest residents. Yet, in the city where Blackberries accessorize our earrings and any sort of attempt at communication on the public transportation system may be viewed as a potential threat, how are we managing to getting this message across?

But as any true New Yorker will tell you, the image that we project to the world isn't what you say; it's how you dress. And dress is key in the City that requires survival of the fabulous. To catch a cab, land a job or secure a table at an exclusive restaurant we must stand out in a sea of a million other narcissists. We rely on our personal style to send the world our signature message: "This is who I am. If you don't like it, then go (well, *you know...*)"

And seeing as Europeans are unhygienic communists and the rest of America is fat, we have taken the liberty of adding best dressed to the list of other areas in which we are number one. We revel in this status by making use of the

thousands of shiny skyscrapers windows that conveniently double as mirrors. Can anything else be expected of a place that is so narcissistically referred to as "The City"?

New York style both inspires and embodies the energy of the city. The beat of our boot heels, our race to work, the romantic mix of our perfumes and colognes as the night comes alive and the feel or luxurious pea coats as we push past you in rush hour traffic all help to make up everything that is the greatest city on earth.

But how do we New Yorkers manage to fit into our pencil skirts in the City with an abundance of everything but time? We use caffeine and ambition to fuel the power-walk of countless blocks in stilettos. Our lives are fast paced, as are the lives of the trends that momentarily grace our closets. This city is always fueling our craving for the fabulous. There is something about Manhattan that simply makes us want more. Higher penthouse, higher heels, bigger latte, bigger diamonds; it inspires us to strive for the best in every aspect of our lives.

New York is the cultural cen-

ter of our nation and the world at large. Artists, chefs, bohemians, musicians, architects, freaks and performers look to New York as the ultimate kingdom of self-expression, creativity and artistic success. Another chick flick, rap song or sitcom pilot in which Manhattan has served as the muse every New York minute. It is often said The City serves as another character. A very well dressed one indeed.

Manhattan is as much of a fashion melting pot as it is of culture. Being that the majority of New Yorkers are not from the island, street style is worldly and eclectic. Every Upper East Side prep schooler, Chinatown bag peddler, flamboyant shoe salesman and street corner performer has his or her own distinct uniform.

Whether it be a handbag with a post-it quality Frauda label, a trendy eco-chic t-shirt or a custom made couture gown, it's being worked somewhere in the city of possibilities. Every neighborhood is another world, and has it's own culture, feeling and style. The style associated with each area gives a deep anthropological insight into its residents.

The city is segregated into two types of New Yorkers: Uptowners and Downtowners. Those who choose (or can afford) to live Uptown must constantly maintain a perfectly polished look to keep up with the Trumps in the Penthouse across the park. Uptowners are well aware that anything worth wearing can be purchased at the fashion palaces that are the three B's (Barney's, Bendel's and Bergdorf's) the official outfitters of the Gossip Girls and socialite set. The couture featured in the upscale-department stores is simply art. Their Fifth Avenue widows serve as galleries, open to the public, who often drool on their designer-knock off cardigans as they live vicariously through the avant-garde posed mannequins. These couture-clad, size-zero figurines represent any given moment's image of our society's model of perfection.

Although all of the clothing sold on the Fifth Avenue may be posh, it is surely not the outfit of all Uptowners. One must earn the right to dress with the best with a rooftop view of the zoo or a mention in the society pages. The nannies, dog walkers and maids who care for the neighborhood's most cherished possessions must blend in with the cobblestone so as to not distract from the chic. The dress is an attempt at anonymity, even transparency, in a world not their own.

Downtowners are much more accepting in their urban fashion world. Downtown is an artful hodgepodge of the New York University nerd chic, peasant skirt protesters, vintage-store shoppers, those who bought now-vintage clothing when it was in style and everyone in between. These hipsters who care so much attempt to give the illusion that their look is effortless. The only bigger Downtown faux paux than

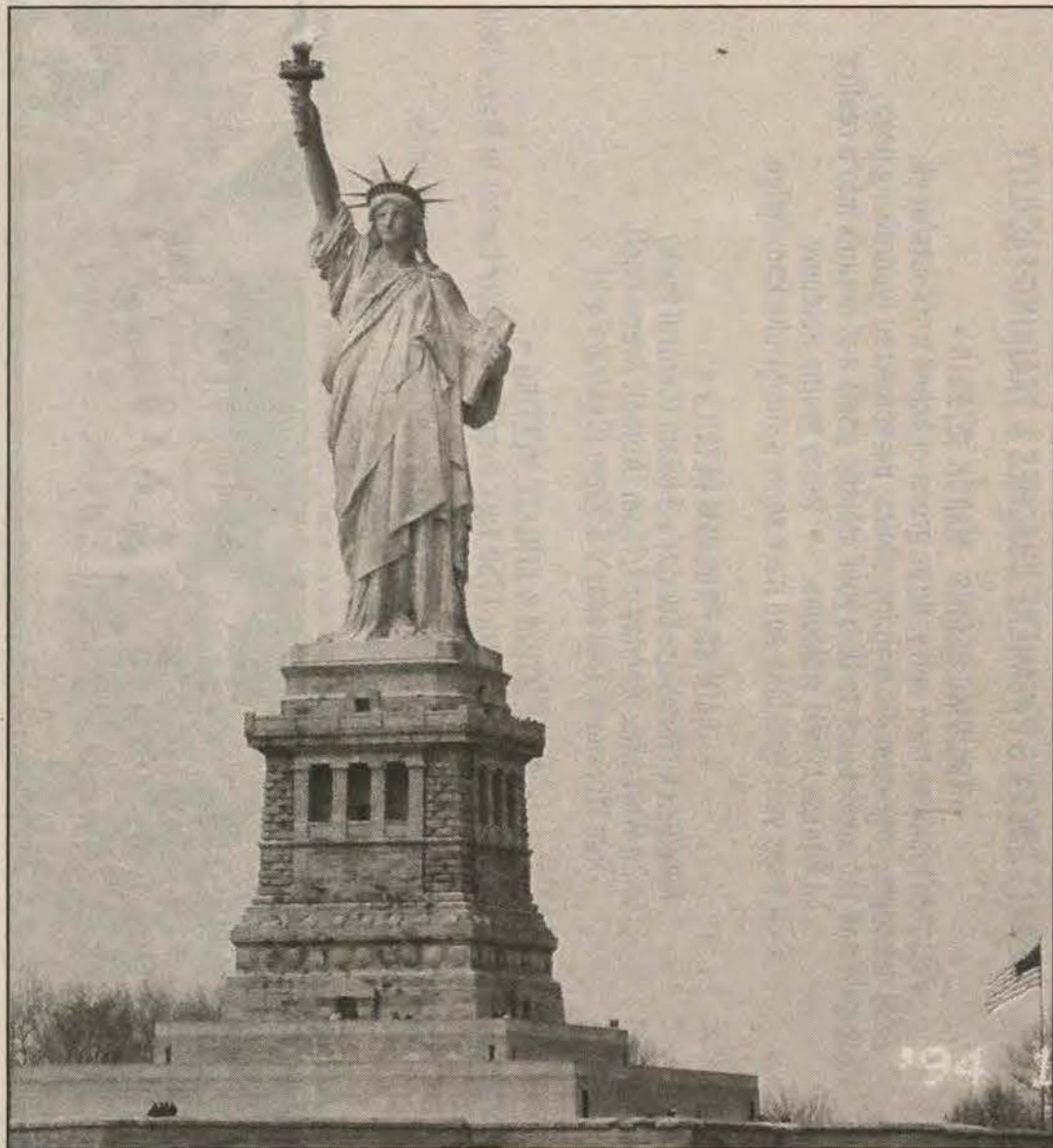
voting Republican is looking as if you have looked in the mirror. The streets shops mix high fashion couture stores with street vendors selling affordable accessorized. This Soho-chic coolness may look simple but often comes with a Park Avenue price tag.

But where do these trends come from before we strut them on the streets? As the fashion capital of the United States, generating over \$14 billion in annual sales, Manhattan has a major edge setting trends. Looks strut directly from our Mercedes Benz Fashion Week Runways our sidewalks, then slowly dilute in fabulousity as they trickle into the mall-windows and chain stores of the less fabulous rest of the world, like New Jersey.

The Garment District is the center of both our million dollar looks and the billion dollar clothing industry at large. Although the district's textile-producing days are so 1900s, today the district is rocking a square mile of couture houses and show rooms. Located a mere strut of the stilettos away from Stern College, it produces the designs of a third of all clothing manufactured in the US.

The district is the home to our nation's fashion elite, from the industry's most prominent designers as well as its most promising entrepreneurs. Oscar de la Renta, Calvin Klein, Donna Karan, Liz Claiborne and Nicole Miller, to name a few, all make the district their home.

And what a home it is! The best-dressed city in the world is always inspiring and being inspired by the world of fashion. For our own muse will always hold a flame for fashion. As she plays hostess, welcoming all of our new friends awaiting their own Manhattan makeovers, Lady Liberty is the best-dressed New York woman of all.



The Lady Liberty, the ultimate New York Fashionista, models her classic look on Liberty Island.

The Observer

Please send comments and
letters to the editor to
scwobserver@gmail.com



TEAM ONE FAMILY
HELPING ISRAEL'S VICTIMS OF TERROR

GET FIT. MEET NEW FRIENDS. HELP ISRAEL'S VICTIMS OF TERROR RECOVER.
TEAM ONEFAMILY HAS ENTRIES TO THE SOLD-OUT 10th ANNUAL NYC OLYMPIC DISTANCE TRIATHLON ON SUNDAY, JULY 18, 2010.
.9 mile swim, 25 mile bike & 6.2 mile run

JOIN US FOR OUR 18-WEEK TRAINING PROGRAM WITH ASPHALT GREEN'S PREMIERE COACHES & TRAINING FACILITY

• TRAINING BEGINS - MARCH 15, 2010 •

Program includes race entry; three group coached workouts/week; daily schedule; race-specific training clinics; personalized fundraising page; race gear and the opportunity to turn your athletic goals and dreams into a reality.

All Fitness Levels welcome.* • Relay teams welcome.

* Must have your own bike and have some swim/stroke knowledge.

• TRAINING PROGRAM DETAILS •

Bike/Brick Workouts: Sunday's 9:00am (Central Park)
Swim Workouts: Monday's 7:15pm (Asphalt Green Pool)
Run Workouts: Thursday's 6:55pm (Central Park)

• ORIENTATION & ATHLETE MEETING •

Tuesday, March 9, 2010 @ Asphalt Green, 1750 York Avenue - Murphy Center in Mazur Hall

To find out more information about this program or about Team OneFamily, please email rachel@onefamilyfund.org or call 646-289-8600 x201.

Team OneFamily is proud to be the leading fundraising team to benefit all victims of terror in Israel with ongoing emotional and financial support.



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