

The COMMENTATOR

The Official Student Newspaper of Yeshiva College and Sy Syms School of Business www.yucommentator.com

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Volume LXXIV Issue 4

Lipa, Ohad Headline Chanukah Concert



Ohad serenades a crowded Lamport Auditorium on the seventh night of Chanukah

The House of Isaac How to Save 'Beis Yitzchak'

BY JULIAN HOROWITZ

Around this time last year, I was tapped to serve as an editor for Beis Yitzchak, YU's only consistently published Torah journal. Though each year's editor brings with him a slightly different vision, for over forty years the journal has provided a creative outlet for our many Torah scholars – both budding and full-fledged – to publish the profound fruits of their studies. The articles sent to me usually fit into one of several models – two prominent examples being the “hakira followed by fitting in machloksim” and the “question on X (Mishnah, Gemara, Rishon, etc.) from Y, but we see from Z that X really understood Y differently than we do” models – but I was nonetheless impressed by the many time-impo- verished undergraduates, alumni, and faculty who submitted full-length, well-researched pieces of Torah scholarship despite the absence of

any obligation or this-worldly reward.

Reading through these articles was an enriching experience, and it exposed me to some ideas and sug- oting that I may never have encoun- tered on my own; the few times that I had previously perused an edition of Beis Yitzchak, I had skipped over the articles by my peers and headed straight for the Rosh Yeshiva sec- tion. An immense amount of work goes into writing, collecting, edit- ing, and publishing this journal, most of which will never be given the full attention that it deserves. This past year, 1000 copies were printed, and of these around forty were sold, with twice that number being handed out as gifts. Even the recent efforts of YUTorah to put the journal online have only added a couple hundred people to the distri- bution of our publication. What can be done to build up the Beis Yitzchak?

As I was editing the first drafts

sent to me, I was struck by the sheer number of grammatical, stylistic, and syntactical errors that I came across in the Hebrew; “Anglicisms,” gender and number disagreement, mistranslations, and tense issues abounded. While the official style guidelines note that articles may be written in any “dialect or stratum of Hebrew or Aramaic,” many of the submissions I received eluded clas- sification in any dialect or stratum of...well, anything. Put simply, most of us have no idea how to write in any language but English. Additionally, but for a small group of foreigners and veterans, most of us can read faster and understand better in English. It's practically criminal to forcibly obfuscate our talmud Torah by making us work in a distant-second language.

Would changing the language to English, or even just including an English section, be a bediavad con- cession to increasingly weak basic skills, or – even worse – an admis- sion of a widening rift between YU and “the frum world?” I would argue that the change I've suggested would, ironically, both improve the level of Talmudic scholarship and make Beis Yitzchak more popularly consumable. The American Jewish community is showered with mussar

continues on page 5

Future Fourth-Year Students: Accommodated!

BY BENJAMIN ABRAMOWITZ

Announced earlier this semester, the new setup of the Fourth Year on Campus Scholarship program threw many student plans askew. A hand- ful of students, who initially planned to apply for a subsidized fourth year on campus, were aggra- vated by the changes, having organ- ized their courses of study on a four- year-on-campus basis at the begin- ning of their Yeshiva careers. These students, caught in the middle of the program's transitional stage, report- ed their problems and found the administration receptive to their complaints. Dr. John Fisher, Director of Enrollment Management, and Dr. Robert Friedman, Director of Student Finance, worked to arrange special accommodations for these students, who can now comfortably remain on campus next year with their anticipated subsidies.

Simeon Botwinick (YC '11), one of the seven affected students, remarked, “Although I knew I couldn't absolutely count on receiv- ing a fifth-year scholarship, the fact

that I knew I would at least have the chance to compete for one was a heavy factor in my decision to stay four years on campus. I was shocked, then, when I found out halfway into my third year that the scholarship would no longer go above 50% tuition.” Already receiv- ing at least a half-tuition scholar- ship, Botwinick was frustrated that his four-year-double-major-with- Honors plan was hampered by the scholarship program's changes so late in his college life. “Of course,” he noted, “I was extremely thankful for the aid I was already receiving. But I was still disappointed not to be able to compete for more, especial- ly since I had always thought I'd be able to do so.”

The administration proved eager to allay student frustrations. Botwinick emailed Dr. Fisher, who forwarded the message to Mr. Friedman, who replied to Botwinick within a day. Mr. Friedman informed Botwinick that his current scholarship would be increased by 6%, as long as he officially applies

continues on page 4

Re-Ordering the Court A Look at the New-Look Student Court

BY JO JO FREUNDEL

YSU's Student Court, an organi- zation likely unbeknownst to most Wilf Campus students, may soon play a significant role in the lives of the entire student body.

The Student Court, as its name implies, is the judicial branch of the Yeshiva Student Union. It has the power to try cases, both civil and criminal, that arise among the male student body of YU. According to the constitution by which the court operates ([www.soyseforim.org/elec- tions](http://www.soyseforim.org/elections), Article XI, section 1, para- graph 2), its jurisdiction encompass- es “all Yeshiva University under- graduate male students,” covering

problems that would arise in almost any activity done on campus. It tries the cases that come up during the course of operation of the numerous clubs that operate on the Wilf Campus. Steven Paletz (YC '11), a former member of the court and the current chair of the Student Life Committee, noted that some of the most common cases the court has heard regard clubs complaining about their funding from the Student Union. “Someone starts a club and wants to run an event, and realizes he doesn't have the budget to do it; that complaint is brought before the court,” Mr. Paletz said. In addition,

continues on page 4

Inside:

News Briefs	3
I Got an 88 on My Midterm!:	7
Student Research in Psychology:	8
Seven Up, Seven Down:	9
Looking for Some Spirit:	12
Fluff Came to New York:	13

Staff

Editorials

Towards an Honest Excellence

There are certain distinguishing marks of finals time. For example, there's that student who hasn't changed his clothes or shaved in two weeks, the FTOC who wanders around bleary-eyed mumbling soon-to-be useless facts to himself over and over, the guy-who-may-have-been-in-your-class-but-hasn't-been-seen-for-two-months-and-has-now-reappeared-to-do-an-entire-semester's-worth-of-work-in-four-days, and the caf store is running perilously low on Starbucks Doubleshots®.

This period also generally sees an increased awareness of and concern for cheating. The stress and difficulty of many assignments and final exams lead to an environment where some students either feel forced to cheat, or decide to cheat in order to simply lighten the load.

The undergraduate community at Yeshiva now enters this intense period following a semester with a disturbing number of specific incidents where there was a lack of academic integrity, which was itself preceded by a year full of such cases.

In this issue's Student Pulse, 76% of respondents were in favor of a university Honor Code. However, some students expressed the view that the rampant cheating on campus bespeaks the fact that YU is not yet ready for an Honor Code.

We have arrived at a very simple solution: STOP CHEATING. JUST STOP.

It goes without saying that we are referring to shameful overt cheating practices, such as buying or commissioning papers, or glancing over your friend's shoulder during an exam. There is no excuse for such heinous offenses. Personal difficulties, family issues, a tremendous workload, mountains of stress – none of these justifies doing this to yourself and your peers. There are absolutely no possible circumstances under which these behaviors are acceptable.

Period.

Equally unacceptable are 'lesser' forms of cheating, those which even Yeshiva students who would not engage in the abovementioned types of overt breaches of academic integrity would be less hesitant to violate. Some circumvent attendance policies by having their friends sign them into class, and others use websites like www.swapnotes.com (which contains much otherwise-legitimate content) to download old lab reports and submit them verbatim.

We demand that the members of the undergraduate community at Yeshiva stop cheating, in all its forms. When we have done so, we shall live and learn in a place free from such a gross burden, and together we will strive for honest excellence.

To: ystud@yu.edu

From: yucommentator@yucommentator.com

RE: TONIGHT!!!! No Free Pizza!!! But, STOP SENDING UNNECESSARY YSTUDS!

It happens daily. You get back to your dorm room after an enjoyable lunch, eager to get some homework done before class or (re)watch last night's 30 Rock. You flip open your laptop for the requisite Gmail-check—which shouldn't take more than a minute or two—before you get started. But, alas, sorting through today's emails proves taxing, even annoying. The majority of your messages are mass undergraduate emails, most advertising events you would never consider attending, developments that don't apply to you, or utterly vague messages of interest to virtually no one. And, most commonly, the ystud parades its author's almost-functional illiteracy.

Instead of feeling delighted with the wide array of activities and events offered at Yeshiva, we are annoyed that our inboxes are transformed into semiliterate swamps showcasing students' communicative incapability. Before you send a message to all your colleagues, make sure you will not end up informing them that you got nothing out of Comps 1 and 2. You all have friends qualified to proofread your emails, and the Writing Center is happy to help perfect any kind of piece before you send it out to *everyone*.

There is just no excuse for the number of spelling mistakes and failed attempts at syntax in the typical ystud. Similarly, being capital letter- and exclamation point-happy does not qualify you to make an appearance in the inboxes of the whole campus community. Chances are, if your announcement is truly worthwhile, you do not need such creative "grammar" to

convey its importance.

No more than two emails, at most, is necessary to advertise a single program. And, if you forgot to send out the ystud until the night of the event, you are not entitled to send out two messages on the same day to persuade people, last-minute, to alter their evening plans. In fact, getting two annoying emails on the same day about the same program is actually likely to alienate people from your now annoying event.

Event co-coordinators: coordinate your ystuds! Overlapping mass emails rather blatantly reflect disorganization and speak very poorly for you and your event.

If your announcement pertains exclusively to a specific group of students, like seniors, economics majors, or SSSB guys (by the way, there's an sssbstud—use it!), a ystud is not in order. The point of ystuds is to communicate messages of importance or interest to the entire male undergraduate community. They are not a cheap way to get your news across to your club of friends (who may very well understand your unintelligible argot). Create an email list. Organizations like the Book Club and Model UN have got the idea.

When you send a ystud, the message is as much about your club or event as it is about you. Make it a positive one. Rather than cringe every time we receive another announcement, Yeshiva students should be able to look upon our campuses' exciting array of activities with pride.

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Student Pulse:

Ethics, Cheating, and Swine Flu

159 students responded to The Commentator's most recent poll: 92 from Yeshiva College, 18 from Sy Syms School of Business for Men, 38 from Stern College for Women, and 7 from the Sy Syms School of Business for Women

ETHICS AND CHEATING

- Have you ever cheated?
 - Never in my life 25.8% (39)
 - Yes, but a long time ago 49.0%(74)
 - Yes, though I do not anymore 16.6%(25)
 - Yes, and I still do sometimes 7.3%(11)
 - I frequently cheat 1.3%(2)
 - o "When I say a long time ago, I'm talking, like, first grade."
 - o "Will regret it for the rest of my life"
 - o "To be honest, I can't remember the last time I cheated. I just know that if I had the chance, I probably would."
- Would you report cheating if you saw it in your class?
 - Yes 32.0% (47)
 - No 68.0% (100)
 - o "But i would not look for it."
 - o "It really depends on the circumstances. I would hope that I would have the courage to do so, but sometimes I would probably feel too intimidated, either by the students themselves or the consequences of their being caught. Also, if I felt that the professor was being negligent, I might be less inclined to report it to him/her."
 - o "but a lot of people say yes and when it comes down to it people get scared to report someone"
- Do you think Yeshiva University should have an Honor Code?
 - Yes 76.0% (111)
 - No 24.0% (35)
 - o "YU students are clearly not ready for an Honor Code. They haven't demonstrated that they can handle it in any way so far. I still hear about huge cheating rings and scandals taking place, so how can we even consider introducing an Honor Code?"
 - o "I think it would be largely ineffective."
 - o "Judaism has a built-in Honor Code. People need to be reminded of this."
 - o "I wish we could have an honor code, and would have loved to choose yes, but sadly enough, the Wilf campus undergraduates have time and time again shown themselves not worthy of the trust that comes with an honor code."

SWINE FLU

- Have you contracted the H1N1 virus?
 - Yes 4.7% (7)
 - No 95.3% (143)
- Have you been vaccinated for the H1N1 virus?
 - Yes 36.0% (54)
 - No 64.0% (96)
 - o "Because my mom told me to"
 - o "I'm wating for the shot, which contains dead viruses. The nasal spray contains live viruses."
- How worried are you about the H1N1 virus?
 - Very worried 0.7% (1)
 - Moderately worried 21.5% (32)
 - Not so worried 63.1% (94)
 - Don't care 15.4% (23)

QUICK FACTS:

- Yeshiva College students are the most likely to report cheating (34.5%), ahead of Stern College (27.0%) and SSSB Men (18.8%)
- Only 5 of 37 respondents from SCW think YU shouldn't have an honor code; SCW's 86.5% approval rate of an honor code is ahead of YC's 71.4%.
- Stern respondents were more likely than any other group to have been vaccinated for H1N1, as almost half the respondents have gotten the vaccine.
- Honors program students claim they are much more likely to report cheating (40.0%) than non-Honors students (28.0%)
- Non-Honors students are more supportive of an honor code (65 of 79 respondents) than are Honors students (44 of 63 respondents).
- First-year students are least likely to report cheating (25.0%), while the percentage increases with years on campus: 26.1% for second-years, 41.0% for third years, 50.0% for fourth.
- 16 of 18 students in the fourth year or more think Yeshiva University should have an honor code.
- Answered "Yes" to Reporting Cheating by Jewish Studies Program: MYP 40.3%; SBMP 16.7%; IBC 10.0%

CORRELATION IMPLIES CAUSATION OF THE WEEK:

- Only 4.2% of Student Pulse respondents have contracted the swine flu. To stay away from danger, keep taking the Pulse!

News Briefs

Contributors: Menachem Spira, Jonathan Schwab, Sammy Steiner

"Synthetic Meat:" Animal Rights Groups Applaud, Halakhists Scratch Heads

Researchers at the Netherlands' Eindhoven University of Technology have, for the first time, successfully produced laboratory-grown steaks. The process, though complex, involves animal myoblasts (basically, stem cells for muscles) – noninvasively extracted from adult livestock.

Then, when cultivated in a nutrient medium that includes products derived from unborn bovine fetuses – obviously, very invasively extracted – these cells are capable of rapidly dividing to form new muscle tissue.

Although the Dutch team's synthetic meat is not quite yet ready for human consumption, some animal rights groups have already expressed optimism that this process will lead to new, viable alternatives to animal slaughter. In fact, last year People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, better known as PETA, announced a one million dollar prize to be awarded to the first team to successfully develop synthesized meat products that can compete both gastronomically and commercially with preexisting meat products by 2012.

For the Jewish community, this advancement raises a number of interesting issues. Firstly, does this mean that kosher pork could soon be available? Maybe. Since the process only requires a miniscule amount of original pig cells to start the growth, there may be wiggle room for some rabbinical authorities. At the very least, it could allow for some sort of pareve meat, as laboratory-grown meat ostensibly, would not require ritual slaughtering, or shekhita, and might not even be considered "meat" by standards of Jewish law.

So, for all those craving a cheeseburger for which faux meat or cheese just does not cut it, science may soon provide the solution.

Stanton Dedication and Investiture

On Wednesday December 16, the 245 Lexington building of the Beren Campus, formerly known as "The Stern Building" was rededicated as Ronald P. Stanton Hall, following a generous donation by former Chairman of the Board Ronald P. Stanton.

President Joel and Mr. Stanton both spoke, along with a speech from SCW SCSC Treasurer Alana Hember and a performance by the Stern Chamber Orchestra. The second part of the program, the investiture of Dr. Adam Zachary Newton as the Ronald P. Stanton Chair in the Humanities, included speeches from Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Morton Lowengrub and Dr. Newton himself which, due to limited space inside Stanton Hall's two lobby classrooms, were simulcast outside in the Laulicht Commons.

Revel Holds Yom Iyun

On Sunday, December 6th, the Yeshiva University Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies held its first Yom Iyun, on the topic "A Taste of Jewish Scholarship." Hosted at Congregation Ohab Zedek on Manhattan's Upper West Side, the event was attended by over a hun-

dred people. Rabbi Allen Schwartz, the spiritual leader of Ohab Zedek, introduced the program, which included Yeshiva's Drs. Mordechai Cohen, Jonathan Dauber, Ronnie Perelis, Daniel Rynhold, and Dean David Berger, speaking on a variety of topics from new dimensions of Bible Interpretation to Crypto Judaism in the New World.

New Events Promote Discussions of Homosexuality on Campus

On Thursday, December 10th, Stern's Torah Activities Council sponsored a showing of "Trembling before God," a documentary about reconciling love of Judaism with prohibitions against homosexuality. After the film, Rabbi Dr. Aharon Fried of Stern's Psychology Department led a discussion of the related ideas and issues. On December 22nd, the YU Tolerance Club and the Wurzweiler School of Social Work will co-host an open discussion on "Being Gay in the Orthodox World." Rabbi Blau will moderate a discussion of students, alumni, and faculty, along with a panel of gay undergraduates and recent graduates.

YC Illuminated before Chanukah

Many people noticed the wind powered electric menorah outside the Morgenstern dormitory several days before Chanukah. The Menorah was built by Raffi Holzer (YC '11), Chaim Stauber – two psychics majors – and (YC '11) Ben Recca (YC '11), a Chemistry major.

Though the original plan was to station it in the Belfer Hall wind tunnel, the students agreed with the administration to place it on RIETS property because, since Yeshiva is a secular university, if the Menorah, a religious symbol, was put up on YU grounds, anyone would have grounds to request a Christmas tree on YU grounds as well, a notion that did not sit well with the RIETS administration.

The students built the Menorah over a number of weekends, plus a few extra hours before Chanukah, totaling 50+ hours. After experimenting with different materials, the final version cost between four hundred and five hundred dollars, part of which was funded by YCSA.

The YC maintenance crew helped the students erect the Menorah on Thursday, December 3rd, and take it down before Chanukah as agreed upon between student and administration. The RIETS office asked them to take down the menorah early based on a legal ruling, or pesak, of Rav Soloveitchik that electric menorahs serve no halachic function and therefore should not be used during Hanukah proper. The RIETS office felt, therefore, that it would be inappropriate to centrally display the Menorah on the YU campus during Hanukah.

This, however, did not inhibit the Menorah from catching the eye of some of the local media outlets. After "catching wind" of the Menorah, WNBC and the New York Times came to campus and covered the story, personally interviewing Holtzer and Stauber. The link to the news report can be found on the YU website.

Sy Syms to Implement Curriculum Changes in Business Major

BY BENJY BLOCH

SSSB is currently working towards earning additional accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), a “seal of approval” specifically for business schools. Part of that process entails a review of the school’s curriculum, and the school recently began adapting its curriculum to meet the AACSB’s high standards. Developed by a committee of an associate dean together with faculty, administrators, students, and unanimously agreed to by the entire business faculty, the new curriculum is designed to ensure that YU graduates are prepared to enter the business world.

Effective September 2010, all majors will now include a new global business course, which will be required of all FTOC’s. This course is critical to students’ success in our fast-paced and interlaced economic world. Its aim is to help students achieve an understanding of how different economies work and how diverse economies interact with one another. “With the advent of technology in the workplace, the relevant business world has shrunk, making it increasingly important that we have a grasp of how the global economy works,” said Jacob Moore, a junior in Sy Syms. This course will provide students with a basic global perspective of business. In addition to this obvious benefit, students will also gain exposure to various business areas early in their college career, which will help them select the one they want to concentrate on for their major.

Another significant change can be found in the statistics department. MIS and Statistics have combined into one department, now called Information and Decision Sciences. Previously, students were required to take Statistics for Business, and then either Quantitative Methods or Operations Management courses. Now, regardless of concentration, students must take all three. These changes come in reaction to alumni feedback. Noticing a lack of mathematical

skills amongst Sy Syms graduates, YU alumni currently in the workforce have highlighted the crucial role of statistics, and quantitative methods in the business world. They feel that a solid foundation in math is vital for students to get the best jobs. “Our goal is to provide students with the best education, one that will properly prepare them for the workforce,” affirms Presidential Fellow Adira Katlowitz.

One of the innovative revisions of the new curriculum is in the elective aspect of the major. In an effort to produce well-rounded applicants, the school has decided that instead of requiring students to take eight courses in their concentration to earn a degree, students will now take five courses, in addition to three credits that can be fulfilled through an elective. This elective, as well as the two existing electives, can be taken in either Sy Syms or YC. In addition, the previously required three economics courses have joined into two required economics courses. Business ethics is now required of all majors as well. “The business world is looking for applicants who know more than just how to fill out accounting ledgers; they want employees who are able to think outside the box,” says another junior in Sy Syms. “The ability to take YC electives will allow me to expand my horizons and improve my communication skills.”

Some of the other changes include the creation of a non-CPA accounting track (for students who seek knowledge of accounting but do not plan to take the CPA exam), the formation of two tracks within the management section, and the establishment of a general management minor. “As we work towards the prestigious AACSB accreditation, we are trying to offer as much flexibility within the business sphere as possible,” says Katlowitz.

All students who are beginning their on-campus studies this fall will start under the new curriculum. Students in the middle of their majors should speak to an academic advisor.

Fourth Year Students Accommodated

continued from front page

for the award. Pleased with this outcome, Botwinick noted, “If I was shocked at the removal of the 4th year scholarship, I was even more shocked at the speed of the response I got. Dr. Fisher and Mr. Friedman addressed my concerns immediately, and I was extremely impressed with their obvious concern over the students who felt slighted.”

Other students were similarly satisfied with the administration’s willingness to help. Daniel Poliak (YC ’11) worked to organize a stu-

dent response to the scholarship program changes. “The rules were changed for good reasons,” he said. “However, people like us were caught in the middle.” Poliak, from the beginning of his years at Yeshiva, planned to finish the Honors Program in four years, a program of study very much encouraged—required, essentially—by the Honors Program’s new setup. “I anticipated that I would have the opportunity to apply for the Fourth Year Scholarship previously run by the provost, and we were notified too late, in the first

half of November, of the change in eligibility.” Poliak concluded, “It was reassuring to find the administration attentive to our concerns.”

Dr. Fisher explained that he and his colleagues tried to identify others, particularly third-year students, negatively affected by the changes. The process of awarding bigger scholarships to these students, he said, was less formal. Just about everyone agreed that something had to be done to help them. Dr. Fisher also noted that he anticipates a great increase in the pool of donors’ money used for student scholar-

Re-Ordering the Court

continued from front page

he mentioned that the court has been involved in some more uncommon and controversial cases, such as the impeachment and removal of one of the heads of the YSU last year. He could not disclose further details, however, because the case was kept private, which can be done at the behest of either the defendant or the Chief Justice (per Article XI, section 3, paragraph 4 of the YSU constitution).

The Student Court consists of one Chief Justice and two Associate Justice positions filled by seniors in good academic standing, and two more Associate Justice positions reserved for juniors. In addition, there is a Justice Pro-Tempore, who must be at least a sophomore, in charge of recording court sessions and filling in if one of the Justices is unavailable for a trial. Cases are heard in front of a full court of five. The tentative list of Justices includes Tani Cohn as Chief Justice, and Michael Falik, Ari Feldman, Asaf Gamzo, David Elkaim, and Tuviah Brander filling the other roles, with one serving as the Justice Pro-Tempore and the other four as Associate Justices. Judges are appointed by the president of YSU, who works in cooperation with the current members of the court. The

members serve a term through the school year, at which point a new court is appointed. Their reign is not limitless, however; a wayward judge can be removed by a four-fifths vote of the YSU council.

That trend could end later this year. There are indications that the court seeks to reorganize itself, appointing members from every Jewish Studies Program on campus to give the court fuller representation. Yet, there may be a bigger issue facing the court: the level of anonymity into which the court has fallen.

The court has wielded its power very sparingly in recent history. This has largely been due to the disorganization the court has fallen into, which is by no means a new occurrence. In a 2004 Commentator article, Avi Zohar commented that in the 2001-’02 academic year, a court wasn’t even appointed, and in 2004 it took the better part of the year to appoint members. This trend has continued up to this year. Paletz admits he didn’t hear a single case while serving on the court, as did Cohn, who declined to comment on what cases are lined up, but stated that none has been heard yet during the current term.

That trend could end later this year. There are indications that the court seeks to reorganize itself, appointing members from every Jewish Studies Program on campus to give the court fuller representation. Yet, there may be a bigger issue facing the court: the level of anonymity into which the court has fallen. Very few current students

have ever heard of the court. Upperclassmen in previous years failed to pass on the knowledge to younger students, and the knowledge was lost somewhere in the turnover of students. Compounding the problem further is the high level of privacy under which the court operates. One candidate previously considered for membership stated that when he was approached about the position, he was asked “not to talk to people about [the court].” Aside from ethical questions unpublishable dealings may carry, it also does nothing to increase students’ awareness of the existence of the court. The less students are aware of the court, the less they will turn to it to arbitrate over possible disputes.

Another issue pertains to the necessity of student-run courts – there is a question as to whether the Student Court need even exist. Student-run courts, though uncommon, exist on other college campuses in the US. Most student bodies have an elected president and a student council, the so-called “legislative” and “executive” branches of the government, but few have the addition of a judicial body. Current members of the court, however, think that the Court is integral to the smooth functioning of clubs at Yeshiva University, clubs that may sometimes come head-to-head with one another. Cohn, however, explained the need for the court as an arbitrator. “Problems perennially plague institutions, and a court is a means of solving these frequent bumps in the road to progress,” he said.

The importance of such a court system is undeniable. A well-organized court would, on the most basic level, ensure that the college’s many clubs deliver on their promises, an issue that has plagued YU in recent years.

**Submit Letters to the Editor
either at our website
www.yucommentator.com
or send an email to
letters@yucommentator.com**

The Sgan Mashgichim- Building Relationships

By Rabbi Ely Bacon

Five years ago an exciting new initiative, the *Sgan Mashgiach* Program, was inaugurated at Yeshiva University. Today, the program is still vibrant as we seek to find new ways to maximize each student's experience at YU. So, who are we and what exactly do we do?

I am Rabbi Ely Bacon, coordinator of the Program, which began as an initiative of President Richard Joel. Together with two other musmachim, we enthusiastically joined this wonderful Yeshiva of outstanding Roshei Yeshiva, a *Mashgiach Ruchani*, Rebbeim, administrators, faculty and students. But, given all of YU's greatness, we wondered if we would be able to make a meaningful contribution.

From the beginning, we recognized that for many students, Yeshiva's campus and student body were much larger than what they were accustomed to. Some students reveled in the opportunity to access so many great resources, while others missed the warmth and attention that is often synonymous with smaller yeshivot. Our mission was to bring a personal touch to the campus by building *kesharim* (relationships) with students.

Our initial efforts are concentrated on the first time on campus (FTOC) students who often need the most help dealing with the complexity of college, the rigors of a dual curriculum, and the transition from high school or Israel yeshiva to adult responsibilities. We begin by sending a welcome letter to every new student on campus introducing the *Sgan Mashgiach* Program, and explaining that even though we will reach out to them individually, they should feel free to initiate contact with us. We distribute posters all over campus that contain our pictures and contact information, so that we can be easily recognized and accessed.

Following the letter, we email and call students to set up individual appointments to establish a personal rapport with them, and we invite groups of students for lunch "on us". Not only is lunch a productive way of increasing our exposure and strengthening our connection to the students, but it is also a perfect venue for students to relax and enjoy each other's company.

As we reach out to FTOCs, we continue to nurture the relationships we already have with returning students. Finally, we make it a habit to circulate around the *batei midrash*, the caf, and the various campus buildings in order to be visible on a daily basis. In these ways we express our sincere desire to get to know the students and to be there for them.

Alongside our emphasis on relationship building, we listen carefully to students for other ways in which we can be helpful to them. After speaking to scores of students, we have acquired a general sense of

some of the issues and areas that could either benefit from additional oversight and programmatic enhancements, or that need altogether new initiatives. The following is a list of some of the programs we spearheaded:

- Shiur Assistants to help the rebbeim set up chavrusas, arrange shiur events and answer shiur related questions.

- BMP *Shoel Umaishivim* to lend extra support and enhance the learning during BMP morning seder.

- Night-seder bekius shiurim that provide a night-seder rebbe for students who are interested in a more structured night seder, as well as the opportunity to bond with a rebbe and form a close chevra of guys.

- Night seder chavrusa coordinator to help students find a chavrusa.

- Chassan classes to teach engaged students the halachot related to marriage and to open up discussion of the necessary skills to build successful marriages. (Chassan classes existed prior to our taking on this responsibility.)

- A Shabbos *Sgan Mashgiach* to help with Shabbos programming, eat with the students in the caf, lead zemiros, give divrei Torah and often MC the tisch.

- Bayit cham, a home away from home, where families living on campus open up their homes to host younger students and act as mentors.

- Lecture series to address issues important to students such as the need for responsibly in using the internet, and how to transition into the workforce after many years of learning in yeshivot.

- Extra shiurim during Elul, before yamim tovim, during Thanksgiving, finals week, and orientation.

- *Yeshivas Bein Hasemesterim* to provide a full program of learning during winter break for students who want to remain on campus. (Students originally started this initiative, but we took responsibility for it to ensure the program's continuity.)

- Shiur options for the Post Pesach Program.

- Extra *Vaadim in Alei Shur*, *Pachad Yitzchak*, and topics on personal growth.

- June-zman BBQ celebrating Torah learning and achievement in our great Yeshiva, a highlight of the year for many students.

These are our current programs, and they reflect the fact that we are responding to student suggestions and advocating for their needs.

Independence, initiative, and the desire to understand are the qualities that lead to personal success, the ability to stand on one's own two feet and tackle difficult choices and tasks in life. As *Sgan Mashgichim* we support, guide and nourish developments of these skills. Yeshiva provides an environment that is safe and supportive, yet also challenging, for students to begin to

set priorities and make important decisions. It is within this positive setting that we work collaboratively as partners with students in enhancing their personal growth. Nothing is more satisfying for us than knowing we have a kesher with a student and that we have in some way helped him. In truth, as much as we hope to impart lessons to students, we learn from them and their experiences. We value our relationships with students, we feel they enrich our lives, and we hope and believe they feel the same.

Now, five years later, we have grown by the addition of four part time *Sgan Mashgichim* and we are a staff trained as psychologists, social workers and skilled rabbanim. We cherish the kesharim we already have with students, and we continue to strive to reach every student who desires a kesher with us. We fully recognize that there is always more work to be done: students whom we have not yet met, suggestions to consider, more valuable initiatives to plan. While we make every effort to reach out to you, don't hesitate to initiate that contact. I promise you will find a warm and caring *Sgan Mashgiach* receptive to your call and eager to meet with you.

We are here for you - call anytime, or better yet drop in for a schmooze. We are located on the third floor of the Glueck Center:

Rabbi Ely Bacon 917-623-4714
 Rabbi Josh Blass 917-623-4711
 Rabbi Benjy Epstein 917-328-2434
 Rabbi Eric Goldman 646-784-7266
 Rabbi Yissachar Krakowski 917-270-6750
 Rabbi Shmuel Maybruch 646-670-8389
 Rabbi Uri Orlian 646-369-6017
 Email - mashgichim@yu.edu

Swine Flu Over YU

By Akiva Berger

Swine flu. In some those words strike fear; in others, nonchalance. But whatever one's response may be, we all must agree that the single most important health issue YU has had to grapple with this semester is the H1N1 virus. Just look at the YU Health Alerts website: out of the first ten entries, currently only two do not pertain to this highly contagious strain of the flu. Surveying YU and college campuses nationwide, one must wonder why this illness has made such big headlines lately, especially at educational institutions.

According to Dean of Students Dr. Victor Schwartz, swine flu is a formidable threat mostly because of how contagious it is. This particular strain of influenza virus is extremely rare (it hasn't been detected since the late 1970's), so few, if any, younger people carry a previously-developed immunity. Whereas the seasonal flu poses a hazard mainly to the normal high-risk groups (for example, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems), the H1N1 is specifically an issue for young, active individuals like college students. This fact makes it all the more important for YU students to get vaccinations, which have been offered since October for a mere five dollars.

The good news is that the swine flu, once contracted, is not at all more severe than the normal flu (despite common misconceptions). Therefore, only a lab test can actually determine if one's illness is indeed the vaunted H1N1. Because of this uncertainty, isolation rooms have been set up on both campuses to quarantine anyone who might experience flu-like symptoms, just to be safe. Luckily, most students who have been ill have gone home immediately, sparing the general populace from any threat.

In reality, both YU and other colleges have enjoyed relatively

low numbers of outbreaks this year. The American College Health Association tracked around 15% of colleges spanning all regions of the U.S. and found only 21.3 cases for every 10,000 students. This basically amounts to 80,000 reported cases out of about 3 million individuals. Out of those, only 150 were hospitalized, and only two died. These statistics prove that although this particular form of influenza is more contagious than its seasonal counterpart, its effects on the sick patient are no worse.

YU in particular has been generously spared. For example, Cornell University had a severe, focused outbreak in early October that saw between 150-200 students catch the virus at the same time, and Columbia as well has seen more cases proportionally. Here at YU, rarely have there been more than two or three students sick at once. Moreover, the wider NYC area has been comparatively H1N1-free compared to other urban centers. Speculation is that there may have been many more mild cases in NYC last spring and summer, exposing a good portion of the population and causing them to develop immunity without even realizing it.

The fact that H1N1 is so contagious makes our everyday tasks all the more significant in the effort to prevent the spreading of the disease. Simple actions like coughing properly, washing hands well, and using the Purell dispensers can drastically curb the effect of the virus. Already, close to 30% of the students at the Wilf Campus have taken advantage of the inoculations, and around 300 people on each campus have been immunized. There are even still some left, as well as the seasonal flu vaccines, so be sure to head over to Student Health to attain either or both. If we all do our part, this year's swine-flu headlines will quickly and quietly fade into the recesses of long-since-forgotten YU history.

The House of Isaac

continued from front page

and parashah literature in their native tongue, but they have little to no exposure to high-level Talmudic scholarship. An English Beis Yitzchak – assuming the writers properly avoided excessive use of yeshivish jargon (another aspect of our writing that English translation would improve) could be sent to YU affiliated shuls around the continent, spreading our Torah beyond the forty yeshiva guys who bought copies.

Some other ideas to keep the Beis Yitzchak relevant: despite published remarks to the contrary from some of our Roshei Yeshiva, ours is an institution which supports high-level Talmud study for women; Gemara classes are taught at Stern, Beren Campus students are invited north for shiurim and lectures, and – most notably – YU has a Graduate Program for Women in Advanced

Talmudic Studies (GPATS). This last group consists of a small cadre of capable women who devote a full-time schedule to the study of Shas and poskim (Talmud and codes), the perfect incubator for works of Torah scholarship. Why not include them in Beis Yitzchak? Those who would prefer not to learn Torah from a woman can skip or cut out those articles, but I see no reason to exclude GPATS women from sharing their insights with the rest of us. And if one of them publishes something good, it might do something to dispel the rumors that women can't learn. Women have broken into some other high-level Torah publications, such as *Tehumin* and *Yeshivat Har Etzion's Virtual Beit Midrash*, and they are equally included in our own *YUTorah* and *Kol Hamevaser*. Why should we keep them out of Beis Yitzchak, especially when they have no parallel journal of their own?

Finally, we can and should take advantage of the manifold twentieth and twenty-first century advances in information dissemination. Our talmud Torah should be treated at least as seriously as our amateur journalism: like *The Commentator*, Beis Yitzchak should have its own website, on which comments and responses should be encouraged. Though it would still be a far cry from my friend Ben Greenfield's utopian dreams of a universally-edited "WikiTorah" (see his article by that name in *Kol Hamevaser* 1:5), adding an online forum would be a great way to ensure that Beis Yitzchak isn't just another thick, hard-cover volume gathering dust on the shelves of the Beit Midrash.

Opinions Editor Julian Horowitz served as an editor of last year's Beis Yitzchak

2009 or 1939?

Why We Can't Ignore Anti-Semitism Across the World

By MIJAL BITTON

The Westboro Baptist Church--the one that pickets the funerals of American soldiers, blames all the world's problems on homosexuals, and essentially stands against anyone who isn't them, recently came to my hometown of Great Neck.

Five adults and two children protested a few minutes distance from my house, in front of Great Necks' Jewish institutions, holding signs saying, "God Hates Jews," "God Hates Fags," "Israel Is Doomed," "Some Jews Will Repent," and "Jews Stole Land." Their website, godhatesfags.com, describes, in most graphic fashion, the many ways in which we Jews will be punished for living immorally and rejecting the word of Jesus.

Most of us in Great Neck ignored them. It was clear that these people were merely looking for attention.

There is no denying that their anti-Semitism is real, but their irrational actions pose no actual threat. They also hate Catholics, Gays, Muslims, President Obama (they call him 'The Beast'), and anyone who doesn't agree with them. No one takes this small cult-like church seriously. We're not afraid of them.

What really scares me is that we treat anti-Semitism that does pose a real threat to us in much the same way.

This year, a popular Swedish newspaper, *Aftonbladet*, reported that the IDF deliberately killed Palestinians in order to traffic their organs. Even after the claim was conclusively shown to be a false blood libel, the newspaper and the Swedish government did nothing to correct the inaccuracy, citing free speech as their justification. This is the same country whose Foreign Ministry profusely apologized after an unflattering cartoon of Muhammad was published in 2007.

One look at South America serves to demonstrate the growing menace that is anti-Semitism.

Hugo Chavez, the President of Venezuela, just announced that he expects Ahmadinejad to visit Venezuela this year. This reflects the close economic ties between Iran and Venezuela and the increasing anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiment in the region.

The Jews living in Venezuela are experiencing daily fear of anti-Semitism. I have two aunts currently living there who are afraid to directly criticize Chavez over the phone. Chávez has compared Israelis to Nazis and has expelled the Israeli ambassador in protest over the Cast Lead operation.

In February, the Caracas' Sephardic synagogue was attacked by assailants who battered the Torah scrolls and destroyed the building. They left behind graffiti calling for "Death to the Jews" and saying that "We don't want Jews here". Many feared the government was an accomplice.

Chavez is slowly assuming control of the entire country - he has built up his own militia, and deter-

mines who gets food, electricity, and water. He controls the media, and has nationalized many industries. He has the power to do anything he wants to the 20,000 Jews living there.

In this era of global communication Chavez's anti-Israel and anti-Semitic views influence the entire South American region.

In Argentina, for instance, hatred toward Jews is often manifested in an unabashedly open fashion. It is common to see graffiti in Buenos Aires' streets asking the Jews to leave. During Israel's anniversary celebration, Jews were attacked by extremists using sticks and knives. Argentinean Jews now have reason to be afraid.

The Miami Herald reported that in Honduras, David Romero, the director of Radio Globo, said the following on September 25, 2009:

"There are times when I ask myself if Hitler was or [was] not correct in finishing with that race with the famous Holocaust. If there are people that do damage in this country, they are Jewish, the Israelis. ... I believe it should have been fair and valid to let Hitler finish his historic vision."

Although this surge of global anti-Semitism is scary, it doesn't surprise me. Anti-Semitism is not a new phenomenon. It has been around as long as the Jewish nation.

This year, a popular Swedish newspaper, *Aftonbladet*, reported that the IDF deliberately killed Palestinians in order to traffic their organs.

Growing up in Argentina I was forced to face it. I have blurred memories as a four-year old of my friend Maya crying after her father was murdered in the 1994 bombing of the AMIA, a Jewish institution. I have been called a "dirty Jew" and had to evacuate my school after it was vandalized with swastikas. I believe, however, that these events are fulfilling a destined cycle of anti-Semitism, which we allude to in the Passover Haggada: "V'khol dor vador omdim aleinu L'chalotenu." "And each generation stands up against us to annihilate us" We are facing nothing today that we have not faced in the past.

The real danger facing us is the overwhelming silence from the Jewish community. We read the news, we see the amount of hatred towards our people grow—and we do nothing. Our apathy is more dangerous than anti-Semitism itself.

We made this same mistake in War World II. Could anyone ever imagine that a sophisticated continent would turn into a slaughterhouse for six million Jews? Our own intrinsic sense of humanity made it impossible for us to recognize the growing beast of anti-Semitism. We look back and know that if we would have taken Hitler more seriously we might have been able to save countless lives.

But now is not the time to dwell in mistakes of the past. We are rapidly approaching a period in which anti-Semitism is as strong as in 1939, the days shortly before the

Holocaust. Now is the time to prevent history from repeating itself.

The one thing we cannot afford to do is nothing. We cannot hide behind the safety of the American democracy, or the promise of the State of Israel. There are no guarantees of "Never Again". There are no divine promises or international treaties to fall back on. We must do something now.

I believe that the perfect victory against anti-Semitism was the campaign that Mordechai and Esther mounted against Haman. Haman used strategies that Hitler and Ahmadinejad have since replicated: spreading propaganda against the Jews, using economic incentives to increase their persecution by the masses, and sparing none from his indiscriminating hatred.

The most important thing that the Jews did to counteract this attack was to accept its inconceivable horror. This realization caused Mordechai to act to obtain salvation politically, by gaining favor with the king and undermining Haman. Esther risked her life and sacrificed her personal happiness to enamor the king into saving her people. The Jewish community underwent a process of repentance, prayed, and fasted begging Hashem to spare their lives.

Their example is the perfect success story against anti-Semitism because they took action.

As students of Yeshiva University, we are fortunate enough that we do not face anti-Semitism on a daily basis. But this does

not mean that we have the right, or even the option, to ignore it. Too many times, I have witnessed utter ignorance and even apathy from my fellow YU students about what goes around in the world, about the threats we are facing. But we cannot allow the protective cushioning of the YU world to blind us to the fate of other Jews. If we want to become the leaders of tomorrow's Jewish world, we must recognize that when an enemy approaches our people, it threatens us all. If we do not stand up and fight, who else will?

As students, the first thing we must do is to become aware. Read the newspapers; open your eyes to the threats that surround us. We cannot fight back if we do not know who our enemies are. Understand the consequences of Ahmadinejad's nuclear plans, read about the radicalization and Islamization of Europe, ask Jewish students in other universities about their own experiences confronting anti-Semitism.

Once we're aware--once we accept the danger--then each and every one of us must act. Use whatever means you have at your disposal to combat this menacing threat. Take responsibility for the present and ensure that 2009 does not become another 1939.

When Torah u-Madda Just Isn't Good Enough

By MICHAEL GREENBERG

Known for his sincere personality and dramatic class presentations, Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Schnall is one of the most popular professors in the psychology department at Yeshiva University. Whether they get to know him during an advisement meeting or in class, undergrads quickly perceive Dr. Schnall's caring relationship with his students. A product of Yeshiva University, having attended MTA, Yeshiva College, RIETS, and Ferkauf, Professor Schnall has taught psychology at Yeshiva since 2006.

When I stumbled upon the fact that Rabbi Dr. Schnall is a non tenure-tracked professor, I was shocked. Not only is Professor Schnall one of the most dynamic and caring teachers I've encountered at YU, he's also one of the very few faculty members who truly embodies the unique synthesis of Torah u-Madda so valued by our institution. Puzzled by my discovery, I set out to determine what "not being on a tenure track" means in general, and specifically why Professor Schnall was denied tenure track status. This is especially troubling given that just last year Yeshiva hired Dr. Ariel Malka, a brand new psychology professor, to a tenure-track position.

I discovered that not only do visiting professors lack job security and receive a lower salary, they also receive no funding for research projects. That's pretty ironic, when you consider that Schnall's recent study on the link between physical health and religious practices may have attracted more attention around the world than any other piece of research that has come out of Yeshiva University in recent years. *The New York Times* and other newspapers around the world published articles about it, and David Myers has even added it to his popular *Intro to Psych* textbook.

Infuriated by what I perceived to be a huge injustice perpetrated by the Provost or the heads of the psychology department, I emailed members of the latter asking for an explanation. To my surprise, the information I

garnered from these inquiries served to quell my anger and redirect my frustration. A reliable source in the psychology department informed me that Schnall was not offered the tenure track position granted to Professor Malka because the department needed a social psychologist, which Schnall is not. That made sense -- I couldn't argue.

I realize that we cannot blame the psychology department for needing a social psychologist. And I won't blame them when the time comes to look for experts in other areas of undergraduate psychology. Yet this means that unless Schnall's expertise in clinical/health psychology coincides with the department's needs -- as they likely will not, since the department already includes a clinical psychologist -- this Torah u-Madda scholar will never receive a tenure track position.

As a university, Yeshiva strives to attract the best and brightest while not compromising on its diversity. But what framework is already in place at YU that allows us to attract and maintain individuals like Professor Schnall, whose uniqueness lies in their synthesis of first-class Jewish and academic scholarship? Obviously, the psychology department needs a social psychologist. However, the psychology department, and every department, at Yeshiva University must be given the opportunity, if not the imperative, to hire Torah u-Madda scholars.

Already we suffer from an unfortunate disjunction between the Jewish and the secular elements of our institution. Yeshiva University gives us Torah and gives us Madda, but the pursuit of that conjunctive vav is relegated to the individual student. This is not an area in which our administration can afford to cut corners. If the decision-makers at Yeshiva University fail to make room for scholars like Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Schnall, the resulting institution will have nothing more noble to offer than a beit midrash and a college within walking distance of each other.

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Hey Everyone: I Got an 88 on My Midterm!

Why Everyone Needs to Chill Out About Their Grades

BY NOAH JACOBSON

I approached the counter at Golan Heights and asked the person stationed on the other side to (please) get me a shwarma - in a pita, chum-mus chips - and make it quick. As the order was passed back into the dark, inner recesses of the kitchen, I marched over to the refrigerator and rummaged through the cans and bottles on display. Vitamin Water? Not so much. Poland Spring? Not a chance. Catching sight of a 20 oz Diet Dr. Pepper, I grabbed it and hastily rotated the bottle in my hands, scanning the plastic label for that essential ingredient...there!

Diet Dr. Pepper does have caffeine. I thought so. But you can never be too sure. Especially on a night like this.

As my pita emerged from the back, I instructed the man with my food to top it off with some techina and garlic-mayo, paid, and sat down to eat with my study buddy, Josh. It was already two in the morning, so I knew I had to wolf it down quickly. Tomorrow was my first mid-term - Fundamentals of Political Science - and I wouldn't go to sleep until I knew the material cold.

Well-fed and amply caffeinated, we returned to Josh's room in Morg and jumped right back into the thick of it. More facts. More definitions. More material.

All of this for one reason. One goal. One thing, the only thing that kept me going this late into the night: The A.

It was the A that I wanted. The 99. Or the 94. Or the 96. Any of those would do. But nothing less. This was the first mid-term of my college career. The first grade that might actually count for something! The grade that would make me or, Heaven forbid, break me. I needed this A. I needed it bad.

And so when I sauntered into the testing room the following day, with dark circles straddling my reddened eyes, I felt, somehow, relaxed. I was ready to go. As soon as Professor Luders dropped the test booklet onto my desk, I gripped my pencil tightly and rapidly vomited all of the information that I had recently accumulated onto the little exam booklet. I missed nothing. I handed in my mid-term with a few minutes to spare, and couldn't help give a little smile in the process, knowing for certain that I had rocked it.

A week later, when I logged into Angel to check my grade, that smirk was gone.

There it was, right there on the screen.

I rubbed my eyes a few times after a first glance. Was I reading that number right? The panic was beginning to set in. This must be the class average; where did he post the individual grades? Was I logged into someone else's account? What was going on here?

But I realized that my eyesight was perfectly fine. And, believe it or not, I had logged into my own account. And the number displayed on the screen was the score that I had received on my first mid-term, the

one that would find itself plastered on my personal transcript: 88.

With this frightful realization, my heart sank. Oh, the horror of it! The shame! How did this happen? How had I allowed this to happen?

For days, I couldn't put that horrid number - 88 - out of my mind. I thought about it as I tried to fall asleep at night. It irked me in the daytime too. Maybe Professor Luders had made a mistake? Maybe he didn't count up the points right? Unlikely. Maybe he hated me? I grew paranoid with the myriad possibilities as to why I had been cursed with the scholastic tragedy that is a B. I was angry. I was upset. I wanted answers. Sure it was a B+. Some might even call that a "good grade". But in my eyes, it was still just a B.

Why me?

I looked around YU at my fellow students, and many of them seemed to be equally mired in their own grade-induced hysteria. One of my good friends, after receiving a C on his English paper, related to me with utmost sincerity that "his life was over," and that he'd "never get into law school now." I felt for him. I

One of my good friends, after receiving a C on his English paper, related to me with utmost sincerity that "his life was over."

could tell he meant it. But he sounded ridiculous. And I realized how ridiculous I too had sounded and acted in the aftermath of that 88.

And so, with the benefit of a little hindsight and some much-needed perspective, I arrived at the following conclusion:

Everyone needs to chill out about his grades.

I want to assure you that I understand that students need to do well in their classes. Many, if not most of us, are extremely ambitious, and that is surely a good thing. For the YU student with dreams of Harvard Law, or hopes of getting into any medical school, good grades are a must. The average GPA for Einstein applicants that gain admission is 3.77. It isn't wrong to want to do your best. It's fantastic to dream big - no one should strive for mediocrity. And even if you aren't planning on attending some fancy-pants graduate school, wanting to get good grades is no sin. Everyone wants to phone home to mom with news of an A, even if they're past the put-the-test-on-the-refrigerator stage of middle and high school. But I don't think someone should throw a fit with a B. Or lose sleep with a bad mark. Or let grades mess with their heads.

So I've come up with the following rationales as to why people should take a "chill-pill":

•There really isn't so much you can do about a bad grade. Sure, you can try to argue points with an instructor. But how far does that ever get you, seriously? I know in my (limited) experience, it usually doesn't do much. Most professors - perhaps contrary to popular assumption - are not diabolic monsters deter-

mined on finding ways to punish you. They probably don't care that much. What will most likely happen is that they will show you exactly where you went wrong and you will probably feel like an idiot for barging into their office in a rage, demanding answers. And you're probably only hurting yourself in the long run - because if your professor hadn't noticed you until now, they sure do now. You're that pesky, rude student that held your professor around after class and kept them from their family, or took away from something else they were going to do, so that you could try to piece together an excuse for why you thought the professor was asking something totally different with that ambiguous, poorly-worded question. Of course, if you answered that $3 + 6 = 9$ and there was a red X on your answer sheet, you should tell the professor. But if it's a little more subjective than that, best let it go.

•One lousy grade is probably not as bad as you think it is. GPAs are extremely important, but they aren't the only thing determining your future. You can walk out of school with a 4.0, but if you bomb your

LSAT's, you probably aren't going to law school. And you can graduate with a 3.2, but if you ace your LSATs, you'll be in good shape. There are many factors that come into play here. Extra-curricular activities, recommendations, interviews, etc. And after all, most of the time, we aren't talking C's and D's. Students are getting worked up about B's, and B+'s, and, believe it or not, A-'s. While registering for this past semester, someone told me not to take a certain class (that I had a particular interest in) because the teacher was known to dole out A-'s. And as utterly ridiculous as that sounds - I listened to him.

•If you know you will lose your mind if you get a B, you'll do more to ensure an A than you might otherwise. Sure, that probably means paying attention in class, or more late-night study groups before test time. But often times, unfortunately, that also means cheating.

•Ask yourself: is it worth the stress? I know someone who, before coming to YU, was one of the happiest, most easygoing people I knew. Always a smile. Always cheery. Always in a good mood. Since college - he's a different person. He's always stressed. He's often frantic about some class or some grade he got. Is the physical toll that fretting about grades takes on our body and our minds worth it? Is it worth it to become a miserable, paranoid person for three or four years of your life?

•This sort of GPA-centric mentality is detrimental to the learning experience. If students are totally focused on the grade, they don't learn for the sake of learning, they don't take the time to interpret and digest and appreciate what they learn. They

just want to know that they have the ability to get it on paper come test-time and get that A. No more, no less. I know a lot of people will take the 3.8 and run. And I understand that. But for me, I think the guilt of spending three \$42,000 years at YU and not once treading into unsafe, potential "B" waters would be more unbearable than having to go to a lower level grad school because of my slightly lower GPA (assuming it would even make that much of a difference). I know that sounds outright foolish to most people. But it's how I feel.

•I hate to get frum and preachy, but I think this discussion ties into a much larger discussion of hishtadlus and bitachon. Although the exact nature of the relationship of these two ideas is a matter of debate, the general idea is agreed upon: we are required to do our hishtadlus, to do the best we can. We must study well. We must put ourselves in positions to get good grades. We must do what we can to make sure we will be successful in life, and for most of us, that means good grades so that we can go further in our professional careers. But our hishtadlus only goes so far. By definition, there is a limit. And when we get to that point, it becomes a matter of bitachon. We must trust that it is then in Hashem's hands. He will, ultimately, determine our fates. Whatever happens is for the best.

To let a bad grade get under your skin may constitute a lack in bitachon, if even only minimally so. You did the best you could. You didn't cheat. You didn't cut corners. And you got a B. Or a C. Or a D. Our obligation to have bitachon means that we must accept that this was the Will of God.

I know this sounds very mussar-y. So it is. But I think that the realization and implementation of this idea in our daily lives is something that will ultimately empower us to get through it all - not just to get over a bad grade, but to get through any ordeal that presents itself in our lives. We do the best we can do. We try to put ourselves in the best situation. And at some point - it's out of our hands.

Last week I got back an English paper. I worked really hard on it. I discussed the thesis multiple times with my professor. I wrote many revisions. I made sure to get a first draft in to my teacher so she could make comments. I saw those comments, worked with them, and made my paper even better.

I thought it was solid.

When the professor handed it back, I tried something different from the usual routine. I calmly folded it away in my backpack. Later on in my room, I took it out again. I didn't jump to the back to check the grade. I went through some of the comments first. I looked to see where I went wrong, and where I could have been better. And then, I looked at my grade.

An 88.

I couldn't help but smile.

And that night, I slept like a baby.

'Come on Over :-)'

A Response to Noah Jacobson

BY JONATHAN KORMAN

One of the most difficult parts of the Yeshiva experience is settling in to a new environment. We may come to Yeshiva with many friends or even siblings, but we are still rightly nervous about how our experience will turn out. After settling down, we embark on a journey in search of growth in an unfamiliar environment. Thankfully, our Yeshiva has taken the time and generosity to appoint Sganei Mashgiach to assist us on this journey when our needs extend beyond superficialities of café food or choosing performers for the Channukah concert.

Obviously, the Sganei Mashgiach cannot begin helping students with personal needs immediately upon their arrival, because the Sganei Mashgiach do not, at that point, know anything about the new students. In order for someone to be able to assist them with their needs, students have to take the time to build a relationship with that him or her; people are not born with telepathic capabilities. The same is true of our respective yeshiva experiences in Israel. Before my rebbe in Israel could really understand my needs, he had to understand who I was and what I was striving to be, which took multiple conversations and an investment of personal time. For the Sganei Mashgiach to assist us with our needs, we need to make a personal investment. Without this investment, the abilities of our mashgichim will be inhibited.

In the previous issue of *The Commentator*, Noah Jacobson wrote that he was upset the Sganei Mashgiach are not assisting students in ways he saw fit. Jacobson related a story in which he sent a text message to his rebbe in Israel asking, "If he has time to chat," to which his rebbe enthusiastically responded, "Come on over :-)." The reason his rebbe replied so warmly is Jacobson made the effort to build a relationship; he sent a text message asking if they could shmooze. I have a strong suspicion the same is true of our Sganei Mashgiach. It is hard to believe that if we would ask one of the Sganei Mashgiach to shmooze, they would not respond with, "Come on over :-)." But until we extend ourselves to them, they cannot be presented with the fair opportunity to extend themselves to us.

Jacobson did clarify, "It's not their fault." He could not possibly have been more correct, because the fault lies with us, the talmidim. If we need advice or help, we need to be proactive, act like adults, and advocate for ourselves by seeking out our Sganei Mashgiach on our own.

I remember when I first arrived in Yeshiva. Since I was starting in January, my greatest concern was that I would not be able to find a chavrusa. The first night of the

continues on page 10

Student Research in Psychology: Alive and Growing at YU

BY SAMMY STEINER

The most recent edition of *The Commentator* included an article exploring student research in the sciences, noting the exciting opportunities for research. The article focused on research in the “hard sciences,” sidelining the research being done on the Yeshiva College campus in the social sciences. Besides the course listings for guided research in chemistry, biology, and physics, each semester’s schedule also includes similar opportunities in psychology and sociology.

This 1.5 credit course requires students to work for approximately six hours a week, though they often spend many more. Part of this opportunity also includes two hours of meetings with a guiding professor each week. However, the relatively small size of Yeshiva College allows each student to receive attention from his professor. Psychologist professor Dr. Bruno Galantucci and his students con-

stantly email back and forth and call each other to discuss progress, breakthroughs, and new ideas.

How does one conduct research in psychology? Research in psychology at Yeshiva College begins with reading about other people’s research. Next comes the designing and running of experiments to test groups of people. Once the experiment has been completed, the researcher must collect and analyze the data. Finally, if all goes well, the student, with the aid of his guiding professor, has the opportunity to write an experimental psychology research paper in the APA (American Psychology Association) style and attempt to get it published.

Recently, the psychology professors have been meeting to discuss their own research projects and ways to incorporate students into their own work. Originally, no formal system was in place; a student interested in doing research would approach a professor with whom he had a relationship. If the

professor had time, they would work something out. Now the department is in the process of formalizing student research opportunities.

The first step in this direction was Professor Jenny Isaacs’ course Advanced Research, which covered research techniques, writing, and theory. This course is intended to equip students interested in doing research with the tools they need to be useful to professors with whom they would be working and give them the lab skills and training necessary to do publishable work. It is offered yearly each fall semester; however, if there is more demand the psychology department would be willing to offer it every semester. The optimal size for that class is four or five students.

Dr. Galantucci told *The Commentator* that, “we are working on creating space for more student research with faculty.” Currently, the psychology department believes that between all the

tenured professors, they could accommodate approximately 20 students doing research, and if they include the full time non-tenured professors, that number could go to as high as 30.

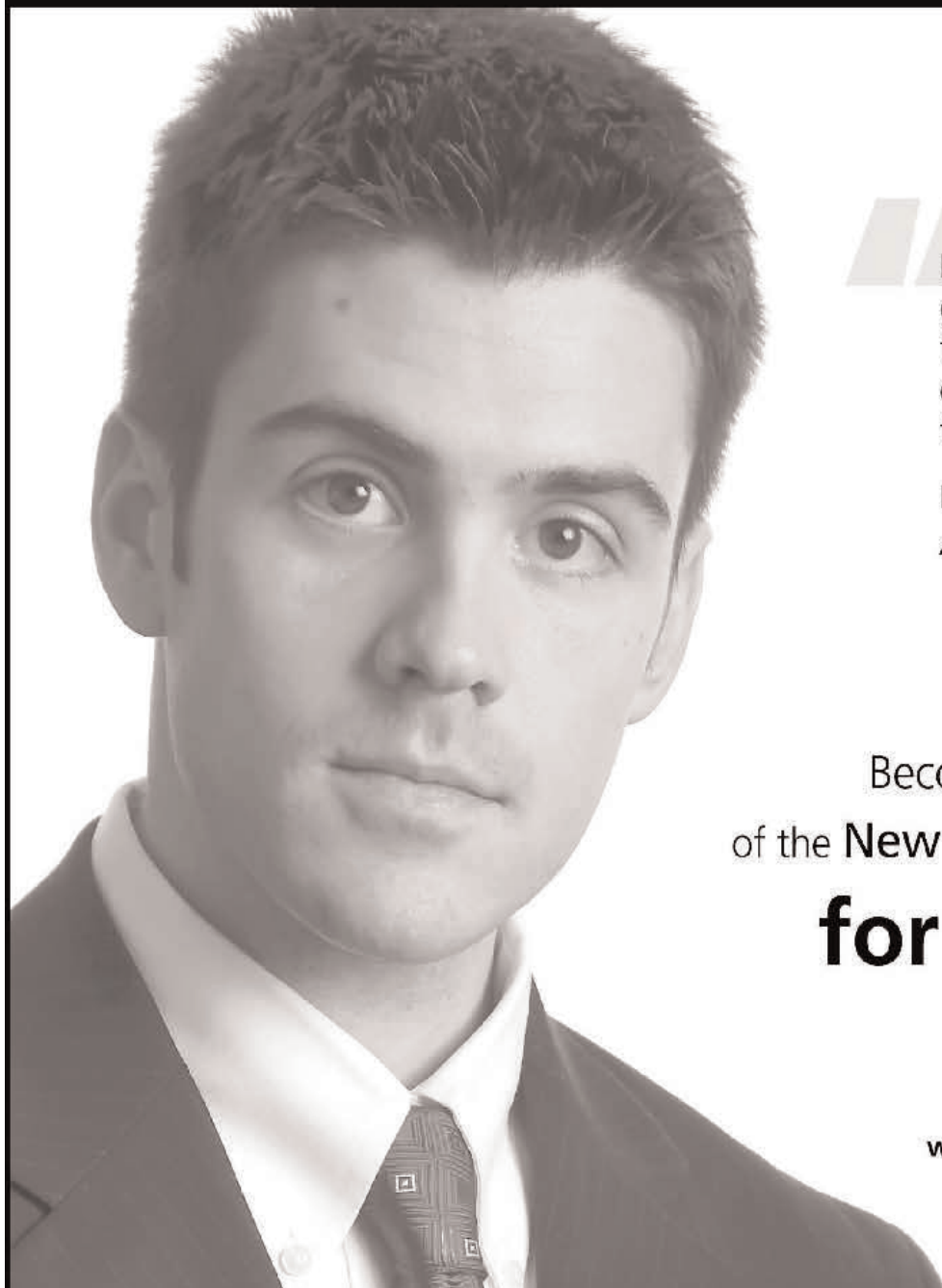
One limiting factor is funding. Currently, the department uses the startup funds that Yeshiva College provides junior faculty members for research. Dr. Galantucci’s personal grant is partially being spent employing a post-doctorate, Carrie Theisen, to help with research in the lab and to be available to students who are involved in research.

The psychology department is currently applying for external grants from the National Science Foundation. The difficulty, however, is that Yeshiva has yet to establish itself as a center for psychology research. Ironically, this puts YU in a vicious cycle, because having the necessary funds would help move YU towards the reputation necessary to achieve additional grants. In the meantime, the psychology department is trying to

keep their research budget low, meaning no MRIs or other expensive machinery.

Dr. Galantucci is currently conducting research with four students in the psychology lab. In an interview he noted that, “the social science faculty is an untapped resource here at Yeshiva College, and I encourage students to carve out time in their already busy schedule for this opportunity.” Reuven Turgel (YC ’09), who is currently researching methods of studying language emergence and how language is born under Dr. Galantucci, had this to say about his experience, “I have found the research experience very rewarding. Not only does it enable me to strengthen my research skills and broaden my knowledge but it gives me the opportunity to form a close relationship with my professor.”

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Featured Faculty: Dr. James Kahn *Economics for Men and Women Alike*

BY JONATHAN SCHWAB

Both Yeshiva College and Stern College for Women have new chairs for their Economics Departments, and conveniently enough, both chairs are occupied by the same man: James Kahn. A new appointment for the Fall 2009 semester as the Henry and Bertha Kressel Professor and Department Chair of Economics, Dr. Kahn held a Visiting Professor of Finance position at University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and a Visiting Scholar position at New York University's Stern School of Business before coming to Yeshiva. At Yeshiva, he spends much of his time heading both undergraduate Economics Departments, and travels back and forth between his offices at the Wilf and Beren Campuses.

Dr. Kahn began his economics education at Harvard University after his primary education ("in more ways than one," he notes) in the Detroit public schools. He then moved on to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he received his Ph.D. His dissertation, titled "Inventories and the Volatility of Production," focused on topics that Dr. Kahn maintains a strong interest in and continues to research.

These areas of study are within macroeconomics and long-term growth, both specialties of Dr. Kahn.

"Long-term growth and productivity," Dr. Kahn says, "are especially relevant today because of the connection to housing prices," an issue frequently in current headlines. Dr. Kahn has himself looked deeper into the trends and meanings of present economic volatility, and he stresses the usefulness of studying economics for students who want to understand their world better. And Dr. Kahn knows multiple sides of economics: in addition to occupying a number of academic positions, he worked for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York for eleven years, moving from Senior Economist all the way up to Vice President.

Charged with invigorating the Economics Department at Yeshiva, Dr. Kahn points to increased student interest as an important factor in moving forward: "The very good, very smart students here should consider it," he said. "It's more and more an important subject to understand and have a mastery of, and it's a good background for a lot of different [career] paths." Hiring more faculty and enabling faculty to teach toward their specialties and research, he says, are top priorities.



Seven Up, Seven Down

Picks and Unpicks from The Commentator's Editors

Ups:

- 1) **The Commentator Segulah.** Join our staff; get engaged. Seriously though, Mazel Tov to Isaac Silverstein, Jonathan Schwab, and Tani Cohn.
- 2) **sporce.com.** Hours and hours of mind-jogging, fun entertainment. Any items that could possibly, conceivably be on a list are, and you have to name 'em. You won't realize how much of your life has been spent on it till it's 4 A.M. and you're ranking countries based on chicken populations.
- 3) **The Blind Side.** A fantastic emotional story of an underprivileged kid adopted by a caring family who makes it to the NFL, based on a true tale. Inspirational in a big way.
- 4) **Dunkin' Donuts from Housing.** *Delicioso!*
- 5) **Owl City.** His songs may all sound the same, but they're still awesome.
- 6) **Maccabeats Chanuka Medley.** And no, we're not just saying this because some of them are on staff. Two encore performances were well deserved.
- 7) **One Hundred Years of Solitude.** Gabriel Garcia Marquez's fantastic novel. It's Book Club's book of the month, and it might be the best book they've ever read.

Downs:

- 1) **Classes During Reading Week.** Come on!
- 2) **Removal of the Wind-Powered Menorah.** Regardless of the reasons, it's disappointing that something so environmentally-conscious and cool got taken away.
- 3) **Google Wave.** Seems really cool, but ultimately just makes it much more time-consuming to do anything. Especially understand what it is.
- 4) **Nagel Bagel's "Hole Hours."** Not open during the most crucial times of the afternoon nor on Sunday? Not cool. It's only a down because we love it when it's open.
- 5) **The entire Twilight series.** Seriously – we read it just to see what it's like. It's bad. Like real bad. Any book with phrases like, "stupid, unreliable vampire" doesn't deserve to be read. Or, for that matter, printed.
- 6) **Radiator Noises.** Creepiest thing in the world. Banging, clanking, whispering like some sort of demon monkey escaped from an alternate dimension and, following a fight with a wizard, got trapped for eternity in my heater.
- 7) **Getting oil all over you from Chanuka candles.** We're waiting for someone to make an infomercial showing some newfangled "NeatLite" System that avoids this millennia-old problem. Or maybe we should just harness wind-powered electricity. Oh wait...



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A Public Plea to Spend Shabbos on Campus

BY HARRY PORTMAN

The moment the last class ends Thursday night, (or Friday morning for those unlucky in scheduling or educationally ambitious) a mass exodus takes place on the Wilf Campus. The vast majority of the "in-town" members of the undergraduate student body, and many "out-of-towners" as well, flee Washington Heights as though they were running from the plague. Is there an explanation for this weekly evacuation?

I have heard many well rehearsed, regurgitated answers over the years: "YU is like my old high school, why would I stay in my high school for Shabbos?" "Shabbos on campus is boring; there's nothing to do." "The food stinks compared to what mom makes." "Why should I force myself to stay in my miserable little dorm room when I can enjoy the comforts of my own bedroom?" Or best yet, "I can go home, isn't that enough of a reason?"

I am discombobulated by the number of people I meet who proudly declare that they have never spent a single Shabbos on campus for the two or three years they have been at YU. However, there is a secondary category of these homebodies. They retort, "I stay on campus for Shabbos during finals, doesn't that count?" My answer is firm: no. It is ridiculous to think that students choosing to remain on campus for Shabbos during the week of final exams actually enjoy themselves. Even if they don't utilize their time locked away in their rooms huddled over notes and textbooks, the clearly anxious and preoccupied mental state of every student on campus precludes any real menucha.

The combined efforts of the Student Life Committee, YU Administration, and student-led efforts have created a very enjoyable Shabbos experience, despite popular opinion. So allow me to summarize why students should spend Shabbos on campus.

Point One: the food. Despite popular opinion - formed mainly by those who have never eaten a Shabbos meal on campus - the food is actually better on Shabbos than during the week. The soup on Friday night is easily the best meat soup served in the Caf, and the other dishes by both day and night are consistently tasty and filling. Then, there are the additional niceties, such as the fruit, snacks and delicious chulent served at the Friday night oneg, the pastries from the Shabbos morning Kiddush, and the enormous spread of salads and other items - including hot chulent and potato kugel - found at Seudat Shelishit. Where else can you consistently enjoy such a variety of palatable cuisine with your friends? Which leads me to...

Point Two: socializing with your peers. With the diversity of the

courses of study on campus, it becomes very hard for guys to hang out with their friends during the week. What better way to reconnect with friends that you haven't seen in a week and a half than to kick back and enjoy Shabbos meals together? You can't invite all your friends over to your house every weekend. Plus, eating more than one meal in the Caf enables you to spend time with different groups of friends. You might even encounter someone you've never even met before, or that guy you know as "what's-his-face, from my Jewish History class," and strike up a conversation leading to a new friendship.

Point Three: encountering and appreciating the diversity of the Roshei Yeshiva and other visiting rabbinic and Judaic Studies faculty



The Wilf Campus: Nice, but is it Shabbos-Nice?

found at YU. As most readers have probably realized, YU can be a pretty big place, and students tend to find their niche shiur, their niche rebbe, and stick with that for most of their time at YU (unless they get bored). However, this system, as functional and necessary as it is, drastically limits your exposure to the many different and interesting perspectives of the Torah personalities on campus. One example that comes to mind from my personal experience as an MYP student: I have immensely enjoyed hearing stimulating divrei Torah and hilarious quips from Rabbi Rapp, the head of BMP. If I had not spent Shabbos on campus, I would only know Rabbi Rapp by reputation via my friends in BMP. When Rav Kahn was stuck in traffic and unable to make it to campus, Rabbi Rapp saved the day by delivering an impromptu discussion about the RCA's conversion process in an intellectually stimulating and witty fashion. Hearing shiurim from YU rabbeim that you would otherwise never encounter is certainly a benefit worth investing time in. On a related note, the opportunities for personal Torah study, unhampered by familial obligations or drawn-out meals with your parent's friends, are also readily available without the need to escape from your parents.

Point Four: unparalleled davening experiences. No matter what your style of prayer is, Shabbos at YU has a minyan for you. For those who prefer the short and quick,

let's-move-on-to-dinner kind of minyan, there's Rubin Shul. For a more formal, yeshiva-style davening, there's the brand new, beautiful Glueck Beit Midrash. If you're looking for a more spiritual atmosphere complete with singing, check out the ever-popular Carlebach Minyan. The Carlebach Minyan, in particular, is a significant addition to the on-campus Shabbos repertoire as an example of a student-led initiative designed solely to enhance the Shabbos experience at YU. Students from every thinkable hashkafic background, morning program, and social group on campus attend the Carlebach Minyan each week, creating a student body unity unseen elsewhere. On Shabbos morning, the Shenk Shul provides a warm, communal feel to its davening, and dozens of YU students flock there each week.

Point Five: At what point are these weekly home-goers going to grow up? Part of the college experience is living on campus. Treating YU merely as a place where you get your daily week-day dose of Torah

study and take some classes geared toward a profession only sustains the negative opinion that people espouse about life on campus. Guys continue to belittle the idea of spending Shabbos on campus. I do not think that the "I tried staying in for Shabbos once, and it was terrible," excuse carries much weight either. Since when does a first experience - in anything - ever work out perfectly? This pervasive attitude continues to contribute to the "lack of atmosphere" of Shabbos on campus.

To all the naysayers about the on-campus Shabbos experience, I say, "Grow up." It's time to let go of mother's skirt-tails and try living like a true college student. If you've stayed in for Shabbos before and didn't have the best time, try it again! YU has provided an environment conducive to a restful and enjoyable break from the hustle and bustle of the work week. Your Shabbos experience is entirely up to you, so take advantage of the opportunity - hopefully before you graduate.

Harry Portman, a YC super-senior, still hasn't won the Stay-to-Play raffle after almost 4 years of spending Shabbos on campus.

Good News for Attendance Blues

BY HOWARD AVNER

With a new dean at the helm of Yeshiva College, Joe Bednarsh saw an opportunity to improve life for his athletes. For years, athletes in Yeshiva College have been looked down upon, especially by the faculty and administration of Yeshiva College. Teachers often refuse to excuse athletes from classes to participate in athletics contests. To remedy this, two Yeshiva University departments worked together to construct a solution to a problem that has long plagued Yeshiva Athletes.

To understand what the new athletics attendance initiative accomplishes, it is important to understand what the policy was in past years - nothing. Nowhere is there a record of a set attendance policy for athletes, which means that they have been at the mercy of either their teachers or the Yeshiva administration. And, through the years, the attendance policy of Yeshiva College has been a gray area, with neither faculty nor administration claiming credit for any set policy.

"The attendance policy that I am most familiar with is the two-and-two policy," one student-athlete said. "Namely, every student is allowed two unexcused absences and two excused absences, although, in panel discussions with the deans, I had heard deans say that no such policy existed."

A student who elected to remain anonymous provided a story of his own:

In my first year, the captains of my team pulled all the rookies aside and told each of us that we should provide each of our professors with our game schedule so that we could discuss missing classes for games. I provided my English (comp.) teacher with my schedule and explained my situation. The teacher told me that she had never heard of athletes being excused for games and would need to check with the Deans. This is the email she sent me:

"Hi there,*****-,

I asked Dean ***** and I'm

afraid he said that you have the same absence limit as the rest of the class."

I was dumbfounded! How could the Dean refer to an absence-limit when I had heard him say that no such limit existed!

"Students should not have to pay for athletics competition...by harming [their] academic records," said Yeshiva College Dean Barry Eichler. In collaboration with both the Yeshiva College Dean's Office and Yeshiva Athletics, a new attendance guideline - in the form of a letter - was created. "[W]e agreed that he [Joe Bednarsh] would send out a letter to the individual professors of everyone on the teams detailing their appropriate schedules for which they're asking excused absences - on condition that it will not jeopardize the student's academic standing in the class according to the professor's assessment of the student's academic work at that time," Dean Eichler said.

The letter is not a free pass to miss classes. Rather, each student athlete must affix his signature to a list of guidelines including "not miss[ing] class for team practices" and agreeing that "all required coursework must be turned in on time," among others. Dean Eichler was explicit in stating that although professors are asked by the department to be accommodating to the athlete, "[in the end] it's the final call of the professor in all cases, because it's the professor...that will be giving the grade and [who] sets down the policies in the class."

The new attendance guidelines may not yet constitute a full attendance policy, but they are an important first step. They address a dilemma that student-athletes at Yeshiva have always been forced to struggle with, and represent an impressive collaborative effort of two separate departments working together.

Building Relationships

continued from page 9

semester I attended night seder and learned in solitude. Looking around at a buzzing Beis Midrash, I became rather nervous that I would not be able to find anyone; every person I knew already had a chavrusa. Then, much to my surprise, at the end of night seder, before Ma'ariv, a klop sounded from the bimah. A rather tall and warm-looking Sgan Mashgiach, whom I would later find out was Rav Uri Orlian, announced, "If any one is looking for a night seder chavrusa please come find me after davening." To make a short story even shorter, after a quick discussion of what I was looking for, Rav Orlian found me a chavrusa. That brief discussion and the act of chessed that Rav Orlian did for me undoubtedly changed my entire

experience here in Yeshiva. If no one had been there to help find me find a chavrusa, I would most certainly have been lost among the masses. However, it is important to note that the only reason I was lucky enough to find a chavrusa was because I personally advocated for myself. There was no way Rav Orlian would have known that I was looking for a chavrusa if I did not inform him of my search.

With that in mind, take a moment the next time you're in the Beis Midrash, and look around. I bet there is a smiling face waiting to get to know you :-).

Jonathan Korman is the SLC Chair of RIETS/Student Affairs and a junior in SSSB.

Avner's Antics: The Killing Fields

By HOWARD AVNER

During the YU open house, I was helping out at the Athletics booth during the "Student Life and Activities Fair" in the Morg lounge. Things were going smoothly while I asked kids the basic questions: "Oh, you're interested in athletics? What sports do you play? Are you on a high school team?" Along with the other student-athletes, I fielded questions about tryouts, coaches and practices. Life was good; after all, I was discussing athletics- my favorite hobby.

One high-schooler asked if YU has a football team. "I'm sorry but YU doesn't have a football team. Do you play high school football?" I kindly replied.

"I play flag football," he answered.

It took all the fibers of my being to hold back what I wanted to say. Luckily, I have a column.

I'm going to take a stance on the Jewish high school sport leagues that take place around the New York metro area. Don't get me wrong, I think it's nice that the Jewish schools play each other. These games support the idea of the larger "Jewish community," but the leagues contribute to unrealistic views of talent. Yeshiva high school athletes no longer develop to reach their full potential, instead just getting good enough to beat their rival Jewish high schools. How many all-star Yeshiva league athletes actually play in the NCAA? How many are even scouted by NCAA schools? Is this simply because Jewish kids aren't good at sports, or because we don't know what it means to fully develop our talent?

Worse, when guys come back to YU from Israel they think that they have real football experience because they've played in the

American Football in Israel (AFI) league. Let's forget for a moment that flag football and real football are in no way comparable. Students believe that beating Big Blue or some other team with a 250 pound thirty-five year old plumber defensive end means that they can protect against a real lineman. Wrong. You need proof? I'd bet that the plumber isn't training six times a week. I bet that he hasn't been playing football every day since he was five. I bet he didn't play through elementary school or high school and I bet he didn't play in college. You think you deserve a prize because you can get past an untrained, out-of-shape lineman that never played competitive football, at any level? Here's a cookie.

I would agree that every couple of years there is a student or two around campus that might have made a NCAA D3 football team, but that's a far cry from a functional

football team. And to everyone that knows a friend who is 6 feet tall and 250 pounds, I'll bet that he's fat and definitely not built. There are plenty of fat people out there, but being fat doesn't qualify you to play football.

Already our trainer sees most of our student-athletes in his office. We already go to get taped, stretched or splinted without opposing players intentionally tackling us.

And we haven't even begun to speak about practicing. As a baseball player I know firsthand that the main reason students don't try out for the baseball team is because of the grueling practice schedule. "I can't wake up at 6:30 in the morning," or "I don't like working out," I often hear. You think football would be easier? We would need to start with the basics: lining up, running routes, recognizing coverage packages and blitzes, in addition to

hundreds of other technical pieces.

Let's imagine that a YU football program became a reality. I assure you, we would die faster than a fish out of water. Please don't misread me; I truly believe that people would die. Forget all the concussions, sprains, broken bones and internal bleeding, people would actually die.

Football is one of the most intense and competitive sports played in America. Even with insane workout and practice schedules, we would still look like a bunch of cheerleaders going up against the Dallas Cowboys -and I wouldn't take YU over the Cowboys (that's for you *West Wingers*). So, the next time someone asks you about a YU football team, remember this: unless we want to turn Tenzer Gardens into a cemetery, YU should not have a football team.

Sweet Success A Runner's Story

By JEREMY SCHWARTZ

Many of you readers aren't avid fans of Yeshiva athletics. While many students do stop by the gym to watch a basketball or volleyball game, or even the occasional wrestling match, very few actually leave campus to support the Maccabees. Most people hear about the baseball, tennis, soccer, fencing, cross country and golf teams from friends who are on it, or maybe some actually check out the new YUmacs.com, but I'll tell you this: I'm sure very few have heard about cross-country member David Sweet's accomplishments this year. Cross country isn't a sport many people follow, but sometimes you have to appreciate things you never really knew existed.

Sweet, a junior from Chicago, Illinois was Yeshiva's best runner in every single meet this year. He never finished a race below 17th place, and placed as high as second. A look at Sweet's finishing times show how outstanding his feats were. In his first collegiate race, he placed 14th with a time of 33:27. The 8k races come out to almost exactly five miles. By the end of the season (which is five meets), Sweet lowered his time to 30:49, finishing 17th out of the whole skyline conference, which includes seventy-six runners.

OK, I get it, these numbers might not mean much to you. Yet, allow me to put this into perspective. Suppose you were a health-conscious student, and after a long day of classes you wanted to go for a nice run on the treadmill. If David were running alongside you, and you wanted to keep up with him,

you'd need to hold down on the "speed up" button until you hit "10" and then stay there for 30 minutes. Now keep in mind that Yeshiva usually runs at Van Cortlandt Park, a notably tough course. The one time Yeshiva competed on a different track, he placed 4th and finished with a time of 30:28. In fact, because of some confusion along the way (and an unfamiliarity with the course), Sweet got lost, and fell behind slightly. If it weren't for this, he surely would have finished below his goal of thirty minutes.

Sweet's recipe for success is very simple. "I just like running, and I try to push myself. I'm not willing to let myself run worse than I did on the last run." As easy as that sounds, Sweet hasn't always timed his own runs. He played basketball in high school, and ran for fun. He continued to run for fun in Israel, and began to time himself this past summer, when he decided he would join the cross country team. "I ran 3-4 times a week. My first time was thirty five minutes." He just kept going and the time decreased steadily.

While Sweet doesn't aim for a certain place in a race, he enjoys "competing against myself trying to get better times." Yeshiva athletics fan are waiting for Sweet to bring home the gold. I don't want to put the pressure on, but David told me he wasn't graduating until May 2012, and I know he will help Yeshiva bring home some hardware.

This Year, They're For Real Why You Should be Watching the Basketball Macs

By ZACH WEINER

The YU Basketball Macs have recently earned two major home victories that have people talking playoffs. They first pulled off an impressive upset, 67-53, over Old Westbury, and then a very important win over Mount Saint Mary that stayed close until the final buzzer.

These are two major conference wins that we could not manage last season, and with games still remaining against the minnows of the Skyline conference, the playoffs are no longer a long shot. In the Old Westbury game, the Panthers were up one with 16 minutes remaining, and then Simon Brookim took over. He scored all eighteen of his points from then on while Chen Biron added clutch shooting from downtown. Omar Haim once again proved his leadership skills in the point guard position as he added fourteen points of his own while taking defenders off his teammates to set up easy baskets. The game was tied at halftime, but something turned on the switch for the Macs inside the locker room. They outscored their opponent by 14 points in what was expected to be a blowout by Old Westbury. In fact, the Panthers had defeated Yeshiva last season by twenty five points, taking the lead in the first minute and never looking back.

The Mount Saint Mary win did not come as easily.

Omar Haim was on the bench nursing a hamstring injury, leaving a burden on David Gilboa to step up and lead the team at point guard. No problem, as Gilboa put in a clutch layup with thirty seconds left to give Yeshiva a very important four point lead at 62-58. However, Mary would respond with a three pointer to cut the lead to one and after Chen Biron failed to extend the lead with free throw the Blue Knights were given a chance to win on the last possession. Tim Morris, the architect behind the previous three pointer, watched his shot hit the rim and come back down to the court as the buzzer sounded and the YU fans jumped in celebration. Gil Bash led the team with fifteen point and Martin Lebovich, back from what appeared to be a one-game bench-

ing, followed with a fourteen point performance of his own.

The common denominator in both games were clutch shooting in both halves. This team is not the team that we saw last year. They are fun to watch and do not allow opponents to go on game-breaking runs. They keep their heads in the game and the goal in sight. And they have found a way to give themselves true home court advantage at the MSAC. With one final game before the break, a home game against St. Joseph's of Long Island, it is safe to say that the YU players will be entering their winter break with their heads held high and big expectations for the second half of the season.

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If You Have Some Time, I'm Looking for Some Spirit

The Search for YU Macs Pride

BY ZACH WEINER

Larry Drew brings the ball up the court, preparing to start a play with his four North Carolina teammates on the court in Cameron Stadium, home of the Duke Blue Devils. He has already dribbled past his coach, Roy Williams, one of the greatest in NCAA history, and can no longer hear him. Drew begins to set up the play but realizes that he is going to have to use hand signals this time. Why? Because every Duke fan is jumping up and down, screaming at the top of his or her lungs, hoping to block any communication between the Tar Heels players. Each fan is dressed in blue, most with painted faces and arms, and is waving his or her arms frantically behind the basket to distract the shooters. When a player misses a shot (or travels), he is met with loud taunts that would make most people cry. The seats near the court are typically "standing room only" and if you still have a voice after the game is over, you weren't cheering enough.

This is called home-court advantage, something Yeshiva University sorely lacks. Yes, I know we're not a Division I school with National Championship aspirations, but can I get a little school pride? Too many people in YU pass up a chance to go watch a home basketball game because they have "too much work"

or "other obligations." Students in other schools would give an arm and a leg to get into some of the big conference games in the season while Yeshiva can barely fill half the seats in our couple-hundred-seat gym.

As for the people who actually are at the games, the noise level is slightly higher than that of the cafeteria during lunch. Where is the school spirit? Where is the desire to see our teams succeed? Most Yeshiva teams play in the Skyline Conference, a conference made up of nine or ten schools, six of which make the playoffs. It is within reach for our basketball team to make the playoffs this season, especially after their strong start to the season (they are right now 4-3 in the conference, including a huge road win over Purchase and impressive wins over Old Westbury and Mount Saint Mary). A little home-court advantage could help them achieve this goal. This is Division III basketball we're talking about. Visiting teams crumble

under the pressure of a full house and screaming fans. I certainly don't condone some of the cheers and chants that many DI schools sing during games, as they are often offensive, but just the thought of running back down court to play defense while the home fans remind

you over and over again about the air-ball you just threw up is enough to get into any player's head.

As for the dress: how about some YU colors? Every guy that walks into the gym during games looks like he's just stopping by before he catches the shuttle to Midtown to hit up the Stern lounge. "Oh, there's a game going on? Alright, I'll check it out." Seriously, why is everyone dressed so nicely? Is it erev Shabbos already? And girls, I appreciate your making the trip all the way up from Midtown to root for our players, but you guys could use some more blue as well. Most girls who come to the games look like they're on their way to a YU Connects program after the final buzzer. There's no need to look that nice, because chances are most of the guys are not at the game for "the scene" – they're there to watch some basketball. I'm pretty sure the Duke fans don't come to Cameron Stadium to find their shidduch. We should all be one fan base, one unit, shaking the gym and going all out for our team. How do you achieve this unity? Wearing the

same color is a good start.

And then there are the athletes on other teams that all say the same thing to me: "Well, they don't come to my games so why should I go to theirs?" Rubbing my index finger with my thumb, I reply, "This is the world's smallest violin playing 'cry me a river.'" This isn't a contest and it certainly shouldn't be "me versus you."

We're a university – we should take pride in that. Game night should be a time that we all look forward to. We should tailgate before games and storm the court after every win. You should hear a pin drop when our players are taking foul shots, but your eardrums should pop when our opponents are standing at the foul line. We work hard every day juggling a dual curriculum along with countless extracurricular activities. This is a chance for us all to loosen up a little and have a good time. I don't know about you, but I want to see this team (and all our teams) go to the playoffs. We may not be Duke or North Carolina, but we do share one thing in common with them – we're members of the NCAA – so let's be NCAA-caliber fans.



This year's Macs have been soaring, but with little fan support.

Yeshiva Athletics to Launch Softball Program in Spring 2010

BY JEREMY SCHWARTZ

Just two issues ago, I wrote an article about how the Athletics Department has been making great strides to improve all of its current programs. As if that weren't enough, the department is launching a softball program, to begin in Spring 2010. Athletics Director Joe Bednarsh calls it "a huge step forward in women's athletics." Bednarsh has seen many big steps for women's athletics in his time at Yeshiva. When he became Associate Director, there were just three women teams. Now there are six, and the seventh will be softball.

The idea was initiated by Meira Lerner, a sophomore from Sharon, MA, and a current player on the soccer Lady Macs. Lerner, a graduate from Maimonides High School, set numerous school records before graduating and decided her softball days would not end in Massachusetts.

After she knew she would attend Yeshiva, she inquired about the likelihood of a softball team. To her dismay, she was told that it had been previously attempted, but there wasn't sufficient student inter-

est to justify its continuity. That didn't stop Lerner. During her year in Israel, she contacted Bednarsh and Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions Murray Sragow. She was given much encouragement, but the next big step would have to wait until she arrived on campus.

Lerner met with Bednarsh, and Women's Associate Director Esther Goldfeder about finally getting the ball rolling. Obviously, it all came down to student interest. Lerner quickly got to work. After posting several signs and sending a few e-mails, there were fifty students interested in joining the team. They gathered for a talk with Bednarsh and Goldfeder about the commitments of playing on a varsity team. Still, there were thirty-nine students willing to sacrifice their time to make this happen.

However, there are many more hurdles to overcome. Many of the women haven't played windmill pitching, which significantly differs from classic slow-pitch softball. Still, over twenty students with over three years of experience and ten with 1-2 years under their belts maintain an interest. All in all, with

some proper coaching, the softball initiative may be able to skip the baby steps that often go hand in hand with starting a program. Bednarsh has already begun the hunt for coaches, focusing on those with a "history of starting programs and gauging talent." He must also find a field within an appropriate proximity which can offer both safety and the requisite lighting needed for nighttime play.

History has proven that if there is student interest, the Athletics Department will get things done. Thanks to Lerner and 38 other students, the department has their

newest challenge. As for the women, they have a long and challenging road ahead of them. Anyone familiar with collegiate programs knows how difficult it is for a first year team to compete. Aside for the lack of experience, Yeshiva teams generally have less practice time because of the dual curriculum. However, Lerner is ready to meet the challenge head on. Having played against women that now play both Division 1 and Division 2 softball, she knows that "the greater the challenge, the more fun involved in playing the game."

Lerner exhibits the upbeat atti-



Fluff Came to New York

A Review of Phish's MSG Performance and Its Implications

BY JONATHAN WELTZ

People who were walking in the vicinity of 34th and 7th in Midtown on Thursday, December 3 probably felt that they were at a jam band music festival rather than in the heart of Manhattan.

Instead of gazing up at the towering skyscrapers or jumbo-screen ads, one could have seen far more exciting imagery amongst the people aimlessly hovering around Madison Square Garden. The tie-dye colors of elaborate costumes, the wild hair, the vacant, distant eyes all indicate one thing: Phish returned to the Garden, along with a vast entourage of devoted 'phans.' It had been a long seven years since Phish had last performed at MSG and the anticipation and energy inside the venue was palpable immediately upon clearing the turnstile.

Since their reunion show in March 2009, Phish has undergone various critiques and criticisms from both music critics and phans alike. While some have applauded the band's return to musical precision and accuracy, in stark contrast to the sloppier yet wilder playing of the 2003-2004 post-hiatus era, others have criticized the band for veering on the safe-side by not taking the added risk of venturing outside of a song's structured parameters or standard improvisation frames.

However, as the 2009 Fall Tour progressed, these complaints diminished considerably as the band began to improvise more sincerely and explore jams more intensely. The band demonstrated increased comfort playing with each other and have succeeded in building more extravagant jams resembling those of the early days. Needless to say, as I trekked down to MSG on Thursday night, I was more than ecstatic to witness, first hand, how the band had evolved.

Phish, consisting of Trey Anastasio on guitar, Jon Fishman on drums, Mike Gordon on bass and Page McConnell on piano wasted no time by kicking into a forceful rendition of "Punch You in the Eye." A perfect show opener, "Punch You" had all 17,000 attendees shouting "Hey" – in precise timing with the band's pauses – at the top of their lungs over an elaborate hypnotic rhythm, a truly incredible sight. The song was executed with absolute perfection featuring stunning piano and guitar solos, as well as a Latin shimmy-dance from Anastasio Gordon.

Phish maintained the intensity with the new "Backwards Down the Number Line" and a rare "Axilla I." They were fully delivering with immaculate execution as MSG came to life with the crowd's uncontrollable singing, dancing and grooving.

However, while the first set began with adrenaline-pumping

powerhouses, it abruptly slowed down with the ensuing performances of "Taste" and "Boogie on Reggae Woman," the latter being a cover of the popular Stevie Wonder tune.

While these songs were played nicely, especially Gordon's bass playing in "Boogie," there was still a feeling that placing these songs in the first set put the brakes on a train that was just beginning to gain speed. Sadly, this did not only pertain to these songs alone but was also seen with "Lawn Boy," "Back on the Train," and most notably, or perhaps notoriously, "Time Turns Elastic."

A new addition to Phish's repertoire, "Time Turns Elastic" is an

luxury that is not necessarily available at live concerts, including Phish ones where fans are accustomed to long compositions and sometimes even longer jams. Until Phish finds a better way of translating this orchestral piece into a rock concert setting, "Time Turns Elastic" will continue to stand out as a hindrance to the fluidity within their set.

The first set came to an end with a fierce "Julius" that showcased Anastasio's skill as a virtuosic guitar player. However, despite this last effort, there seemed to be something missing. Although the songs were performed precisely, there was a lingering feeling that something was missing. With the exception of the

immersed in the improvised style playing that makes Phish among the best jam bands in the world.

As the jam began to climb down from the incredible apex that it had reached, it became apparent that the show was just getting underway. In fact, the most impressive aspect of the second set was the fluidity present throughout its entirety.

As opposed to each song being a singular unit separated from one another with openings and closings, each song was extended and inverted to flow endlessly into the next with the creativity and skill that we have come to expect from this masterful group of musicians. "Disease" bled into "Piper" which then segued into "Fluffhead" with ease and pre-

Kuroda splashed and mixed various colors, patterns, and shapes to create what can only be described as transient, living art. Concluding the set with a truly masterful "David Bowie" with each member playing their very finest, the crowd was left awestruck and demanding more, which was delivered with a frantic and over the top "Character Zero" encore.

As a whole, the concert was an incredible performance. Phish is certainly back with daring material that pushes each musician to a new level of virtuosity. However, there is a clear difference in the music they are playing now as opposed to before the 2004 breakup. Some call this new era – often dubbed as 3.0 – as "safe" or "uninspired" compared to the band's earlier playing, yet this may be the result of witnessing the evolution of a once wild rock show into a more mature and refined musical experience. Some forget that, when comparing 1994 Phish to 2009 Phish, they are comparing the music of twenty-somethings to that of forty-somethings. Obviously the music of the former will be more wild and exploratory while the latter's will be more contained; but, with that containment there also comes a sense of maturity.

This can be, perhaps, compared to the musical evolution of Eric Clapton after his days with Cream. In his early career, Clapton was known as one of rock's wildest and fastest blues guitarists. With high distortion and roaring feedback, Clapton made a name for himself by dazzling fans with uproarious solos that displayed his own talents. However, as time passed, Clapton honed his skills and began playing a refined style of blues that combined more elements than his own speedy riff playing. His music took on a more mature texture that earned him the respect and admiration that he holds today.

The same can be said for this new era of Phish. After creating a name for themselves and cementing their place in the jam band community, it appears that the band has collectively matured and refined their skills. With less superfluous notes more directed jams, the band has a much tighter, precise approach and, consequently, execution.

This maturity exemplifies these musicians' collective and individual advancements and translates beautifully in the concert experience. Withstanding the tests and vicissitudes of time, Phish has proven, time and again, that they are first-rate musicians and, considering their performance at MSG, it is clear that the passage of time has produced a more solid, mature and refocused group of musicians.

Kuroda was outstanding the entire performance, but specifically was able to work his magic throughout this spacey jam. Using the crowd and stage as his canvas,



Trey Anastasio, Jon Fishman, Mike Gordon, and Page McConnell are all still alive and kicking.

adaptation of Trey Anastasio's single orchestral work arranged and released with Don Hart and the Orchestra Nashville in 2008. Since it has found its way into the newly released Joy album (September 8, 2009) as well their live repertoire, "Time Turns Elastic" has been welcomed by some, but disliked by most.

Having heard the song played in its original compositional form by Trey Anastasio with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in September 2009, I find the song moving. It features a rich, mature chromatic progression teetering on the edge of atonality. The song is true testament to Anastasio's ever-progressive songwriting talents and genre crossing ventures.

That being said, I must agree that this show's rendition did nothing to gain any new admirers. This intricate composition demands time and patience in order to fully develop, a

mind-blowing "Stash," the first set was almost entirely devoid of true unbridled and boundless jamming. The band veered on the safe-side and delivered an accurate, yet unremarkable first set that was, in the end, was a little disappointing.

However, while the first set left the crowd wanting more, the second set delivered with such an onslaught of Phish favorites that it left most in an utter daze. It was as if the band reemerged on the stage with a new focus in mind: to dispel any rumors belittling their jamming capabilities.

The set opened with one of the greatest "Down With Disease" in recent memory. Lasting nearly 20 minutes, "Disease" featured the entire Phish quartet playing at their absolute best. From Gordon's intricate bass bombs, to Anastasio's screaming guitar arpeggios and the light theatrics from Chris Kuroda, the crowd was completely

Each song in this trio was performed superbly and witnessed the emergence of the type of intense energy that the first set had lacked.

In addition to this energy, Phish developed the growing connection between band and fan by maneuvers such as the lyrical change from "Fluff went to the store" to "Fluff went to New York".

Segues from the funk filled Talking Heads cover, "Cities," into the rock anthem "Free" were darkly twisted and well received. "2001," an adaptation of the theme song from Stanley Kubrik's 1972 film 2001: A Space Odyssey, saw some of the best works by light engineer Chris Kuroda, commonly known as CK5, a nod to his status as honorary fifth member of the band.

Where Should We Draw the Line? One Student's Musings Over the Limitations of 'Art'

BY ZACH ENGLENDER

What is the meaning of art? This question has plagued philosophers, critics, lovers of the humanities, and thinking individuals throughout the ages. Recently, I have joined these ranks.

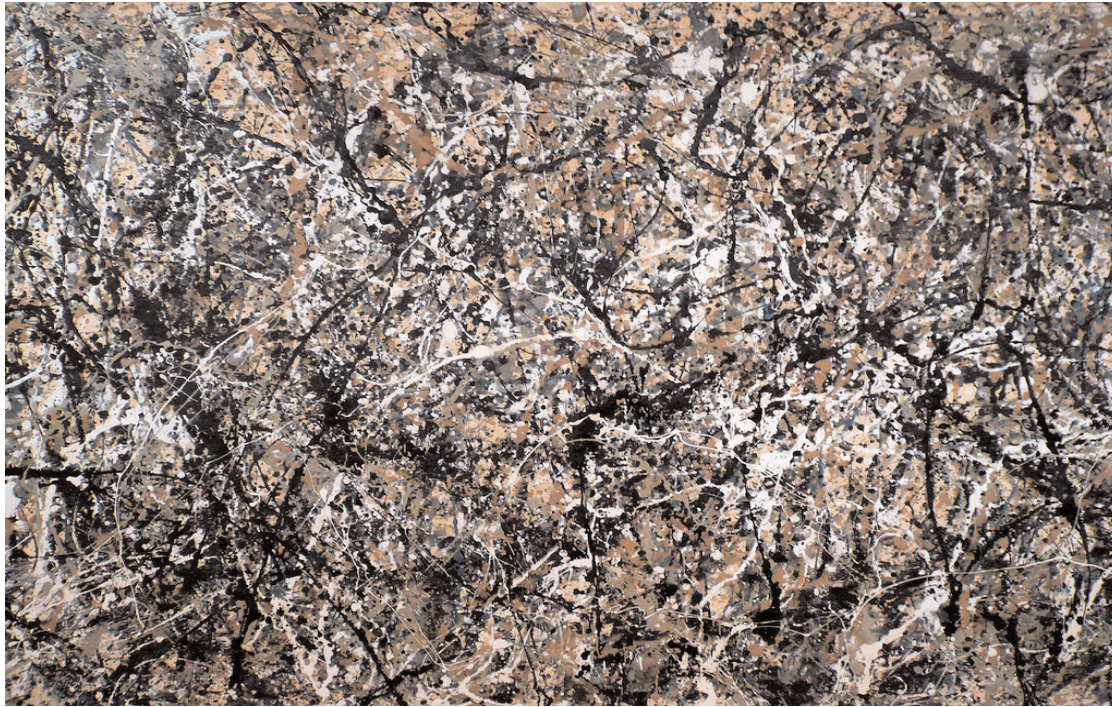
Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Cezanne, Henri Rousseau, collectively constituted a new era of Post-Impressionism that challenged the way art was conceived. Although their art was similar to Impressionist paintings, they began to distort reality by using exaggerated shapes and aberrant colors.

Georges Seurat, another post-impressionist artist, used pointillism, an art form which uses many tiny dots of color to express color blending, as seen in his renowned painting "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte." This particular style of art is a self-conscious one which, by drawing explicit attention to each stroke, raises the question of what we consider "art" and, in a certain sense, constitutes an example of pre-modern modern art.

One particular form of modern art is abstract art, which comes in several different forms. Picasso's paintings are generally classifiable among two types. In one type, called cubism, the artist paints different shapes to represent nature, human figures, and various inanimate objects. Another type of abstract art is abstract expressionism, in which the artist focuses on painting ideas and thoughts than objects and people.

One particularly famous piece of abstract art is Jackson Pollock's "One: Number 31, 1950" (see image) which is simply a big canvas with splatters of different blacks, grays, and whites. There are videos on YouTube of Pollock painting one

of his masterpieces. Placing his large canvas on the floor, Pollock proceeds to drip, throw and flick different colors of house-paint onto the canvas. From the video, there seems to be no mathematical method or structured technique. However, some still seem to find value in his work, because in 2006 another one of Pollock's "splatter paintings," "Number 5, 1948," sold



Art or a tuna casserole? The debate over Jackson Pollock's "One: Number 31, 1950"

for \$140 million.

This painting truly raises the question of "what is art?" It can be argued that art must be, in some recognizable way, a representation of a tangible item, place, personality or scene. Some of the abstract expressionist painting in the MoMA could have easily been done by a precocious preschool child. They are not depictions of anything tangible, but rather of thoughts and ideas. They are not complex works of art; they

are squiggles and dots. This being the case, why then is it art? Why is MoMA displaying these paintings?

Personally, I think art is a skillful re-creation of an image. This re-creation can be nearly perfect – like photorealism – or it can be an exaggerated display of an artist's view of a certain object – like post-impressionism. Whatever the case, I do not believe that any portrayal of views

simple, they are in fact an important revolution in art history.

Apparently, for the first time in hundreds of years, artists began to paint in a two-dimensional form. "They brought about the truth of the surface," Professor Aurich explained. For centuries, artists were focused on creating depth in their paintings, but in a movement that came to be called "modern art,"

expresses his feelings by dribbling, throwing, and flicking paint onto a canvas situated on the floor. Now, granted, Pollock was an innovator and a pioneer, but does that solidify his works as "art"?

According to Webster's, art is "the quality, production, expression, or realm, according to aesthetic principles, of what is beautiful, appealing, or of more than ordinary significance." To some, abstract ideas, or the construction of them, is "beautiful" and "appealing" enough to be considered art and, as a result, worthy of being displayed in museums. To others, abstract expressionist paintings are rudimentary and unappealing, and therefore should not be included in the definition of art.

Perhaps a line needs to be drawn between what genuinely constitutes art and what constitutes a manifestation of one's emotions. Though it is certainly naïve to believe, for even one second, that some international committee of art "experts" could ever agree on such a definition, and that, even if they did, the world would be inclined or even should be obliged to accept it, there still must be some distinction – even if it is unable to be verbally formulated – between the result of a cathartic exercise and the rendering of an work of art.

Moreover, even if this distinction does exist, there is not necessarily one universal or objective one for everyone; rather, this is an issue that every admirer should independently grapple with. And, though they, like myself, might be unable to formulate a bona fide answer, this struggle is still a worthwhile endeavor.

they began to refer back to primitive art. They subsequently produced two-dimensional paintings with a renewed focus on color and emotion, as opposed to detail and representation.

Aurich hailed Pollock as "the leader of the movement," because he invented action painting, a form of abstract expressionism, in which one of the main aspects of the piece is the way it was created. As stated earlier, Pollock cathartically

The Jewish Hip-Hop Star A Review of 'Until When'

BY HARRY PORTMAN

In a market of Jewish music where some popular albums have begun to merge together in a stagnant mix of bouncy pop and blasting brass, Prodezra, a.k.a. Reuben Formey, has materialized as a welcome change.

Formey, who grew up in Savannah, Georgia, began dabbling in music production during high school using an old Casio keyboard and his home computer. After beginning to pursue a religiously observant lifestyle in college and then attending a Chabad-Lubavitch yeshiva in Israel, Formey decided to use his talents to contribute to the progressive world of modern Jewish music. With the release of *Until When*, he has infused Jewish music with a brand new sound.

While hip-hop has not traditionally been considered part of the spectrum of Jewish music, recent breakthrough artists such as Matisyahu and Y-Love (the latter

makes an appearance on "Until When") have drawn attention to this rapidly developing musical movement. Formey has remarked that he draws strength from an inner desire to "make music that people do more than just listen to, but will actually feel within their soul." Instead of personally taking credit for the popularity of his rhythm and rhymes, Formey characterizes his talent and success as a blessing from G-d — a gift to be shared with everyone around him.

Prodezra joins the rank of rising young Jewish stars that appeal to a more mainstream audience. Unlike most performers that pro-

duce albums aimed at the Orthodox market niche, these artists cater their musical style toward anyone – Jew or non-Jew – seeking spiritual

fulfillment.

Until When is evenly split between lyrical and instrumental tracks and features a wide array of thumping beats and meaningful vocals. Guest vocalists appearing on the album include Y-Love, Describe, Nachman, and Eli Lipsker, while Prodezra himself is featured on two tracks and the introductory Prologue.

While all the songs are characterized by infectious beats, such as those found in "Koach (interlude)" and "Ein Od Milvado," listen-

ers searching for inspiration will find it in "Change," a song containing a synthesis of lyrics about both the technologically advanced modern world and remembering the Jewish past with citations from Psalms recalling Biblical Jerusalem. Particularly moving is "Liora," a tribute to Jewish women (and specifically named after Formey's wife) which is both sensitive and downright beautiful.

Prodezra's first release is an exciting new venture, something different from the run-of-the-mill Jewish music production, and a welcome addition to anybody's music collection.

Until When is available for purchase at www.cdbaby.com/cd/prodezra where it is listed as one of CDBaby's Top 10 instrumental/lyrical hip hop albums, and can be downloaded on iTunes.



Artist Spotlight: Dark Star Orchestra *The "Not-Just-a-Cover-Band" Cover Band*

BY RAFI BLUMENTHAL

Throughout the general music world, the issue of cover bands remains a hotly debated topic. Some maintain that, regardless of which band is being covered, they could never come close to recreating "the real thing," constituting a waste of both time and money. At the same time, there are those who acknowledge the inherent shortcomings of a cover band, yet maintain that going out to hear some of their favorite tunes recreated in a live setting is still a worthwhile experience.

Dark Star Orchestra, a – or perhaps "the" – Grateful Dead cover band, formed in 1997, complicates this issue because, while most cover bands attempt to replay a band's greatest hits album precisely as they were originally recorded, Dark Star takes a different approach.

Striving to recreate the unique live experience of The Grateful Dead – a band famed for touring for over thirty years, until the death of lead guitarist Jerry Garcia, and also considered the forefathers of the jamband movement – Dark Star selects a Dead concert from their history (late sixties to early nineties) and recreates the experience by performing it in its entirety. Thus, just as with a Grateful Dead concert, one can go see Dark Star many times and always be treated to an original show with an "original" setlist.

Yet, perhaps "recreate" is not the right word. As the word "Orchestra" in their title suggests, the band approaches Grateful Dead classics in the same way that an orchestra interprets the music of classical composers, i.e. taking an original composition and interpreting it through their own, personal musical lens. Thus, when Dark Star does so, they effectively fuse together their creative spirits with the Dead's to create an original experience. In this sense, even applying the term cover band to Dark Star might be called into question.

In fact, several critics, including the Washington Post, have picked up on the band's originality, hailing Dark Star as "a cover band for people who don't like cover bands," and the Associated Press wrote that "Dark Star Orchestra takes its act to a level of detail that befits a rock band famous for its fanatical following."

And, aside from critics' endorsement, even some of the original Grateful Dead members have played alongside Dark Star and continue to sing their praises. Bob Weir, the guitarist for the Grateful Dead, marveled that, "A couple of times I had my back to John (Dark Star's guitarist) onstage and he started to sing and I had this weird sense that

it was Jerry (Garcia)."

In 1997, guitarist John Kadlecik formed Dark Star as a Tuesday night house band/side project based in Chicago. Yet, the word spread quickly about Dark Star, propelling them into the national spotlight. In fact, the band was booking coast-to-coast tour dates almost a year after its inception.

Then, in November 1998, after a Phish show, Phish members Mike Gordon and Jon Fishman sat in with Dark Star and performed with them for the majority of their after-show, cinching Dark Star's place as "not-just-a-cover-band" and earned them the admiration of fans and critics alike.

After that, Dark Star's populari-

Kadlecik accepted an invitation from original Grateful Dead members Phil Lesh and Bob Weir to play lead guitar for their brand-new collaboration entitled Further. By accepting this prestigious invitation, Kadlecik realized that he could no longer be a member of both bands and, despite being a co-founder of Dark Star, decided to resign from his position in order to tour with Further.

Though Dark Star stated that they will continue to tour with Zen Trickster's Jeff Mattson, assuming lead guitar duties, fans remain uncertain about the future of a Dark Star sans Kadlecik. Chaim Eichen, a Yeshiva student and avid Grateful Dead fan, worried that "without



ty soared and they began to tour constantly, sometimes playing over 200 shows a year and often making multi-night stops in cities across the country. To date, they have played approximately 1,600 concerts throughout their twelve-year career.

As they began to play more frequently, they started to both experiment further into the Dead's repertoire and create their own original set-lists. Many fans cherish these shows because it creates opportunities to experience songs from different eras paired together, seamlessly, in the same set.

Recently, Dark Star's success has forced the band into a new era. In an open letter addressed to their fan-base, the band first thanked their fans for "being part of this continuing long strange trip (a reference to a lyric from the Grateful Dead song "Truckin'")" and then announced that they are entering a new "chapter" in their history.

Apparently, lead guitarist John

Kadlecik, the band just won't be the same. Kadlecik's voice and guitar were both uncannily similar to Jerry Garcia. Without that crucial ingredient, I don't see how they can succeed in the way that they used to."

Eichen, along with this writer and many other Yeshiva students, trekked down to the Nokia Theater in Times Square a few weeks ago to see Dark Star perform one last time with Kadlecik. At that particular show, the band opted to cover a Grateful Dead show from July 15th, 1988.

The band sounded great, engaging in expert vocal harmonies and intricate jams resulting in a truly singular experience. The show was also a rare instance where fifty-year olds and teenagers – each boasting their own tie-dye t-shirt – could be seen dancing together to the same music.

Afterwards, Eichen gushed, "the show was such a bittersweet experience because, though the band

War and Peace at the Metropolitan

BY JOSEPH ATTIAS

A fundamental precept of Buddhism is the ability to reach Enlightenment – an awakened state of spiritual alertness – in a single lifetime. Avenues to this higher state of being include the chanting of mantras and the performance of mudras – ritual hand gestures.

Another path to Enlightenment, one often used in conjunction with mantra-singing and mudras, is meditation upon particular religious diagrams known as mandalas. These extremely complex rituals are usually taught and performed within the presence of a highly trained master. A select few of these original mandalas are now on display at a The Metropolitan Museum of Art in an exhibit entitled "Japanese Mandalas: Emanations and Avatars."

At the very center of these often tremendously colorful mandalas rests the personification of all Truth: Buddha Dainichi Nyorai. All around the Buddha rests derivations of his being, most of whom are seated in the meditative position. These highly detailed painted scrolls come in gold, red, green and blue and can take the form of several feet in height and length, some even dating back to the twelfth century C.E.

Also on display at this exiting exhibit is the fascinating Scroll of Mudras, an eleventh century guide to meditative hand gestures formations (mudras) and several figurines and statues of Buddha and other deities that are over one thousand years old. This exhibit abounds with colorful scrolls and detailed paintings, and offers a prime example of how one of the world's oldest religions contemplated the divine.

Also, Peaceful Conquerors: Jain Manuscript Painting, a similar exhibit is currently being featured. Jainism, a famously pacifistic manifestation of Buddhism, considered manuscript painting a religious endeavor, but not because its meditative enhancements. Thanks to these medieval traditionalists, details of myths and folklore such as celestial scenes of birth and love are

portrayed on these delicate manuscripts – some of which were comically painted on textile.

Although, like the one before it, the primary focus of this exhibit is the kaleidoscope-like manuscripts, it also features small decorative figurines of Buddha. The most captivating one is a seventh century copper alloy meditating atop a throne supported by lions. Bearing the markings of an Enlightened Being, he sits in yogic position aloft his throne with an enviously tranquil countenance. This exhibit is another wonderful example of the artistic and contemplative energy to be found in Far-Eastern religions.

Yet, lest one think that all Far-Eastern culture resembles a serenely peaceful monolith, the Metropolitan has provided the viewer with a remarkably contrasting exhibition entitled Art of the Samurai: Japanese Arms and Armor. Calling it "the first comprehensive exhibition devoted to the arts of the samurai," the exhibit combines the finest variety of Japanese weaponry, including swords, archery equipment and firearms. The items on display date from ca. 1156 until 1868 – the year of the abolition of samurai culture.

This exhibit includes the original full armor of the infamous sixteenth-century fighter Honda Tadakatsu, as well as an amazingly precise facsimile made for a young member of his family. The most interesting element of this exhibit is the elaborately decorated warrior helmets. Reaching over a foot and a half in height, this ornate headgear appears to be more suited for a fashion show than a battle.

This trio of exhibits is an exceptional opportunity to experience a kernel of the vast treasures that Oriental culture has to offer. Although very different in nature, the exhibits allow for a more refined perception of Oriental traditions and non-Western ways of life that date back thousands of years.

played incredibly and sounded great, it reminded me of what I won't be able to hear in the future."

Yaakov Block, another student who attended the show, remained more positive than Eichen, explaining that, of all the Grateful Dead cover bands he has seen, including ones with some of the original members, "none of them even came close to recreating the simultaneous energy as well as soothing and peaceful atmosphere that Dark Star does. They are able to create tension and excitement while still keeping the calm in a way that we have not seen since the golden years of the Dead."

He added, "the band has always been on a road filled with obstacles,

and the departure of Kadlecik represents just one more that the band, collectively, will surely overcome."

Either way, though Dark Star's future remains hazy, there is no denying their impact. Their remarkable tale, fueled by their sheer innovation and determination, challenges us to rethink the once-simple and distinct categories of "band" and "cover band." Dark Star lies somewhere in the middle and, with or without Kadlecik, they will continue to spearhead the elusive yet venerable genre of "not-just-a-cover-band" that they have single-handedly forged.

Be the inspiring teacher you always wished you had.

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