

The COMMENTATOR

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

Tuesday, May 18, 2010 / 5 Sivan 5770

Volume LXXIV Issue 9

End-of-Year Celebrations



With Shavuot, the Salute to Israel Parade, and graduation fast approaching, the next few weeks promise to be filled with finals.

Committee Begins Search for Vice Provost

BY BENJAMIN ABRAMOWITZ

Yeshiva recently began looking for someone to fill the soon-to-be-established position of Vice Provost. The decision to create this new position stems largely from recognition of Provost Dr. Morton Lowengrub's constant hard work in an office that has remained too small for too long.

As University President Richard M. Joel said, "the Provost has been working in a very understaffed situation. It's necessary to make sure that he's not alone." Describing Dr. Lowengrub's work over the past number of years, President Joel remarked that the Provost has been "invaluable, but it's impossible for him to do all that is on his plate."

For a few years, many other faculty members have been assisting Dr. Lowengrub in a number of the office's projects. For example, Professor Will Lee and Dean

Michael Ginzberg have been working as co-chairs of the Self-Study Steering Committee, which aims to prepare the university for its reaccreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). Other professors and administrators have been working closely with the Office of the Provost to facilitate other developments, and these commitments are quite time-consuming. Appointing one figure to help oversee all of them should relieve many of these hardworking faculty members from this extra work, and ensure that all of these projects run smoothly.

President Joel said that the Vice Provost would carry his and the committee's hopes to be "a senior university officer that is hands-on globally." He also described the appointment of a Vice Provost as an important element of Yeshiva's general plan of "re-imagining."

In terms of what type of person

the committee is looking for, President Joel said that they hope to "attract a serious academic with administrative experience." President Joel stressed that the Vice Provost appointment is an academic leadership position, and the selected candidate may teach an undergraduate course. Explaining that members of the search committee are open to both internal and external candidates, he said, "we're considering the whole world."

One of the Vice Provost's first duties would be to orchestrate the potential reorganization of the university's departments. The university hopes to reduce the number of departments to 15, which will promote collaboration and synergy of research. One example is that the Math Department would be renamed the Department of Math Sciences, which would reflect its inclusion of computer science and mathematical statistics.

Dr. Lowengrub expressed his excitement to welcome a new academic personality, noting, "we're becoming a more complex institution, so we need more help." Regarding the university's efforts to attract a first-rate candidate, he stressed that "the best way to get people is to have them meet the students."

Two Club Hours, Perhaps Trimesters, on the Horizon

BY EITAN ULMER

In response to a recent editorial in *The Commentator* and suggestions brought by students to the Student Life Committee (SLC), Provost Dr. Morton Lowengrub is considering implementing two club hours in future semesters. Much work still needs to be done to accomplish this, but the hope is that by Spring 2011 the schedule will make room for two club hours, on either Monday and Wednesday or Tuesday and Thursday. This possible addition may come in the midst of many structural changes to Yeshiva's current schedule, all designed to improve daily student life.

The project initially began after students mentioned the difficulties which the Thursday club hour

places on Shabbat plans. Club Hour currently takes place every Thursday between 2:45 and 3:45, resulting in every subsequent class's being pushed back about an hour. For students who wish to travel home for Shabbat, it forces them to choose between taking a course they desire and being able to leave on Thursday night rather than Friday. Responding to these concerns, the SLC began looking to change Club Hour from Thursday to Tuesday, where a later ending to the day would not be as inconvenient.

Soon after this, an editorial appeared in *The Commentator* titled "An Hour Makes All the Difference," in which the "overburdened Club Hour" finally found its defendant. The article argued that

continued on page 7

Registration Woes Eased, Registrar to Further Improve Website

BY ARIEL PELEG

The Yeshiva University registration website, My YU, offered students two new features to facilitate last month's course-registration process for the fall semester. In the event that they were experiencing technical difficulties during peak registration hours, students were provided the option of receiving live, online assistance from a registrar representative after office-hours. The registration website also began to list the number of available spaces in each course during the registration process. These changes came amid requests by student leaders to improve the website to make registration less arduous for students. Additionally, the Registrar is in the beginning stages of redesigning their online system to support new features including automated wait-lists, with the goal of replacing over-tally forms.

The new live-assistance system was created shortly before the registration process for the upcoming fall semester began, and was met with enthusiasm by nearly all students. According to the Registrar's count, almost one third of all registering students used the live-assistance system to facilitate their registration.

Associate Registrar Sam Tyszler explained that "when we brought this [live help system] in, it was really thought of as a grand experiment with no fanfare or [prior] notification [to students], and we put it in place to see what the response would be."

Yet, "it was so overwhelmingly positive and so highly used that we had to – in the middle of registration – expand the system to deal with the load of students who came into the system, and that was very encouraging."

The capabilities of a registrar staff member on live-assistance, however, are somewhat limited compared to those in the registrar's office. Whereas live-assistants can deal with technical difficulties, such as enabling an Honors student to register for Honors courses in the event that the system will prevent him from doing so, they are unable to perform overrides. Following registration week, live assistance remains available only during regular office-hours.

In addition to offering more online student assistance, the Office of the Registrar also plans to perform a general upgrade on its somewhat dated registration website.

continued on page 8

Inside:

Parting Words	5
New Dean for YC	6
Robbery on Campus	12
The Flecktones	13
The Other Twersky	15

Staff

Editorials

A Call for a New Rosh Yeshiva

Whether it's because the number of students in the Mazer Yeshiva Program has increased in recent years or because of a shift in student alignment within the program, it seems that MYP/RIETS finds itself in need of a new Rosh Yeshiva.

It is evident to us, and to many others, that something in MYP is changing. Even though it may not be entirely clear how, why, or in what way the program is shifting, you have only to peer through the window of the massive lecture hall in the Glueck Center where Rabbi Sobolofsky gives shiur to see that things are perhaps not as idyllic as they once were. If you look in, you will see a room completely packed with students, on most days upwards of 90. What you won't immediately notice, though, is the significant percentage of them who are not particularly interested, through no fault of Rabbi Sobolofsky's, in the content or presentation of the shiur. What you won't see are the 25 students who simply didn't show up that day.

Again, this does not speak to anything about Rabbi Sobolofsky's skills as a pedagogue or largesse as a Torah scholar – these are unimpeachable. But it cannot be denied that there is something wrong if 40% of the shiur either doesn't show up or doesn't pay attention.

Rabbi Sobolofsky's shiur is not the only one whose numbers have boomed in recent years. Rabbi Rosensweig also gives shiur to a packed room, and Rabbi Wieder's shiur has nearly doubled in size over the last two years alone, but these and other shiurim contain large numbers of disillusioned or disenfranchised students.

Something is changing, and while we may not be able to pinpoint exactly what or why, we can propose a solution: President Joel and Rabbi Reiss, it's time to appoint a

new Rosh Yeshiva.

The last Roshei Yeshiva appointed were Rabbi Eliahu Baruch Shulman and Rabbi Eliakim Koenigsberg, both in late 2005. Aside from Rabbi Assaf Bednarsh, who is located in Israel, they are the only Roshei Yeshiva appointed during President Joel's time at YU. Rabbi Reiss was appointed as Dean of RIETS, but his appointment was not meant to help address the problem we are identifying in terms of daily shiur.

Three new Roshei Yeshiva in six years does not necessarily represent a slower-than-normal pace, but it simply does not take into account the reality of the current situation in MYP: students are gravitating in certain directions, and the number of students who are unsatisfied with shiur offerings is growing.

Perhaps most disconcertingly, a large number of serious students feel underrepresented given the current body of Roshei Yeshiva. Some students simply do not feel comfortable hashkafically in many of the current shiurim – students whose waning interests have nothing to do with laziness or religious attrition and everything to do with the limited number of places to turn to. They will often be reluctant to turn even to those couple of places either due to social stigmas or because of methodological complications.

It is high time, then, that a new Rosh Yeshiva is appointed, one who can help address these problems. Let him be someone who can speak to this growing demographic of hitherto-marginalized students, someone who brings a new approach for those who have not yet found their place here, and someone whose hashkafa is firmly aligned with that of YU.

Looking for a Process Worthy of our Valedictorian

Since last fall (and well before it, too), this space has often been used to declaim student apathy and berate the administration for the lack of transparency in our college. Unfortunately, as the academic year draws to a close another event compels us to highlight a recurring problem of Yeshiva College. No, we're not talking about registration difficulties or finals headaches (though we feel your pain – we all go through it too). No, it's not a laundry list of standard complaints about the Caf or graduation hoop-jumping. It's the selection process of the Yeshiva College Valedictorian.

Or lack thereof, as far as we know. But before we continue, let's be clear: congratulations to Willie Roth, a fantastic student and upstanding citizen of our school. He represents the class of '10 and deserves the honor. But the issue is how he came to be that representative: if you know, please tell us, because we certainly don't. Nowhere, not in the Yeshiva College Catalog, nor anywhere on the labyrinthine yu.edu, are any sort of qualifications laid out.

Ten years ago, *The Commentator* reported ("YC Seniors to Select Valedictorian," 65.10) that YC Seniors would choose their valedictorian based on a new set of rules: "approximately ten seniors" would be selected, "with the highest GPA [and] with a minimum of 88 credits" (which at some point was bumped up to 94). The idea of an autobiographical packet accompanying the list of candidates was introduced as well, presumably to help seniors make their decisions. "All candidates were asked to list their majors, minors, extracurricular activities, academic honors, summer internships, their most significant academic achievement, and any other special qualifications." Of course, not many people sit around reading *Commentator* articles from last decade. A quick glance at this year's autobiographical sketches made it clear that the candidates were not all working with the same model in mind. The sketches varied wildly in length, focus, and content, and two of the twelve did not even mention the candidate's major. These students are our very best. They have been through a lot here, and have succeeded tremendously. They deserve a clear explanation of what a valedictorian's qualities should be, and what aspects of their own lives they should be sharing with the student body.

Which, of course, brings us to the next question: what exactly are these qualities? The valedictorian is supposed to represent the students, but in what ways? And whatever these qualifications are, who decides if the candidate meets them?

The article ten years ago said that the new guidelines were intended to make the voting process less of a popularity contest. By "formulating nomination and voting procedures," it said, the election would "focus on substantive issues." But there are obviously still issues with the voting process. The qualifications remain as vague as ever, forcing students to fall back on the only thing they can do under the circumstances: vote for the guy they know best. As a case in point, the last three YC valedictorians have all been from the New York Metro area, and all attended Yeshivat Sha'alvim, one of YC's largest feeder schools. No, we're not saying New Yorkers and Sha'alvim students aren't qualified to be valedictorians; we're saying it's strange that for three years in a row they have won a student vote that's not supposed to be a popularity contest.

And that vote takes place, curiously, through the Dean's Office. Why? Because in 2000, then-Dean Norman Adler wanted to make sure that the process guaranteed efficiency, integrity, and honesty. These efforts are admirable - if nothing else, one would hope that the vote for valedictorian is carefully monitored. But an unfortunate side-effect of this 5th-floor Belfer ballot is that a notoriously low percentage of seniors actually turn out to vote. Is there any reason the same ballot is not now online, a shift that increased numbers tremendously for voting on student council positions?

We suspect this process has yet to be seriously re-evaluated due to the relatively low number of students it affects. This, of course, makes practical sense, and yet on a symbolic level we would hope valedictorian selection deserves our institution's attention. Wouldn't it be appropriate if we could take as much pride in the process as we can in the person? Our valedictorians deserve the honor that only a publicly-known, standardized, and clear selection process can bring. It's sad that their final, glorious Yeshiva moments are characterized by yet another procedure rife with ambiguity and student body ignorance.

The COMMENTATOR

500 W 185th Street
New York, NY 10033
Email: commie@yucommentator.com
Telephone: (212) 795-4308
Fax: (212) 928-8637

Editor-in-Chief	Michael Cinnamon
SENIOR STAFF	
Managing Editors	Simeon Botwinick Isaac Silverstein
SECTION EDITORS	
News	Yaakov Miller Benjamin Abramowitz
Assistant Editor	
Features	Jonathan Schwab Tani Cohn Sammy Steiner
Assistant Editor	
Associate Editor	
Opinions	Julian Horowitz Noah Jacobson
Assistant Editor	
Arts and Culture	Rafi Blumenthal Joseph Attias
Assistant Editor	
Sports Editor	Zach Weiner
News Briefs Editor	Michael Hershkop
WRITERS	
Senior Writers	Ari Gartenberg Ariel Peleg Shaya Avner Jeremy Schwartz
PRODUCTION	
Business Manager	Zev Westreich
Online Editor	Elie Freilich
Account Executives	Etan Bluman Jonathan Weitzman Ben Silver Joshua Joseph
Distribution Manager	Eitan Smilchensky
Layout Editor	Chaim Cohen
Copy Editor	Jonathan Druckman Yair Frankel Noam Friedman Josh Ishal Ari Shapiro Michael Siev
Photography	Benjamin Susswein



The Commentator is an independent student publication, funded in part by the Yeshiva Student Union and published throughout the academic year. Views expressed in The Commentator are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial board or the student body, faculty and administration of Yeshiva University.

CONTACT *The Commentator*

Editor-in-Chief	editor@yucommentator.com
News	miller@yucommentator.com
Features	schwab@yucommentator.com
Arts & Culture	blumenthal@yucommentator.com
Opinions	horowitz@yucommentator.com
Advertising	westreich@yucommentator.com

Seven Up, Seven Down

Picks and Unpicks from The Commentator's Editors

Ups

1. YU Boys will be Stern Girls. From acclaimed filmmaker Uri Westrich and starring, among others, two of *The Commentator's* own editors, a spoof on previously 7-Upped Harvard Sailing Team skit "Boys Will Be Girls." Normally, we wouldn't 7-Up such an obvious conflict of interest, but even the uninvolved editors acknowledge the unbelievable hilarity of this up-and-coming YouTube hit.



2. "Death by Caffeine." "How much of your favorite energy drink, soda, or caffeinated food would it take to kill you?" asks this website. Pick your favorite final fuel, input your weight, and find out how much of it you need to die. <http://www.energyfiend.com/death-by-caffeine>



3. The YU Bridgers. A new student club devoted entirely to running the length of the George Washington Bridge, with free T-shirts for participants. As if you need convincing.



4. Dallas Braden's Perfect Game. The 19th in major league history. Let that sink in. 27 straight outs. Fewer than 20 times. In 132 years of professional baseball. Yeah, it's a rare event.



5. Graduation! Woo!



6. The New Constitution's Investment of Power in *The Commentator*. Failed passing or not, we're very honored to be declared the unquestioned official newspaper of the Yeshiva College and Sy Syms School of Business student bodies.



7. The Choice of Simeon Botwinick as the Next Editor-in-Chief. As a frequent 7-Upper, he's a great fit for the position. Everyone knows this is the most important thing in the whole newspaper. And world, come to think of it.



Downs

1. Finals-time Library Congestion. Trying to squeeze in some paper-pounding between the guy hurriedly memorizing biology and the woman cramming psychological theory. The fact that they're each whispering to themselves doesn't help.



2. Overpackaging. I promise you, Amazon, you really don't need to make this such a high security grade. That hard plastic is way more than necessary to protect from travel damage.



3. The Cashier Who Hands You the Receipt with the Change. Unbelievable! These are two separate things! One I will throw away seconds later, one I will keep in my wallet for the time I need the five extra cents for the Three Musketeers bar! They just don't go together.



4. Cold Days in May. No fair, weather. I already put away all my cold clothes and got all mentally into warmness.



5. Impolite Emails. The digital forum does not, contrary to your opinion sir or ma'am, permit you to address me informally, make absurd requests of me, or treat me like I'm your "bro."



6. Microsoft Word's Obsession with the Nearly-Useless "Overwrite" Function. Why would a computer ever accidentally activate this destructive mode? Quick typing becomes a burden, and sentences become totally lost. Does anyone ever really need the "Insert" button?



7. The End of the Michael Cinnamon Era for *The Commentator*. The sobfests aside, a fantastic leader and a wonderful person. Simeon has some big shoes to fill.



News Briefs

The Commentator is happy to reintroduce **News Briefs**, a section which graced the YU newspaper of old. This section will present short, abridged news reports concerning both the Yeshiva University campuses and the greater Jewish community. The fact that these reports are smaller, less in-depth, and not subject to critical analysis is by no means indicative of their importance. On the contrary, the point of this section is to inform YU students of the many key happenings around campus and abroad. It is even possible that, as issues covered in the section progress and develop, *The Commentator* will cover these stories more fully. **CONTRIBUTORS: MICHAEL HERSHKOP, YECHIEL FUCHS**

Charity Basketball Tournament Raises Over \$1,000

The first annual YU 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament benefiting the Koby Mandell Foundation and Haifa Hoops for Kids took place on Lag Ba'omer, May 2, 2010.

In addition to raising over



\$1,100 for these charities, the Yeshiva Student Union, along with event organizers Daniel Somech and Rafi Katz, was also able to bring together over 50 students and alumni, comprising 15 teams, for friendly competition.

Tournament winners are YU alumni Zev Hendeles, David Batalion, and Aryeh Batalion, while Rafi Abergael won the 3-point competition.

Jewish basketball legend Tamir Goodman attended the event as a representative for Haifa Hoops for Kids and gave an inspirational opening speech to the participants.

Golan Heights, the local restaurant famous for its involvement in YU events and charity-drives, also helped sponsor the tournament.

Yeshiva College Welcomes New Medievalist

Yeshiva College is proud to welcome a new faculty member, Professor David Lavinsky, who will be teaching two classes in the fall. One is an upper level class called "Medieval Genres," and the other is a Freshman Honors Seminar on conversion and religious identity.



Dr. Lavinsky is excited to come to Yeshiva. Lavinsky wrote to *The Commentator* staff, "I am quite

happy to have found my way to Yeshiva... I can scarcely imagine a better setting for pursuing questions about what it means to read and to study religious texts. I've also been deeply impressed by the students. At my job talk last year, some of the most perceptive and challenging questions came from students, so I'm eager to return in the fall on a permanent basis!"

Dr. Lavinsky completed his Ph.D. in English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan, joining the department as a lecturer in 2009. Lavinsky's interests include early English literature through Shakespeare and research focusing on medieval heresy, and in particular on a group of English heretics known as the Wycliffites.

In addition to moving to New York, Dr. Lavinsky's summer plans include giving a talk at a conference in Paris, doing research at the Newberry Library in Chicago, and revising his dissertation into a book.

Mogul Jared Kushner Visits YU

On April 26, Jared Kushner, principal owner of Kushner Companies and publisher of the *New York Observer* (and son-in-law of Donald Trump) spoke to YU students. Furst Hall 535 was filled with students dressed in business attire, ready to learn about the business of real estate from a true guru. While enjoying sushi and other refreshments, par-



ticipants found themselves learning much more about Jared than they had initially thought they would. Jared graduated from The Frich School, a familiar high school for many of the attendees. The event, sponsored by Yeshiva University's Real Estate Club and organized by club President Aaron Fishbein and his board, was said to be both "informative and memorable."

Sy Syms Business Plan Competition Winners Awarded

After months of intense preparation, the six finalists for the 2010 Annual Sy Syms Business Plan Competition presented their business plans in front of an assorted audience of students, staff, and a panel of faculty-judges on Wednesday May 5th in Weissberg Commons (Belfer Hall, Wilf Campus). The event, sponsored by The Ira Rennert Entrepreneurship Society and the SSSB Entrepreneurship Society, award-



ed a total of \$3,500 to the placing winners of the competition, \$6,500 less than the \$10,000 that was initially advertised. The top three winners were, respectively: Zev Lapin and Jonathan Farzmand for "Storage Bucket LLC"- a college summer-storage service, Isaac Kasztl, Steven Stieglitz and Hal Douek for "BookXChange"- a college textbook reseller, and Nicole Wigder and Shaina Ishaal for "Just Chillin"- a café featuring self-serve frozen-yogurt and chocolate fondue. Winners Lapin and Farzmand plan to invest their \$2,000 winnings into further developing Storage Bucket which recently won a bid as Yeshiva University's exclusive summer-storage service. Congratulations to the winners and good luck to all the participants in their future endeavors.

Yeshiva University Launches Speakers Bureau

Under the auspices of the CJF, Yeshiva University has recently launched its much-anticipated Speakers Bureau on April 21, 2010. The bureau features more than 100 faculty members from the University's various schools and affiliates who have made themselves available as speakers and panelists on over 150 areas of expertise for lectures, conferences and symposia. The speakers will be available for bookings through-

out North America, and can be contacted via their personalized web sites on www.yu.edu/speakers. In addition to providing detailed information regarding the speakers themselves, the site also provides assistance to help visitors promote their own events as well. Readers interested in more information should visit the website, email speakersbureau@yu.edu, or call (212) 960-5400, ext. 6350.

Heights Art Initiative Takes Off

On Monday night, May 3, a unique workshop took place with a group of select YU students, together with fifth-grade students from the Washington Heights community. Named "The Heights Art Initiative," the event featured the distinguished YU Museum artist, J.T. Waldman. The participants were first introduced to the Jewish story of Purim through illuminated manuscripts and comic books. They were then told to create their own megilla - a story about themselves or their community that explores issues of identity, social justice and living as a minority culture within a larger society. The students left with their own miniature comic books, along with many smiles.

What to Do about Iran's Nuclear Program?

As part of the Dr. Marcia Robbins-Wilf Scholar-in-Residence Program, Yeshiva University held an event on May 3 entitled "What to do about Iran's Nuclear Program?" The event was run by the prolific Professor Bryan R. Daves of the Yeshiva College Political Science Department. Expert panelists included many diplomatic and national advisors, including David Albright, a former nuclear weapons inspector for the IAEA.



The presenters dealt with the concern of how the United States, along with the international community, will respond to the Iranian regime's continued defiance of U.S. demands to halt enrichment

of their nuclear stockpile. The Schottenstein Cultural Center was filled with many interested men and women. That same Monday night, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad spoke at the United Nations, denying his nation's quest to develop nuclear weapons.

Terrorist Attack in Times Square Fails

Faisal Shahzad, now in custody on charges of terrorism, drove a black SUV filled with explosives to Times Square on Saturday, April 30. Had the car-bomb gone off successfully, it would have caused serious damage and casualties.

Shahzad, a Pakistani-American from Connecticut, admitted to rigging the Pathfinder with a crude bomb based on explosives training



he received in Pakistan, and was arrested after authorities caught him on a plane headed for Dubai. Investigators suspect a link with the Pakistani Taliban who may have provided him with the training and funds for his operation.

Botwinick Appointed Next Editor-in-Chief

Commentator Editor-in-Chief and graduating senior Michael Cinnamon has appointed Simeon Botwinick as *The Commentator's* next Editor-in-Chief.

Simeon began his career with *The Commentator* as a staff writer soon after he arrived on campus two years ago. In addition to writing articles last year, Simeon worked as Layout Editor and self-appointed Captions Editor. His hard work and contributions to *The Commentator* only increased with his efforts as this year's Managing Editor.

"Simeon's dedication and commitment to *The Commentator* have been inspiring," said Cinnamon. "I am confident that he will put out a great paper next year."

"Michael's probably right," said Simeon.

From the Desk of the Editor-in-Chief

Some Parting Words on Perspective, Integrity, and Power

BY MICHAEL CINNAMON

The purpose of this article is two-fold. First, I would like to take a bit of space to simply reflect on my experience as Editor-in-Chief, in what will hopefully be a meaningful manner both for me and for anyone who takes the time to read this. Second, and probably more importantly, I wish to emphasize a few different ideas that I, and many others on and off *The Commentator's* staff, have been pondering over the past year. I would especially like to concentrate on three themes that have been important to me as I have had the opportunity to gain some insight into the inner workings of YU in ways that I had not in my previous three years here: the relationship between administrators and students, personal integrity, and the power of the student.

Naturally, students tend to hope for major changes to take place overnight. Most are on campus for three years, few stay for more than four, but almost all are united in their desire that administrators immediately address any problems that arise at YU. This desire for immediate satisfaction is completely normal, and, when it stems from a desire to improve the student condition at YU, even admirable.

However, it is also important for students to realize that “three or four years” is but the blink of an eye in the life of the institution. In this regard, administrators frequently have a very different perspective from that of students. A vice president who has worked at YU for 25 years, a member of the maintenance staff who has been on campus for 10 years, or a faculty member who has just been granted tenure – all of these people have dramatically different outlooks on the YU experience than do students who are in and out in four years or less.

Because of this, administrators tend to reject the lightning-quick approach that students favor when resolving intra-university problems. They often opt to take time to test out many possible solutions before deciding on a course of action, or to conduct lengthy searches to fill positions. Like the student approach, there is nothing inherently wrong with this type of action; moving at a measured pace often leads to a better appointment or initiative. But also like the student approach, it fails to take into account the other side of the coin.

It makes sense to take time to implement changes, but when someone identifies a serious problem and comes up with a six-year plan to address it, or when a search committee forms with the idea of filling a vacancy in two years, it seems as if administrators are saying, “We have found a problem, and are taking measures to address it. Don’t worry, current students – this will be fixed as soon as you guys are out the door!” After a year that saw the influx and outflux of a significant number of faculty, and on the cusp of a year that will see the curriculum review being implemented in earnest, administrators should, at the very least, take pains to keep students updated about these extended processes.

Finding the balance between student and administrative viewpoints can be difficult, but the road does not have to be paved afresh. For students, it may simply require a bit more thought rather than immediately criticizing YU for ignoring student interests. For administrators, there is existing infrastructure in the form of student councils and the Student Life Committee, and existing models for student involvement on search or governance committees. Know that “the other” is not synonymous with “the enemy,” and that the overwhelming majority of each

group has the best interests of YU at heart.

One clear enemy, though, is the lack of integrity in numerous spheres at YU. The most obvious examples of this are explicit breaches of academic integrity, but these are not nearly the only such cases. Students cheating on tests, writing papers for their peers, and other types of plagiarism have been discussed in these pages, but we absolutely must not let this become just another issue that we simply lament and then pass off as irresolvable. Administrators must take actions against these abominable crimes, and we as students cannot stand idly by while these and more are going on right next to us as we sit in class or in the computer bank in the library.

But aside from these breaches of academic integrity are what some of us have termed “lesser-known cheating issues.” These are problems that don’t get as much exposure as the flashier crimes noted above, and therefore might be even more dangerous. Some students who might shy away from blatant academic integrity violations would be less concerned about this latter category. It is worth listing here some of these issues, as they are rarely addressed in a public forum:

1. Reusing lab reports from previous years – this could be completely avoided by altering labs from year to year.
2. Students signing other students into class – this goes on all the time. A student signs in for a friend who is skipping class. I have heard actual accounts of a student raising his hand in class when his name is called for attendance, and then raising his hand again when his friend’s name is called. Again, easy to fix.
3. Unauthorized assistance on papers – faculty must enlighten students as to existing policies so that they know what kinds of aid

are allowed and what kinds are not.

4. Holding classes for lower-classmen at registration – upper-classmen, who get to register first, will register for a class they have no intention of taking so that they can drop it at an opportune moment, sometimes after being paid to do so by a lower classman.

5. Students knowing the content of tests in advance – sometimes, professors who teach at Stern in the morning and YC in the afternoon use the same exam for both classes, and the YC students magically know the content of the test before the professor walks into the room.

Engaging these issues in a productive way during Orientation may help this process, but ultimately a revolution will have to come from students who can no longer bear these breaches, from faculty who respond to reports of cheating by addressing them rather than being insulted or pretending they don’t exist, and from administrators who are willing to finally take a hard line rather than just do the equivalent of writing a strongly-worded letter.

We must not plod along with blatant disregard for these problems. Administrators, faculty, and students alike must take responsibility, and, more importantly, take action. Getting an education must be about more than just memorizing material or applying formulas; it is an opportunity to expand the mind, to break free of these vicious cycles, and to strive not only for academic excellence, but also for academic integrity.

Many of these ideas relate to the final theme I want to emphasize, which is now mostly directed to students (although administrators can read and be proud): The reality that students at YU possess power unparalleled at virtually any other campus. Nowhere else, to my knowledge, can students so

thoroughly interact with faculty and administrators, to the extent that many students here regularly meet with deans, vice presidents, and president. And I am not just referring to student leaders. Faculty, staff, and administrators alike are eager to build relationships with students, but, often, students must make the first move.

Similarly, opportunities for involvement in extracurricular student activities abound, and students are almost without exception extremely willing to show their peers the ropes. Getting involved in aspects of student life can transform the undergraduate experience at YU in ways beyond imagining, from finding a group of like-minded friends to finding a career or life-goal.

Looking back over many of the editorials in *The Commentator* this year, it is clear that these ideas have emerged, not even fully intentionally, as major themes in our coverage this year. We have tried to find the balance between different perspectives, to emphasize the need for personal and academic integrity, and to emphasize the unique opportunities for and power of students at YU.

Working for a college newspaper is very different than working for other kinds of media outlets, and even more so here at YU, especially in terms of the issues and stories we choose to cover and how we cover them. There are many more tensions at play, relationships that one wants to maintain, and so on. I have been privileged to work with a staff comprised of people who have similar feelings on many of these issues, and I think I speak for all of us when I say that if our readers have taken some of these ideas to heart over the year, we have done our job well.

The Commentator wishes
everyone good luck on finals.

Yeshiva's New Mock Trial Team Goes 3-5 at Yale Tournament

Rachel Golian (SCW '10) Takes Home First Place Award

BY SIMEON BOTWINICK

This year's Mock Trial team, the first to represent Yeshiva in six years, went 3-5 in the American Mock Trial Association (AMTA) tournament at Yale University in February, with victories over UConn, Wesleyan, and Dartmouth. But if you talk to several members of the team, their biggest victory of all was forming the team itself.

Adam Fink (YC '12), founder and current team captain, was dismayed when he first arrived at Yeshiva this year, discovering that there was no mock trial team. "I had participated in mock trial during high school," said Fink, "and it was one of the most rewarding experiences that I had. I hoped to continue the experience in college."

When Fink learned that Yeshiva didn't currently have a mock trial team (and after confirming that there was, in fact, an intercollegiate mock trial competition), he began to set the wheels in motion to form a team.

The first step was contacting Yossi Berger, Vice President of YCSA. "Yossi pointed me in the right direction," said Fink. "He put me in contact with certain people, such as Rani Lustiger [the pre-law advisor] and, Barbara Birch [the senior director of alumni affairs]." Berger also promised to foot the bill to gain the team entry into the AMTA. "It looked like a great opportunity for interesting experiences," Berger later explained. "I was on mock trial myself in high school and know firsthand that people can learn a lot from it."

The next step was dealing with the AMTA itself. Initially, it seemed the team would have no problem registering. "The process of joining the league was surprisingly simple," Fink reported. "All I had to do was mail in a \$300 check."

However, Fink soon encountered a major hurdle: all the competitions occurred on weekends, Saturdays included. "Being Sabbath-observant, this would clearly make it impossible for us to join," said Fink. As a last attempt, Fink emailed the league, explaining Yeshiva's situation and asking if an exception could be made, fully expecting to be turned down.

But good news was to come. "They shockingly replied that they would try to help us as much as they could without making any fundamental changes to the setup of the competitions," explained Fink. "Even though they said that we might not be able to participate in every trial, this was way more than I had hoped for, and I was ecstatic." More good news arrived several weeks later, with the league's announcement that they would fully accommodate Yeshiva's religious-observance, and not schedule any of its matches on the Sabbath.

The third step was finding someone to coach the team, a task made more difficult by the fledgling team's tight budget. "I sent numer-

ous emails to Cardozo professors and the Moot Court Honor Society, asking if any of them would like to help coach the Yeshiva University mock trial team," Fink described. "Fortunately, the editor-in-chief of the Moot Court Honor Society, Andrew Gladstein, responded to me that he could help."

The stage was now set for the most important part of the entire

Each week the team travelled down to Cardozo for three-hour practice sessions, studying the fictional case presented to all schools, and perfecting their speeches and direct- and cross-examination techniques. Schools are divided into prosecution and defense teams, each side with its own lawyers and witnesses. The trick of the competition is to take the given facts of the case and to use them to support your side. Participants must therefore have a keen grasp of all the relevant information of the case, as well as a thorough knowledge of courtroom procedure. Smooth speaking and quick thinking are both also musts for any team hoping to contend.

As February inched closer and the competition drew nearer, practices increased to two and even three times a week. "I don't think that it interfered too much with schoolwork," said Fink, "because the competition took place in early February, about two weeks after we came back from our winter break." Luckily so, because during the final two weeks leading up to the competition the team increased its workload even more. "We worked 24/7 then," reported Fink. "We were totally consumed by last-minute preparations."

When February 5th, the first day of the tournament, finally arrived, the team settled in to the New

Haven Hotel for the weekend. The building was a mere ten-minute walk from the Yale University building where the matches were held.

There were a total of 26 schools at the tournament, with only the top eight moving on to the next competition. Yeshiva squared off against four of these schools, playing each twice (once with prosecution and once with defense). Since results weren't announced until the end of the tournament, the team had to wait until then to find out how they had done.

The first match was on Friday, February 5th, against Iona College, and immediately afterward the team had to rush back to their hotel to get ready for Shabbos. Saturday night was a match against UConn, and Sunday featured a doubleheader, against Wesleyan and then Dartmouth. "Between trials, we would argue, scream, laugh, and make slight modifications to our case," said Fink. "In the end, we found out we had gone 3-5."

Fink was pleased with his team's accomplishments, praising everyone's performance. "Everyone performed very well," he said. "It was an amazing experience overall." Especially noteworthy was Rachel Golian's performance, for which she won a first place All Region Attorney Award.

Despite the team's early success, Fink isn't ready to rest on his laurels yet. "Our major weakness was our lack of mock trial experience," he said. "Going into next year, now we know what we have to change."



process: forming the team itself. Fink got the word out by sending several ystuds and sstuds. He wanted between six and ten students for the team, and got his wish, ending up with a team total of seven members: himself, Suzanne Mazel (SCW '11), Rachel Golian (SCW '12), Seth Nayowitz (YC '11), Daniel Spector (YC '12), JoJo Freundel (YC '12), and Arie Gres ('10).

YC To Hire New Dean for First-Time-On-Campus Students

BY MOSES SUTTON

As the current academic year ends and preparations for next year begin, a new development yields hopeful expectations for the fall 2010 semester: the establishment of a new deanship, Assistant Dean for Academic Student Affairs, a position that has recently been filled by Dr. Brian Weiser.

The new dean will be a member of the Dean of Yeshiva College's management team and will consult with individual students on a regular basis to discuss academic and personal concerns. He will function as the primary resource for FTOC (first time on campus) students, whether post-Israel arrivals, "true freshmen" or transfer students, ensuring them a fluid, positive and successful transition into college. Because the new dean will focus

most of his energies on FTOC students, his first real opportunity to shine will be Orientation 2010, a most crucial week for FTOC students. The new Assistant Dean of Student Affairs can expect to work hard over the summer contacting recently admitted students and their parents, reviewing incoming class profiles, creating plans to meet the programmatic needs of the student body's various subsets and, finally, implementing and overseeing orientation. In order to accomplish these goals, Yeshiva College Dean Dr. Barry Eichler felt it necessary to bring Dr. Weiser in as early as May 3 to begin meeting with deans, colleagues, and even students. The new dean must be well acquainted with the deans and Advising Center staff of YC, SSSB and all of the morning Jewish Studies programs, and he has spent most of his time thus far

on the Wilf Campus doing just that. The hiring committee plans for Dr. Weiser to gain publicity among incoming students by the end of the summer, and they wish to seem him act as a resource even for students in Israel, who have not yet arrived on campus.

Prior to accepting his new position at Yeshiva University, Dr. Weiser was Assistant Professor in the Department of History at the Metropolitan State College of Denver since 2004. He is currently on a one-year leave of absence from that position, and whether or not he stays at Yeshiva after next year depends on the mutual satisfaction between the YU Community and Dean Weiser. Dean of Students Dr. Victor Schwartz has expressed positive expectations for the new dean, a man who is generally connected with the Modern Orthodox commu-

nity. When he was a senior undergraduate in Columbia, Dr. Weiser participated in the RIETS Chaver Program at YU in the spring of 1991. Assistant Dean of Students Bradley Karasik fondly recalls first encountering Dr. Weiser that spring; Dr. Weiser was Karasik's NCSY advisor. Dr. Weiser subsequently earned a B.A. and an M.A. from Columbia University, after which he completed a Ph.D. in British History at Washington University in St. Louis. While the valuable academic and administrative experience Dr. Weiser has accrued since then are seen as his most compelling credentials, YU may take advantage of his extensive knowledge of British history too. Dean Eichler has said that some sort of teaching appointment for the new Assistant Dean for Academic Student Affairs is possible; such an

arrangement would not be unprecedented, as Dean Sugarman also doubles as a professor.

President Joel remarked that the new appointment is part of a larger effort to make the interface between the Deans' Offices, the Registrar, Academic Advising, Student Finance and all other facets of the bureaucracy that undergraduate students, especially FTOC students, have to deal with more navigable and "seamless." He noted that moving Academic Advisement into Furst Hall was part of this effort. He expressed his hope that Dr. Weiser's presence will help establish an air of student-friendliness in the Dean's Office and strengthen the interdepartmental relationships among different Wilf Campus offices.

SAAC Making Major Progress

By YAAKOV MILLER

After falling by the wayside for several years, the Student Academic Affairs Committee (SAAC) has been revitalized by a group of enthusiastic students this year. Launched several years ago by Provost Dr. Morton Lowengrub to stimulate and facilitate dialogue with students, the SAAC formerly served as an advisory body that periodically met with the Provost and other administration officials to air academic concerns.

Raffi Holzer (YC '12) served on the committee last year, but felt that it rarely lived up to its potential, and over the summer thought of new ways to create a more productive committee.

"I felt we had to find an independent role to play so that the committee would have a purpose that would keep it alive even when we did not have a meeting with the provost coming up," he said.

The SAAC has spearheaded several initiatives this year and hopes

to have them implemented over the course of the next academic year. One such initiative led by Benjamin Muller was lobbying professors to not hold class during Reading Week. Unfortunately, since in order to remain an accredited institution semesters must be a certain number of weeks long, we cannot legally prohibit teachers from having classes during that week. However, we can certainly discourage it.

Another project proposed by the SAAC members is the publishing of course evaluations and syllabi online. SAAC members Alan Dawidowicz and Jonathan Schwab presented their findings to the Deans and Provost at a recent meeting, suggesting that professors do not necessarily need to publish their entire syllabus but would instead post a detailed course description that would provide ample information to aid suitable course selections. Additionally, it would allow students to purchase books prior to the start of the semester, preventing students from falling behind in their

work from waiting for book shipments.

SAAC member Rafi Blumenthal suggested to Dean Eichler that student course evaluations should be posted online, and Dean Eichler immediately expressed his support for the idea. The first step is to enlist faculty support. SAAC members are rethinking the evaluation system to create a form that establishes different criteria for science classes and liberal arts classes. Next year, with the help of ITS, SAAC intends to launch their website that will eventually host these course evaluations.

Under the continued chairmanship of Raffi Holzer next year, the SAAC hopes to build on its successes and help explore solutions that will create a more friendly learning environment for students. In that vein, Abigail Schoenfeld, Presidential Fellow in the Office of the Provost, sent out several Ystuds calling all interested students to apply to be part of the committee.

Student Life Committee Foresees Positive Changes for Security, Laundry

By BENJAMIN ABRAMOWITZ

Over the course of this past semester, the Student Life Committee (SLC) has worked to advance developments in many different sectors of Wilf Campus life. With SLC Chair Steven Paletz's continued work over the summer and next semester, students can look forward to a number of major changes at the start of next year.

Perhaps most exciting for students from outside the tri-state area, the laundry rooms will be upgraded this summer with brand-new washing machines and dryers. Doesn't excite you yet? Read on. Not only will they be higher-quality machines, but they may accept credit cards instead of just laundry cards. But here is why these new machines might be the coolest thing that ever happened in the world: each machine will be programmed to alert its user via text message when his laundry is finished. Students will also be able to find out online if laundry machines are available. As welcome as it is tech-savvy, this change will surely be

celebrated, even though the cost to use each machine will go up 25 cents.

Another upgrade on the text message front is still nascent, with an unknown introduction date. The SLC is working with ITS and Security to design and implement a system in which students can text Security to sign up for a local or inter-campus shuttle.

Some of the other developments that the SLC has been working towards will seek to streamline the office of Productions and Mail Services. Student may have already noticed one major improvement that the SLC has worked with Productions to introduce: students now receive notifications via email upon receipt of packages. At the start of next year, Productions plans to assign a mail code to each student. The goal is to facilitate the mail distribution process and avert those only-at-YU errors arising from two or more students' having the same name.

The Office of the Registrar has introduced many upgrades this past year, many the result of collabora-

tion with the SLC. These noteworthy changes include Banner's display of how many students have registered for each course and how many open seats remain, in addition to the new option for help via live chat. The SLC hopes to continue working with the Registrar to digitize as much of the system as possible, with the creation of online overtly forms first on the agenda.

Paletz would like to remind the Yeshiva community about a no-longer-recent development: YUWorld.net, the university's official classifieds. He hopes that it will attract more users in the future, as it is a useful tool that most students are unaware of.

Regarding the SLC leadership of the next academic year, Paletz plans to resign after his productive tenure. He is waiting to be contacted by the incoming YSU President about appointing a new chair for next year. "I'm excited about the selection process," Paletz said, "because there are so many great people to choose from."

Battle of the Accountants

By HOWARD AVNER

For weeks, tension has been brewing between Sy Syms School of Business students and administrators. Students worried that, with the addition of the Masters of Accounting program that Sy Syms recently began offering, the school has been taking measures to force accounting students into staying another year at Yeshiva to receive licensing as a certified public accountant.

At an open meeting this past Thursday, a number of students sat down with Provost Dr. Morton Lowengrub, Professor Moses Pava, Dean Michael Ginzberg, and other Yeshiva and Sy Syms administrators to understand the official policies of the University regarding whether Jewish studies credits can affect completion of the 150 credits required by the state of New York.

The meeting also moved to other topics. One of the largest tangents dealt with the importance of an MS in Accounting in general. Professor Pava and Dean Ginzberg were quick to defend their brand-new MS program based on evolving programs in other schools to which YU likens itself.

"I do want to let you know that what is at stake here if everyone starts looking at our program as a three-year-on-campus program - one year in Israel and three years here," said Professor Pava. "In the long run, the reputation of our school is in jeopardy. I don't think we'll be able to compete with schools that we aspire to compare ourselves to or with schools perhaps below our reputation...I think it's going to be very difficult for us to compete, for us to place students." Pava continued to explain that "accounting is about accountability" and how the "kinds of teaching that go on in a Master's program are very different than the kinds of teaching that go on at the undergraduate level." Still, many students were unimpressed and vehemently disagreed.

"They [recruiters from the 'big four' accounting firms] basically expressed to us that it would be better for us to get the 150 credits as quickly as possible," said one senior accounting major. "It was unanimously voted [by those recruiters]

that all of them see no real advantage in students that have gone through a Masters program unless it was in some kind of particular specialty,"

However, Dean Ginzberg responded that there is "a diversity of opinions, and I can't recall any one other than Yoseph Levine [a recruiter for Deloitte and Touche] who says to avoid the Masters....".

Either way, the question of working towards a Master's or Bachelor's was not the main issue for which the meeting was called. Rather, two larger issues seemed to drive a greater stake between the two sides. First, according to a student from the university, credits earned through study in Isaac Breuer College (IBC) will no longer be counted toward the required 150 credits because a university administrator called the NYSED and told them that the credits are not "real" and should not count.

Provost Lowengrub acknowledged the allegation, but responded that "I have checked with everyone. I went to everyone. I cannot find the person who did that. ...[W]e have no intention of calling the State in one way or another."

However, later in the meeting Dean Ginzberg mentioned a call that his department had made to the State. "There were discussions with New York State a year ago to ask them about this, but it was to ask." Presumably, the Dean meant to ask about the new credit requirements being bumped to 150.

According to the NYSED, the department in charge of which credits get accepted, the only credits that are recognized are those on the official Yeshiva University transcript. Again, although one may earn multiple types of degrees from the University as a post-secondary, degree granting regional accredited program, unless those credits make it to the official University transcript, the State of New York will not recognize them. "If Yeshiva puts the credits on the Yeshiva transcript, we will count them. But they don't and they won't and that is the conversation I had with the person from Yeshiva. So you need to speak with them," was the response this reporter received.

Liberal Arts in Israel? The Shalem College Challenge

By SIMEON BOTWINICK

Unlike America, Israel has no liberal arts universities. All of its colleges are vocational, intended to teach job-specific skills only. That is, until April this year, when the Shalem Center formally filed an application to open Shalem College, Israel's first institution authorized to grant liberal arts B.A. degrees.

The Shalem Center was established in Jerusalem in 1994, with the goal, according to its website, of "developing the ideas needed to

guide and sustain the Jewish people in the decades to come." In a recent newsletter explaining the motivation behind deciding to open Shalem College, several challenges currently facing Israel were highlighted. The Center pointed to the fact that Israel's "primary and secondary educational system . . . has descended from world-class to average and below," and explained that Israel has a "system of higher education that prepares young people for careers, but neglects the humanities and exposure to the

great ideas of the Jewish people."

These flaws in the education system have led to a "brain drain" effect, as Israel's top students go



abroad to further their education, and directly contribute to "a weakening commitment, in key sectors of society, to the concept of Zionism and its central role in maintaining the Jewish state."

Furthermore, the skill-specific education in Israeli universities has created a "lack of serious, well-prepared intellectual, cultural, and political leadership capable of responding to new and daunting national and international challenges." Israel's top students are leaving, and those who remain have not been instilled with any particular appreciation for their role as Jews in a Jewish state.

In an article that appeared in Haaretz last year, Eli Podeh, chair of the Islamic and Middle Eastern

studies department at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, recognized Israel's education problems. He opined that Israel has only two options: A) To give up the fight to rank among the world's premier education centers, and rest content with having the most advanced academia in the Middle East, or B) Begin to model its universities after those of the U.S. and other Western countries.

In a recent open letter, Daniel Polisar, current president of the

continues on page 8

On Honors and Distinctions

A Look at the Rules Surrounding the Selection of a Valedictorian and Admission to Semikhah Honors

BY TANI COHN

A look at the “rules” surrounding the selection of a Valedictorian and admission to Semikhah Honors

If you haven’t yet been paying too much attention to your GPA, here’s another reason you should freak out. The Yeshiva College valedictorian is chosen SOLELY on the basis of GPA. Yup, that teenager you tutored pro-bono last spring, that unpaid internship in Washington, D.C. and your father’s deep emotional connection to the Dean won’t help you here. Think of it as your introduction to the real world – don’t take it personally, it’s all about the numbers, sport.

But the problem is that you would never really know this, nor would you be able to look it up somewhere, such as in the Yeshiva College catalog. In fact, the rules governing the selection of valedic-

torian are not written down, at all, anywhere.

THE REAL RULES

In an interview with Associate Dean Fred Sugarman, the process by which the valedictorian candidates are chosen was described as follows, “Candidates are chosen by three criteria: they must have officially filed for May graduation (or have graduated in the prior September or January graduation period) and have at least 94 on-campus credits. Assuming the candidate fulfills these requirements, a committee consisting of Drs. Lee, Bernstein, and Feit, and Dean Sugarman reviews the top thirty or forty transcripts (according to GPA) until they reach 10 or so valedictorian candidates.” He further added, “academic integrity is an issue, [and the names of the candidates] are sent to Deans Schwartz and Reiss

for review.”

To be clear, the committee works by selecting candidates in order of GPA standing, so there’s no actual selecting per-se taking place (save for perhaps Dean Schwartz and Reiss—a separate issue). Rather, the committee just vets out those candidates with high GPAs who do not fulfill the other requirements of on-campus credits and filing for graduation.

BA’AL PEH

Many of these rules, specifically the requirements of 94 on-campus credits, are similar to those which govern the bestowment of Latin Honors. However, many take issue with the fact that while the rules governing Latin Honors are clearly printed in the Yeshiva College catalog, no such written rules exist for Valedictorian. Rather, these rules are entirely oral - until now.

The above issues aside, popularity poses a problem as well, as the valedictorian is chosen by his peers, a practice which Stern College for Women gave up on in the late 80s. Also, the elections take place in the Dean’s office and have a mandated survey, thus almost ensuring an extremely low voter turnout. Some may attribute this to a combination of senioritis or indifference, but one only has to look at the statistics to see that voting online increases voter “turnout” multi-fold.

B’RAIRA?

Another sticky issue involved in the committee’s selection of valedictorian candidates is that of retroactive shiur credit, the practice of receiving college credit for shiur after having completed the course for no college credit. Indeed, some of this year’s valedictorian candidates are known to have gained such

credits, thus allowing them to surpass the 94 on-campus credit threshold. However, they requested and received such credit well before the valedictorian selections began, while at least one qualified candidate is known to have requested and been denied such credit during the selection process.

So, given all the factors, which we now know are involved in the selection of our valedictorian, how much is the distinction actually worth? The cash prize, as reported by the valedictorians of the past two years, is between 100-150 dollars, so monetarily it ranks relatively low among the rewards given out at graduation (some prizes are in excess of 500 dollars, while they are sometimes split amongst more than one graduate). In terms of prestige, many current seniors and juniors

continues on page 14

Two Club Hours, Perhaps Trimesters, on the Horizon

continued from front page

one hour in the week was not enough for the many events that frequently occur on campus, causing many scheduling conflicts and tough choices for students and faculty. It proposed that to solve this problem, a second club hour should be enstated on Tuesday as well, whereby Tuesday and Thursday would follow the same schedules.

This editorial, combined with the discussions already in place, prompted real action. The first discussion with the administration took place in February at an SLC meeting. The only opposition raised was the concern that adding two club hours would push the other classes off too far. Around the Pesach break, YSU President Shloimie Zeffren and SLC Chair Steven Paletz presented the idea to the undergraduate Deans and Provost Dr. Lowengrub. This idea was essentially given approval, but before it can actually be implemented many obstacles still need to be addressed.

Amongst these issues is the concern previously mentioned that both days will end late, as opposed to just Thursday. In addition, the Wilf Campus shares classrooms with some of the University’s graduate schools, and any schedule changes

will have to take this potential conflicts into account. Not only classrooms, but also many professors as well as students are involved in both undergraduate and graduate classes. Furthermore, many professors might have other jobs or obligations and be unable to teach in different time slots than the ones the current schedule allots.

Thus, the matter is not so simple, and many factors need to be considered in any schedule-change effort. Over the summer, the SLC will work to overcome these factors as part of a general restructuring of the current schedule grid. As part of the attempt to construct a less confusing version of the grid, they will also be looking to make space for the potential two club hours, thereby taking care of two projects at once. It is not yet decided how many club hours there will be or on which days they will take place, but Dean Sugarman, Dean Jaskoll, and Steven Paletz will be working hard this summer to make sure that all the different considerations are addressed and a new schedule is in place as soon as possible.

They will not be the only busy ones this summer, as the Provost heads discussions for much larger structural changes in future years. While he would like to see the Club Hour issue addressed, as well as

possibly these our Club Hour synchronized with that of Beren Campus, he is also looking broader afield, even towards a possible move to trimesters as a way of dividing up the calendar year. Students would still be in school for the same number of weeks, but those weeks would be divided up differently, allowing them to take fewer courses per semester. A past suggestion was one in which semesters were divided 5-10-7, as a way to smoothly integrate the holidays into the schedule, but an even trimester looks to be more feasible. Since the Provost has taught under a trimester system before, YU will not have to begin from scratch, but will be able to look at existing models.

One of the goals these plans hope to accomplish will be to promote greater synergy amongst departments, as well as building in research opportunities for the students. The University is currently undergoing a curriculum review, and this provides a good opportunity to rearrange various components of university life, allowing the different departments to work more closely together and create more options for their students. As Dr. Lowengrub said, “The whole idea is to provide the best educational opportunities for our students.”

Shalem College

continued from previous page

Shalem Center, recognized the problems raised by Podeh, but suggested a third option: “To create an independent, privately funded, liberal arts college that will prepare its graduates for a life of service to

Israel, while simultaneously offering a model of academic excellence that will spur Israel’s public universities to undertake far-reaching changes.” This, according to the newsletter, is the goal of Shalem College: a program that inspires its students to become “active citizens

of Israel,” and “committed members of the Jewish people,” while still being “engaged participants in world culture” who can “contribute to the advancement of learning in the humanities and social sciences.”

Reintroducing: the Cafcardometer!

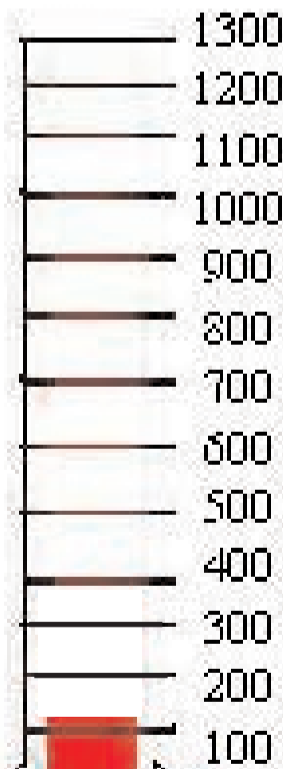
The Cafcard is so easy to use that students sometimes forget how much money they are spending and, before you know it, you have no more money left on your Cafcard.

As Aryeh Rosenbaum (YC’09) said, “Using the Cafcardometer, everybody can go at their own pace, whether you want to run out of money by midterms and mooch your way to finals, or horde all the cash on your card so you can donate \$1,375 to city harvest, or buy the entire inside serving line in May. Because college is all about choices.”

The Commentator says:

The average Wilf Campus student should have a little over 100 CD (Caf Dollars) remaining.

Already out? Try mooching...or stealing. And if you’ve still got loads left, it’s time you met something called Powerade-by-the-box! Or maybe buy out the C-Store’s abundant supply of decades-old toiletries. We can’t wait to see what arbitrary item they refill the space with.



2009-2010: A Year in Review

BY SAMMY STEINER AND
JONATHAN SCHWAB

It was a year of celebrations, of new faces and new facades, a year of visitors and research ventures. But it was also a year of sad passings, of controversies and departures of professors and administrators. And now, as we near the end, let us reflect for a moment on what has transpired through the vantage point of the newspaper that chronicled the contents of the year. Most people will remember the infamous Gay Panel, which was in fact sparked by and in turn fueled an arc of articles in *The Commentator*. But looking back, many other noteworthy events and openings of the year should not be overshadowed.

This year was punctuated by several joyous celebrations: the Chag HaSemikhah, acknowledging the past four years of rabbinic ordinations, the Glueck Center dedication, the renaming of Stern's 245 Lexington building as Stanton Hall, and the awarding of the inaugural Norman Lamm Prize to Chief Rabbi Lord Dr. Jonathan Sacks. Other recent events were clouded in controversy, such as the Purim Chagigah, which unpopularity took place on two campuses for the first time, separating men and women.

Students happily welcomed the many infrastructural and aesthetic

institutional upgrades on the Wilf Campus, including the new Glueck Center, Heights Lounge, Nagel Bagel, and campus-wide Wifi. And accompanying these new digital and developmental upgrades at YC, the administration and faculty have taken strides to revamp the core of the college with results of the four-year curriculum review process in the Fall: six new pilot courses in the General Education categories of "Interpreting the Creative" and "Human Behaviors and Social Institutions," in addition to more Freshman Writing Seminars.

And these curricular and academic changes were made possible by a flurry of new appointments that further bolstered YC's prowess: from within, Dr. Barry Eichler and Dr. Gabriel Cwilich assumed the positions of Dean of Yeshiva College and Director of the Honors Program, respectively, while new arrival James Kahn took over both YC's and Stern's Economics Departments. Unfortunately, some of those new appointments were made necessary by an unusual number of departures for various reasons: Dr. Thea Volpe and the popular Desta Tedros left the Advising Center, Dean Srolovitz resigned suddenly last summer, and Drs. Bruce Hrnjez and Stephen Pimpare, who were denied tenure, will join well-liked professors John Hogan

and Jessica Seessel, all departing Yeshiva. And some departures were even sadder than these: we said goodbye forever to three important figures in our University (and the Jewish world): benefactor Sy Syms, former dean Dr. Norman Rosenfeld, and Jewish leader Rabbi Dr. Bernard Lander.

The *Commentator* was there throughout to report it all, as well as the lighter side of Yeshiva College news and features, including several short term pieces such as *The Shuttle Chronicle*, *The Nefesh B'Nefesh Experience*, *Senior Research Spotlights*, and *Museum Update*, as well as ongoing columns like *Seven Up and Seven Down*, *Featured Faculty*, and the re-institution of the ever popular *Caf-car-dometer*.

In all, it was an exciting year, one full of events and enlightenments, ups and downs, of distinctions and disappointments. No one moment defined it, but the collection of articles and editorials trace the fine arc of what occurred over the course of the past eight months.

Registration Woes

continued from front page

"The latest version of Banner (My YU) promises a lot of great things, like intelligent wait-listing and a modern web-interface," said Tyszler.

In addition, Tyszler, who has worked for Yeshiva's Information Technology Services in the past, discussed the creation of a new student portal system. Such a system would take the place of My YU and add many new features, such as supporting YU's email system and Angel on a single website, all of which currently have separate websites. "It will be a single point of contact for everything you need, and there will be student notifications [on the portal]. It will be a great resource," said Tyszler.

This new student portal is currently being created by ITS, and the registrar plans to adapt its registration website to become a part of it. It still remains unclear, however, when the new registration webpage will become available or when new features will take effect. The registrar's office hopes some new features will be completed within a

year, but, as of now, has no concrete deadline.

In general, the registrar's office aims to transfer most of its workflow to online systems. "We're going to try to create online workflow system that takes processes that happen on paper, the things that make students run back and forth from place to place, and put them on the web. This will give students a window into how processes flow. If a grade change form stops somewhere, you'll at least know where it is," said Tyszler.

Although Tyszler did admit that there still is no official project in place to create this online workflow system, Tyszler's objective, in the meantime, is to see at least ten percent of all paper-based processes go totally electronic within the next year. "There's a lot of need for a modern workflow system. Once we have software, all we need is to give a good look to procedure, convert to electronic, and see where we go from there, and I have high expectations."

This is a Word You Should Stop Using Incorrectly

BY BENJAMIN ABRAMOWITZ

"Literally"

Upon hearing that joke, you "literally died?" I suppose that's possible, but that you're back to tell me the story is rife with significance both biological and theological. Were there "a million people, literally" at your event? Guess you sent out enough Ystuds, huh?

Featured Faculty: Dr. Aaron Koller *If You Like it So Much, Why Don't You Teach There?*

BY JONATHAN SCHWAB



For Dr. Aaron Koller, the broad definitions and possibilities of working in the field of Bible Studies combine with the unique qualities of this institution to make his job extremely enjoyable. Koller has been at Yeshiva University for 11 of the last 13 years, though only for the last several of them has he been at the front of the classroom. One of the few professors here who received his B.A. from Yeshiva College, Koller is also the most recent graduate of the college to hold an assistant professorship in YC.

This semester, Dr. Koller is teaching a section of Intro. to Bible, along with a Friday course in Amos and Hosea. In addition, he says, he enjoys teaching several IBC courses. Beyond his pedagogical positions, he pursues a range of research subjects, from Phoenician feasting practices (a lecture he gave at a conference in Haifa recently) to the politics of the book of Esther and rabbinic midrash. These topics, along with other esoteric foci ("some are boring," he warned), such as his dissertation on Ancient Hebrew words for cutting tools, allow him to pursue his interest of using the Bible as a entry point for understanding the context around it. The questions he asks in his courses are: "what makes this [the text] important or interesting? What did it mean in its own context, and what did it mean to later readers?" This will be especially relevant to students in his Fall Five Megillot class, in which he hopes to explore the Biblical and post-Biblical readings of Shir HaShirim and what makes it a religious work.

In addition to the Five Megillot course, Koller will be teaching a class on Daniel, which he says will also present a challenge, not only because of its language, but because "it's a different kind of book than we have in the rest of the Bible." Teaching a cycle of text classes hasn't gotten stale, Koller says, "because each time I get to rethink and approach the texts in new ways. For me it probably takes a couple of times of teaching a book before really feeling like I have a handle on it, and by then there's a new approach I want to take."

The students of Yeshiva College, Koller says, are "definitely of a very

high quality." The two unique challenges of Yeshiva are the time-crunch all students feel and the fact that in Jewish Studies the students have seen many of the texts before and already have opinions and beliefs about them. While this is difficult to overcome, Koller says that it gives the students a unique point of view on the texts, and that their religious attachment to the texts "makes it easier for the conversation to overflow the bounds of the class."

The College has changed much since his time, Koller says, especially the Jewish Studies Department, which has increased incredibly in size and academic depth. The support of research and teaching from the department and from the administration, he says, has been instrumental in these changes, which have also allowed it to be more student-friendly and less bureaucratic, even though one might think the size would decrease the personal nature of it.

"Slow it down," Koller urges students seeking to improve their undergraduate experience. "Stay four years and take time to find and do what you like. There are so many interesting things to do in college, and there may never be another chance like it." He quotes advice he got from one of his graduate school professors, another YC alumnus currently working here, Dean Barry Eichler. Dean Eichler emphasized that a little extra time now in some sense makes little difference later. "Two years may seem like a huge amount of time now, but in the long run, it's much less than you think," he said. "There are some opportunities to learn and do that will just never present themselves again."



Shavuot Sameach
from
The Commentator!

A Dilemma of Rabbinic Proportions

By JULIAN HOROWITZ

Those of us who will have the unique pleasure of dressing up in black gowns for this year's graduation ceremony will, in celebrating this milestone, have finally reached the point where we are no longer encouraged to provide comical answers to those who question our career goals. The aspiring firemen, cowboys, and astronauts of yesteryear have grown into the aspiring lawyers, doctors, and accountants of today, and those of us who haven't yet decided what we want to do when we grow up are beginning to get concerned looks from increasingly-anxious parents.

We are all entering a phase that social commentators have begun to call "The Odyssey Years," which is, according to a New York Times op-ed by that name, the period of indeterminate length between the turbulence of adolescence and the stable maturity of adulthood. My personal nervous anticipation of this period derives from a simple question, to which I'm not sure there is a simple answer: who pays the bills?

Full-time graduate school has become something of a sine qua non for many higher-level professions. Even if student loans can help

defray the absurd costs of tuition and supplies, upon whom does the burden of paying our living expenses fall? Are our parents expected to continue to support us through our twenties? Allow me to use the RIETS semikhah program as an example of this dilemma, both because it is immediately relevant to myself and because I find it a particularly compelling illustration.

With few exceptions, the first year of semikhah begins in the fifth year after high school graduation, when most students are twenty-two going on twenty-three. Including this first year, RIETS mandates three years (six semesters) of "full-time study," which entails, according to a fact-sheet published by the RIETS office, an expectation "to learn in Yeshiva, at a minimum, from Sunday through Thursday from 9:00AM to 3:00PM and on Friday morning" (emphasis in original). This course of study must be supplemented by professional classes (offered on Friday mornings) and a corequisite of Kollel study, a Masters Degree program, or classes in Jewish thought. Finally, during the fourth year of semikhah, a student – typically 25 going on 26 – is to combine his education with fieldwork, internships, and professional

seminars.

While RIETS tuition is next to nothing, and stipends of several thousand dollars are available to Kollel and graduate students, these stipends rarely meet the cost of living in New York City. Add to this the implicit and explicit pressure exerted by Jewish custom and community towards early marriage, and the pittance of a Kollel salary will rarely go far enough to feed two (or, b'shaah tovah, more) mouths.

The situation described above seems to apply equally to many other graduate programs: unless Mom and Dad (or Mom-in-law and Dad-in-law) are willing to pay our bills until we're 25, getting through graduate school can be a very tricky process. It's something of a Catch-22: you can't pay your way through grad school until you get a good job, and you can't get a good job until you've finished grad school.

But the situation at RIETS is slightly more complicated than that at the typical grad school. Each student who registers for a semester at RIETS must sign a form guaranteeing that he will pursue no outside employment. Not only is there no time in the day for a job, but those who would like to make time are barred from doing so. Even most of

the local day school kollels are, officially, off-limits until the fourth year of semikhah. While this contract is often honored in the breach, I'm not sure how those who designed the RIETS curriculum expected their students to make ends meet. Effectively, these policies have all but doomed future Modern Orthodox clergy to the Kollel lifestyle of other Orthodox communities (referred to jokingly by one Israeli educator as being a "professional son-in-law") which so many of us frown upon.

Jewish tradition, according to a phrase recited by praying Jews every day, teaches us that Torah study is the equivalent of all other commandments. As a two-time participant in Yeshivas Bein Hasemesterim, YU's winter break full-time learning program, I can understand the power and potency of the full-time, single-minded pursuit of one goal, especially when contrasted with the mind-numbing hecticness and distraction of the college semester. And I applaud those who secure the resources to pursue this type of study after they've graduated college. But I simply don't understand how an educational system can prohibit grown men of 23, 24, and 25 years

from supporting themselves. It's no secret that the upper-middle-class types who attend YU have things a bit easier than most, but is a culture of constant taking and reliance on others really something we want to support?

As usual, the world proves me wrong: millions of people have earned graduate degrees without independent wealth, and this will continue despite my protestations. Nonetheless, I would encourage the administration of our own graduate schools, specifically the one that I would like to attend, to consider this dilemma in formulating their policies. Details would need to be hammered out: perhaps an extra two or three semesters should be required of those who maintain jobs during the academic year, or perhaps RIETS should offer credit for intensive summer study. Either way, I ask that I'll be able to pay my own rent by the time I turn 25.

Julian Horowitz served as Opinions Editor for the past two years. In all honesty, writing for The Commentator was one of his favorite things to do.

Philosophy or Sophistry? A Reaction to Dr. Phillip Kitcher

By JESSE SHORE

Towards the beginning of the current academic school year, Phillip Kitcher, esteemed philosopher and John Dewey Professor at Columbia University, delivered a lecture in honor of Yeshiva University's opening its Center for History and Philosophy of Science. Ostensibly, his lecture was to focus on the significance of Darwinian philosophy. In reality, however, Kitcher had a very different agenda. After a brief citation from chapter 14 of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, he began to apologetically speculate about the natural development of religion. The rather ambivalent sentence of Darwin's, "Light will be thrown on the origin of man and his history," was used to springboard the topic from Darwin's contribution to modern philosophy into a controversial lecture on the origins of faith in God.

"While I don't think one can reasonably accept the literal truth of religious doctrines," Kitcher asserted with a chortle—"I think that there's more to religious practice than that, and that aspects of religion remain important." Religion and ethics, he continued, are a crucial and ongoing development of normative behavior, fostering the development of the human species. Taking the stance of a secular

humanist, Kitcher preached that religious doctrine was a byproduct of natural selection.

All of this was interesting enough and it felt good to get this man's acknowledgment that my religion contributes to the development of our species. Who doesn't want the approval of a man with a British accent? However, the content was mostly composed of his own musings, and the alacrity with which he drew a copy of the *Lex Talionis* from his pocket, (a code of retribution whose original source was traced to the Code of Hammurabi) in order to illustrate the Documentary Hypothesis, had turned the air rotten with ridicule. It is much easier to pontificate, and to sound quite impressive and thoughtful, than to spend time rigorously arguing a point and to allow for a scholarly rebuttal. Here was a man of esteem, a secular man surrounded by a bunch of oddball theists. What an opportunity for him to be enlightening and controversial and to receive our respect! I don't blame this man. I would probably act the same way were I in his shoes. A compelling argument was lacking, though, despite the intelligent accent. Sometimes I wish I could speak as eloquently as Kitcher. Darwin might have been an eloquent speaker, but he sat the evening out. I suspect that Kitcher

had not allowed Darwin to speak for himself.

His preachings received a gentle challenge from the audience. A question was posed concerning the employment of faith in every pursuit, whether empirical or spiritual. Cleverly borrowing from a pragmatic outlook on rationality, the audience member (and it was not yours truly) had inquired how science could be divorced from "emotional connectivity," and that one could just as easily claim that speculation about the origin of the human species is based on a "leap of faith" when one declares our genesis to be in the absence of a Creator. This is no different from one who employs faith in their assertion of a first cause, for we can read into the biological and paleontological evidence whatever we like. To claim that evolution must be inherently atheistic is not prudent at all, at least not by an agnostic's standards.

Kitcher's response was very close to the following: "Alright, I am prepared to take a leap of faith, as you suggest, and to accept a religious doctrine that proclaims there is a Creator. The problem is, which religious doctrine should I accept, and in which direction should I leap? Should I leap towards the Old Testament, or towards Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, as the source for truth? You

see, as science must correct itself, as it continues to develop, so too will ethics and religion."

Indeed Kitcher had, unwittingly, acknowledged the potency of the question. He had in effect agreed that declarations of ethical and religious truths are on equal footing with declarations of science and empirical investigation. It could be that Kitcher was unaware, but several decades ago there was, in fact, a slew of American academics who argued on behalf of the political points and racial observations discussed in *Mein Kampf*. *Mein Kampf* had been a reasonable and compelling doctrine for part of the American intelligentsia in the last generation.

Well, if it is true that according to natural selection the flaws in human society are cast by the wayside, then the passing of time will judge whether the said truths from either *Mein Kampf* or the Old Testament will be preserved and from which book those truths will be lovingly recalled and cited for progeny's sake. For Kitcher had placed these books in a natural context and—in doing so—he had made them natural competitors. Given the seniority of the Old Testament (and the claim to its authorship), and the number of people in the world who make reference to the Old Testament and its

commentators, in comparison with those who cite from *Mein Kampf*, I leap in the direction of the former.

It is unlikely that Kitcher had left the auditorium that night with the vague awareness that he was being every bit as dogmatic as those he was attempting to attack. On the topic of Darwinism, he had left the audience wanting. From my own browsing, there seems to be a lot more that Darwin discusses in his writings in addition to that small, ambivalent sentence concerning the origins of man and his history. Perhaps the next time Kitcher comes to Yeshiva University, he will enlighten us on these other things as well. I don't want to give you the wrong impression of Phillip Kitcher, so make no mistake: Kitcher brought up some interesting points and speaks with an eloquence of the highest order. He reminded me of the philosopher David Hume's very intelligent observation: "Eloquence, when at its highest pitch, leaves little room for reason or reflection; but addressing itself entirely to the fancy or the affections, captivates the willing hearers, and subdues their understanding."

Fourteen Maccabeats Stuck in an Elevator A First Year in Review

BY NOAH JACOBSON

My eyes were trained intently on the mirror before me as I methodically formed a Double Windsor with my skinny black tie and day-dreamed about the extravagant night that lay ahead for me: images of ornate ballrooms, delectable appetizers, and fine aged wine practically on tap ran rapidly through my mind. I was awakened from my reverie by the buzz of my cell phone – it was from one of the other fourteen Maccabeats cordially invited to perform at the Waldorf=Astoria Hotel for Yeshiva University's annual Chanukah Dinner, and he was growing impatient. I fastened the tie up to my spread collar, threw on my suit jacket, and headed quickly for the door.

Oh, what a night it would be.

The fourteen of us sang and laughed our way down the length of Manhattan, as our fellow subway-riders looked on in initial bewilderment, and eventual endorsement. Our voices all warmed up and our pulses beating fast, we entered the stunning Waldorf foyer and were directed to the fourteenth floor where the pre-dinner awards ceremony was already in progress. Too energized to endure a sit-down, formal ceremony of any sort, we positioned ourselves next to the elevators and began running through our extensive repertoire. As people began flocking towards the elevators to descend to the main ballroom, we serenaded them with song after song.

Our caroling was a hit, just as it had been on the subway ride, only now our spectators were dressed in finely-tailored tuxedos and exquisite ball gowns. We maintained our positions, snapping our fingers and clapping our hands, as group after group filed into the elevators. Finally, it was time to abandon our post. As we launched into our final number, "Bad Day" (a song choice made retroactively ironic by ensuing events), we filed into the elevator in rapid succession – all fourteen of us, with a few other camera-toting spectators to boot.

Unfortunately, the angelic harmonies and major chords overpowered the desperate plea of the elevator attendant for us to stop entering the elevator, for we had reached maximum capacity. Even as the elevator began to give a bit and twitch in a downwards direction, most of the singin' Maccabeats did not notice. But when those twitches evolved into a sudden drop, when the elevator doors abruptly slammed shut and a plume of smoke appeared – we all finally got the hint.

What had been, just a moment before, an elevator full of jolly tunes and big smiles was instantaneously reduced to a solemn space of whispered silence and worried faces. Suddenly, a crackly voice

filled the space.

"This is security, what happened?" said the voice emanating from the speaker on the elevator panel.

"The kids...they came in too quickly...there was nothing I could do," said the flustered attendant.

"Okay, we're going to lower you down. Sit tight."

And so began our slow descent down fourteen floors of the world-famous Waldorf=Astoria. Some cracked jokes to pass the time. Some snapped pictures and took videos on their cameras, viewing the whole ordeal as a welcomed opportunity to bolster the content of their Facebook profiles.

For me, being crammed into the elevator only seemed to make me more on edge, and exacerbated my already heightened stress-level. The Chanukah dinner came at a pretty hectic time for me. In the beginning of the year, I had written an article entitled "A Sincere Apology." In it, I conveyed the message that, in short, all was peachy in YU. No problems with registration, with the workload, or even with handling the daunting task of balancing Torah and Madda. Peaches. My friends really gave it to me – they claimed I was being naïve, that I should have waited until the end of the semester to write such an article. But I defended my position, and kept a smile plastered on my face and optimism in my heart.

But as I sat in an increasingly warm elevator, developing an acute case of claustrophobia and wondering if I would ever get out, I feared that my friends were right all along. Finals were on the horizon, and I wondered how I'd ever cram that much material. It was becoming increasingly harder to learn effectively with the obligations that my classes and extra-curricular activities put on me. And even before the semester was up, I was already in the process of picking classes for the following semester. I felt almost buried in YU and its struggles. The smile had withered. I feared that this elevator fiasco was merely a microcosm of my entire YU experience. A great beginning, filled with song and joy, optimism and happiness – which would, inevitably, turn out to be a tortuous, drawn out descent to the pits.

Yikes.

Rabbi Akiva Tatz, in his book *Living Inspired*, cites Rambam's analogy of a man walking through a forest in a raging storm. All is dark. He knows not how to proceed through the thick of trees and shadows to make it back home. Suddenly, a bolt of lightning flashes through the night sky, and in one split moment, all is perfectly clear. A moment later, all is dark once more, but the person has "seen the light," and he is confident in his ability to traverse the forest, the

clear picture of that moment of light still lucidly emblazoned in his mind.

It is these bolts of lightning, these infrequent moments, that we must be constantly on the lookout for. It is these moments of light and clarity that reaffirm that the long, dark, and often scary path that we choose for ourselves is worth it. It is they that give us the confidence to make it through.

I remember when a friend of mine, before the school year, had revealed his intent to go pre-med. His friends all teased him that he'd never make it. We had heard plenty of stories, we reminded him, of wide-eyed, naïve guys who talked a big game, and with the first 50-page reading of the chemistry books, dropped that major like it was hot. It was survival of the fittest, and we were pretty sure that he wasn't fit enough.

Too our surprise, however, he was persistent to no end. It didn't come easy to him. It was no cakewalk. Week after week, I'd walk aimlessly into the Heights Lounge and see him in the same spot, buried in textbooks and papers. He was always there. It wasn't as though I had nothing to do, but compared to him, midterm week was like spring break. And I let him hear it, too - I constantly teased him for not having a moment to breathe, for leading such a seemingly miserable existence.

He didn't waver.

Six months later, he is going strong. Sure, the road was difficult. Sure, it seemed near impossible at points. But he was able to see the big picture. He was able to understand that the difficult journey would be made worth it with an understanding that the goal was a noble one, a worthwhile one, and one that would make the whole process seem endurable, even if only in hindsight. He learned so much – not only in physics and chemistry, but about himself and what he was and is capable of.

The second "moment" to which I refer did not occur in YU at all, but back home in Texas. I went back to Houston for a weekend in February for a very momentous occasion – my father was making a Siyum Hashas, a celebration of the completion of the Talmud. It was a truly wonderful weekend, to be able to celebrate with him and mark the completion of a seven-and-a-half-year process.

On the plane ride back to New York, I recall thinking about my time at home and about my father's monumental achievement. My father did not grow up religious. He didn't have fancy day school education and certainly didn't have two years to study in Israel, as I had. He

continued on page 13

The Other Lead Roles The Many Travails of YCDS

BY YEHUDA SAFIER

"There! That's how I feel!" Max Prince yells as he punches a hole in the wall of the writing room of his hit TV show. Max Prince is of course played by the sophomore actor Tani Isaac, and the scene is from Yeshiva College Dramatics Society's (YCDS) Spring production of *Laughter on the 23rd Floor*, written by Neil Simon, directed by Lin Snyder. On stage, his employees look on in bewilderment and fear as Max Prince's hand disappears through the dry wall. The audience is wondering if he really hurt himself. "Why did he do that? Did that hurt?" they whisper among them-

assembled together piece by piece.

My point is that audiences only see the polished product, a week's performances of YCDS' fall and spring productions, while this product is, in fact, a result of months of hard work and preparation by a number of people, only a fraction of whom get to be on stage receiving accolades. While the actors do put in a tremendous amount of effort putting on a play - countless hours spent rehearsing in the theater, memorizing hundreds of lines, and getting into character - they shouldn't be the only ones on stage taking a bow and receiving applause at the end of a show.

Like Transformers, there is more



selves. On stage, the characters are wondering the same thing, or so it seems. In reality, this was no surprise to them. Rehearsing this scene hundreds of times to the point of near perfection enables the actors to react so realistically. As a matter of fact, over the course of six nights "Max Prince" put his hand through a wall 24 times. 24 times Tani sacrificed his hand for the benefit of the crowd.

Hold it! Before we continue with the show, let me ask you this. Would this scene be any different if, let's say, the wall was not there, the lights were not on, the characters were not clad or placed in the right spot on stage, the stage was not set with objects that resembled what an office would look like in the 1950's, the play was not publicized, or even perhaps the seats were empty? Instead of a popular and entertaining play, there would be a bunch of guys walking around aimlessly, stark naked in the pitch black, with no one to watch them (which I suppose wouldn't be too bad as they wouldn't be wearing any clothing). These other details are important. And a play is not like a Tetris puzzle - things just don't happen to fall into place with a twitch of your finger. Instead, putting on a production is more of a hammer and nail process, in which each aspect is carefully thought out, calculated and finally

to producing a play than meets the eye. There are numerous supporting staff fixated around the show to ensure its success, and without them the performances would not have been the same. Just to list a few, there are [deep breath]: the President and Vice President of YCDS, Productions, Lighting Design, Lighting Engineer, Operations Manager, Sound Engineer, Box Office Manager, Assistant Box Office Manager, Creative Director, Properties Manager, Properties, Costumes, Director, Stage Manager, Set Designer, Assistant Operations Manager, Treasurer, Secretary, Alumni Affairs, Photography, House Manager, Assistant Creative Designer, Salespeople and



Dramaturge (look it up if you never heard of it before. Not many people have). All these characters play an essential role in making *Laughter on the 23rd Floor* jump off the script

continued on page 12

Robbery On Campus

By BEN RECCA

While, sadly, cheating and dishonesty have a fairly well-established presence on our campus, rarely are we ourselves the victims of these crimes.

THE BACKGROUND

Thursday afternoon had finally arrived, and my workload was light and avoidable. But I still had some class to sit through, so I headed to the nearest vending machine for some instant energy.

Yes, I knew I would be overcharged—85 cents for a candy bar—but I also knew you can't put a price on Nestle chocolate. I was ready to part with my dollar and watch my winnings fall from above as I attempted to endure the remainder of my day.

THE STORY

The candy bar fell as expected, but that “dingdingeling” noise that we're so accustomed to hearing didn't follow. I was pretty sure I had inserted a whole dollar; in fact I don't recall ever using exact change in my life. I looked back up at the price positioned under the item and there was no mistaking it: it read “.85”.

The machine must be broken, I reasoned. Besides, 15 cents won't get me too far, especially in the City. But I pressed those battle-ship coordinates again, only to find the little LED screen flash “1.00”.

Was this a joke? Was I on some sort of hidden camera show?

I checked other items and they too were being sold at a higher programmed price than the advertised price. The plot thickened.

I had class, but my unfaltering scientific curiosity donned its hat and trench coat and lit its pipe; this had to be investigated. Professor, if you're reading, I apologize for missing class and hope you understand.

Now, just so we're clear, this was no longer about 15 cents. This was about principle. I don't get outraged much, nor do I have a particularly confrontational personality, but my blood was hot. I had no idea how long this fraud had been going on for nor how much money had been amassed from those who frequented this machine, but my parents raised me right and I knew this was wrong.

I think what angered me deep down about this little scam was that the very institution that preaches the paramount importance of total honesty and integrity (are we an institution that does this? I thought we were an institution that consistently looked the other way and allowed cheating to pass by unpunished...) especially in matters of business dealings had been taken advantage of as the target of inexcusable fiscal deception.

Wait. Maybe I'm overreacting, I reckoned. I don't know who these vending machine people are, nor do I know their intentions. They may be decent people and this could have been an isolated, honest mistake of which they are simply unaware. After all, we're all human; I've made more mistakes than I'd care to admit. Yeah, to raise prices without telling anyone until it's too late is unethical, but they can only be blamed in proportion to their awareness of the matter.

I looked for a number to call on the vending machine (after first finishing my Butterfinger, of course) but it was nowhere to be found. I walked down to the Registrar, because they are always so helpful, and told them the story. They were also in the dark as to who ran YU's vending machine operation. They had a good laugh, though, over my unwarranted irritation over a mere two coins. I tried to explain, but stopped once I realized it was the Registrar.

They did helpfully point me to the security booth in the Furst lobby, suggesting that maybe someone there would know.

Ah, Burns security. You have never let me down, and this time would be no exception. The guard, though also confused by my apparent frustration, kindly informed me that all candy machines found at YU are operated exclusively by one company, so other ones might have some contact information. This man has my unconditional vote for a promotion to Lieutenant.

I went to the Rubin basement and, as the security agent predicted, there was a little golden sticker with two phone numbers on it. I copied them down and walked outside, ready to get to the bottom of this.

Both numbers were out of order. How convenient.

Obstacles like these feed a fiery passion rather than smother it into a dying ember.

I went up to Morgenstern Hall and found, to my delight, a vending machine with different contact information on what seemed to be a newer sticker. I called the numbers from those vending machines and they went through. My mental alertness was heightened, my posture tall. And for the sake of honesty, I tell you that for a second I felt like Jack Bauer.

The conversation went as I secretly expected though morally dreaded. I filed the complaint and reported the machine, but the man on the other end of the line was stubborn.

To paraphrase:

“Well, if the students would type in the code first they would see what the price actually was.”

“True, but why would anyone assume they are being misled by a candy machine? Countless people

are being cheated here. Even if they would have bought the candy bar for a full dollar, you still can't advertise one price and charge another. This is highway robbery!”

He gave me another number to call and I retold my story.

Again, to paraphrase: “Ok, I understand and appreciate the call; we will fix it.”

“Thank you. Now obviously time is of the essence here because if—beep.” He had heard enough.

This story happened over two and a half weeks ago and the prices behind that Plexiglas have still not changed. Now it's been three weeks from this past Thursday, so it's been over three weeks already.



NOW WHAT?

I asked the same thing, and still don't really have an answer. I sincerely hope I don't need to convince any of you the deplorability and unethical nature of this profiting strategy. Cheating a lot of people a little is no worse than cheating one person a lot. What's more, if their profits on each item are small, which presumably they are, they could be doubling or tripling their earnings with this ploy.

Stealing has many forms, and from Ponzi schemes to false advertising they all must be stopped. False weights and measures are considered an abomination by our religion, a toevat Hashem Elohecha (Deuteronomy 25:16).

I believe it's appropriate for YU to enforce its zero-tolerance policy for cheating, and to dismiss this company, as it would any student, from our campus.

Ben Recca is a Junior at YC majoring in chemistry.

Got What it Takes to be a YCDS Guy?

continued from page 11

and into the theater.

There were a total of 42 members involved in Laughter on the 23rd Floor, only nine of whom were actors. That means that for every actor there are 4.7 other people involved in creating the play. Let's take a peek behind the curtain at some of the other facets that come into play while putting on a play.

After settling in your seat and reading all the fascinating bios about the actors and the rest of the staff, the show begins. First, the sounds of 1950's style music fill the air (compliments of our incidental music composer, Dr. Barbara Blatner), then a soft glow emanates from the lights flooding the stage. No, it's not on a timer; rather, there are maestros behind these effects, known as the Lighting Engineer and the Sound Engineer. Every per-

Rabbi Dr. John Krug, has over 40 years experience in YCDS (that's over 80 shows!), in addition to a long laundry list of other impressive theatrical positions on his resume, including Assistant Producer of the off-Broadway hit *The Fantasticks* for 28 years, and other television and film productions. As a result of his efforts and expertise, deep reds reflect off the stark white walls and pale whites are shined, oriented and displayed in an artistic fashion all for your viewing pleasure.

But the lights remain dim without the supervision of the all star Stage Manager, Ely Winkler. Winkler, a former actor, now plays a role behind the curtains. As the stage manager, he is responsible for the production, technical assistance as well as acting assistance. “There is so much work that goes in to every show,” Ely says, “lights, sound, props, costumes, tickets, ushers and of course actors- and my



formance, they cram into a room in the back of the theater, surrounded by light and sound boards. With impeccable timing and a flick of the wrist they execute the desired light and sound effects.

If not for the efforts of the Lighting Designer, however, the Lighting Engineer's work would be near impossible. Yes, you guessed it; the Lighting Designer...designs the lights. But don't let the name fool you; this is not a task for the electrophobic (fear of electricity) or hypsiphobic (fear of heights). The Lighting Director must climb a rickety ladder to the ceiling of the theater and manually move, change, and position each light fixture to a certain spot, often unplugging and plugging wires the length of large snakes. Such a minute slip of the hand can cause the light to be completely out of focus, rendering his efforts negligible. He deals with the mixing and matching of all different colors to produce the desired hue, often setting the mood for the upcoming lines.

YCDS' Lighting Designer,

job is to make sure all of these come together successfully by opening night.” He's the conductor at a concert, orchestrating this performance with a click of his walkie talkie instead of a flick of his baton, coordinating the many intricacies of the play, and ensuring that each one is running smoothly. He plays the role of mediator between the technical assistance and the board, as well as between the actors and their Director. Finally, he plays store supervisor, taking inventory, checking budgets and ensuring that every facet of the play is running smoothly, down to the fresh bagels and coffee in the opening scene.

Now that we are familiar with some of the ingredients needed to produce a play, let's combine them. What do you get when you take 42 dedicated people; 24 fists through a wall; six days of performances; 4 months of hard, arduous work, a packed house; and an applause or two? It's just another average semester for YCDS.

Puts your stomach in knots, doesn't it?

A Review of Aryeh Kunstler's 'Our Eyes Are On You'

By HARRY PORTMAN

Aryeh Kunstler's long anticipated sophomore solo release, "Our Eyes Are On You," is a sheer pleasure to listen to. It's been three years since the release of Kunstler's debut album "From The Depths," and after participating in the recording and production of a few other projects, such as his brother Dani's "V'Havienu 3" and Yaakov Chesed's "The Journey," Kunstler has finally put all his energy into creating a resoundingly successful follow-up to his first album.

The first song, called "Hashem Sifosei," is a very welcoming greeting that not only sets the stage for the album by asking G-d for the ability to sing onward, "Open up my lips / So that I can sing Your Praise / I'm overflowing now / Open up my floodgates," etc. , but also sets the tone for the rest of the eleven tracks.

Immediately, the listener is treated to the familiar, distinctive sound of Kunstler's electric bass and guitar along with some electronic notes that signal Kunstler's experimentation that prevails throughout. "Our Eyes Are On You" is not "From the Depths 2," but Aryeh Kunstler 2.0. Kunstler manages to take all the elements from his first release that were well received , and transcend the inclination to create "simply more of the

same" by modifying and enhancing his established style to reinvent a newer, fresher sound.

The variety of musical genres spanning the album attests to Kunstler's willingness to try new things, take risks, and still achieve impressive results. From the more typical pop rock of "Hashem Sifosei," to the easy listening of "B'shem Hashem," the wistful ballad "Nachamu," the edgy hard rock of "Gam," the 80's pop sound of "Mi Kamocho," and even the jazzy "Split The Sea," Kunstler fashions new and different sounds with every song.

Musical influences from all sorts of styles have clearly inspired Kunstler to build off of his first album in many new and distinct directions, each with its own auditory flavor. Kunstler mixes meaningful English lyrics with selections from verses along with Hebrew-only songs to create a blend that distinctly identifies the style he created on "From The Depths." From the more standard "VaAnachnu Lo Naida" to the very original "Lishuascha" (which tells of Samson's last prayers during his final struggle against the Philistines), Kunstler repeatedly surprises and delights his audience.

The songs themselves are not only performed well, but the arrangement of tracks is also masterfully done. Each song is a differ-

ent experience, and Kunstler manages to set contrasting styles next to one another in such a way that provides a successive set of changing moods that flows nicely throughout the duration of his musical journey. The album starts off strong, accentuating Kunstler's well-known strengths in rock, and then proceeds on a thrilling ride of highs and lows, allowing listeners to experience a host of different emotions and feelings while listening to the album.

Overall, the album covers many different genres and has something for people's different musical tastes. Despite delays in production, the outcome is well worth the wait and will be enjoyed for quite some time.

Aryeh Kunstler can be found online at www.aryehkunstler.com and on Myspace at <http://www.myspace.com/aryehkunstler>. "Our Eyes On You" is available at various online Jewish music websites and at local Judaica stores near you.

Fourteen Maccabeats Stuck in an Elevator

continued from page 11

got to where he did against all odds, of his own volition and resolve.

I admit it. Succeeding in Jewish learning and spiritual growth in Yeshiva University is harder – much harder – than I had originally portrayed in my article. I struggle immensely. I stumble. We all stumble. But sometimes we fail to see the big picture, we fail to apply perspective. When I returned to yeshiva over winter break, a meeting was called for all returning alumni, almost entirely from YU, to discuss our experiences in college so far. At one point in the conversation, as YU guy after YU guy expressed the difficulties and struggles of YU, one of the mashgichim got up and pointed to a particular student in the room who was currently in a secular university. Let's keep a little perspective, he reminded us. Our struggles are real ones, to be sure. Enough to make us stumble. Enough to frustrate us, and rightfully so. But let us keep in mind how lucky we are that these are our struggles – how to balance multiple sedarim and classes, what time to leave night seder to study for the next day's test. Let's keep in mind that people like my father would have killed to have had those same struggles.

After what seemed like an eter-

nity, the elevator reached the bottom floor. A few moments and a couple power-tools later, the doors were pried open. We were about halfway underground, and had to shimmy our way through a small opening to safety, where a whole crew of security and hotel personnel were waiting. After a few minutes, we were all safe and sound.

Sure we were riled up. Sure we had been afraid. But we knew we had a performance to give, that hundreds of people were waiting. So we dusted off our suits, tightened our ties, and made our way to the ballroom to sing. As we finished our number and the crowd erupted in applause, I hoped that this whole ordeal would indeed turn out to be a microcosm for my YU experience. Sure it wouldn't be easy. It wouldn't be peachy. But it would be worth it. The seemingly endless struggles would be made worth it by those moments of breakthrough, those bolts of lightning that would help us appreciate the unique opportunities afforded to us, and just how lucky we are to be here.

The group did, however, institute a five-Maccabeat-at-a-time elevator rule, which has since been strictly enforced.

Noah Jacobson is the Assistant Editor of Opinions and in his first year on campus.

Artist Spotlight: Bela Fleck & the Flecktones

By RAFI BLUMENTHAL

The Flecktones' story begins with the banjo-picking musical virtuosi Bela Fleck who, in 1990, was asked by PBS Television to play at the then forthcoming Lonesome Pine Special.

In response, he gathered a veritable dream-team of musicians to form "The Flecktones" – a play on the name of the 1960's rock band "Dick Dale and the Del-Tones." That team included Howard Levy who played piano, harmonica and ocarina, bass guitarist Victor Lemonte Wooten and his brother Roy-El on the Drumitar – an instrument he created – which is a guitar-like synthesizer that functions as an electronic drum. In fact, his inventiveness has earned him the nickname "Future Man."

To some these may be household names, but at that point most of them were hardly in the musical vogue.

After their initial performance together, the band immediately felt a strong chemistry. What began as a one-time project blossomed into a fifteen-year, thirteen album journey through jazz, rock, bluegrass, beebop and pop.

Particularly revolutionary is Fleck's ingenious usage of the

banjo. At around the age of fifteen, Fleck reportedly became fascinated with the banjo and began to work on adapting beebop music for it. The instrument, which musicians often looked-down on for its inability to

extremely talented bassist with lightening fast fingers and an incredible capacity for improvisation, which, he claims, has caused some of his former band mates to "flip-out."



The Flecktones. with their touring partner, Alash

sustain notes and a perceived absence of expressiveness, had often been relegated to the world of bluegrass. But, following in the footsteps of Earl Scruggs, Fleck's work to introduce the banjo to the mainstream jazz scene has effectively re-defined the banjo as a reputable and formidable instrument.

Vic Wooten, meanwhile, is an

Vic began his musical career early, growing up in a family where all his older brothers played instruments and sang. At the age of five, Vic was performing professionally with the Wooten Brothers Band alongside brothers Rudy (saxophone), Roy-El (percussions), Regi (guitar) and Joseph (keyboard). He has also been awarded three Bass

Player of the Year awards by the magazine Bass Player– the only musician ever to win so many times.

Many fans of the Dave Matthews Band will recognize Vic – or at least his bass-lines – from the many times he sat in on performances with the band. Particularly noteworthy among Dave fans is his enthralling solo during "#41" on Dave's Live in Chicago CD.

Howard Levy left the band in 1992 to pursue musical projects of his own. After that, the band continued for a while as trio, until Jeff Coffin joined them in 1997. Coffin, who has studied with Loe Lavano, is an extremely enthusiastic musician renowned for playing two saxophones simultaneously, added an entirely new dimension to the band. However, following the death of Dave Matthews Band's saxophonist Leroi Moore in August 2008, Coffin went on to fill in for him and, since then, has been playing with both bands.

Coffin's departure does not seem to have slowed down the band's progress, however. Later that same year, the Flecktones released their critically acclaimed Jingle All the Way which features songs that span the cultural spectrum such as "Jingle Bells" on the one hand and "The Hannukah Waltz" on the other

hand. Particularly noteworthy is "12 Days" where the band tackles a different meter, tempo and key with the start of each new "day."

In fact, it is this sort of genre-defying innovation that has brought them praise from all sorts of venues, including Entertainment Weekly who calls them "Heavyweight players who make an endearing fusion", adding that "It's hard to resist a band that draws on bluegrass, funk, world music, pop and jazz with such glee and blissful lack of pretension."

One of the many factors that contribute to the Flecktones' diversity and originality is their constant quest for new musical venues to explore. To that end, over the years each member has spearheaded side-projects to provide them with such outlets. Currently, the Flecktones are in such a period of side-projects, with the band, according its website, officially off the road until December 2010. Yet, they promises that "they'll be back soon with new music," and, given their track record, they're probably good for their word.

Honors and Distinctions

continued from page 7

related to it as a mere resume-boost, adding that it would not help an applicant to graduate school who plans to attend immediately following college, as the award is not bestowed until May. And while the valedictorian does address the audience at commencement, this speech slot is shared with the SCW valedictorian, allowing for a YC valedictorian to speak only on odd-number years.

KOLLEL & KESEF

A somewhat similar situation exists with regards to the Wexner Semikha Honors program at RIETS. Begun in 1998, Semikha Honors awards a larger monetary compensation, and, well, Honor, to between 4-6 exceptional Semikha students each year. While the average Semikha student learning in Rabbi Shachter's Kollel will earn about 4,500 dollars a year in addition to complementary housing, an Honors student will take home 6,000. Further, a married member of Semikha Honors will earn about 12,000 dollars a year. Semikha Honors students are also enrolled in special sections of the practical rabbinics courses known as SRs which feature smaller class sizes while covering essentially the same material as the standard practical rabbinics classes.

In the past, the application process was almost entirely non-existent. Indeed, one former RIETS student described it as follows, "I can't tell you much, and that's part of the problem. The application process isn't advertised and the acceptance process is also very unclear. At one point a notice would go up on the wall saying if you're interested in Semikha Honors give your name to the office, and a short while later a list of recipients will go up." Further, he made mention of a few frequently mentioned topics by all those spoken to about this article saying, "To my knowledge the honors program just means an increased stipend, no requirements to write articles or the like. People have complained in the past of the high rate of sons of Roshei Yeshiva in Semikha Honors."

Since this past year, one who wishes to apply to Semikha Honors must complete a written application and interview with Rabbi Reiss, in addition to submitting a Torah article written in Hebrew. These are then reviewed by an admissions committee consisting of Rabbis Schachter, Willig, Rosensweig, and Schwartz. Yet, while this most certainly seems to be an improvement upon the past, more streamlining and transparency may still be desirable. One disgruntled Semikha student who was not awarded Semikha

Honors told *The Commentator*, "my interview took about 5 minutes over the phone, and the person interviewing me had only glanced over my application and not even read my article, and he told me this on the phone."

TIFERET BANIM

The high rate of sons of Roshei Yeshiva in the program is another issue for some applicants. While on the one hand it makes sense that people of high caliber will have offspring of high caliber as well, many feel, due to the obvious financial benefit at stake, that at times the committees' complete objectivity is compromised. However, Rabbi Reiss did make it clear that, "We (RIETS) have no inclination towards the sons of our Roshei Yeshiva." Yet, one current Semikha student recalls one RIETS administrator remarking off hand that he (the student) should, "not even bother applying [to Semikha Honors] this year, as there are too many Roshei Yeshiva's sons [applying]."

Still, many understand the high number of offspring in the program and are not upset by this fact in the slightest. However, some do take issue with RIETS awarding Honors to those who do not hold a bachelors degree, either from Yeshiva College or other liberal arts institu-

tions; these students instead obtained a Bachelors of Talmudic Law (BTL) from a Yeshiva. Rabbi Reiss defended this practice stating, "The same way as other graduate schools admit students holding Bachelors of Talmudic Law degrees we admit them on a case to case basis. We don't automatically exclude people who go through a different framework than Yeshiva College." He added that, "It makes sense that any Semikha student should be eligible for Semikha Honors. Everyone who applies to Semikha Honors is evaluated on his own merits." Yet, several current Semikha students spoke out against this practice, one among them saying, "It is ridiculous to reward Honors upon someone whose education is not in line with that which RIETS stands for. I understand that RIETS accepts such people, but to reward them above others of similar intellectual caliber who take Torah U-Madda seriously is absolutely absurd."

So, both of the above issues, Valedictorian and Semikha Honors, hold a degree of secrecy. Valedictorian has no printed rules, while Semikha Honors, though boasting an application process, is controlled by an admissions committee whose methods and criteria for selection remains almost a complete mystery. And, while students'

suspicions ferment, the administrations responsible for the two present issues which will likely be forced to either increase transparency by publishing rules and regulations, or alternatively sulk further into the shelter of their archaic ivory towers.

VALETE

As this is my final article for *The Commentator*, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have taken time over the past two years to read my writing(s). Some articles, I am happy to say, have led to concrete action, (Hebrew Department), while others at the very least generated great campus discussion (Shiur). It is my hope that all those who seek to improve our University, be it through the pages of this paper or otherwise, are steadfast in their efforts and genuine in their attempts, and hopefully, even somewhat successful.

Review of Hello Sid's 'Soul Dividing'

By HARRY PORTMAN

Hello Sid, a Jewish pop rock band based out of Highland Park, New Jersey, was formed in 2006 by then-college students Jake Rozmaryn (vocals) and Jesse Strulowitz (-lead guitar, piano, vocals). Since then, however, the founding members have been joined by Daniel Gross (drums, tambourine), Jake Berman (bass) and Moshe Teitz (rhythm guitar). Their music, which combines Hebrew and English lyrics, is inspirational and upbeat, drawing upon influences from acoustic, alternative, blues, jazz, pop and rock.

Soul Dividing, the debut album by Hello Sid, was released a short while ago, but received little fanfare. The album features a very distinct vocal sound and, with Rozmaryn at the helm, the group is provided with the presence of a powerful lead singer, an element that other Jewish music bands lack. For the most part, the album provides a consistent rock sound that only varies slightly from track to track.

However, the instrumental compositions do not always seem to mesh with the Hebrew lyrics they are paired with, giving the feeling that the music was created first and lyrics were only added later. The English lyrics are not as impactful as those featured on many other recently-released albums, and seem to rely more on their vocal sound than their actual meanings.

Additionally, a number of the Hebrew songs selected seem as though they are simply "yet another version" of popular songs that already exist. And, though the musical

composition for each song is different, the overall vibe is one of a continued expression of more of the same again and again.

Highlights of Soul Dividing include the rocky "Adom Olam," the ballad-like "Eishet Chayil" and the English song "It's About You," which discusses finding one's true essence in the turmoil of a modern world.

Musically, Hello Sid's first release is a success, and Soul Dividing does make for decent background listening, as long as the lyrics are not given too much scrutiny. The English lyrical composition and Hebrew song choice could have been a little more thought out, and the vocal expression should have been more varied; in spite of these shortcomings, however, Soul Dividing is still fun to listen to, and the talented members of Hello Sid show a very promising start.

In short, Soul Dividing is a solid first album from a freshman band, and one can only hope their second album, already scheduled for an early 2011 release, will show development in their musical and lyrical style.

Hello Sid can be found online at www.myspace.com/hellosid and "Soul Dividing" can be purchased on www.cdbaby.com and iTunes.

Be consistent with how you mark the name of the album – use either "Soul Dividing" or Soul Dividing, but not both (see title of article).



Tennis Update

BY HOWARD AVNER

This year, the Yeshiva Macs tennis team has emerged as one of the top athletic teams around Yeshiva. However, unlike many teams, the tennis team did not find its strength behind a great coach; they made it to the Skyline conference semi-finals with devotion, a strong group of athletes, and Joe Itkis, a player-coach.



Down a tennis coach, the Yeshiva athletics department asked then women's volleyball assistant coach, Arnold Ross to take over as men's head tennis coach. Ross had played NCAA tennis at Mount Saint Vincent, but his true sport of choice was men's volleyball. And, with the firing of Juan Corona as the men's volleyball coach, Ross left his position at the helm of the tennis team.



Without a coach, the team continued practicing under the auspices of Joseph Itkis. Itkis, a common face within Yeshiva athletics, made practice schedules, arranged for busses, and managed most aspects of the team.

"I don't know why the [athletics] department hasn't been able to find a coach, it's ridiculous," said a member of the team who refused to be named.

"We wanted to make sure that we got the right coach for the job. We had many great applicants but none that we felt fit perfectly," was the response from the athletics office.

Outstanding play by Zach Charles, Seth Nayowitz and Ephraim Leederman among others gave Itkis a strong team to lead. All in all, a trip to the semi-finals seems to prove that the athletics department made the right choice sticking with Itkis as player-coach.

The Other Twersky on Campus

BY ZACH WEINER

Imagine for one moment you play for a sports team at your school and serve as a backup, ready to play whenever the coach calls your name. Now imagine it's your second year on the team and you still have the same role – waiting for that call to get in there and show how you can help your team. Yes, you've had a few at-bats here and there, plus a couple of plays in the field, but you're waiting for that one opportunity to make your mark and give the team a chance to win. Oh, did I mention that while doing this, you are juggling a dual curriculum? Yeah, I think I forgot that part. So you handle this dual curriculum while showing up to the field every day, not sure what your role is going to be or how much playing time you're going to receive. Now imagine the two starters in front of you are unable to play and the roster is depleted from injuries and players taking finals. This is your chance – your first career start. What are you going to do with it?

Well, I'll tell you what Nachum Twersky did with his opportunity. Twersky, hailing from a small town we like to call Philadelphia, has been a member of the Yeshiva baseball team for two years. He shows up to the field every day in high spirits, ready to play ball. After almost two full seasons on the bench waiting for his chance, Twersky was given the starting nod at third base against Baruch, a team



that had just lost the CUNY championship a couple days before. In the game, Twersky faced hard grounder after hard grounder, taking balls off the chest and knees in order to keep them in the infield and hold a slim one run lead. He also earned his first career hit and scored a run in the all important four-run third inning. Yeshiva would hold on for a 4 – 3 win against the CUNY powerhouse, a major upset and their only win of a season that included injuries to important starters and horrible weather that kept the team indoors up until opening day. He also earned his first career RBI in game two of the double header when he hit a two-run, two-out single. Put

on the roster for his defense, Twersky finished the day with no errors.

I asked David Kesselman, the game's starting pitcher, to describe Twersky's performance in one word. He had trouble choosing just one: "energizing, game-changing, momentum-shifting, amazing..." I asked him again to choose just one word and immediately he said "inspiring."

Take notes, players. This doesn't only apply to baseball. Too many people feel entitled to playing time and only focus on the smaller picture of their need to be out on the field or court. I understand the desire to play but at some point you need to decide what is more important to you: your need to play or the team's need to win. My high school coach was very fond of saying that "2 + 2 = 5, meaning the whole is always greater than the sum of its parts. The team always comes first." When your time comes, you better be ready to earn your playing time, but until then, you should be there for your teammates and put the team's needs first. Logan Mauzy, assistant coach of the baseball team has said multiple times that "the team is only as strong as its weakest player." Anyone who feels entitled to playing time and can't handle the team winning while he watches is only hurting the team. As someone who spent his fair share of time on the bench, both in high school and college, I can tell you that it hurts to watch, but you have to believe in yourself that your time will come, and when it does, you can seize the opportunity.

This is precisely what Twersky did. "I love playing baseball and I love being on this team," said Twersky, "so once I heard my name in the starting lineup, I was very excited to go out there and try to win the game."

Those who missed the Baruch game were shocked to find Twersky back in the starting lineup just one day later in the season finale against CUNY champion, CSI (not the show -the College of Staten Island). However, he quickly showed everyone that Baruch was not a fluke, playing solid defense yet again at third and collecting his third hit of the season against one of the best pitching teams on the schedule.

With new talent coming in next year, Twersky is still in high spirits. "I like the competition at third base. It makes you work harder and it feels that much better when you earn the spot." Next season, the baseball team will be a part of both the Skyline and CUNY conference, leading to a brutal schedule and the need for every player on the roster to step up and play hard. I think it's safe to say that Twersky will be ready for the call.

Avner's Antics

Why I Play the Game

BY HOWARD AVNER

I've been through multiple losing seasons as a Yeshiva Maccabee and the question I get most often is "why do you play; do you like losing?" Here is my answer.

In my first year at Yeshiva University, my father, a man who strongly believes in academics, gave me his blessing to try out for



the baseball team. It wasn't until three years later that I understood why he saw investing my time in the athletics program as advantageous.

One night, after a hard loss, my father imparted something along the lines of, "you need to recognize how your athletics have affected you. Athletics - especially at the level you're at - is only about winning and losing on the surface. Underneath, it's about your development. It's a learning experience. You need to learn when to be a leader and when to follow. You need to learn to follow instructions and trust others. You need to learn how to find something special that you can bring to the team. Athletics will develop you not only as an athlete, but a person"

I've been quoted as saying "I'm a competitor, it's what I do," and I truly believe that statement. I don't give up, I love sports because I love competition. Even when I need to pitch against a team with a much better record than our own, I love nothing more than walking up to the mound, taking a sign and throwing a pitch.

Yeshiva baseball has been a drug for me. I can't get enough. The fact that I have gone through multiple seasons without a winning record should be testament enough. Still, it's hard for somebody on the outside to understand. For a true athlete, competition fuels the soul.

This year, I was privileged to be on the Macs Volleyball team. Playing alongside some of the greatest players in Yeshiva Volleyball history, I watched them compete with true passion in their eyes. Even when the team was matched against the top DIII teams

in the country, the volleyball team never went down without a fight. The team may have joked around on bus rides, but once on the court everything was serious.

My years at Yeshiva would have been unbearable without athletics as an outlet. I've loved every moment that I've been associated with the program. At this point, I'm a dual-sport athlete, a member of the Student Athletic Advisory Committee, event staff, and a sports writer for *The Commentator*. I know almost every athlete and I have discussed every team at considerable length.

For three years I've known Joe Bednarsh and am indebted to him for his support. He's been a great help to me not only as an athlete and writer, but as a person as well. Coaches Ringel, Blitz, Kahn, Mauzy, Canzanno and Ross have all taught me multiple lessons on and—perhaps more importantly—off the court. Miguel Urbaz has always been available to me to catch bullpens or step in as a batter when I needed the practice. Stan Watson is perhaps the nicest person I know and nothing less than a true gentleman. I am forever indebted to the entire athletics staff for keeping my head above water during my years at Yeshiva University.

I always encourage people to try out for teams. It took me one



year (although he thinks it was less) to convince David Sweet to try-out for the cross-country team and now that he's the best runner Yeshiva's ever had, I'm pretty sure he thinks it was a good decision. My own sister became a fencer in her first year at SCW and made an appearance at NCAA Regionals.

So why do I play baseball? Why am I a Yeshiva athlete? Because I love the competition, I love the camaraderie, and I appreciate the life lessons along the way.

**PERCEPTION,
MEET
REALITY.**

www.yu.edu/nowyouknow