

# The COMMENTATOR

## YEAR 75

The Official Student Newspaper of Yeshiva College and Sy Syms School of Business

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## YU Students Break Dreidel World Record

BY GABRIEL WEINBERG

In an effort to raise school spirit, and, in the words of *Vice President of Student Affairs Hillel Davis*, to “unify the school,” Yeshiva University set out to beat the Guinness World Record for most dreidels spun in one venue, previously set at 541 by Temple Emmanuel of Cherry Hill, NJ, in 2005.

Jason Katz and Fiona Guedalia, co-presidents of Students Helping Students (SHS) - a student club that raises money for student scholarships - organized the event, along with help from Daniella Weprin, Presidential Fellow in Institutional Advancement, and Aliza Berenholz from the Events Office. “When Fiona and I were thinking about a Chanukah event,” said Jason, “we were

drawn to the dreidel, remembering playing it as children. Both of us are super-competitive, so it was only natural for us to combine dreidels and World Records.”

YU’s media relations department helped spread word of the event. “Our advertising strategy was to create a buzz around campus slowly

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Seth Meyers gave DreidelPalooza a shout-out on Saturday Night Live.

## Yeshiva Guy Says Over a What?

BY YEDIDYA GORSETMAN

Over the past few months a YouTube video has been circulating around campus called “Yeshiva Guy Says Over a Vort.” The premise of the video consists of two animated characters discussing a *vort* (Torah insight) that one of them heard from his rabbi. The character telling the *vort* is depicted as being from a right-wing yeshiva background, while his counterpart is portrayed as Modern Orthodox.

The argument between these two characters focuses on the idea of interpreting certain statements of *Chazal* (sages) literally. Specifically, the video deals with the well-known *midrash* that states that the *avot* (forefathers) and, in this particular case, Yaakov, kept all of the 613 mitzvot.

While the video is depicted as somewhat humorous, it does carry a

serious undertone, causing a mixed reaction among viewers.

Some find the video to be enlightening. Isaiah Rothstein, a RIETS *semikha* student, thought that the video shed light on “the unfortunate reality that so many of our nations’ youth have been bruised by the Jewish education system.”

However, other students find the video to be less meaningful. Evan Chesir, former SOY president, commented “I wasted 15 minutes of my life watching this.” It should be noted that the video is less than four minutes.

One Mazer Yeshiva Program (MYP) student, who wished to remain anonymous, also thought that the video “made fun of a serious *halakhic* tradition,” going on to say that it was “inappropriate.”

Throughout the video the “*Yeshivish*” character is responded to in a heavily sarcastic manner, which

presents him and his argument as illogical.

In an article entitled “The Avos and the Mitzvos,” published in *The Five Towns Jewish Times*, Rabbi Yair Hoffman, the former rabbi of the Young Israel in Long Island, argues that the video “makes light of the *Gemarah* in *Yoma* 28b.” Rabbi Hoffman further claims that “the overwhelming majority of Torah authorities, however, clearly and completely hold of the maximalist position, [a literal reading of the *Gemarah* in *Yoma*].”

Rabbi Natan Slifkin, a prominent Orthodox rabbi in Beit Shemesh, later posted a response to Rabbi Hoffman’s article on *rationalistjudaism.com*, attacking the article for not acknowledging the many *Rishonim* that understand the *Gemarah* in *Yuma* to be allegorical. Rabbi

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## Miami Heat 118, Cleveland Cavaliers 90

### The Tragedy of LeBron James, in Five Acts

BY MICAH STEIN

To call the Cleveland Cavaliers-Miami Heat game a David vs. Goliath matchup qualifies as an insult to Goliath. After all, Goliath stayed with his home team and fought hard until the end; he demonstrated some measure of loyalty.

No, this was more like King David taking his “talents” to the Philistines to join his buddy Goliath when things got tough in Israel. And announcing it on national television. After choking against the Boston Celtics.

Well, you get the picture.

#### Act I: The Decision

The tragedy of LeBron James is the type of saga that could only exist in reality, a winding tale of sports,

media, ego, and irrational passion that now pits a desperately rabid fan base against its hopelessly clueless superstar. In case you missed it: LeBron James, born and raised in Ohio, led his hometown Cavaliers to national prominence, established himself as the NBA’s premier talent, and seemed poised to bring the sports-crazed city of Cleveland its first championship since 1964. With seven ill-chosen words – “I’m taking my talents to South Beach,” – he managed to negate everything, turning his most loyal fans into bitter adversaries.

James currently ranks as the 5<sup>th</sup> most hated athlete in the country, narrowly trailing such textbook “role models” as dog-fighting quar-

*continues on page 16*

## Chanuka Concert Rocks a Sold-Out Crowd, Raising Money for Kids of Courage

BY YOSEF GILLERS

This year’s annual Chanuka concert brought the most famous tunes in popular Jewish music to Lampport Auditorium for an incredible show on Thursday, December 2. The Maccabeats opened with a short set, leaving the crowd impressed and wanting more. The Moshav Band followed up with a great mix of

new tunes and old favorites, pumping up the crowd with their “cool-Jew” rock vibe. Lampport was ready to rock by the time Matisyahu hit the stage with his powerful voice, profound lyrics, and of course, the *dude-eriffic* disco dreidel. The show was a huge success, raising large sums of money for Kids of Courage. Yeshiva University is now officially

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# Staff Editorials

## Whom Are We Calling "Rosh Yeshiva"?

Our Rashei Yeshiva set us apart from every other university. While other places may have impressive Judaic studies departments, regular faculty just aren't the same thing as rebbeim. You can certainly take Judaic classes elsewhere, be an active member of a Hillel, and call up your local Orthodox rabbi if you have a question, but no other college in the world offers the possibility of sitting, learning, and getting to know such an incredible array of Torah scholars in the classic Yeshiva model. Our rebbeim, who deliver shiur (almost) daily, deserve a great deal of credit for the hard work that they do. They are the engine that drives the Yeshiva part of the noble experiment we call YU.

But are they really "Rashei Yeshiva"? Let's think about what that title conveys. In the Israeli Yeshivot that many of us attended, the Rosh Yeshiva was the person who actually led the institution – the principal or headmaster, you might say. While he might have given shiur weekly, or perhaps even daily, this was secondary to his administrative duties and general leadership role. It was he who set the tone and made decisions for the entire school, whether it was with practical matters (how many tanach classes should be offered?), halachik (what's the yeshiva's policy on second-day of yom tov for non-Israelis?), or hashkafic (should we prohibit talmidim from marching in a gay-rights parade?).

Now let's think about what our Rashei Yeshiva do: they give shiur. Granted, they sit and learn in the beit midrash, develop relationships with their students, and are generally available for conversation, but their primary duty is the shiurim they deliver. In Israel, you

had rebbeim who did that too. And you had a name for them: Maggidai Shiur, or Ramim. The fact that they were not also called "Rashei Yeshiva" was not a slight to their importance, but a simple reflection of their duties. A Rosh Yeshiva leads a yeshiva; a Maggid Shiur gives shiur. It's as simple as that.

Except that for some reason here it isn't. Check the closest SOY poster – we have over thirty individuals with the title "Rosh Yeshiva." How many of them actually lead anything other than their own shiurim?

For YU to function as a cohesive, unified yeshiva, we need one leader to set the tone for the whole. Who is this individual? Is it the President? The Chancellor? The Dean? The Dean Emeritus? The Mashgiach Ruchani? The Bochein? Without a clear leader we endanger the unity of the yeshiva, threatening to break it into many smaller constituencies. We are left with a situation in which Rabbi Reiss, who was brought in amidst high hopes to shape the educational direction of the school and finally take the helm of our aimlessly flying Dutchman, seems powerless to steer this ship in any meaningful direction. "He's not really leading," lamented one administrator on the impossible task facing Rabbi Reiss. "All he can do is try to make peace."

Let's call a spade a spade. The title "Rosh Yeshiva" should only go to the few individuals who actually lead our yeshiva, to give them the respect and their positions the clarity that they deserve and require to do their jobs right. Without clear leaders to take strong stances on issues as they arise, we are left with only the guiding opinions of those who shout loudest.

## The Case for Four Years

Finals time reminds us that in Yeshiva College, time is the most valuable – and least available – resource. As we madly race to condense a whole semester's work into our days, extracurricular activities and learning, normally herculean feats to keep up during the academic year, fall to some extent by the wayside. Worse, some turn to quicker routes toward "success:" past years' tests or a classmate's notes – or even better, a secondhand summary of said notes – offer a short-cut past the idealism expressed on the first day or on syllabi in favor of a good grade. There's just no time for idealism or enjoyment, not with our transcripts on the line.

The lack of time is real, and short of a little Harry Potter-inspired magic, there's not much students can do about it. But there's no excuse when we do it to ourselves. We work from dawn till well after midnight, downing a constant stream of energy drinks and coffee, while bemoaning how onerous our workload is. But this is a workload that we have chosen for ourselves. And the creative and enjoyable outlets – the fun parts of the college, the ones we always complain don't exist in YC – have no place in our busy lives. We rush to finish our majors, spending not a moment more than we need to in class or on campus or at a lecture once we've eaten the free food. All, of course, in three years with Israel credit. Interesting but challeng-

ing courses outside our majors, participation in student government or activities, and even (gasp) lives outside of school are for the most part assumed to be antithetical to our goals.

But it doesn't have to be like that. It doesn't have to be the opposite of the way it is in virtually every other college. We, the students, have more power than anyone to make college enjoyable.

Staying a fourth year on campus is a good deal. For those of us to whom the GPA quantifies our existence (a valid understanding, as some graduate schools would agree with it), four years afford the ability to space out tough courses. For others, it can mean a second major or minor. A chance to get involved with a student organization one believes in, or, for those already involved, a chance to take the helm of it.

If you're unsure about what your next step in life is, maybe the best thing to do isn't to rush into the waiting abyss. Especially in the current economic climate, maybe a little extra time spent studying or exploring your interests is the right idea. And even if you are sure of your next step, think about what it says about you as a candidate – and maybe also as a person – if a serious portion of your life has no justification other than as a stepping stone to the rest.

# The COMMENTATOR YEAR 75

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## 7 Up

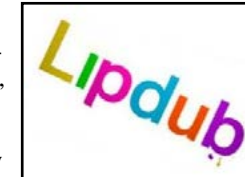
1. "Candlelight." The Maccabeats' absurdly popular single and music video has brought Chanukah cheer to the world and unparalleled publicity to YU.



2. Kid Drinking Water. Abject failure at imbibing, incredible success at being cute. Find him on Youtube.



3. Security Guards who don't make you take out your ID. This is a security risk we're willing to take for the five seconds of saved pocket-searching. Thanks, friendly guards!

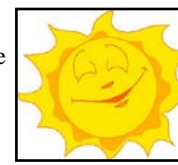


4. The lipdubbing phenomenon. These single-take, phenomenally coordinated music videos, surprisingly fun and often clever, are making a huge splash online. Check out lipdubs on Youtube, including one by Hebrew University students that has over 140,000 views.

5. The first ten minutes of Tomorrow Never Dies. While the rest of the movie is wretched, where else would you find punches, kicks, explosions, gunfights, dogfights, and more crammed into ten minutes? We won't post a link, but let it be said that it's quite east to find on Youtube.



6. Katy Perry's single "Firework." "Boom, boom, boom, even brighter than the moon, moon, moon;" though the rhyme is not exact, the feel-good message and pop-light feel rocks.



7. The second half of winter. The days are getting longer again! Welcome back, sunlight!

## 7 Down

1. Shuttles canceled on snow days. But that's when we need them most!



2. The "New" Facebook profile. Leave us alone, Facebook. We are already slaves to your will; you don't have to spell it out by forcing us to keep changing our lives to suit you.



3. Finals. We went to class or did homework or at least pretended to all semester. Now we have to review all of that and write it down? And we can't bring our coats?



4. The Finals Lady. She is just plain scary, and we are already freaking out about the test.



5. Professors who assign class during reading week. Why on earth is this allowed?



6. Snowballs to the face. Aw man, anywhere but there! Now there's gross snow-slush dripping down my shirt.

7. The ~ key. Anyone know what it does? Probably tied with "scroll lock" and "insert" for most useless ever, yet somehow it qualifies for the coveted top-left corner spot of the keyboard. Are we just addicted to squiggles?



## Letters to the Editor

### New Makolet Has Challenged Halacha

Dear Editor,  
I was extremely disturbed by the article on "The Makolet" that appeared in the November 18 issue of The Commentator.

First of all, if the facts -- as reported -- are true, then it seems that the article should be titled "New Makolet.... Challenges Halacha".

There are some pretty clear Halachot regarding (what I will call) "Destructive Competition." I can only assume that Rabbi Aaron Mehlman was (or is) unaware of the facts as reported, since it is utterly incomprehensible to me how any individual who has Semicha would provide a Hashgacha under such circumstances (unless, of course, he is just a "Rabbi" and not a Rabbi ... however, I did not get such an impression from the article).

Whether he "signed" an agreement or not seems irrelevant to me. Once there was an objective determination that there was Destructive Competition, if the Makolet owner did not like that determination, the PROPER procedure is to follow up in Beit Din.

In particular, since the Beth Din of America (BDA) now has "space" in the Glueck Center, there is a competent and respected Beth Din available nearby to adjudicate this matter. Failing to do so can only give the impression that the owner of "The Makolet" does not care about halacha. This is further reinforced by references to "threatening phone calls and letters warning of lawsuits." Such tactics have NO PLACE in our (Jewish) society.

If such letters and calls were received, I would expect the owner of "The Makolet" to utterly and PUBLICLY disavow such letters and calls. I would FURTHER expect that Rabbi Mehlman would -- upon reviewing all of the evidence -- urge the owner of "The Makolet" to enter into a Din Torah and accept "P'shara K'rova L'Din". I would further expect that the Din Torah should be conducted by BDA as it is respected, competent, and easily accessible.

In fact, refusing to "take advantage" of such an excellent resource (e.g., trying for "Zabla" or going for a less respected Beit din) can only reinforce the suspicion that the owner of "The Makolet" is not truly interested in a Halachic resolution.



As a side point, I would ask if it is really appropriate for Rabbi Mehlman to even offer supervision in an area where there is one Vaad that has been handling all of those matters competently and efficiently. There seems to be the possibility that the Riverdale Vaad should be considered the "Local Vaad." The very fact that the "Local Vaad" was reluctant to supervise this establishment should have given Rabbi Mehlman pause. I know that in our community, when there was a vendor that "lost" supervision from our Local Vaad, the vendor located "someone else" -- who would not come in until he had discussed this with the Local Vaad and verified that it was "OK" for him to do so.

As a result, I have to say that right now, I would not be comfortable eating anything under the supervision of Rabbi Mehlman's organization until this matter is cleared up.

Given all of the above, I have to wonder how anyone who respects Halacha would be comfortable patronizing "The Makolet."

### New Makolet Has Challenged Nothing

Dear Editor,  
As Editor of KASHRUS Magazine and a YC grad, I read with interest of the recent turf battle taking place near YU. Unfamiliar with the facts, I rely on the article for details.

What I find troubling is the article claiming that The Makolet is challenging the Vaad of Riverdale. It is not. It is unheard of a beis din not requiring the signature of both parties before proceeding with a din Torah (which today is compromise and not "din"). If there were no signatures on a document then there was no binding commitment to follow the decision of the beis din.

Furthermore, I wonder, in lieu of Rabbi Blau's statement that the original control of kosher in and around YU was the SOY, whether the Vaad of Riverdale has any territorial rights over an area outside of Riverdale. According to my city map, YU is still in Manhattan and not in the Bronx.

But the really confusing part of all this is whether the Vaad of River-

dale has an ability to decide about *hasagot gevul* since they are currently certifying one of the parties. They do have a right to refuse to certify a store which they feel is *masig gevul* on another, but I sincerely question their right to independently determine whether the second store is *masig gevul* and that no one should grant them hashgacha.

Yes, I see that The Makolet has gone beyond the Vaad of Riverdale to get hashgacha, but I fail to see that they have "challenged" the Vaad.

Rabbi Yosef Wikler  
YC 1966

Ferkauf 1970  
Editor, KASHRUS Magazine  
Editor, New York Kosher News

### AEPi Is Hardly YU's First Fraternity

Dear Editor,  
In your recent article, "Fighting For Fraternity," you reported that the proposed AEPi chapter would be the first fraternity in YU history. You also reported that President Richard Joel claims that the university will never officially recognize any fraternity as a club. As an aspiring member of Yeshiva University's Chi Pi chapter of Alpha Psi Omega, I found these statements confusing.

The National Honorary Theatre Society, or Alpha Psi Omega, has had an official YU chapter for about 37 years. Don't make the mistake of thinking that Alpha Psi Omega is the lone exception which has somehow slipped below the radar (despite being clearly publicized in the YCDS playbill available at each performance). The most recent Undergraduate Men's Catalog lists it as one of ten current societies that have YU chapters. These include, but are not limited to, societies in mathematics, classical languages, pre-medical studies, scientific research, and debating.

Admittedly, the catalog lists these as "national honor societies," not fraternities. These organizations, too, refer to themselves as honor societies. I am sure there is some sort of difference between the two terms... I just can't figure out what that difference is. As far as I can tell, an "honor society" is a specific type of fraternity. Both are Greek-Letter Organizations.

So either there is no qualitative difference between "society" and "fraternity," AEPi would actually be the eleventh fraternity, and President Joel should offer a new reason to shoot it down, OR there is a major difference between the two, AEPi would be a first, and President Joel should explain the qualities that make an "honor society" acceptable and a "fraternity" unacceptable. Why aren't these well-established societies considered too "Hellenistic"? They have Greek letters, too!

Noam Weinberger YC '12

## Google Employee Dispenses Information, Advice, T-Shirts

By SIMEON BOTWINICK

On Tuesday night, November 16, over 150 students at Yeshiva flocked to Furst 501 to hear from Dr. Chanoch Goldfeder, current employee of the software mega-company Google. Dr. Goldfeder, a graduate of Yeshiva College, spoke about his path to Google and his current work there.

"I wanted the computer science club to have an event that would appeal to the whole YU student body, not just computer science majors," said Toviah Moldwin, president of the Computer Science Club, which organized the event. "Ita [co-president of the club] suggested that her brother who works at Google come to speak, and I and the rest of the staff of the computer science club immediately jumped on the idea."



Dr. Goldfeder's presentation, entitled "From Email to Gmail (with a detour in robotics)," went through the history of email and explained how Gmail, Google's email service, operates completely differently. Many aspects of the service, such as its huge capacity, threaded views, fast searches, spam filters, and gchat, were all revolutionary for their time, and immediately ensured the service's massive popularity. "We first launched Gmail on April 1, 2004," recalled Dr. Goldfeder, "which was a mistake. People just thought it was a joke."

Dr. Goldfeder sprinkled his energetic presentation with fun facts about Google ("Did you know that Israel is the only country outside the United States in which Google has more than one location?") and its subsidiaries ("Every minute, twenty-four hours of video are uploaded to YouTube"). He also encouraged current students to consider the field of software development, citing the constant energy and excitement that pervades companies like Google. "Trillions of emails are sent every day with Gmail," said Dr. Goldfeder, "so we see one-in-a-million issues every few hours. Not a day goes by that we don't find something we've never seen before."

To encourage audience participation, Dr. Goldfeder gave out complimentary Google paraphernalia to those who could answer trivia questions he presented from time to time. Several lucky students, who knew what things like petabytes and checksums were, walked away with Google t-shirts, water bottles, notebooks, and stuffed animals. And everyone in the crowd walked

away with free pizza, sponsored by Google.

After his general presentation, Dr. Goldfeder spent some time describing his own path from Yeshiva to Google, and how others could do the same. "How do you get from YU to Google, or Microsoft, or IBM, or another software company?" he asked. "Major in math. Or computer science. Or better, both." He explained that most companies required at least a Masters degree before they would hire full time, but encouraged everyone to apply for internships.

Dr. Goldfeder ended by answering questions, both from the audience and from a website that had allowed students to submit questions beforehand.

Students overwhelmingly seemed to have positive things to say

about the event. "It was really fun and interesting to hear about the inner workings of Google," said Daniella Ahdout, who, although admittedly not a computer science or math major, still said she enjoyed the event.

"The success of this event told me that people at YU really are interested in things related to computers, technology, and computer science, despite the small percentage of YU students who actually major in computer science," said Toviah Moldwin. "We hope to hold many similar events in the future, hopefully with a similar success rate. We are also considering inviting people to speak about computer security, digital music, and all sorts of cool stuff."



A full crowd listens intently to Dr. Chanoch Goldfeder in Furst 501.

## YU Open House Draws 400 Students and Parents

By YAIR SAPERSTEIN

On Sunday, November 23, the YU Office of Admissions held its annual Men's Open House on the Wilf Campus to introduce would-be Yeshiva students to the world of YU.

The Open House was run this year with a particular focus on giving prospective students and their parents a taste of actual college experience. In addition to the usual lectures and shiurim which were given on Sunday, an Open House Shabbaton preceded the Sunday events to let prospective students experience a shabbos in YU.

The Admissions Office attempted to make even the normally "banal events," - the term Justin Shemesh (YC '11) uses for the standard Open House features, such as the lectures and shiurim - more dynamic by the addition of charismatic speakers such as Rabbi Mordechai Willig, Dr. Gillian Steinberg, and Dr. Michael Machczynski. Rabbi Willig gave insights on Chanukah, while Dr. Machczynski discussed primeval solutions to the energy problem. Dr. Steinberg's lecture on the new type of introductory literature course that she has pioneered - one that focuses on a single text, and on the literature that influenced and has been influenced by this text, rather than on the typical survey of all the literature of one time period and place - was so convincing that one mother from the audience, who happens to be an English professor at another university, said that she might borrow this new English department class model for her own courses.

Thirty five students, from Baltimore, MD, Boston, MA, Brookline, MA, Chicago, IL, Columbus, OH, Detroit, MI, Elizabeth, NJ, Hartford, CT, Lawrence, NY, Lower Merion, PA, Paramus, NJ, Silver Spring MD, and St. Louis, MO, were able to experience Shabbos in YU by attending the Open House Shabbaton. The prospective students attended the Shabbos meals together with YU students, enjoyed a tisch on Friday night hosted by Rabbi Rapp, and

stayed in the "surprisingly nice" MTA dorms, in the words of Murray Sragow, the Associate Director of Admissions, who stayed in the MTA dorms himself.

Aaron Portman, a prospective student from Columbus Torah Academy, explained that he found the Shabbaton useful. "It helped me put YU into perspective as a school, not just a location for the Sarachek [high school basketball] tournament, which was my only other encounter with the University," he noted.

Any criticisms? Aaron recounts, "I felt that the [Sunday Open House campus] tour was a little redundant and slow, especially since I was there for the entire weekend." While the Open House Shabbaton was offered last year, it was not as well publicized as it was this year. This year, during the usual visits to various high schools made by representatives from the Office of Admissions, the high schoolers were notified of the Shabbaton, and were encouraged to attend. Also, a prominent link to details on the Shabbaton was displayed on the YU Open House webpage. To expand this opportunity to more students in the future, the admissions office plans to publicize the Shabbaton even more widely next year.

Student ambassadors, who devoted up to six hours to Sunday's Open House, were ubiquitous, both on the Shabbaton and at the Open House on Sunday. Spiffily dressed in orange ties and gray sweatshirts, the ambassadors accompanied students and parents from the parking lot to the Heights Lounge, a comforting welcoming technique picked up from the TABC high school Open House by Murray Sragow.

Jason Bloom, a student ambassador (SSSB '11), explains his reason for volunteering as an ambassador: "The interactions prospective students have with current students is one of the most important factors they have when deciding which college to attend," he said. "I wanted to help them choose."

While the ambassadors were easy to spot, the faculty from each department were even harder to miss. In the Max Stern athletic center, tables were set up with floating balloons plainly displaying names of various Yeshiva University departments, at which representative faculty sat. Mrs. Lolita Wood-Hill, the pre-health advisor, had a particularly large crowd gathered round her as she discussed the unique aspects of taking the pre-health track at YU. From her previous work experiences as the pre-health advisor at Hunter College and City College, she spoke first-hand of the benefits of

attending a small college, including the ability to easily arrange one-on-one appointments with the advisors. The food service provided a lavish lunch, including deli wraps and salads, followed up by a desert reception of jumbo cookies.

The Open House also including a serious effort to show off YU's many clubs and student groups. Following lunch, a concert, given by the Maccabeats in Weissberg Commons, as well as a Chemistry Magic Show, performed by YU's Chemistry Club in the Morgenstern Lounge, were designed to give the prospective students a taste of these activities.

The Magic Show, including tricks such as "Elephant Toothpaste," a massive foaming mountain formed by the reaction of two reagents, and the Maccabeats concert were not quite as well attended as was hoped, especially when compared to the attendance at the morning's lectures and shiurim, which were standing room only. The low attendance at these events can perhaps be blamed on their position in the schedule (immediately following lunch), or on the other concurrent occurrences, such as "You Can Afford YU: Financial Aid." Chanina Abramowitz (YC '11), a Maccabeat, and Menachem Spira (YC '12), a Chemistry Magician, both spoke of the positive reviews they received following their respective events. Menachem recalled one parent saying "you guys really have fun doing science here, don't you?" The mother of a prospective student mentioned the professional quality of the music, the talent of the a cappella singers, and that "YU has given them a unique opportunity to shine and I look forward to the same opportunities for my son."

Next year, the admissions office hopes to better publicize these events on campus to allow current Yeshiva University students to attend them. Additional events are also planned for next year: the athletics department hopes to give a sports demonstration, and YCDS hopes to feature a preview of its upcoming show.

A major goal for future years is to convince more students in local high schools to show up at the Open House. The persuading has begun even this year by the NowYouKnow campaign presented in this year's Open House invitation, with a conspicuously large link to the NowYouKnow website on the YU Open House webpage. The impression that some students have, that they are already familiar with YU, is being upset by this campaign, which features little known facts about YU. With all of this advertising, Murray Sragow hopes, "we can expect an even greater showing of prospective students at next year's Open House."

## Comedy Collaboration Combines Charity with Cheer

By NOAH BOTWINICK

Comedy and chessed lovers joined forces on Tuesday, November 23, last month at the third annual Jewish Last Comic Standing event. From 8:30 to 10:30 PM, more than 200 people, mostly students from YU, sat in Furst 501 and were entertained as five amateur comedians from YC and SSSB and one from Stern showed off their comedy skills to their peers. Following their performances the audience was further entertained by professional comedian Josh Rabinowitz.

Members of the audience paid 10 dollars to attend, although this money was for more than just the price of admission. The event, which was organized and run by YU Chessed Club President Tani Guterman and the rest of the YU Chessed club board, was non-profit. Instead, money received from the audience supported camp HASC, a seven week sleep-away camp in the Catskills for children with special needs. Money was also collected by selling raffle tickets for 3 dollars apiece, with a chance to win a Flip video camera, donated courtesy of Camp HASC Director Ron Yaish. At the end of the night, the Chessed Club had collected 2,000 dollars to donate to camp HASC; that brings their total collected for the camp to over 10,000 dollars over the last three years. When this same event

occurred in December of 2008, it attracted over 300 students and generated over 4,000 dollars, according to the YU news website.

"The show went pretty well," said Eitan Levine, who was voted by the audience as funniest comedian of the night. "It was well attended and was definitely better than last year's train wreck of a show."

This event was far from Levine's first time delivering comedy. Levine runs "The Kosher Comedy College Tour," which travels to college Hillels and Chabbad houses all along the East Coast to deliver stand-up comedy shows. The performers include, "some of the top up and coming comics in New York," he said. They've already been to Rutgers, Brandeis, Queens, and UMass, and are planning to go to Staten Island and Maryland within the next few months. He also added that, "It feels good to win - even better that I beat Eli Lebowicz."

Lebowicz, who was last year's contest winner, isn't new to the amateur Jewish comedy scene either. "I've always enjoyed trying to make other

people laugh, whether it's by making completely awkward comments, or by playing basketball," he said. He also has videos on YouTube of his standup performed at various comedy clubs, although most of the views there, said Lebowicz, are "my dad trying to figure out how to use YouTube."

But Lebowicz doesn't just perform at the HASC fundraisers to show off his standup routines. "I figured that if I got people to come to the event by doing comedy, it was my way of helping the fundraiser," he explained. And the chessed goes beyond just raising money for HASC. "I think the HASC comedy contest really does a lot of good. It raises money for a good cause, while entertaining people." He elaborated that, "It also brings people together for a night that is relaxed and laid back, something all college students



desperately need."

Many of his jokes focused on themes central to YU students. One of the lines from his performance goes: "Someone told me recently, 'You know what scares me? One of the security guards told me he has a relative who's Palestinian.' I said, 'You know what scares me? One of the guards asked me for my ID, while I was walking OUT of the building.'"

Not all the jokes centered on the university. Jonathan Schwab, one of the comedians who performed, also joked about a wide range of issues. "The board game Risk has affected the way I see the world," he said during his routine. "I don't believe in voting because it doesn't matter who wins, only who captures Australia on the first turn. And I refuse to visit any country that borders on more than three others. For vacation, my wife wanted to go to Greece. I suggested Madagascar or Greenland."

Shlomit Friedman, the only female comedian who volunteered to compete in front of 200 fans of her peers, had more to demonstrate to the audience than just her jokes. "Being

the only female, I felt good stepping up to the plate and representing all those funny girls out there. Despite the stereotype 'girls aren't funny,' there ARE funny girls that exist!" she said. She explained further that although she loves performing and trying new things, "I felt it was even more important to stay strong and confident and go through with it," in light of the fact that she was the only girl who performed.

She added that it isn't only a general lack of confidence among girls when it comes to humor that keeps other girls off the stage. "I think in general girls are aware that it is not as socially acceptable, especially in the orthodox community, to perform in front of men - even if it is just comedy," she stated. "Plus, I think most girls may want to maintain a certain 'good girl' image in social circles." Shlomit added that maintaining this image is even riskier "on stage where anything you say can't be taken back and you have to face judgment, whether good or bad, from an audience." She referred to the audience as, "a tough crowd."

"It was great to be able to help special needs kids while enjoying a fun night with friends at a comedy show," says Taco Miretzky, a junior from Chicago who attended the event. He added, "I'm surprised that more people didn't show up."

## AEPi Honored Alongside YU Rebbeim at Shaare Zedek Dinner

By JOSHUA REDLICH

On November 30, as YU broke its dreidel-spinning record at DreidelPalooza, the American Committee of Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Medical Center honored its American benefactors with the World of Heroes Awards Dinner. Among the honorees was Rabbi Dr. Manfred Fulda, Chair of the Division of Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University, and Andrew S. Borans, Executive Director of Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi).

Rabbi Fulda, who teaches students in the Isaac Breuer Collage of Hebraic Studies (IBC), was recognized for his dedication to the Jewish people as well as for all of his past work on behalf of Shaare Zedek. It was noted at the award ceremony that the relationship Rabbi Fulda forges with his talmidim goes above and beyond the norm; with his personable and welcoming demeanor, he creates an environment in which all of his students feel comfortable approaching him with halachik questions of all sort. For his constant service to the Jewish people and his eternal devotion to teaching the values of a Torah life to both those familiar and those foreign to such a lifestyle,



\$100,000 grant. AEPi had acquired through their philanthropy events two sums of \$100,000 and one sum of \$25,000, yet the fraternity could not decide which of the seven charities they collect for, Shaare Zedek included, should be the beneficiary of these incredible gifts. In an exhilarating and inspirational speech, one AEPi member spoke to his brothers and urged them not to choose. Instead, he proposed raising \$100,000

for each of the seven funds. His altruistic and inspiring words were received with a roar of agreement from the crowd, and so the fraternity set out towards the seemingly unachievable end of raising \$700,000.

With the money raised for Shaare Zedek, AEPi generated a partnership between the hospital and the IDF, enabling the hospital to provide its soldiers, both professional and draftees, with first-rate treatment in all areas of the hospital. AEPi also created the "Brother to Brother Campaign," linking brothers across the United States with the IDF soldiers in need of advanced healthcare. Through their hard work and generous contribution to the medical center, the fraternity has been able to help a countless number of Israel's defenders.

Overall, the World of Heroes Dinner, held at the magnificent Pier 60 on the Hudson River and catered by the gourmet chefs of Main Event, was a huge success, raising almost \$100,000 for Shaare Zedek from just those in attendance. Yet the real triumph was enabling those present to see Alpha Epsilon Pi and Yeshiva University stand side-by-side, both working to achieve the same goal of helping their fellow Jews.

## Monotonous Cartoons Spark Controversy

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Slifkin went on to write that "Rabbi Hoffman's essay is a model of how the *mesorah* gets rewritten, and it is



an appalling demonstration of disrespect towards those *Rishonim* [who believe in a rationalist reading of the *Gemarah* in *Yoma*]."

In an interview with *The Commentator*, the creator of the video, referring to himself only as *Krum*, stated that the inspiration for making the video was to "shed light on an unfortunate mentality that is prevalent in yeshivish circles... [a] tendency to interpret Torah sources in the most simplistic, fantastical manner possible." He later went on

to write that this mentality is "poisoning *yiddishkeit*."

Despite the fact that his handle is *Krum*, yeshivish slang for one who is no longer religious, he describes himself as coming from an Orthodox and yeshiva background.

*Krum* commented further that he feels people have come to believe that "any attempt to view Torah sources through the light of reason, modern science or even basic common sense... [would signal] a lack of faith bordering on *kefirah* [heresy]."

The video currently has close to 60,000 hits and has even had

a few response videos made, something *Krum* did not anticipate when he made his video. However, there was a drastic drop in views just a few days after *The Maccabeats'* video "Candlelight" was posted. *Krum* took this lightly, joking that "those Maccabeats stole my thunder right as my video was going viral." He was left wondering, "Where are my invitations to network TV?" For *Krum's* sake, *The Commentator* will have to be a close second to TV interviews.

## Rabbi Tuvia Lasdun, beloved Rabbi and Librarian, Passes Away On Erev Shabbos Chanuka

By JOSEPH WEINBERG

Rabbi Tuvia Lasdun, a beloved rabbi and former YU Librarian, passed away December 3<sup>rd</sup>, erev Shabbos Chanuka.

Rabbi Lasdun was one of seven children born to Lithuanian parents in pre-World War II Russia. At an early age, Rabbi Lasdun and his family moved to Hamburg, Germany. The Lasdun family has considerable *yichus* (heritage) as they are relatives of both Rabbi Kalmovich of the Mir and first cousins with Rabbi Bloch, the Telzer Rosh

personality.

Rabbi Lasdun was also a representative of the *mesorah* (tradition) from Eastern Europe. The generation of survivors from pre-World War II Europe is on the decline and Rabbi Lasdun was one of the few remaining survivors from such a historic era. His Torah was the Torah from Europe and he passed it on to whoever was interested. He even brought the old Eastern European-Ashkenazi tunes to light on Yom Kippur when he would daven Kol Nidrei at YU.

In addition to his work for YU,

Rabbi Lasdun lived in Washington Heights and was an active member of the Breuers community.

Yeshiva, under whom Rabbi Lasdun studied.

During the holocaust, Rabbi Lasdun and his brother escaped to Shanghai where they lived until the late 1940's. There they met another former YU Librarian, Rabbi Mandelbaum. In the late 1940's, Rabbi Lasdun and his brother immigrated to America and went to Cleveland to help their uncle reestablish the Telzer Yeshiva. Rabbi Lasdun subsequently found a job in the lower East Side of Manhattan working as a sales manager for Feldheim Publishing Corp.

In the mid 1980's, when the Feldheim branch closed down, Rabbi Lasdun found his way to a librarian's job at Yeshiva University. This happened as a result of a relationship Rabbi Lasdun had developed with Rabbi Lamm. From his work at Feldheim, he knew a considerable amount about Jewish books and he fit right in working at the Yeshiva University Mendel Gottesman Library of Judaica/Hebraica.

His presence was immediately felt as his beaming smile and consideration became apparent from the outset. He was always trying to do a favor or lend a helping hand and would never expect anything in return. As Zalman Alpert, another reference librarian on the fifth floor noted, "Rabbi Lasdun was a true Jew. He fulfilled the essence of all three of the basic Jewish Principles: Torah Scholarship, service to god, and *gemilus chasadim* [acts of kindness]."

Rabbi Lasdun was known for his calls to widows on erev Shabbos to check in on them and see how they were doing. He even delved into *shadchanus* (matchmaking) a bit. In addition to his incredible kindness and *gemilus chasadim*, Rabbi Lasdun was a tremendous Torah Scholar. He knew not just where to find the books, but what was inside them too. Even with all of these incredible qualities, Rabbi Lasdun maintained an extremely humble and modest

## Write On: Wilf Campus, Stern College Writing Centers Run Workshop in Baltimore

By JONATHAN SCHWAB

Six students and four faculty members recently travelled to Baltimore, MD to lead an interactive session about Writing Centers and their roles in universities. Three students and two administrators from each of Yeshiva's two undergraduate Writing Centers participated in the joint conference of the International Writing Centers Association and the National Conference on Peer Tutors in Writing, from November 4 to 7. The conference brought together over 900 peer, graduate, and faculty tutors with directors of writing centers around the country and centered on the theme of "Safe Harbors or Open Seas." The dozens of presenters were asked to situate Writing Center work in nautical terms, linking the conference's location to its work.

The Yeshiva workshop, called "Something to Give in Return," started as an activity run by the Wilf Campus Writing Center at a joint meeting with the SCW Writing Center on March 7, 2010. In the workshop, participants were split up into four groups and asked to think, write, and talk about writ-

ing centers from the perspective of students, faculty, tutors, and writing itself. Then, the groups were shuffled so that small discussions could take place in which all the focused populations were represented. Last, the smaller groups presented their thoughts to the crowd, and writing centers were understood in a larger context.

Presenting the workshop with participants from many different writing centers opened everyone's eyes to the differences in how writing centers work, the Yeshiva presenters said. Participants from other universities spoke about writing centers working online via Skype, writing centers that assign tutors directly to classes, and even writing centers used by over half of the local undergraduate body.

The undergraduate tutors – Simeon Botwinick, Jason Miller, and Jonathan Schwab of YC and Lauren Burstein, Miriam Gofine, and Nicole Grubner of SCW – got to attend other sessions at the conference. Botwinick, who attended a special interest session for Jesuit institutions, commented that "it

was fascinating to see how other mission-driven universities integrate religious and secular studies." These institutions, Botwinick said, "grapple with many of the issues familiar to us. And they loved it when I used President Joel's 'enable and ennoble' line."

Dr. Lauren Fitzgerald, Director of the Wilf Campus Writing Center said, "It was a great opportunity for all the other showcase the work we do in Yeshiva and our excellent tutors, but it was an even better opportunity for our tutors to present their workshop."



The Yeshiva peer tutors were also joined by Professor Lane Anderson, Assistant Director of the Wilf Campus Writing Center, Professor Andrea Efthymiou, Assistant Director of the Stern College Writing Center, and Professor Adina Kay-Gross, a faculty tutor at the Stern College Writing Center.

## Honors Program Evaluates New Teaching Fellowship Program

By EITAN ULMER

The end of this fall semester also marks the end of the inaugural Honors Teaching Fellowship program. Through it, eight honors Seniors were paired with professors and aided in the teaching of introductory-level Honors courses. As the pilot run draws to an end, the Honors program is looking back at this largely successful effort and examining what can be improved for the future.

The program was first conceived by the Honors Student Council, as part of an effort to ensure that the Freshman Honors Seminars remain ahead of the curve for parallel Composition courses. As First Year Writing Seminars reflect more widespread adoption of the Honors model, the student council looked to tweak the current Honors Seminars.

One of the main goals in re-imagining the honors program was "fostering a connection between senior honors students and freshman honors students," said Jonathan Schwab, a member of the Honors Student Council and a Teaching Fellow. "The goal was to put honors freshmen with honors seniors in classrooms. Have a student writing his thesis available, and freshmen would see that and be able to identify with that process and have a model for how it is done." For this reason, introductory Honors science courses were included in the program as well, making role models for progression through the program for all majors as visible as possible.

Program] especially was instrumental." Dr. Cwilich

Once that process was completed, Dr. Cwilich mentioned the program to honors juniors at the end of the Spring 2010 semester, found interested students, and over the summer matched these students with professors. By the end of the summer the program had eight students matched with eight professors, ready to begin in the fall.

Dr. Cwilich said that each professor came with different ideas for

the involvement of their teaching fellows, causing the experiences to vary widely. Professor Elizabeth Stewart, teaching "Art/Literature: Age of Photography" has reserved the last half hour of every class for Teaching Fellow Michael Turkel to use at his discretion. Mostly, Turkel said, he has helped students by go-

ing into greater detail on some of the more challenging readings assigned in class. Making use of his Writing Center tutor experience, he has also spent time on writing, helping students with their papers. Stewart said that the class has "by now turned practically into a team teaching situation. Michael has been an invaluable help, the best sort of team teaching experience."

Jonathan Schwab, working with Lavinsky, was involved in planning the class from the beginning, even discussing the syllabus when the two met over the summer. Lavinsky sought Schwab's advice on topics such as texts, reading load, assignments, and creating a balance between writing instruction and topical inquiry. He also felt that Schwab has been a useful resource as a second reviewer of student writing. "Jonathan frequently has class time to explain concepts and to present ideas. He has done several presentations on writing strategies for the class. He has taken a very significant role and is enormously valuable to the class," he said. Schwab added that in addition to modeling class conversation, he has spoken several times in class about various opportunities and experiences he has had as a senior in YU and about the Honors Program in general.

Jerry Karp, paired with Dr. Frey Zyyzman for Honors General Physics



Dr. Cwilich, director of the Honors Program, addresses students.

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## Law Firm Addresses International Students' Immigration Concerns

By AVI MUNK

International students were offered some legal insight into the world of immigration law when Michael Wildes, Managing Partner of Wildes & Weinberg P.C., offered an immigration workshop at Yeshiva University. This seminar was the first in a series of lectures raising awareness of the many difficulties that the over three hundred foreign students on campus could soon face.

Yeshiva University, aware of the many hassles that foreign students face with regard to immigration, has been making an effort to help students' lives at the university run a little smoother. Many foreign students find life in America challenging, even as they grapple with the difficulties of leaving home. Even many "out of town" students sometimes have trouble transitioning to life in one of the busiest cities in the

U.S.

At the most basic level, a language barrier can present hurdles that make life difficult to adjust to. Realizing the academic pressure foreign students face, Elaine Thompson, the Director of International Students, and her staff 'called in Mr. Wildes, in anticipation of his being able to help. "Michael Wildes has worked closely with Yeshiva University for many years," explained Ms. Thompson. "What better way to help the students out than to get such a professional lawyer to help with their immigration issues?"

Wildes & Weinberg is best known in the immigration world for successfully representing people such as former Beatles singer John Lennon, and Jimena Navarrete, Miss Universe 2010. Wildes & Weinberg firm founder, Leon Wildes, has been teaching at Cardozo, Yeshiva University's law school, for



over thirty years.

Mr. Wildes, along with members of his staff, agreed that it would be most appropriate to address the students directly, given the ever-changing immigration laws of the United States. Mr. Wildes offered students a series of free workshops. As he puts it, "keeping students informed of the issues that most pertain to them is our number one priority, and what better way to do it than in a series of workshops that explain the complex issues in a simplistic way?"

Mr. Wildes and attorneys Chris Basaman and Andrew Drozdowski were at hand at the workshop to answer any personal questions and to explain the complexities of immigration law.

"The presentation was both informative and interesting," said

Areyeh Samuels, a student from Toronto. " Mr. Wildes managed to bring life to a topic that can be quite complicated and technical." For more complex personal matters, Mr. Wildes reassured the students that he has a convenient office in Englewood, NJ, close to the Wilf campus, as well as an office in the city near the Beren campus. For those international students who were unaware of the first workshop, Ms. Thompson and the firm have already started planning for the second one, which will take place sometime in mid-February. According to Ms. Thompson, the first workshop was a success. "Students came out of Belfer Hall feeling confident that they have someone they can trust," she said, "and that already is a step in the right direction."

## Faculty Celebrate Book Publishings

By YEHUDA COHN

This past summer, when Dean Karen Bacon of SCW had the idea of an event to honor those faculty members at Stern College who had recently published books, she knew it was an initiative worth pursuing. When Dr. John Fousek joined the deans' office on Beren campus in the fall, after having previously been a member of the center for ethics

books had been authored by 26 different full time YC, SCW, and SSSB faculty members, all within the past two years.

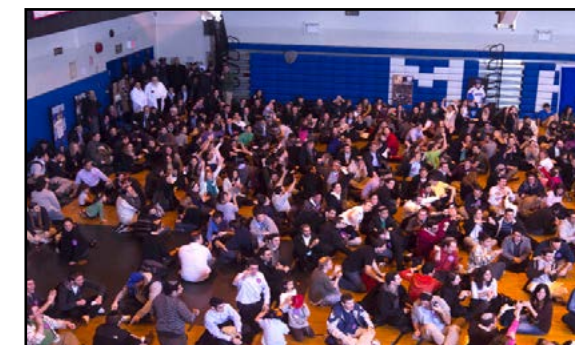
Dr. Fousek noted that this impressive level of scholarship has great ramifications for the students themselves. As he remarked, "a faculty that's engaged in original research and writing is a faculty that brings that excitement [for their subject] into the classroom... He also

## YU Students Spin the Night Away

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over the course of a few weeks, and to increase this buzz as the event got closer," explained Rachael Fried, Presidential Fellow for the Office of Communications and Public Affairs, and leader of the publicizing efforts. "We released one video a week, progressing from the lower key and more subtle type to the funny and more noticeable videos." All sorts of characters, including budding dreidel scientists and Basketball Coach Jonathan Halpert giving a pump up speech to dreidels in the Yeshiva locker-room, found their way into these short videos. The final one that was released had no sound so that it could be played on flatscreens around campus for the whole week before.

Media relations also sought to spread publicity even beyond the campus. "We also used Facebook, fliers and email to get the word out to as many people as we possibly could," said Fried. "The media picked up on our efforts to break the world record and we eventually ended up in all different kinds of newspapers and news shows."



As the event began, Yeshiva University security guards, - armed with pitch counters to count people - funneled all of the event's participants through one entrance in order to ensure an accurate count of the dreidel spinners. Each of the counter passed through the registration

area where they signed in, received a dreidel, were counted, and put on a purple sticker that read "Spin for Scholarships."

Other residents of Washington Heights, along with alumni and their children from the New York/New Jersey area, joined YU students from both the Wilf and Beren campus.

DJ Wartelsky, 8, from Teaneck, NJ, finished his homework early so he could come out and show his spinning skills. He said that he and his little brother practiced for the event. Dr. Aaron Koller, Professor of Bible at YU, arrived with his children and an elementary school math book to pass the time before the kick-off of the festivities. Rabbi Wieder and his wife brought their young son to add to the count.

Although some lamented the lack of activity before the actual spinning, others were happy for the opportunity to rub shoulders with and show off their dreidel skills to Eric Pavony, Founder and "Knishioner" of Major League Dreidel (MLD). He and his team were on site giving spinning tutorials and providing "an official dreidel presence at the event."

MLD was born in 2006 after Pavony noticed at his mother's Chanukah party that the dreidel was "only an ornament, not meant for adults to play with, collect-

ing dust on [his] mother's mantel." He standardized the spin surface with creation of the "spinagogue"- a Star of David that provides an enclosed flat surface to contain the dreidels. Competitors spin their dreidels in the spin zone. The spinner that clocks the longest spin time

wins. The MLD runs competitions throughout the United States and they sell their "spinagogue" through Bed, Bath, and Beyond.

Throughout the spinning, participants could buy tickets to a raffle to help raise money for SHS. Overall, the event yielded 800 dollars for SHS.

The event was followed by the debut performance of the Y-Studs, Yeshiva's new a capella group, a short comedy act by Eli Lebowicz and the raffle drawing for an iPad and other prizes.

"The feedback for the event has been really great," said Rachael Fried. "I think this got the word out there that not only is Yeshiva University a great place to be for its academic excellence, but that it is a fun place and has a lot going on. We raised money for Students Helping Students, broke a world record and had a great time all in one night!"

"We were a bit anxious at first, not really sure if we had the manpower to do it," admitted Jason Katz, "but the event was a huge success. The amount of exposure that SHS received among students and patrons alike was fantastic. And although breaking the record was amazing, the real win for us was the awareness we were able to bring to people about Undergraduate Scholarships at Yeshiva University and how each person can help."

The record-breaking garnered a wide range of media attention, and was mentioned everywhere from Fox News and the Huffington Post to Conan O'Brien and Saturday Night Live. In the Weekend Update segment of SNL, Seth Myers relayed to the world how "over 580 students at Yeshiva University in New York this week gathered for DreidelPaloosa, where they set a record for most people spinning dreidels at the same time...They also broke the record for worst paloosa."

on the Wilf campus (where he had been since 2007), Dean Bacon was finally able to advance this plan. After speaking to Dean Eichler of YC, who was keen on the idea as well, it was decided to make this a joint event for the faculty of both schools.

Similar events have been head in the past, though not in recent years. Typically, they were small affairs that only honored one or two professors. That was where last month's celebration differed markedly. Earlier, Dr. Bacon had compiled a list of about 6 faculty authors that she knew of. Together with Dr. Fousek, two more names were added to the list. This was already a "pretty impressive" number to Dr. Fousek. As he began to research more thoroughly, he was pleasantly surprised at just how many authors he and Dr. Bacon had left off of their list. "Within a week, said Dr. Fousek, "we had twice as many books.. Though the event had originally been planned for only YC and SCW faculty, when it was found that a member of the SSSB faculty had also published a book, Dean Ginzberg was contacted, and SSSB was included in the count as well. All told, 29 different

observed that such a prolific faculty exemplifies "the rich intellectual environment of our schools," to which he quickly adds, that books are just the tip of the iceberg. Faculty in various departments spread their work via different print and online journals as well.

Prior to the event itself the professors' books were on display in the libraries on their respective campuses. The event itself was attended by 17 of the authors, as well as their families and colleagues. There was a reception for the authors, and their books were made available for sale. The topics ranged, reflecting a cross section of YU departments. With boos subjects varying from business ethics to bible, mathematics to medieval Jewish philosophy, and piracy to poetry, the scope was truly remarkable. One of the highlights of the evening was Dr. Bacon's speech in which she read aloud the name of every book and its author, and allowed the crowd to acknowledge each author individually. It was a "very weighty moment. It was touching and inspiring," said Dr. Fousek.

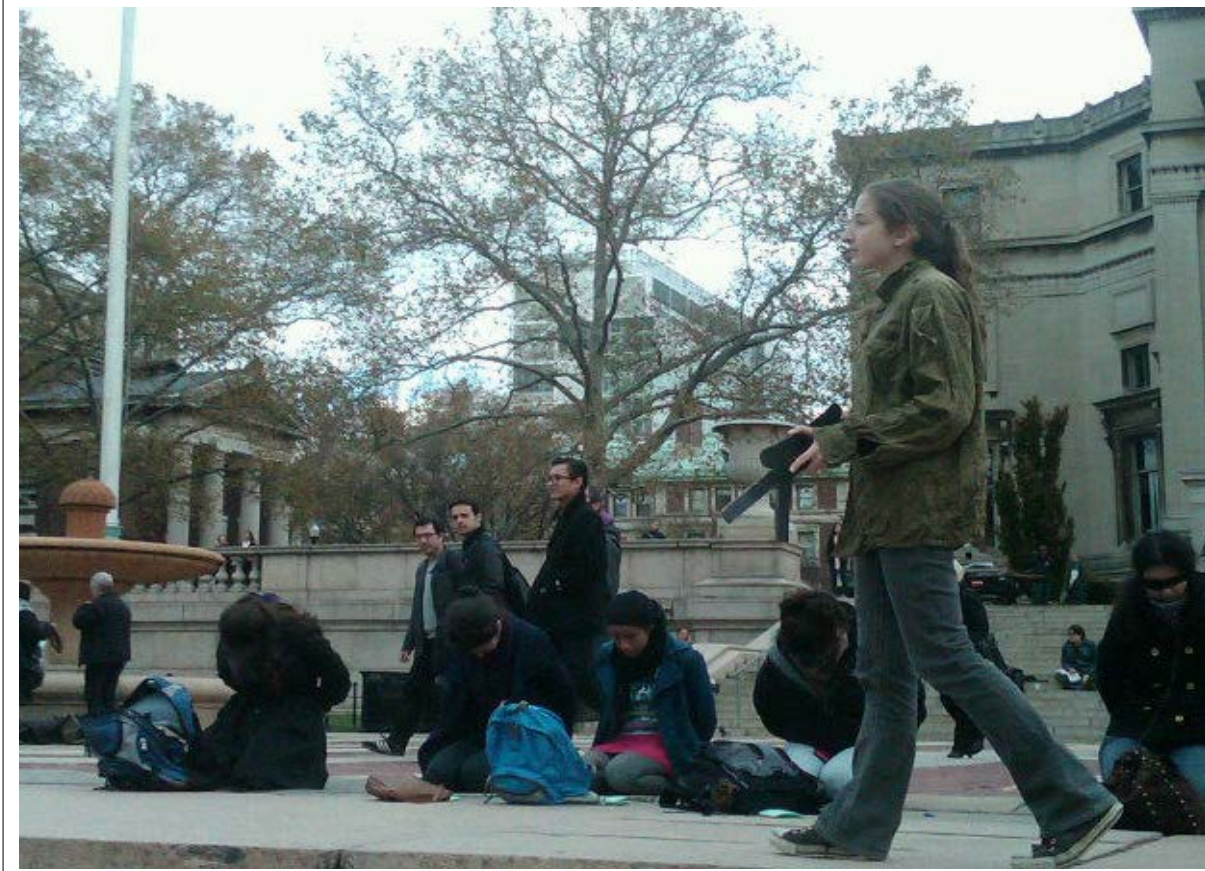
## Honors Program

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ics I, has had a different experience in the program. Although Zzyppman originally intended for Karp to co-teach the recitation, Karp was unavailable due to scheduling conflicts, so Zzyppman instead suggested that Karp give a weekly optional session on using the program Mathematica to do physics problems. Karp, who is currently using Mathematica as a research tool for his own thesis, was very excited about this. Karp spoke to the value of the teaching experience, saying that it "has been a lot of fun; I am enthusiastic about what I demonstrate and I think that the students find Mathematica to be cool and interesting." Time constraints and inflexible schedules, though, have been negative factors in his opinion: "The sessions are optional, and Dr. Zypman, legitimately, doesn't want to give incentives to come to an optional session, because whoever couldn't come would be unfairly penalized. Many students do try to come, but when they're swamped with work they have trouble showing up. So usually I don't have more than three attendees, and it can sometimes feel like a lot of work for not so many students. But I do enjoy teaching the students and it has overall been a positive experience."

With the semester drawing to a close, the Honors Steering Committee is evaluating the program's success. Dr. Cwilich said that after meeting with them a month ago, each professor was contacted to evaluate the experience. The committee, reported Dr. Cwilich, was "happy" with the results. "This is the first semester, so we cannot say there is 100% success," Dr. Cwilich said. Out of the "ambitiously high" number of fellows, eight (the program has eight, as opposed to the originally suggested four or five), "Five are working fantastically. Fantastically means The professors are saying this changed the nature of their course, and they want to do this every time in the future." Some of the difficulties encountered, Cwilich believes, were caused by schedule conflicts: "In the cases where the fellow could be actually be physically in the class it helped a lot," he said.

The Honors Steering Committee has yet to evaluate freshman opinion on the impact of the Teaching Fellows, but they are working on a way to properly evaluate that information. Once the course has ended, they intend to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the program's success. For Dr. Cwilich, the big test will come in three years, when it can be seen how many of the freshmen end up staying to write their honors theses.



It was a shocking image I brought back with me to the place completely devoid of anything shocking. And this feeling of shock was one I was not completely sure what to do with – though I sensed something had to be done with it.

make the trip that day, partly because I felt I was needed and was eager to help. But there was another part of me drawn downtown: a nagging sense of daring, almost mischievous curiosity. An anti-Israel protest? Mock checkpoint? This was the sort of thing I'd only seen on ADL press releases and heard of from students at campuses like Michigan and UC Berkeley. I had to see this with my own eyes.

When we first arrived, all seemed relatively calm. In fact, the impressively sizeable group of pro-Israel students assembled in counter-protest seemed to greatly outnumber the handful of SJP members congregated across the way on college walk. Outwardly, I smiled and pretended to be relieved. But inside, I was severely disappointed. Where was all the action?

I was not to stay disappointed,

though. Soon, the "checkpoint" began to truly take shape, and the protest quickly gained momentum. Volunteers materialized from all corners, and one by one they subjected themselves to what was purported to occur at Israeli checkpoints. They were blindfolded with black cloth and gagged with duct tape. They were manhandled and tossed in all directions, their shirts yanked almost to the point of being ripped. They were shoved violently to the ground. Within about half an hour, a scene had materialized that could

have done relatively little to change that. But as I rode the 1 train back that early afternoon, the frightening image of all those people lined up and stuck with me. It was a shocking image I brought back with me to the place completely devoid of anything shocking. And this feeling of shock was one I was not completely sure what to do with – though I sensed something had to be done with it.

I realized, though, that more frightening and significant than the unsettling image was being asked, for one of the first times in my life, to truly defend my position relative to others. I'd like to think that I am acutely aware of the extreme and dire challenges that Israel faces necessitating border checkpoints. And I knew that this demonstration was an over-the-top, unfair, exaggerated, and counter-productive form of protest of what is in reality a supremely complicated and unfortunately necessary situation. But I still felt myself at loss for words. When Columbia students and other passersby engaged me in conversation about what was going on, I nervously called out to another to help me navigate the conversation. Not because I wasn't familiar with the lingo. I knew *exactly* what to say. But the fact that I had never had to say it made me unable to when it counted.

For most, college is the time and station in life designed for and identified with exposure. Exposure to new places. New things. New ideas. New experiences. It is the time to willingly subject yourself to and immerse yourself in situations that make you feel exceedingly awkward and uncomfortable. This exposure is supposed to result in having an "experience" that will last forever, that can be called upon in memory for posterity, and that will hopefully teach you something. Most of all, though, college is the time to challenge anything and everything one has ever known; to begin one's life as an adult, to rethink one's worldview from scratch.

A significant drawing factor of Yeshiva University is its ability to provide precisely the opposite of that. For a significant number of its students, Yeshiva University was *the* choice because it is a college where exposure to foreign experiences is kept to a minimum. You never have to feel awkward or uncomfortable. You never have to get that jarring, shocking feeling. And your position on any given issue never has to be challenged – because chances are, it is the position shared by everyone around you.

But I would challenge Yeshiva students to find appropriate venues for introducing a small yet healthy dose of exposure – and even some shock value – into their lives. Being challenged face-to-face at Columbia as a supporter of Israel – a position that I had taken for granted – motivated me to become stronger and more confident in that position. I can better stand my ground going forward because I have seen the opposition, and I am prepared. And by exposing myself to the jarring and challenging scene, I now fully understand just how acute and constant the threat of Israel's de-legitimization is. The "experimental model" of college is not Yeshiva's model. And it should not be: Yeshiva would hardly be Yeshiva with an anti-Israel rally on campus. But the goal of this university is to shape young men and women who will engage the world, to enable and enable future Jewish and world leaders. Those future leaders must be willing to venture outside of their comfortable, insular, and predictable immediate surroundings every once in a while. They must be willing to expose themselves to the real challenges that exist in the world – however frightening they may seem – if they ever hope to become the confident and capable leaders they aspire to be.

Well, that's a relief. The cancellation of TEIQU's Ethan Tucker event, coupled with a spate of articles criticizing the hypocrisy of censorship in an academic environment had begun to worry me. But not after our President unambiguously proclaimed that no such committee exists, affirming YU's commitment to educational integrity across the spectrum.

Not so fast. "There is a committee that is looking over campus life," President Joel continued, "but we only are going to stop programs when there is a real fear." Huh?

What happened to that firm rejection of censorship? What happened to the unwavering commitment to open discourse? And if that is not a Censorship Committee, what exactly is it?

These questions remain unanswered in the wake of President Joel's alarmingly evasive Town Hall Meeting. What was advertised as an "open and meaningful dialogue" turned into a clinic on oratory illusion, as the President deftly glossed over a series of significant campus issues with neither "open" nor "meaningful" treatment.

Technically, President Joel is correct – of course no officially titled "Censorship Committee" operates at YU. But there *is* a committee of rabbis and deans that monitors (and, occasionally, cancels) events or speakers based on vague and undefined ideological considerations. What we *call* this committee is ultimately irrelevant as long as its purpose remains apparent – censorship.

In his answer, President Joel chose to focus on the term "censorship" rather than the relevant practice of repressing student events, carefully sidestepping the real issue. He somehow managed to simultaneously deny the existence of a censorship committee and defend its necessity.

For the most part, President Joel presented rhetoric and fact as interchangeable. Within the context of censorship, he ventured into another hot-button issue: AEPi at YU. Unprompted, President Joel informed the audience that there will be no fraternities at Yeshiva University. Why not? Well, unbeknownst to the would-be fraternity founders (and

## A Censorship Committee by Any Other Name...

### One Student's Reaction to a Troubling Town Hall Meeting

By MICAH STEIN

The question/answer session at November 18th's campus-wide Town Hall Meeting kicked off with a bang: "There is no Censorship Committee at Yeshiva University" President Richard Joel reassured the capacity Heights Lounge crowd, "Lo haya velo yeheyeh [There never was and never will be]."

Well, that's a relief. The cancellation of TEIQU's Ethan Tucker event, coupled with a spate of articles criticizing the hypocrisy of censorship in an academic environment had begun to worry me. But not after our President unambiguously proclaimed that no such committee exists, affirming YU's commitment to educational integrity across the spectrum.

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For the most part, President Joel presented rhetoric and fact as interchangeable. Within the context of censorship, he ventured into another hot-button issue: AEPi at YU. Unprompted, President Joel informed the audience that there will be no fraternities at Yeshiva University. Why not? Well, unbeknownst to the would-be fraternity founders (and

everyone else in the room), YU has the "richest campus life of any university" and thus does not need fraternities.

Excuse me? Yeshiva University offers many exceptional services. However, to claim it has "the richest campus life of any university" is brazenly hyperbolic. We spend too much time in class to enjoy the same array of rewarding activities as typi-

cal college students, and too many students go home for the weekend to sustain a cohesive community on campus. Yes, President Joel can surely produce an impressive list of extracurricular activities at YU, but the abundance of clubs does not translate into a fulfilled campus life for every student nor does it reduce the feelings of isolation that led these students to seek community in Greek Life.

The actual state of YU campus life is beside the point, though. This is a matter of distinguishing between truth and optimism while holding our leaders accountable for

legitimate or pertinent one. How much longer will we allow our concerns to be ignored or distorted? If Town Hall Meetings continue to serve as an outlet for canned answers to dynamic questions, then our collective participation in these events serves to implicitly endorse an indifferent administration.

Of course, no university operates as a democracy, and to solicit student input for every institutional decision would be impossible. But students must play *some* role. The "advisory board" currently operates with no official guidelines despite the expansive nature of its task – es-

entially, defining YU's ideology. The issues of censorship and Greek Life demand meaningful dialogue and concrete action. While Town Hall meetings serve as an effective channel to introduce these concerns, the student body cannot remain satisfied with merely raising grievances. Where is the follow-up? Where is the transparency? Where is any indication from the administration that our concerns are being addressed?

Articles and editorials in this newspaper have failed to elicit any public reaction from the administration. Direct questioning at the Town Hall was met with evasion and rejection. From the perspective of the university, it seems that the problems of censorship and institutional accountability simply don't exist.

They do. It's time for the students, faculty, and administration of Yeshiva University to affirm that censorship will never take place at this institution. In rejecting censorship, we recognize that our educational and cultural development benefits from a range of opinions – even those that fall outside the accepted scope of modern Orthodoxy.



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## A Trip Through the Past

By ALAN DAWIDOWICZ

I recently found myself with the immensely pleasurable task of searching through old issues of *The Commentator* on microfilm in the library. (For those of you who thought that was a sarcastic statement, try using the microfilm machine and *not* having fun.) I was looking over issues from the 1976-77 school year, the year Dr. Lamm became President of Yeshiva University, and Jimmy Carter President of the United States.

The atmosphere at YU today is one where the administration does their best to shield the young, impressionable student body.

I couldn't help but notice a common theme amongst the different articles. Students were involved in everything. Every issue had an article updating the student body on what the Student Congress was doing. From a cursory glance of only one year's worth of old *Commentators*, I saw articles discussing student votes on whether or not there should be a second Literature requirement. Newly appointed President Lamm wrote a letter to the students asking for their ideas and input. Students were encouraged to lead.

Things are much different today. Interactions between the students and the administration are tenuous, at best. Students are generally informed of decisions instead of being involved in the decision making-progress. There was recently a curriculum review at Yeshiva. Were students invited to take part in this process? We are in college, and our opinion regarding our own education should be taken into account.

The atmosphere at YU today is one where the administration does their best to shield the young, impressionable student body. Religious ideas are censored by the new Events Committee by six different administrators. Is there a student representative on this board? Or even a student liaison? No. Last year students were informed the Purim *chagiga* would be on separate campuses the week before Purim. In 1976, Yeshiva University had a rifle club. Today, administrators won't allow punching bags in the gym—it sends the wrong message.

Please, from one, simple YU student to the administration, stop unnecessarily sheltering us. We are adults, capable of achieving so much, and these are the years to achieve! Let us thrive, be passionate and driven. Let us get involved in our Yeshiva University. Be honest with us, and we will return the favor. Just give us the chance.

## Yeshiva University's Silencer – and the Loaded Gun Attached

By NATHANIEL JARET

The so-called “Censorship Committee” which surfaced last month has ignited an understandably acerbic brouhaha. Right-wing elements at YU, no doubt, must be wondering how an institution like our own could possibly function *without* a censorship committee—we are, after all, supposed to be an Orthodox institution! How can the likes of Bible Critics (no matter how delicious and satisfying *kugel* is), biologists and physicists with atheistic leanings, and rabbis from other (!) movements in Judaism, possibly be provided with a soapbox implicitly emblazoned with the YU coat of arms? Meanwhile, in reaction to this committee, those with more Modern and open-minded allegiances are running for the hills, cowering in terror for what seems to be the beginning of Soviet-style censorship. “Better dead than red!” they call out towards the 12<sup>th</sup> floor of Belfer.

But what was actually censored this past November?

Rabbi Ethan Tucker is the co-Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Hadar, a grassroots egalitarian institution about 100 blocks south of our own. He has *semicha* from the Chief Israeli Rabbinate and a PhD in Talmudic Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary. His ideology is decidedly progressive, but firmly rooted in the language of Halakha, not too dissimilar from Conservatism of the 60s. He has co-published a 90-page essay, laden with material from rabbinic, *rishonic*, and *achronic* literature, which amounts to his comprehensive argument for why the exclusion of women from liturgical practice, including *minyanim*, is not as obviously halakhically cut-and-dry as the Orthodox rabbinical establishment would have us think.

Rabbi Tucker, invited by the student club Torah Exploration of Ideas, Questions, & Understanding (*TEIQU*), was not permitted to speak at Yeshiva University. President Richard Joel stated at the most recent Town Hall that this was be-



Rabbi Ethan Tucker

cause his views on the development of Halakha are inconsistent with our own. Perhaps.

But what has this act of censorship actually effected? What have been the reverberations of this decision?

Well, the event happened anyway. Fifty students crammed into a student apartment in the Heights, relatively late in the evening on a regular school night, to hear Rabbi Tucker speak—and who knows how many more students would have

shown up had it been held in Furst 501. After Rabbi Tucker's *shiu*, there was a Q & A session, during which many attendees expressed reservations to and even caustic objections over both his methodology and his conclusions. For others, Rabbi Tucker piqued interest but expectedly generated ambivalence, and a select few were almost, if not totally, sold. R. Tucker is charismatic, eloquent, and admirably addresses criticism voiced against him, using language and methodology strikingly similar, though not identical, to what the textually and critically trained Modern Orthodox community presupposes. And he thus secured an audience.

And if YU's best and brightest could not pose compelling challenges to Rabbi Tucker's *hashkafa*, either at his lecture or in a lecture or series of lectures following his, then *why is Rabbi Tucker automatically wrong?* This is where an element of religious insecurity truly kicks in: by banning a speaker *not too distant* from the Orthodox world, YU has effectively declared that it has no confidence in 1) its students, for their ability to arrive at the conclusions it wishes they would, but 2) *much* more problematically, in its educational leaders, for their inability, or unwillingness, to effectively dispute that speaker and thus defend its Orthodoxy.



We live in information-flowing New York City, not a monastery in the French countryside.

Rabbi Tucker *will* remain a real threat and a compelling alternative to Orthodoxy until his arguments are rebutted. And the students cannot rebut them alone. If Yeshiva University, the bastion of Modern Orthodox thought, cannot argue compellingly against those who disagree with the particulars of its system, straightforward arithmetic dictates what will happen to students already attracted to (in this case) egalitarianism who are intrigued or bothered by Orthodoxy's relationship with it. And the number of such students is not insubstantial. Yeshiva University has failed to do the math.

To those at YU for whom questions of egalitarianism and the positioning of women in Orthodox society are non-questions, there is nothing to say. They are right; Rabbi Tucker does not, and does not pretend to, affiliate with Orthodoxy. But for anyone who has realized that the positioning of women has *already* shifted dramatically in the past century anyways, and that this is true *even in the Orthodox world*, there are discussions to be had. The plethora of recent examples speak for themselves: the Rabba controversy last year, Rabbi Daniel Sperber's essays on *women and Kriat HaTorah*, the heated Dayan Brody/

Rabbi Shulman *Tradition* exchanges on women's hair covering, and even Rabbi Ovadia Yosef's (of all people) relatively recent ruling that women can technically fulfill men's obligation to hear the *megilla*. These are all individual threads in the expansive question of “Women and Halakha.” This heated dialogue, penetrating even the insular Haredi and Yeshivish worlds, fiercely at tests that discussions over changing realities for women under Halakha are alive and kicking. These issues are real, the emergent questions are biting, and there are those who have chosen to engage them and those who have receded into the warm and safe confines of what they consider

Orthodox and *Orthodox* because it is true (as is implied by the Latin etymology—“straight opinion”— of the word Orthodox itself), then let us act accordingly. By no means can we ever accept the backwards, juvenile, and wholly obscurantist notion that Rabbi Tucker *must* be *incorrect* because he is not “Orthodox.” If he is indeed wrong, it is because the content of his arguments are not sufficiently true to justify his far-reaching progressive conclusions. The same goes for Professor James Kugel, Professor Philip Kitcher, Rabba Sara Hurwitz, and so forth, for there isn't really such thing as a “*tzarich iyan gadol*,” not in today's marketplace of ideas. Society has already eaten from the tree of knowledge; it is naïve and dangerous to think the apple still hangs juicily. Like the fate of the “world-is-flat” theory, Orthodoxy will be rendered obsolete by the passage of history if it remains undefended by those best equipped to do so (God forbid). And frankly, a bunch of impressionable, religiously exploring college students, bright as we may be but still wet behind the ears, are not best equipped to do so.

Yeshiva University owes its student body a more mature response than a trigger-happy policy of censorship. Entirely ignoring the slippery-slope danger that this “censorship committee” represents to any body of thinking individuals, it is the *message* that YU sends to its students when it doesn't even attempt to offer responses to the questions and challenges that its students—indeed, Orthodoxy at large—are grappling with, and increasingly often, succumbing to. And if the brilliance and scholarship in the intellectual powerhouse that Yeshiva University is cannot offer a sophisticated Orthodox response to the questions that will arise, *b'chol dor va'dor*, then no one can, for that response probably doesn't exist. Yeshiva University, with every act, murmur, and blink of censorship, shirks its duty, abandons its lofty and admittedly difficult charge, and fails both its students and Orthodoxy at large.

Nathaniel Jaret is a Junior majoring in English Literature, and is Arts & Culture Editor for The Commentator.

<sup>1</sup>In a tiny nutshell, Halakhic development is by no means a black-and-white matter, and rarely are things simply *right*, or *wrong*. There are textual, historical, sociological, and other considerations that inherently impact the Halakhic process—not everything that *can* be changed in Halakha *should*, *ipso facto*, be changed, as I am sure the most honest in the Conservative movement would silently concede.

If we actually believe—and don't just pledge lip service to—the idea that something is *true* because it is

## A Letter to Dean Eichler from SAAC on Behalf of the YC Student Body



Dear Dean Eichler,

As the new semester rapidly approaches, students will shortly begin the lengthy, winding, and often stressful process of registering for their classes. We understand that many of the issues we will face, like getting locked out of a class, are simply par for the course. However, we know that you, and the rest of the administration and faculty of Yeshiva University are constantly aiming to make the registration experience as student friendly as possible. To that end, we were hoping you could help us on one simple but essential issue regarding registration: the early release of course syllabi.

Currently, the aspect of class registration that students find most frustrating is the actual choosing of courses. Due to the lack of information regarding some of these courses, the process of discerning which classes best suit a given student's interests and learning style, has come to seem like a biannual exercise in divination, rather than in deduction.

The syllabi provided at the beginning of every semester are valuable, but if disseminated prior to registration, their value to students would increase dramatically. They will provide students with important information regarding course goals, a professor's lecture style, and subject matter,

making registration a more informed, and hopefully calmer, process.

Recently, the federal government passed a law requiring universities to publicize textbook information to students prior to registration. We are grateful for this law, as it will hopefully eliminate the other major stress of each new semester, the mad rush to purchase textbooks. However, we humbly request that in addition to required texts, professors also post at least a “proto-syllabus” of sorts, containing information pertaining to course objectives, lecture style, and possibly grading guidelines.

Ironically, many departments already publish this information in leaflets they distribute around campus. If those course descriptions could be uploaded to the MyYU course schedule, it would be a tremendous help to the student body, and we would be most appreciative. To facilitate this process, the Student Academic Affairs Committee was provided with a simple “how-to” generated by Academic Computing, showing professors how to upload their syllabi. We have enclosed that document.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this and to hear our request.

Sincerely,  
The Student Academic Affairs Committee on behalf of the YC student body.

Interested in joining the  
*Commentator* family?  
It's a happy one.  
We promise.

Email us at  
editor@yucommentator.com

## Speaking in Tongues

By DOV HONICK

As the world around us celebrates the holiday season, YU students are lamenting the onset of the registration season. Whereas the holidays bring good cheer and spirits, registration at YU induces a frenzy of running back and forth from academic advising to the registrar, a scrambling to find the right

campus, there was nary an appointment to be had. Finally, for Spring semester, I actually managed to get an appointment. When I arrived at the advisement office, lo, there was no sign of the advisor. I waited. And waited. After about twenty minutes, another advisor walked in and upon inquiring who I was waiting for, told me “oh! She meets in her faculty office in the basement.” Surely

“Registration is by nature a byzantine process, which is made all the more difficult when the administration is speaking a different language than the students, or not speaking at all.”

classes, and then a re-scrambling to find the right classes that aren't closed out, all enough to grieve even the most intrepid student. Chaos reigns, and by the time students are finished with the running, the registering, and then the re-registering, well...let's just say, the season is no longer jolly. Registration is by nature a byzantine process, which is made all the more difficult when the administration is speaking a different language than the students, or not speaking at all.

This issue is commonly known in clichéd YU parlance as a “lack of communication,” and it has been discussed almost *ad nauseum* in various opinions articles, whether it is gripes about the censorship committee or summer school or any other number of issues that come up in any college. The criticisms of YU often stray from the realm of the cogent. I have heard people refer to “the administration” in a way strikingly reminiscent to wacky survivalists talking about “the government.” To be fair and rational, the YU administration, unlike the government, does not conduct secret ritualistic meetings with cloaks and blood pledges where they plot the demise of the student body. The simple fact is that during the registration process, information gets lost in bureaucracy. YU's administration, like the administrations of colleges everywhere, runs in a rather Vagon-like fashion.<sup>\*</sup>

For me, the frustration began over the summer. I, like everybody else, received via email a registration form for the Fall semester. One look at the voluminous course listing left me flummoxed and told me that I would need some kind of academic advising, which is in fact technically mandated, in order to make sure I had the right classes. Well, being from out of town meant that my only recourse was email or phone. No reply. I even tried the much-lauded LiveChat option through the Registrar's office; nothing there either. Okay, not the end of the world, another email told me that there would be appointments during orientation. Of course, because many people had the same problem, when I arrived on

Dov Honick is a first-year student majoring in History.

<sup>\*</sup> For those who haven't thoroughly enjoyed *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Vogons are a species of alien that are pathologically bureaucratic.

## Published Answers in The Commentator? Not What you Think: *The Strange History of Shelly Senders and the CLEP Test*

COMPILED BY ELLIOT FRIEDMAN  
AND ADAM ZIMILOVER

Shelly Senders styled himself the "Cleveland Crusader," an 'out-of-town' boy using his position on the student newspaper to change Yeshiva University for the better. During the 1977-78 academic year, his last as an undergraduate, Senders became *The Commentator's* Contributing Editor. From this perch, he wanted to bring "issues worthy of broader discussion" to the attention of his readers. In practice, this often meant wading into turbulent waters. One piece of his argued that students "were putting up walls" around the university's aging rabbinic luminary, Rabbi Soloveitchick, "making it difficult for him to be a true part of the Yeshiva community." The assertion earned him a wave of "angry responses."

But Senders was not looking

areas meant to serve as equivalents to college courses. However, as Yeshiva's registrar at the time himself acknowledged, these tests were never intended as substitutes for a bricks-and-mortar college education. Instead, they were "designed for students unable or unwilling to go through the rigors of a college schedule." Ultimately, they were intended to lead not to a traditional diploma from an established university, but to a unique "External College Degree." Despite this, Yeshiva College accepted the tests for full course credit in a host of disciplines, including English and history. Many students, either out of laziness or in an attempt to speed their way through college, used the CLEP exams to gain quick, easy credits. This option proved particularly attractive to an emerging subgroup within Yeshiva College: those who had studied in Israel

quence of answers to the multiple choice questions. Students would simply inscribe that sequence on a number two pencil, walk into the testing room, and proceed to gain six college credits without a stitch of studying.

Senders saw in the CLEP exam the perfect target for *The Commentator's* Cleveland Crusader. By exposing the cheating practices, he hoped to stop Yeshiva from granting easy credit for what he saw as an academically worthless test. But he did not simply run to the presses with a hastily written opinion piece. Instead, he set out to investigate.

Senders did not want to make accusations based only on second hand information. So he decided to sit for the American History exam (though he stresses that he never used it for college credit). A chemistry major, Senders had not taken an American history course since

*The adjacent article tells the story of how YC student Shelly Senders campaigned against Yeshiva's acceptance of the CLEP exams for course credit. The following is an excerpt from the original Commentator article in which Senders explains the problems with the CLEP test:*

**The Commentator—November 28, 1977**  
By: Shelly Senders

Let's face it. Aside from taking a "perfectly legitimate" leave of absence from Rockland Community College and claiming 32 credits for a year's worth of non-college work in an Israeli Yeshiva, the easiest way to many credits is by taking the College Level Examination Program (CLEP) test in one of the over twenty subjects. And since so many students here at Yeshiva take advantage of the University's low educational standards with regard to the CLEP test, I feel my efforts on their behalf will be much appreciated...

I have often wondered about the true level of proficiency necessary to earn credit on these tests. Does "passing" require an expertise equivalent to that of a student completing such a course in college or is the test little more than a remake of a high school Achievement Test? Being a graduating senior with no need for additional credits, I decided to take the American History exam on a lark to more-or-less "test the system". I must admit, I did study two or three hours, and I did have a course in history in high school and yet, my background entering the test was certainly minimal by college standards...

And the results? Well I ended up in the 95th percentile and received six credits for the equivalent of five hours of work (three spent studying and two spent taking the test). Even more surprising was my discovery that being in the 70th percentile meant that a raw score of approximately 35% was necessary. My conclusions from this interesting experiment were twofold. To begin with, although the test was rather difficult as a result of its emphasis on trivial detail, the grading scale used overcompensated and yielded inflated marks. Furthermore, the standards used by YC are extremely low, allowing minimal understanding of course material to be the yardstick for granting exemption and credit...

The fact that Yeshiva accepts such a low proficiency level seriously disturbs me. But there is another problem with the CLEP tests as presently administered which is perhaps even more distressing. A "mesorah" has been circulating around many of the city's colleges...In English literature all of the information necessary to achieve a grade of 100% is available to many students because some intelligent fellow decided to jot down all the questions to the test. On the American History exam, the techniques have become even more sophisticated and now a list of the correct "letters" is circulating allowing one to walk in "cold" and gain six easy credits.

*Letter to the Editor in support of Senders' article:*

**Letter to the Editor - December 14, 1977**

To the Editor,

My hearty congratulations go to Shelly Senders for his taking a principled stance on the issue of CLEP examinations and academic standards. It is refreshing to see in print the realization that CLEP examinations as they are currently misused by many, cause more harm than good. There are other ways to allow a student to demonstrate proficiency, and I sincerely hope that there are more honest ways of encouraging college students to spend a year in Israel.

Robert Kantowitz YC '76

*Yeshiva discusses suspending the CLEP examination two months after Senders' article:*

**The Commentator—January 16, 1978**

By: Jack Stroh

The Yeshiva College Senate... discussed the suspension of the CLEP examinations.

A column appeared in *The Commentator* on November 28, 1977 concerning the value of the CLEP examinations for exemptions and college credit. Dean Kurtzer told the Senate that the article was not the cause of the current reevaluation but acted rather as a catalyst...

Dean Kurtzer proposed that the tests be suspended retroactively from the date of *The Commentator* article, and that other types of alternatives for exemption or for credit to be considered...

During the discussion over the CLEP exams, Rabbi Miller emphasized another point. There is no reason, he said, that the author of any *Commentator* article should be harassed simply for following his own conscience and voicing an opinion.

*continues on next page*

*CLEP continued*

latitude in taking courses." Another claimed that the college had tried to impose rigor by, for example, forcing students to take higher level courses in areas in for which they had earned CLEP credit. When another member of the *Commentator* staff contacted the administration about the cheating, they said they were aware that there was a problem since even foreign students frequently achieved perfect scores on the American history test. However, they did not realize the extent of the cheating, such as the use of inscribed pencils.

After approaching YU's own administration, Senders then went to the deans of other New York colleges and asked them about their attitudes towards the test. Most told him that they did not grant credit for CLEP tests. One Columbia University official went on the record stating that the test "is not a substantial sort of achievement" and "doesn't show the mastery of a discipline."

Finally, after all his digging, Senders was ready to go public with his findings. The resulting piece, published in *The Commentator* of November 28, 1977, focused on presenting the CLEP tests as academically meaningless. Though not the main focus of the article, Senders mentioned the rampant cheating

and, especially, the use of the special CLEP pencils. However, he did not stop there. With the support of the Editor-in-Chief, Senders took one final, audacious step: he published the answer sequence to the American History test in the title box prominently displayed above his column. It was this display of evidence that finally pushed the test "over the edge." In fact, the cheaters themselves unwittingly saw to it that this would happen. At the offering of the American history exam that followed *The Commentator's* printing, students, too lazy to manufacture the special CLEP pencil, walked into the test with the answers clipped straight out of the paper.

With the publication of Senders' piece, the campus quickly fragmented into "pro-Shelly" and "anti-Shelly" groups. Among those who were "pro," one supporter sent a letter to *The Commentator* offering his "heartfelt congratulations" for Senders' having taken "a principled stand." But many of the "anti" group did not limit themselves to verbal expressions of disapproval. They harassed Senders mercilessly. They spat at him in the cafeteria. They hung paper signs on his Morg dorm room and lit them on fire. The attacks even reached his parents' house: "People called my parents and told them that I had been killed

in an accident...there were bogus attempts to have local pizza parlors deliver pizzas to my door." Some particularly enraged students issued death threats. One came over to Senders in the library and threatened "to break every bone" in his body.

The "cheating lobby" constantly looked for ever more creative ways to punish him for his actions, and the administration, "preoccupied with the survival of the school," did little to stop it. One group forged Senders' signature and appended it to letters to the medical schools to which he had applied, requesting that his application be dropped because he had gotten into the school of his choice, though he had not yet gotten in. They also sent a letter to ETS, the CLEP's authors, pointing out that Senders had printed the answers. The company threatened Senders with a lawsuit.

Prior to these final attacks, the administration had expressed support for Senders. The Vice President of Student Affairs had even delivered an impassioned speech to the Yeshiva College Senate calling Senders' actions "an act of courage." But, after these latter assaults, the administration finally took an active stance. First, the dean called the suspected ring leaders of the "anti-Shelly" group into his office and threatened to prevent

them from graduating. Then, the school's lawyers wrote to ETS and told them that, if they pursued the matter, Yeshiva would reveal that the company had not changed its test. Only with these measures did things finally calm down.

If Senders suffered deeply for his stance, he also achieved his purpose. When Yeshiva's faculty Senate met in December and January, Dean Daniel Kurtzer proposed suspending all credit for the CLEP tests. He even attempted to make the invalidation retroactive to the date *The Commentator* piece appeared in print. And, as Senders recalls, "the matter made it all the way to the Board of Regents of the State of New York because the 'CLEP mesora' had made it to Queens and Brooklyn."

As for Senders himself, with his worst persecutors having graduated, he stayed on campus one more year and completed a Masters in Jewish Philosophy from the Bernard Revel Graduate School. The next year, he entered Yeshiva's Albert Einstein School of Medicine and graduated in 1983. Today, he resides in Cleveland and serves as president of his own practice, Senders Pediatrics.

Looking back at his experience, Senders says, "I might have done a little more behind the scenes politicking and a little more quiet negotiating." Yet, he is unapologetic

about the outcome. "I am just as resolute about the importance of maintaining academic and ethical standards as I was in fall, 1977."

In fact, rather than leave him bitter, the experience left him with positive memories of Yeshiva. "My 4 years at Yeshiva College and the subsequent 5 years at BRGS and AECOM provided me with the tools that have made me everything that I am...they left me with a voice, burnished by the CLEP crucible of public opinion, that I have used countless times in defense of 'what is right for children.'" Today, he says, he channels those crusading impulses into his medical work, "advocating on behalf of children with learning difficulties, developing parent education programs to help guide the inexperienced and working to make the health care system a kinder and gentler place for his patients." In this vein, he hopes that today's students remember the CLEP story not for all the difficulties it caused him personally, but for its demonstration of the good that idealists can do if they take a stand for what is right.

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### New A Capella Group on Campus

By ARIEL PELEG

Yeshiva University's newest a capella group, the Y-Studs, performed their debut concert last month at DreidelPalooza. The new group is the innovation of three students at Yeshiva College, Mordy Weinstein (YC '12), Nate Jaret (YC '12) and Ari Gartenberg (YC '13) who started the group earlier this semester. The group is YU's second all-male a capella group to form in recent years.

capella group, Tizmoret. Jaret, upon the suggestion of Weinstein, joined Tizmoret last year. Weinstein has been a member of Tizmoret for the past two years and has since become president of the group, which has released four albums to date. "I felt like we had a lot of untapped talent in YU, and the Maccabeats didn't have enough room for all of them," said Weinstein about his decision to found a capella group at YU.



The Y-Studs debut in Weissberg Commons after DreidelPalooza.

The idea to form the group developed last spring, when Weinstein got together with Jaret and Gartenberg, looking to add a new a capella group to the YU music scene. Weinstein began his college a capella career just over two years ago when he joined the Maccabeats, but he dropped out of the group just three days after being accepted in order to join the Queens College Jewish a

The idea of starting the group was

the name Shirayim, as a pun on the Hebrew word *shir*, song. This idea, however, was scrapped when some students began to joke that the group was the *shirayim*, Hebrew for leftovers, of the Maccabeats. Instead, they chose to call themselves the Y-Studs, a play on the name of the oft-received emails that YU students are all too accustomed to.

While, according to Weinstein, the idea to start the Y-Studs drew a lot of positive feedback, some YU students have expressed mixed feelings about the need for a new a capella group on campus. One junior YC student who wished to remain anonymous, commented that, "I'm no fan of the Maccabeats, but at the end of the day, they're not terrible, and the culture at YU seems mostly to love them. I just feel that for the Y-Studs themselves it will be a disappointment. They're not going to beat the Maccabeats out of the hearts and minds of the glazy-eyed Stern girls who love boys who can sing and learn. And let's be real, that's the Maccabeats' main fan base."

met with enthusiasm from student leaders when brought up last spring, and the new a capella group quickly obtained funding from the Office of Student Affairs. "We spoke to [Soy President] Saadia Fireman as well as [former YSU president] Shlomie Zeffren and they seemed into it and willing to give us funding," said Weinstein. Next, the group had to find a name. At first, they considered

Weinstein, however, sees things differently. "I don't mind if people think there's no need for another a capella group. I don't think there is any competition between the Maccabeats and us," said Weinstein, adding that, "the Y-Studs are very happy that YU and the Maccabeats are getting recognition for their new single. It helps the scene of YU a capella, which we're all happy about.

### Fuel Cells and Faculty Mentorship: Chemistry Professor Michael Machczynski

By STEVEN LOWINGER

An easy-to-spot Chemistry professor, Dr. Michael Machczynski grew up in Trenton, Michigan. He received a degree in chemical physics from Michigan State University and earned a Ph.D. in Chemistry from the California Institute of Technology. He explains the topic of his thesis, "Physical Characterization of the Rack Effect and Hydrogen Bond Networks in Blue Copper Proteins" as attempting to understand how nature achieves the transfer of electrons between proteins. Machczynski's penchant towards chemistry stemmed from his desire to "understand how the world around us works." Currently working on improving fuel cells, Dr. Machczynski is attempting to hasten the conversion of water into oxygen, thus allowing fuel to be produced using sunlight. His research lab was the recipient of a prestigious American Chemical Society grant.

This semester Dr. Machczynski teaches General Chemistry I, and he

has taught Inorganic Chemistry, Molecular Biochemistry and Chemistry Seminar in the past. Before arriving at Yeshiva College, Dr. Machczynski taught at various universities including the University of Modena in Italy where he gave a week's worth of lectures on molecular orbital theory and inorganic photo physics. He has also taught a course at the California Institute of Technology for four years on Advanced Ligand Field Theory.

Machczynski's dedication towards the students has shown throughout his two years here at Yeshiva. He has mentored seven

undergraduates from Yeshiva College, and two from Stern College for Women, and he is also very involved in the student research club, Undergraduate Student Research Presentations (USR), through courses, Inorganic Chemistry and Molecular Biochemistry. Working in a city is very important to Dr. Machczynski, because of his fondness of museums and the social environments. "I try to take as much advantage of the city as my job allows," he said. Traveling from Brooklyn, Dr. Machczynski is exposed to various types of culture on his daily trip to Yeshiva. This trip enables virtually all aspects of the city-life to be "on the way" to where he is going. In his spare time, Machczynski competes in a city volleyball league, and once a week does martial arts.

In the coming semester, Dr. Machczynski will be teaching General Chemistry II and will be aiding students, as usual, in Chemistry research. For students interested in pursuing research, he recommends that "they get involved in research as soon as possible." Encouraging students to seek out faculty, he says "the faculty here at Yeshiva is very approachable, because it is our job to help you, and we enjoy doing it."



which he gave a popular lecture on how to give research talks. Dr. Machczynski is always there for his students, as his researchers will attest. He has also been involved in providing the best chemistry courses available, even creating his own

### The Student Pulse

What is your opinion of an advisory board whose job it is to oversee what speakers, topics, and events may take place on campus based on religious sensibilities?

Strongly in Favor	15.2%
<b>In Favor</b>	<b>28.8%</b>
Neutral	16.2%
Against	19.4%
Strongly Against	20.4%

"I think that a university has the right to decide what speakers and events it hosts. While they cannot and do not tell you what you are allowed to listen to and what opinions you can subscribe to, they can decide not to have those views spread within their own institution."

"I am in favor as long as the criteria are defined and the approval process is transparent."

"Just because we attend a religious school doesn't mean we should only hear about topics that have made it through school censors. As students in higher education, we have an obligation to develop a broader understanding of the world beyond the cocoon of orthodoxy."

28.4% of Stern students in the Higher level Jewish studies program, and 32.1% of MYP students are in favor of a board whose job it is to oversee events on campus based on religious sensibilities, whereas 38.5% SBMP students are against, and 35.7% of Basic Jewish studies Stern students, and 42.9% of IBC students are strongly against.

27.9% of first year students are strongly in favor of a board whose job it is to oversee events on campus based on religious sensibilities, whereas 36.4% of fourth years students are opposed, and 50% of fifth year or more students are strongly opposed

How would you feel about an Ultra-Orthodox or Charedi Rabbi speaking in YU about religious topics?

Strongly in Favor	19.4%
In Favor	32.5%
<b>Neutral</b>	<b>38.7%</b>
Against	7.3%
Strongly Against	2.1%

"If YU bans non-centrist speakers then I think every other institution should promote an academic boycott on YU Rebbem."

How would you feel about a Reform Rabbi speaking in YU about religious topics?

Strongly In Favor	9.9%
In Favor	19.9%
Neutral	23.0%
<b>Against</b>	<b>24.6%</b>
Strongly Against	22.5%

How would you feel about a speaker discussing issues concerning sex, drugs, or other religions?

students, they should be able to have a speaker."

"All of these topics are pertinent to us as young Jewish men and women, and deserve to be addressed in the context of our identity as religious Jews. It is far better for the future of the Jewish people and for YU students in particular that they learn that information and advice relevant to their lives can and does come from a respectable, *frum* source rather than from the surrounding culture."

Should a chapter of AEPi, the national Jewish fraternity, exist at Yeshiva University?

Absolutely Yes	8.9%
Probably Yes	13.4%
<b>Neutral/Unsure</b>	<b>31.8%</b>
Probably Not	25.7%
Absolutely Not	20.1%

31.6% of MYP students feel neutral about a branch of AEPi at YU, while 42.9% of IBC students, and 33.3% of SBMP students are Strongly in favor.

"YC is already one big Jewish frat, so why add another one?"

"Some students feel very disconnected from the overall culture at YU, and this would be a good chance for them to feel a part of something Jewish."

"This is a religious institution that abides by a strict set of halachos and the concept of the fraternity is antithetical to our values. Even if the founders have noble intentions, Aepi will eventually transform into a party house."

"Fraternities perform many charitable activities and generally benefit universities. Just because it is a Frat, that does not mean it will violate the values of YU."

If students wanted to open a chapter of AEPi, would it be appropriate for the administration to prevent or restrict them from doing so?

Absolutely Yes	17.9%
<b>Probably Yes</b>	<b>22.3%</b>
<b>Neutral/Unsure</b>	<b>22.3%</b>
Probably Not	20.7%
Absolutely Not	16.8%

50% of first year students are either strongly in favor or in favor of YU preventing a chapter of AEPi from forming at YU, while 47.7% of fourth year students are either opposed or strongly opposed.

Have you heard that a fee for living off campus is being considered?

<b>Yes</b>	<b>83.4%</b>
No	16.6%

Are you in favor of an off campus fee if it helps YU economically?

Absolutely Yes	5.1%
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"If there is an interest among the

### SAAC Leads Push to Publish Evaluations

By MICHAEL SILVERSTEIN

As the registration rush comes to an end and students finalize their schedules, the question often arises: What's this teacher like? Will the course be challenging? Will it be engaging? Will it be an "easy A?" For years, students have had to look to websites such as Ratemyprofessors.com or ask upperclassmen, often finding that the aforementioned resources were not enough. There was no place that one could go that contained information not only about every professor, but also about his courses. By the end of next semester, all that may change.

Recently, the SAAC (Student Academic Affairs Committee) has proposed that YC should make teacher and course evaluations available to all students. (As of now, the proposal is only addressing YC faculty evaluations; Sy Syms and Stern are currently not involved in these discussions.) Following the examples of many other universities - such as University of Pennsylvania, Columbia, Brandeis, Queens College, and MIT - that have such websites, the SAAC proposed the creation of a system that "[p]rovides more information to students... producing 'educated consumers' who can more knowledgeably choose courses," according to the SAAC website. In addition, they hope to "alleviate many of the 'first-day' anxieties associated with walking into a classroom and meeting a professor who is not what the student expected or wanted."

Teacher and course evaluations are not a foreign concept in YU. By now, almost every YU student has filled out multiple teacher and course evaluations. Currently, these evaluations are never published, only seen by Dean Barry Eichler, Provost Morton Lowengrub, respective department chairs, and the professor. (Students have no need to worry about being objective in their evaluations; teachers do not see the evaluations until after they submit their grades.) These evaluations are used to help the professor evaluate their own performance. The evaluations are also used by the college to evaluate professors' job performance, and are eventually examined when questions such as tenure, contract renewal, and salary raises arise. Students, however, never see these evaluations.

After first presenting to the YC deans and the department heads, the SAAC presented their idea to the faculty. Whereas the deans and department heads were generally supportive of the proposal, some of the "professors were dead set against this ever happening," reported SAAC president Raffi Holzer. Holzer, along with SAAC members Rafi Blumenthal, Yonatan Cantor, and Eitan Ulmer, have worked hard over the past few months to get their proposal off the ground.

While some professors were sup-

portive of the proposal, many objections were voiced. Teachers were concerned that students would not be completely objective (particularly when students are performing poorly in that teacher's course), and that students would write inappropriate comments. In addition, some teachers had halachik concerns, believing that such reviews could fall under the category of *halbanat panim*, or embarrassing someone in public. Lastly, teachers were worried that negative reviews posted on the web could hurt future employment opportunities. Professors in favor of the proposal expressed such approval on condition of certain changes, mostly designed to improve the evaluations and ensure that they are designed most appropriately to fulfill their new purpose. The SAAC has responded to some

explore this proposal is currently being formed. Specifics of the evaluations will not be decided until the faculty committee meets and officially votes on this issue. The Robert M. Beren Presidential Fellow in the YC Office of the Dean, Evan Herten, (who has worked closely with the SAAC and the Dean's office with regards to this proposal) was able to explain some of the details of the technological side of implementation. Herten explained that, depending on the decisions of the faculty committee at its most basic level, the evaluations could just contain number responses to specific questions. Such a program technologically would be "easily implementable," Herten further noted. The possibility of having a comments section or a message board has been toyed with,

but makes things "more technically complicated." Concern about appropriateness and objectivity of comments is the reason that, at least at this stage, a comments section is more difficult to properly implement. Specifics such as whether the online evaluations would be run by YU or a third party, or the types of questions that would be asked, have not yet been decided.

Certainly, the SAAC proposal is still a work in progress, and certain details still need to be refined. The faculty committee is left with the task of figuring out ways to create a system that will help professors and students obtain meaningful data about their courses. Dean Eichler pointed out, however, that once a basic program is in place, evaluations "can always be improved and tweaked." A lot of work, both by students and by faculty, has already gone into and will continue to be put into this proposal. Hopefully, with the combined efforts of the students, the faculty, and the administration, a pilot program will be launched by the end of next semester.

While some professors were sup-

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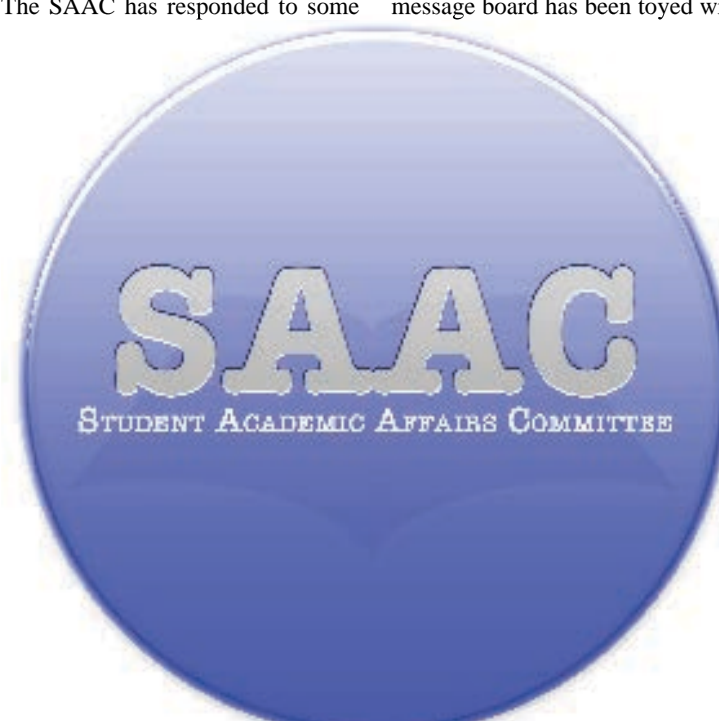
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## Cleveland Feels Heat of LeBron Decision

continued from front page

terback Michael Vick and serial adulterer Tiger Woods. These developments would have been unfathomable merely a few months ago, when James earned his second consecutive MVP award and the league-leading Cavaliers had the look of a dynasty in the making.

Instead, it all fell apart. The Cavs meekly bowed out of the playoffs following a disturbingly tentative performance by James. Then, on July 8, 2010, LeBron James announced that he would join fellow superstar Dwayne Wade and wannabe superstar Chris Bosh on the Miami Heat, forming the potent core of a sure-fire dynasty. Clevelanders did not take the news well. In the aftermath of "The Decision," fans angrily burned their #23 "James" jerseys, produced a series of increasingly wrathful YouTube videos, and treated James with disdain usually reserved for genocidal dictators (or Pittsburgh Steelers fans).

People often point to "how" James left as the source of this resentment, but "where" matters just as much: Miami is the anti-Cleveland. The warm weather, slickly dressed locals, and warped ethical mores (I've never \*technically\* been there, but one can only imagine) defy Cleveland's Midwest, hardworking values.

And by every metric, Miami sports fans stink. No team in the region has managed to cultivate an invested fan base, despite fielding an NBA champion in 2006 and two World Series winners within the last fifteen years. This season, with the opportunity to watch a gift-wrapped, potentially historic contender every night, Heat fans continue to act like they're still watching (or not watching) the Marlins. In response to the lukewarm environment, Miami recently unveiled a "Fan Up" campaign designed to instruct their pitiful fans on proper stadium etiquette. The guidelines include such gems as "be in your seat for tipoff and stay there until the buzzer sounds," and "make some noise for your Miami HEAT." Seriously.

Meanwhile, Cleveland boasts one of the most dihard collections of sports nuts in the country. Within LeBron's lifetime, the Indians set an MLB record for consecutive sellouts, one Browns fan legally changed his name to "Big Dawg," and the Cavaliers produced the second highest attendance in the NBA last season.

### Act II: The Chosen One

The story hinges on this simple reality: LeBron James was born to play basketball. At 6'8" and 250 pounds of comic book-caliber muscle, he's likely the most physically gifted player in the NBA. With an ever-increasing basketball skill set matched by an innate court vision, he may be the most talented as well. It's just not fair.

Coming out of high school in 2003, James was widely regarded as

a sure-thing, can't-miss prospect, a once-in-a-generation athlete heralded as "The Chosen One" by Sports Illustrated magazine. In a foreboding press conference following his senior season, James announced that he would skip college and "take my talents to the NBA." He quickly emerged as the consensus #1 draft pick.

Armed with the worst record in the league, the Cleveland Cavaliers won the draft lottery and selected James with the first pick. It worked out quite well. James collected the Rookie of the Year trophy, two MVP awards, 6 All-Star selections, a scoring title, 6 All-NBA selections, "Youngest-player-ever-to-do-just-about-everything," and rewrote the franchise record book in seven years with the Cavs, exceeding almost every reasonable expectation in the process.

Almost every expectation, that is. His individual excellence could never quite translate into an NBA championship, as the team managed only one fruitless trip to the Finals, falling to the San Antonio Spurs in 2007.

But the Cavs became a peren-



From Chosen One to Big Three.

nial contender, leading the league in wins over the past two seasons even as they repeatedly fell short in the playoffs. His presence on the roster raised the value of the franchise by over \$250 million, turned the Cavaliers into a must-see attraction across the league, and, most drastically, gave the city of Cleveland a credible shot at finally winning a championship.

### Act III: The Curse

You see, Cleveland is cursed. For real. I'm not talking about a boo-hoo-Boston curse, where one loser franchise (the Red Sox) was always tempered by a perennial winner (the Celtics). Or a "the-Yankees-haven't-won-in-a-year" malaise that seems to be popular around these parts.

No, the Cleveland curse spans a uniquely broad scope, encompassing nauseating near-misses (Indians '54, '97; Browns '88-'90; Cavaliers '07-'09), long stretches of irrelevant mediocrity, and brief interludes of historic ineptitude. No local team has won a championship since 1964, when the Cleveland Browns won the NFL Championship – the Super Bowl didn't even exist yet.

Since then, we've amassed a trophy case full of heartbreak, a collection of miserable defeats that

are now instantly – and painfully – identifiable: the Shot, the Drive, the Fumble, the Move, Jose Mesa.

It extends far beyond the playing field. In the most obscene episode, team owner/local pariah Art Modell uprooted the beloved Cleveland Browns in 1995 and moved the franchise to Baltimore. The Ravens (née Browns) went on to win the Super Bowl five years later while the new Browns continue to toil in perpetual mediocrity. Oh yeah, and the entire city is mired in a deep economic recession.

Hence the decades of pent-up frustration. Hence the anger. Hence the burned jerseys, defaced billboards, and angry rants.

### Act IV: The Game

Hence December 2, 2010: Cleveland Cavaliers vs. Miami Heat. In Cleveland.

TNT billed it as "The Return," a fitting second act to this summer's "The Decision" (or "The Betrayal," depending on your perspective). The contest pitted two teams headed in opposite directions. In one corner stood the Cleveland Cavaliers, a forgotten contender bristling descending into irrelevancy and struggling to craft its post-LeBron identity. The Miami Heat, meanwhile, were playing well but not spectacularly, falling just short of their preseason billing as "The Greatest Team in History."

Scalpers at Cleveland's Quicken Loans Arena hocked tickets at five times the typical price, putting the value of vengeance at roughly \$150/seat. It was cheaper than a therapist, I guess. The collective adoration that we had

lavished on James was replaced by relentless verbal abuse. This represented our first shot at revenge, the opportunity to exact the price of betrayal. And who knows, with the crowd on its side, maybe the Cavs could pull off an upset.

If only. By the end of the first quarter, it became clear that the middling Cavaliers were no match for LeBron's new powerhouse squad. We nearly forgot: LeBron James is really good at basketball. Dwayne Wade is too. Chris Bosh is...alright, I guess. Even with a subpar supporting cast, the Heat remain way too talented for a team like the Cavs.

LeBron James turned in a virtuosic effort that night, his first memorable performance of the season. This is hardly surprising. You see, the most glaring hole in LeBron's legacy remains his bizarre performance against the Boston Celtics in last year's Eastern Conference Semifinals. Charged with leading the favored Cavaliers against a veteran team with championship experience, James folded. He exuded unmistakable apathy, playing with such indifference that his performance spawned a series of rumors alleging a sordid locker room controversy as the cause.

What really happened? When the game mattered and James be-

## Volleyball is the New Basketball

By JEREMY SCHWARTZ

For the first time ever, the word "libero" could actually be heard around campus. Yeshiva students were actually talking about volleyball, and why wouldn't they be? The Maccabees had an incredibly successful year, surpassing all expectations and certainly making a name for themselves, both on campus and in the offices of the Skyline and Hudson Valley Conferences.

The Volleyball Maccabees won a total of 14 games, and lose the same number, leaving them at a .500 winning percentage. However, only one other YU team finished that well in the 2010 season, and it was tennis, finishing at 6-6. It may seem mediocre, but volleyball improved greatly since 2009 and accomplished some incredible feats along the way.

As everyone can tell from the sparkling new banner in the MSAC, the Maccabees won the Hudson Valley championship. They didn't just win, they tore it apart, or "left it wide open, so everyone can see," as they say in Curb. Throughout the playoffs and regular season, the Maccabees didn't lose a single game to any Hudson Valley opponent. In fact, they only lost one set, to Cooper Union, 32-30. (For those who don't know, volleyball games are best of five, and to win you must get 30 points, and win by two, dead at 35.)

Three Yeshiva players were named to the HVMAC All-Conference team: Joseph Bajtner, Zanyv Grauman, and David Kahana. Kahana was also named the tournament MVP, while also collecting Ye-

jerseys to burn and the sting of betrayal will gradually ease. At some point we may even reevaluate "The Decision" and welcome James back to Cleveland with grudging respect. No matter what progresses, on December 2, 2010, LeBron James killed the illusion of "the fan."

LeBron's decision to forsake small-town sports immortality in Cleveland for big-city apathy in Miami laid the groundwork, demonstrating the impotence of fans within the sports hierarchy. Our unbridled passion over seven seasons could not entice James to stay, and that re-directed passion did nothing to faze him as an opponent.

If any crowd should have impacted the result of a basketball game, it was the angry mob in Quicken Loans Arena that night. Ultimately, the crowd's electric negativity hardly mattered. With every basket, James confirmed the fans' deepest fear: irrelevancy. He absorbed our most pungent vitriol, shrugging off five months of pent-up anger with casual indifference. Despite the unprecedented level of collective contempt, the crowd's influence could not penetrate the court. We remained – as always – merely spectators.

The fans, meanwhile, will continue to boo and rant each time LeBron returns to Cleveland. With the Cavs doomed to the cellar for the foreseeable future, we'll content ourselves with rooting against the Heat. Eventually, we'll run out of

shiva's most outstanding graduating male athlete. He was also named to first team All-Skyline team. In addition, Arnold Ross was named Coach of the Year.

When it came to Skyline, Yeshiva finished in third place, and was eliminated in the playoffs by 2<sup>nd</sup> place Bard. In 2009, the Macs finished in second to last place. This difference clearly shows how rapidly the program is improving. But many fans are skeptical of the program's projected continued success. The loss of Kahana, Grauman, and Bajtner will definitely hurt the Macs. Sure, Voystock, Rosenthal, and Hershkovits make a solid core, but it was the depth that made the 2010 squad so competitive.

A member of the 2010 Maccabees, Howard Avner, credits last year's success to players trusting their captains. The team had "outstanding vets. Everybody understood that they were the leaders."

The real question will boil down to second year head coach Arnold Ross. After being handed a deep, talented team, he will now have to sustain the competitive level of the program and turn some raw talent into volleyball studs. The new players must buy into the success of his coaching and put in the effort. Joseph Bajtner explicitly credited Ross for the turnaround season. "He stressed proper defensive alignment, and that let the offense take care of itself." Bajtner is calling on Hershkovits and Rosenthal to step up and lead the crew. If the coaching and players' effort can come together, expect the banner to be re-stitched many times in the coming years.

## Baseball Books of the Offseason: The Hardball Times Baseball Annual 2011



By JONATHAN SCHWAB

*For fans of America's pastime, the harsh cold months of the offseason can be especially torturous. From the last out of the World Series to the day pitchers and catchers report to Spring Training, baseball junkies must resort to the action of rumor mills on free agent destinations and possible trades. As exciting as contract extensions and arbitration negotiations can be, these are dark months for those who love the game.*

*In the last several years, however, more and more analytical books have hit the market, offering reviews of the past season and previews of the one ahead. As the market gets crowded with different reading options (most for the statistically inclined), we offer you our thoughts on the benefits and pitfalls of the various works. These are the books of the offseason, and in this issue's column, we review The Hardball Times Baseball Annual 2011, the seventh annual published by the website [hardballtimes.com](http://www.hardballtimes.com)*

The first benefit and detriment of *The Hardball Times Annual* is its early publication date. Released only a month after the end of the 2010 season, the book provides a good first read and quick fix. The rush to publish it, though, means that no details of the postseason are included, which makes for a very odd experience: the book's first section, a review of the 2010 season, notes which teams made the playoffs, but nothing is said about their exits, the most recent baseball in the minds of many.

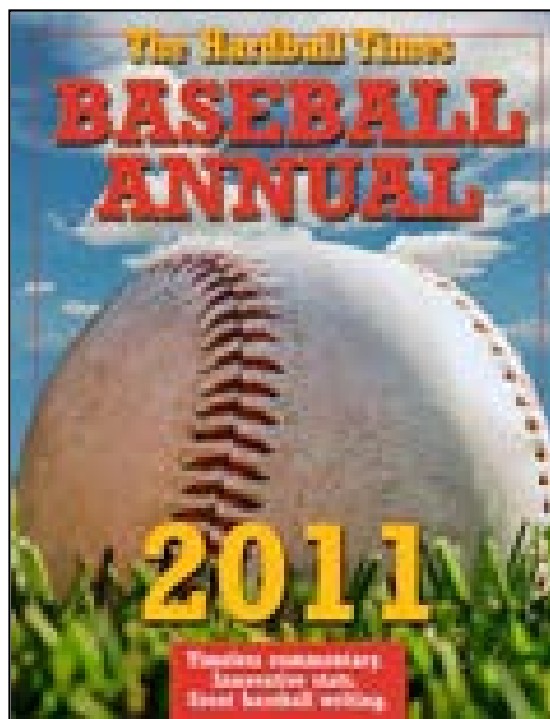
The season reviews are written by division, and each is tackled by a contributing author from the *Hardball Times* team. While the different perspectives are interesting, the experience is somewhat dissonant as different writing styles and tools are used in analyzing baseball's six divisions.

The fascinating mix of topics, both serious and – in its own terms – frivolous, makes it interesting to read. Under the heading "Commentary" are articles ranging from 2010's biggest disappointments to the fastest and slowest home run trotters (yes, that is an article on the time it took for players to round the bases after going yard). Such articles accompany others on teams' economic strengths and predictions for player performance in the coming season.

The book also departs from its immediate context moment for a wider view: "The Future of Fielding" has over twenty pages (five

different articles) examining current fielding statistics' pitfalls and conjecturing models for bettering them. "History" is a hodgepodge of topics from "2010: Year of the Pitcher?" to an examination of the "Best and Worst Benches of All Time." A very enjoyable break in this section is Jon Daly's delightful three-page stat-free narrative of Joe DiMaggio and the people he inspired, including Stephen Jay Gould and Nobel Prize in Physics winner Julian Schwinger. These two sections, not weakened by a dearth of information on the 2010 playoffs, compel readers to think about baseball in the grander

This is not a book to pick up if one does not know what DIPS or wOBA or PECOTA are (a calculation of pitching performance independent of the defense behind a pitcher; a single statistic that measures batting performance by weighting the more important outcomes; and *Baseball Prospectus* system for predicting player performance, respectively). Without a lengthy introduction and with only a brief glossary, *The Hardball Times Baseball Annual* expects its readers to understand loftier concepts. The high level of discourse only prompts the question: why is the book rushed to pub-



historical sense, highlighting trends and movements.

The book delves quite heavily into statistics in its final two sections, "Analysis" and "Statistics." Neither of these is for the uninitiated, as a pretty even mix of words, numbers, acronyms, and jargon-y phrases make for heavy reading. "Statistics" is mostly pages filled with tables of player performance, though these are accompanied by sidebars of "Stat Facts" with conversationally interesting tidbits like this season's leader in sacrifice bunts (Dodgers pitcher Clayton Kershaw). But even interestingly titled articles in the "Analysis" section, like "The Curious Case of Barry Zito," rely on readers' strong understanding of PITCH/x (a pitch charting tool for classifying speeds and types of thrown pitches).

Thus, another aspect of the book emerges and overshadows the early publication date as the book's most important feature: the presumed familiarity of the reader with numbers.

## The Quidditch World Cup: Fact or Fiction?

By JOSHUA REDLICH

For those of you who thought that Purim is the only day a year you can dress like a wizard and get away with it, guess again. Dressed in Slytherin and Gryffindor robes and brandishing magic wands and flying broomsticks, Harry Potter fans from throughout the world flocked to New York on the weekend of November 13<sup>th</sup> to witness the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Quidditch World Cup. Hosted in Manhattan's Dewitt Clinton Park

without having to worry about being pushed to the ground and then rolling over while still on his broom and jumping back up again. As ridiculous as it sounds, Quidditch is quite fun to watch, partially because the uniforms are incredible (think soccer jerseys with capes) and especially because you can shout things such as "HE CAUGHT THE SNITCH!"



hand in order to score points is quite a difficult job. Moreover, the game is brutal. There is rarely a match in which a player isn't seen being pushed to the ground and then rolling over while still on his broom and jumping back up again. As ridiculous as it sounds, Quidditch is quite fun to watch, partially because the uniforms are incredible (think soccer jerseys with capes) and especially because you can shout things such as "HE CAUGHT THE SNITCH!" without having to worry about being shipped off to an asylum.

The game is played with two teams of seven players. The players consist of 1 keeper who guards the three goal posts, 3 chasers who pass the quaffle to one another in an attempt

to get the large red ball through one of the hoops, 2 beaters who toss bludgers, or dodgeballs, at their opponents in order to "knock them off their broom," and a seeker who's job it is to find and catch the snitch. The game ends when the snitch is caught. Now, unlike in the books, the snitch is not a tiny, golden, winged ball that flies threw the air. Instead, it is a tennis ball in a tube sock attached to the back of a referee who wears yellow and gold and runs around the field, trying to keep away from the seekers. Unfortunately, the IQA (International Quidditch Association) has

162 games as well as a live performance by Harry and the Potters, a rock band that proudly sings exclusively about the book.

The park was divided into three Quidditch pitches to allow different games to go on simultaneously, while the center of the field was filled with tents where crazed fans could purchase original Alivan's wands and broomsticks for absurd prices. Also for sale were t-shirts and posters, by which those in attendance could prove that when they said they were spending their weekend at the 2010 Quidditch World Cup they were being serious.

The rules of Quidditch are almost identical to those in the book. The only major difference is that the players do not actually fly on broomsticks. They do, however, run around on them. While this may seem to be a horrible joke, having to keep one hand on a broomstick that has to remain between your legs at all times while also tossing and catching balls with your other

chosen not to force the snitches to wear white, feathery wings; hopefully that will change by next year's World Cup.

As Quidditch is still in its beginning stages, only recently having been made into a college sport, the IQA are looking for more participants, urging any school with athletic students or devoted Harry Potter enthusiasts to form a team and enter the league. As YU is a school with at least a handful of students that fall into one of the two categories, perhaps its time for some of them to mount a broom, catch some quaffles, beat some bludgers, and catch a snitch.



Quidditch brooms at rest.

## Book Review: Bringing New Wisdom to the Wisdom Corpus

By AJ BERKOVITZ

If one were to compile a list of scholars who spearheaded the movement to appreciate the Bible as a literary masterpiece, Robert Altar's name would near the top. Altar champions a method that remains faithful to the text while evincing convincing literary readings. This method is the central focus of his masterpiece *Art of Biblical Narrative*, a work that represents only the first steps of Altar's accomplishments. From there, Altar began to write translations and commentaries of various Biblical works. His translation of the Torah and Psalms remain a necessary aid to anyone wishing to enrich their study with the extremely sharp and insightful literary wit of Altar. Altar's newly published work, *The Wisdom Books*, continue his tradition of literary excellence.

*The Wisdom Books* features Altar's bold but accurate translation and commentary on Job, Proverbs, and Qoheleth. Before discussing the translation and commentary themselves, we turn to the introduction of Altar's book. Although I was skeptical at first, Altar's five-page introduction to wisdom literature succinctly summarizes the necessary details any cursory reader ought to know. He begins with a discussion of the placement of these books in Tanakh and proceeds with a brief explanation of what characterizes the genre of "wisdom literature." As is the case with all of his translations, Altar does not bog the reader down with dense academic discourse on the nature of wisdom literature. He quickly explores the concept, identifies a genre, and then proceeds with his translation and commentary.

This is, in fact, a hallmark of this book. Altar's translations and commentary do not presuppose an extensive knowledge of biblical or literary criticism. His translation and commentary are accessible to the casual reader, but scholarly enough for the scholar. For the general audience of this newspaper, however, I caution one piece of advice: read Altar alongside the Hebrew original. At times Altar refers to the Hebrew text. Although he explains what he attempts to prove with precision, readers who are capable of adeptly reading the Hebrew will gain infinitely. This point proves true especially when he begins to comment on meter and rhyme. Translations, albeit necessary, can never replace the text itself. Nonetheless, Altar's translation far surpasses many that precede it. Altar translates the biblical text in a style that remains faithful to the Hebrew, but ultimately

readable. In addition to positing his new translation, Altar consistently comments that he draws from and contrasts his understanding to older translations. Altar occasionally contrasts his translation to the King James edition. For example, Altar translates the *teheta*' of Job 5:24 as "amiss." This renders the verse: "And you shall know that your tent is peaceful, probe your home and find nothing amiss." In his commentary, Altar quotes the King James Version as translating *teheta*' as

*tut* is a shortened or defective form of *'eshonot*, 'thoughts'. Something along the lines of the construction proposed here makes sense in context because the smug man scolding disaster and showing contempt for one who stumbles nearly applies to Job's friends." Altar impressively exercises his expertise without succumbing to excessive hubris.

Let one think that all of his commentary dwells on philology, Altar does wonders in explicating complicated proverbs. The Book of Proverbs provides a unique challenge to its readers. Not only does its author write in curtailed Hebrew, the meaning of each proverb requires intense scrutiny. Altar provides just such analysis. Altar's understanding of Proverbs 26:14 reveals his literary depth. The verse states: "A door turns on its hinge / and a sluggard on his bed." Altar begins by commenting that "the assertion in the first half of the line is either so obvious (of course a door turns on its hinge) that one wonders why it needs to be said at all, or it is perplexing, which makes one wonder for a different reason." After acknowledging the difficulty, Altar turns to the second half of the verse. This part, according to Altar, provides a sharper understanding. "In this instance, the sluggard is revealed turning back

and forth on his bed and getting nowhere, like a door, while the comparison also invites us to think of the contrast between people going in and out of the doorway as the door opens and closes and the sluggard unwilling to move from his bed." Not only does Altar provide insightful exegesis, he invites us to join the conversation and further think about the multivalent interpretive possibilities.

*The Wisdom Books* reclaims a diminished fervor for traditional wisdom literature. The greatest strength of Altar's translation and commentary lies in his ability to converse with multiple audiences simultaneously. The scholar will find his commentary valuable and the casual reader will find his translation and interpretations readily accessible and exhilarating. The book provides another unique opportunity to immerse oneself in texts otherwise difficult to read and think about. To the ones who can read Hebrew letters I restate my advice: read Altar side by side with a reliable Hebrew text.

On November 27, I flocked towards Rubin lobby along with many fellow undergraduates for a free book that was being given out by the YU Museum. Each person must have been thinking, "Free book! What do I have to lose?" I had thought the same thing, but it turned out that there was indeed one thing I would lose: my naiveté about the interaction between the Jewish people and the age old Talmud.

Since the Talmud was standardized well before my lifetime, it appears to have become not altogether different than the Bible. Although it is still Torah She'beal Peh, and is empirically different than its To-

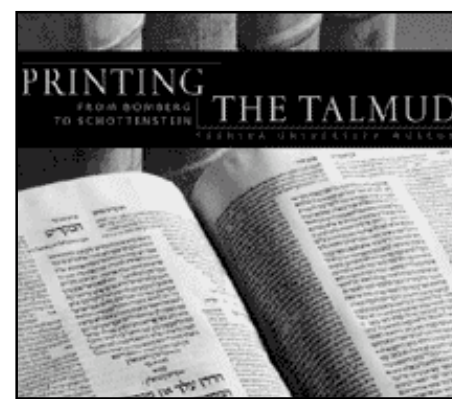
rah She'Bichtav counterpart, it seems to carry the same sense of invariability and lack of interactivity that the Written Law does. *Printing the Talmud* does much to dispel such notions. True, the Talmud has been standardized in recent times, but *Printing the Talmud* goes through the long and continuing history of the Jewish people's interaction with the pages of text we call the Talmud.

*Printing the Talmud* is separated into two complimentary parts: historical essays and the catalog for the YU museum's new exhibition, the latter displaying the progression of the Talmud's layout that the former suggests. The essays go period by period through the history of the Talmud, from its oral beginnings to its most modern advances. The essays are by world-renowned scholars from all over the globe, including professors of Jewish History from YU, Columbia, NYU, Bar Ilan, Hebrew University and many others. This eclectic method of creating a fluid history of the Talmud is not unlike how the Talmud itself was compiled. Amoraic analysis "continued over generations, even centuries, developing sugyot (Talmudic discussions or essays), on specific topics" (13). This occurred in many different academies, most notably Pumbedita and Nehardea. The pages of the book even appear like those of the Talmud, with the footnotes on the side of the page mimicking the position of Rashi's commentary. Much like sugyot in the Talmud, each essay is self contained and is interesting in its own right, while still discussing topics that are involved in other essays.

A common problem encountered in any YU historical publication is the interaction between looking at Jewish history traditionally or critically. While every essay strives for a balance of the two, the unique style of essays enables the reader to view

the history of the Talmud through differing viewpoints.

Most importantly, the essays give the reader an authentic sense of how and why each step of the process occurred, giving a real feel for what was going on at the time for both the Jewish and gentile communities. By doing so, the reader is left with a genuine picture of how Jews have interacted with the text of the Talmud throughout the centuries. The Oral Law, with its constantly-evolving format, is shown to be empirically different than the Written Law. Indeed, the Oral Law is changing form to this very day, with new advances in traditional learning and technology. This picture would not be complete without the catalogue in



the second half of the book. After reading much about the development of the page of the Talmud, the reader can then

peruse through the pictures and see for himself the development of the Talmud by way

of manuscripts.

*Printing the Talmud* offers a few heated views of the Artscroll Schottenstein edition of the Talmud. An essay is devoted to translations of the Talmud, which portray the history of translations to German, Hebrew, and then English. In the essay, Rabbi Adam Mintz presents criticism of translations, including concerns that "translation cannot capture the full essence of the original" and that "translated volumes [give] non-Jews access to the Talmud, leaving out the possibility, if not probability, of misunderstanding and even misuse of the Talmudic texts" (132). Another difficulty that came up with the Shteinztalt edition was that many "felt that it would be 'cheating' to make Talmud study so easy" (138). For some reason, these fears were instantly thrown away for the Schottenstein Edition. While many would still view the volume as a great achievement and an increasingly valuable and necessary resource in the modern world, the concerns stated previously may apply even more so to the Schottenstein Edition.

This book is worth reading even just for the clear presentation of the progression of the Talmud's printing, with examples found in the manuscripts in the back of the book. *Printing the Talmud* is a must-read for anyone interested in learning about the creation of the texts that make up the very backbone of Orthodox Judaism.

## Review of *Printing the Talmud*

By SAM REINSTEIN

## Harry Potter and the Beginning of the End

By JOSHUA REDLICH

After years of waiting, fans of J.K. Rowling's renowned Harry Potter series finally witnessed the movie adaptation of the series' seventh and final installment, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. On Friday, November 19, at exactly 12:01 A.M., Warner Brothers released the first of two movies that will together make up the whole of *Deathly Hallows*.

Fans met the decision to split the novel into two films with enthusiasm, ecstatic that the magic of Harry Potter would now last for seven additional months and hopeful that, by extending the movie, Warner Brothers would at last be able to create a film that actually follows what occurs in the books, no longer compromising with crucial scenes in order to keep within the constraints of two and a half hours. Even with the time extension, however, there are many incidents that are missing from the movie, and plenty of important matters are explained either poorly or not at all.

Of the scenes missing, most are not of major importance, yet the Weasley twins' radio show, the finding of Dean Thomas and Griphook the goblin in the forest, the portrait of Phineas Nigellus Black, and the quarrel between

Harry and Lupin at 12 Grimmauld Place would have been nice to see. However, there are many details of great significance to the tale that are either rushed or absent entirely, such as Kreacher's tale about helping his master steal Voldemort's locket, Dumbledore's suspicious past, Harry's desire to forsake his quest for the Horcruxes in favor of the deathly hallows, and the jinx on Voldemort's name.

Yet, even with these disparities between page and screen, the movie is, overall, fantastic. For the majority of the book, Harry's quest to find the Horcruxes moves excruciatingly slowly, resulting in tired and occasionally disinterested readers. The movie, however, does an extraordinary job at keeping the story moving and the audience at the edge of their seats. Also, the landscapes in which Warner Brothers shot the sequence of Harry and his friends' aimless wanderings through the wilderness add a

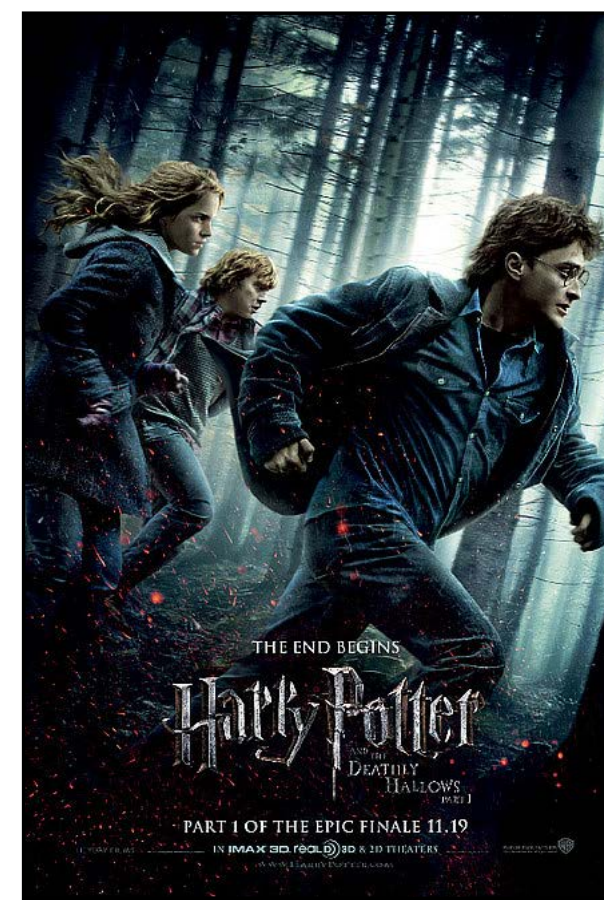
Homerian, epic-like quality to their quest for the Horcruxes, something the book is less successful in accomplishing.

The film also includes additional scenes that, unlike the completely random destruction of the Burrow

in the *Half-Blood Prince* movie, actually add to the story. Opening with the tragic experience of Hermione erasing her parents' memory of her, a scene only briefly mentioned in the novel, the movie succeeds in casting its dark and serious tone from the onset. Additionally, Harry's attempt to break the somber mood of their journey with a dance exemplifies both his and Hermione's difficulty in experiencing any sort of joy while on their treacherous expedition, particularly after Ron abandons them. Furthermore, the dark and frightening aura that encompasses the episode at Malfoy Manor is substantially darkened by Bellatrix Lestrange's butchery, which leaves the word "mudblood" carved deep into Hermione's arm. And, of course, there is the delightfully awkward scene in the Ministry of Magic where Ron, disguised as Reg Cattermole, is forced into a make-out session with Reg's wife

just as the real Reg enters, dressed only in boxers and an undershirt. All three of these scenes work effectively within the context of the movie, either by helping set the tone or by easing the tension of otherwise overwhelmingly serious scenes.

Unlike the upsetting conclusions of the *Order of the Phoenix* and the *Half-Blood Prince* movies, both of which fail to incorporate some of the best moments from their corresponding books, *Deathly Hallows* triumphs in its ability to turn story into reality, not only succeeding at bringing Harry's adventures to the big screen but also adeptly adapting "The Tale of Three Brothers" into a clever visual experience. Moreover, the film captures almost every detail of Rowling's novel, from the flight of the seven Harrys to the fight at Malfoy Manor. Indeed, the precision with which this movie was produced far surpasses that of any of the six that came before it. One can only imagine what to expect from the next and final Harry Potter film, which will be made up almost entirely of the best and most exciting part of the book: the epic battle between Voldemort and Harry Potter at Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry to decide, once and for all, the fate of the Wizarding world.



## Chanuka Concert Rocks a Sold-Out Crowd, Raising Money for Kids of Courage

continued from front page

from and cool.

The newly-famous Maccabees pleased the crowd with their YouTube sensation, "Candlelight," proving to everyone that their talent lies not only in their lyrics and video-making skills, but in their vocal aptitude as well. They even broke down the individual components of the song, just to disprove anyone who might have thought they used special sound effects or anything "unnatural." Their performance was



Maccabeh on stage in Lampport Auditorium on Chanuka night number three.

a sure teaser for their upcoming winter concert, which will feature a

full set on December 26.

Moshav hit the stage next with an all-new Chanuka-themed song called "Light Me Up," stoking the crowd and getting the energy flowing in the auditorium. The band's old classic "Abba Shimon," which features Yehuda's chilling middle-eastern voice, brought the audience into a Bedouin tent for a few moments. The saxophonist and guitarist then erupted into a beautiful jam, leading into a crowd-exploding "Come Back." The entire back of the room was chanting along, and

security personnel, for Matisyahu's performance. Moshav finished with several other strong tunes and exited the stage briefly, returning almost immediately with an outrageously fun "Yibaneh Hamikdash" encore to end their performance.

After an intermission and a video about Kids of Courage, the beneficiaries of the concert's fundraising, Matisyahu came out with fire and passion. His set featured plenty of old favorites, epic beat-box and freestyle sessions, as well as some very spacey jams. The crowd was on their feet and in the aisles fist-thumping and dancing from the minute he took stage, but they really rocked out when the opening notes for "Time of Your Song" flew out of the speakers. Mid-song, the techies lit the disco dreidel which only made the already giddy crowd dance even more excitedly. He slowed things down with a soft beginning to "Jerusalem," allowing the crowd to contemplate on the song's deeper meaning, and maybe catch their breath a bit. Of course, by the end of the song the crowd was flying

on their feet again, some even crowd surfing.

Other highlights included his

brand new hit single "Miracle." The energy in the room climaxed as the dance beat spun the room around like the disco dreidel. In addition to the great sound, the lyrics hit home too: "bound to stumble and fall / but my strength comes not from man at all" - the words penetrate deep in heart of a Jew. This song certainly struck a chord with the crowd.

Another point that resonated with the Jewish soul were his yearning chants of "She'yibaneh bais hamikdash"; it is quite rare to experience a rockstar's religious observance through the stage, a unique private spheres. It was almost as though Matis invited the crowd into



## Morality in a Time of Atrocity: A Review of YCDS's The Andersonville Trial

BY AARON BERKOWITZ

Did you ever given into peer-pressure when you were a kid? I can admit that I have. Whether it was something small like stealing a teacher's chalk for sidewalk entertainment, or large-scale machinations, we have all done things because of the influence and cajoling of others. But what if you had been told you had to kill a person? How about a hundred? Would you succumb to such pressure, if your life depended on it? YCDS' fall drama, *The Andersonville Trial* poses this question to each and every person.

Taking place in 1865, immediately after the Civil War ends, *The Andersonville Trial* recounts the proceedings of the court case *The United States of America vs. Captain Henry Wirz*. Captain Wirz, played by Tani Isaac, is indicted for negligence and manslaughter at Andersonville Prison, where over 14,000 Union soldiers died of malnutrition, exposure to the elements, disease, and even outright murder. The action of the play centers on the question of whether the Captain's responsibilities to his superior officers outweighed his moral obligations to the inmates in his prison. Secondary drama is introduced when this court case also trenchantly explores whether either the North or South were correct in their respective positions on the question of slavery, which, we discover, is apparently not so simple a matter. Thus, the central issue of Wirz's behavior, and the play at large, is really but a microcosm of the more meta questions of morality in ante and postbellum America.

We are first introduced to the litigator, Lt. Col. N.P. Chipman, a steadfastly committed soldier of the North who maintains that objective moral obligations dictate that Wirz should die for his crimes against humanity. As the story unfolds though, Chipman becomes increasingly less confident in his initial black-and-white perspective. Played by Tzvi Feifel, Chipman could be described as at least, if not more important, than Wirz himself. Feifel does an excellent job in capturing the emotion and thought process of Chip-

man—the audience can clearly see, by means of his actions and tone, the transformative process the Colonel undergoes.

It was not only the cast that did a



William Shatner on the television feature of *The Andersonville Trial*.

good job though—there was also a range of impressive theatrical techniques that YCDS employed. Both the lighting and use of stage props was excellent. By creatively layering the second floor of the theatre with a sheet and shining a spotlight on it, the play was able to portray flashbacks as the characters were talking. Actors were staged behind the sheet, their shadows carrying out the horrid acts. Similarly, there were other actors, lit up by spotlight, acting out on the side of the stage the atrocities committed just as those involved were describing them in court. Finally, an interesting method of audience interaction was employed. As the defendant's lawyer, Mr. Otis Baker (played by Ariel Meiri) walked on stage, he shook hands with the (male) audience members as though they were spectators to the actual court hearing. This helped to establish the audience as a jury of sorts for the court case.

The performance was hampered by only two aspects, its length and noise level. Having watched the play on its last night of performance, I was expecting that it would run smoothly. This was not the case. Starting almost 15 minutes late and then going for nearly two and a half hours, the show turned into a much longer production than I, or anyone, expected. Judging from the facial expressions and the occasional nodding-off of my fellow audience members, I can safely assume that

had some time been shaved off, the play and its message could have been enjoyed much more. As for my latter reservation about the play, the level of noise from the actors themselves did not always benefit the quality of the performance. Almost from the get-go, the audience was subjected to oppressively loud shouting, and this continued throughout the play. During the intermission, I overheard one man remark how impressed he was by the actors, for their voices not having failed yet. Besides making it difficult to understand what the actors were saying (which was, in turn, compounded by the use of accents, both natural and staged), it detracted from the effectiveness of the drama itself. Sometimes,

speaking with control and subtlety adds so much more than does sheer force and volume.

Overall, however, the play was an enjoyable experience that, as director Lin Snider (in her tenth production at YCDS) points out in her introduction, was "entertaining yet thought-provoking." Having only attended YCDS comedy productions before, I was a little hesitant to attend this year's drama, *The Andersonville Trial*. It's not particularly because I like comedy over drama—in truth, I prefer a good drama. My hesitance stemmed from the increased difficulty in accomplishing a successful drama. I was pleasantly surprised. I found that *The Andersonville Trial* resonates on a personal level, and the Jewish community at large, given the play's obvious positioning as a thematic predecessor to Nuremberg Trials. Given the excellent acting and the creative theatrical techniques, *The Andersonville Trial* emerged an overall success, drawing in the audience asking of it not only "Am I My Brother's Keeper," but "Who is My Brother?"

Though the audio quality suffers slightly in Dr. Milner's intentional eschewing of a professional recording studio, the authentic feel and sound remains inspirational, truly capturing the experience of a lively group singing around a Shabbat table.

The selection of niggunim featured on "Songs at a Table" successfully maneuvers between different niggun styles, including a deeply moving Breslav "Lecha Dodi," a rousing rendition of "Mareh Ko-

## Album Review: Songs at a Table

BY HARRY PORTMAN

"Songs at a Table," the debut album from *The Niggun Project*, which was spearheaded by Einstein College of Medicine alumnus Dr. Josh Milner, is a refreshing release. The *a cappella* genre is gaining national prominence, and especially at YU, thanks to the successes of the Maccabeats and other performers, but "Songs at a Table" manages to embody a creative twist on the

hen," an utterly gorgeous traditional "Wedding Niggun," and get-up-on-your-feet-and-dance tunes such as "Berl's Niggun" and "Stoliner Niggun." Each song on the album successfully encapsulates the essence of how it is sung in rounds at a *kumtitz*, and placing a particular song on "repeat" captures that very same vibe. The arrangement of songs on the CD starts and ends strong with faster *niggunim*, with the slower *niggunim* interspersed



genre.

As the title might suggest, the twelve songs featured on this album were recording in a homey setting, with the vocalists sitting around a dining room table in an attempt to recreate the beloved style of an impromptu Shabbat gathering of friends singing at an *oneg* or *tisch*.

Complete with familiar elements such as clapping and silverware banging on the table, Dr. Milner and his group of sixteen singers – a mixed crew of relatives, friends, and neighbors – succeed brilliantly.

The album draws from a number of traditional sources for its selection of niggunim, including Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach's and popular Chassidic melodies. "Songs at a Table" only features one new tune, "Niggun Batya," which was composed by Dr. Milner and named after his youngest daughter. "Niggun Batya" is sweet and touching, and with the right publicity, could become a staple of *kumtitzim* everywhere, as the more well-known songs on the album have.

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The selection of niggunim featured on "Songs at a Table" successfully maneuvers between different niggun styles, including a deeply moving Breslav "Lecha Dodi," a rousing rendition of "Mareh Ko-

in a the middle of the album. This set up perfectly parallels the gradual build up, ebb and flow progression that is characteristic of the atmosphere of a real *kumtitz*.

An essential aspect of "Songs at a Table" is the driving reason behind the album's creation. The CD was conceived as a charity project to benefit *Leket Israel*, the State of Israel's national food bank. Dr. Milner, a resident of Washington DC, collected donations from local sponsors to cover the costs of recording and production, thus ensuring that the proceeds of every album purchase directly benefit *Leket Israel*. If sales of "Songs at a Table" are successful, Dr. Milner hopes to produce a second album that will be recorded in various DC area synagogues, with proceeds benefiting the same charity. "Songs at a Table" successfully recreates the familiar, welcoming setting of singing alongside friends, and benefits a noble charity in the process, securing its place as a worthwhile addition to the Jewish Music world.

"Songs at a Table" can be previewed and purchased at <http://www.songsatatble.org>.

## A Familiar Voice: Review of *Foreign Bodies*

BY BENJAMIN ABRAMOWITZ

It's an old story (a reinvention of Henry James' *The Ambassadors*) about old people; Cynthia Ozick's new novel, completed in the author's 83<sup>rd</sup> year, didn't quite promise the freshest thrill-ride of 2010. Yet just a few chapters in, Ozick's characters prove as lively and spirited—for better or for worse—as any more classically alluring literary personalities. From the intergenerational, intercontinental interactions of abrasive characters with their demure counterparts arises not just keen insight, but suspenseful appeal, despite the superficial drabness. But the most vibrant aspect of *Foreign Bodies*, as is to be expected with an Ozick novel, is the character of Ozick's own writing, enlivening virtually everything it details.

Including many pages of personal letters in which characters write to one another, *Foreign Bodies* highlights its characters' relative verbal capacities. Language, rather than actions, best evidences the differences between the characters. From the careful, sagacious sentences of Bea, the protagonist, to the crude but passionate eruptions from Bea's brother, Marvin, Ozick writes on every level fluently. Perhaps that is the best mark of her facility with language: the unrefined lines of her less-gifted characters are just as nuanced and deliberate as the omniscient narrator's most literary and profound musings. Ozick's adaptable linguistic force cries out as loud as, though perhaps more clearly than, her most vocal characters.

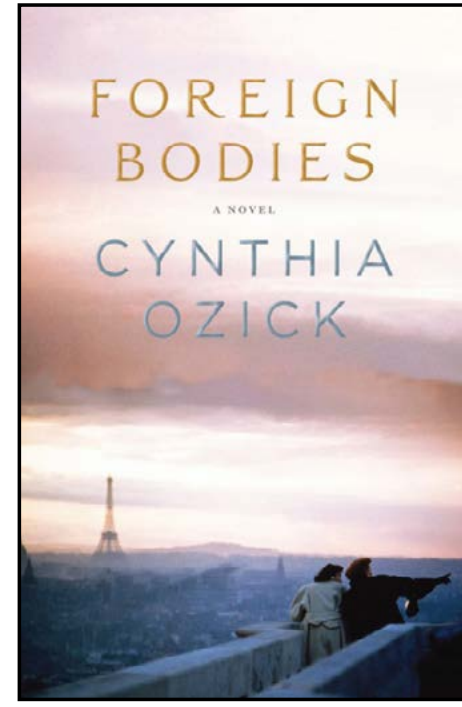
No matter how tragic, or even

talk about it right. And in *Foreign Bodies*, Ozick does exactly that. Detailing Bea's story, Ozick shows that, despite the uniqueness of her personal narrative and absurdity of her mission, Bea's every day provides a window as universal as any other into human nature. Bea is far from perfect, often as manipulative

as the harsher people she deals with; but, her meticulous self-assessments reflect a self-awareness lacking in everyone around her, seeming to justify all her decisions. The clarity of Bea's thoughts, the language in which they are framed, calls attention to Ozick's capability, but also makes the reader envious of Bea's own quiet confidence.

Perhaps we don't get to know the characters as well as we would like. Ozick's consistent illumination of personalities via their idiosyncrasies might preclude the full familiarity readers seek. As such, Bea's actions often strike the reader as bizarre or inexpert. But the quality of her explanations, the fact that what she says literally means what she means, leaves us sure that Bea's actions are well thought out and wise, even if she remains a bit of a mystery.

Readers find the narrator's assessments, both of people and circumstances, unavoidably true; they ring with piercing clarity, as if to deny them would render one somewhat less human. Even Ozick's descriptions, mechanically yet fluidly assembled with clause tacked on to adverb-laden clause, chill readers with their simultaneous effusiveness and precision. Ozick's style and insight concretize some particularly abstract components of the human psyche. Readers, alongside some of the characters, gain better understanding of the purpose of art.



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As the movie centers in suburban Sheffield, where the four Muslims, Omar, Barry, Waj, and Faisal, are either ranting about Godless Western consumerism and how to foment a Jihad world order, or blindly following suit. Initial suggestions of targets to blow up include, of all places, a mosque, in order to radicalize Muslim moderates into full-blown war (Barry, the white convert, would naturally do this). After vociferously debating whether someone who blows up fellow Muslims earns the promised virgins, they settle for the London Marathon.

Early in their machinations, one of the foursome, Faisal, informs the rest of his posse that he was able to buy enormous quantities of household chemicals from a wholesale shop down the road. "All from the same shop?" the pseudo-sagacious elder, Barry, exclaims. "You're going to get us nicked!" But have no fear, my fellow Jihadists, for Faisal, we discover, was prudent enough to use four "different voices", each, in reality, identical, when politely inquiring of the store clerk, "Can I have twelve bottles of bleach please?"<sup>2</sup>

In an al-Qaeda training camp that two of the four initially attend to muscle up and develop their "technique," Omar, the most passionate and well-spoken of the Jihadists, accidentally shoots a rocket propelled grenade backwards when attempting to ground an American drone plane, "the eye of the devil." In

## The Funny Side of Jihad: A Review of *Four Lions*

BY NATHANIEL JARET

There is little comical about a suicide bomber. Until *Four Lions*,



that is. A British Jihad satire directed by Chris Morris which premiered at the esteemed Sundance Film Festival in 2010, *Four Lions* traces the lives of four British Muslims hell-bent on departing this world with a bang and meeting their lovely black-eyed damsels. Problem is, these four are the dumbest terrorists since the September 1999 incident in which a Palestinian terrorist's explosive outfit detonated an hour early, very much in the middle of a field, for his refusal to accept the Zionist regime's "Daylight Savings Time" conspiracy.<sup>1</sup> In the fictional case of *Four Lions*, nothing short of hilarity ensues.

Like any ambitious satire, *Four Lions* runs out of material from time to time, and when this doesn't result in the movie's river briefly running flat out dry, it is typically because it has quickly resorted to unrelated, often slapstick comic fodder that holds, if precariously, the audience's attention, at least until the movie regains course with its primary target—the contemporary state of British Muslim resentment, and what it would look like if the poor blokes had no cerebral matter. Some of the humor remains decidedly British in scope, and will not appeal to every Yankee in the Big Apple, but the overwhelming majority of the laughs are accessible and hearty.

Admittedly, beneath the satirical hysteria, there also remains a thin film of worry residing in knowledge of the fact that most jihadists are not this dumb, but alas, that is not what *Four Lions* sets out to explore.

All-in-all, *Four Lions* is a real cinematic treat, bringing much-needed levity to a most morose topic. The cast is brilliant, the plotline, absurd, and the laughter generated, consistently flowing. You can be sure you will walk out of the theater all smiles.

the rolling credits, we discover that what he *did* manage to strike, dead-on, was Osama Bin Laden's tent.

But beneath the smoke of premature detonations, mindless schemes, and Islamic antics, the movie does manage to subtly capture the hypocritical complexity of Jihadi proclivities in Westernized Muslims, as well as the frigid paranoia that this reality instills in the Anglo-saxon populace. While Omar rants about those "consumerist" pigs, he is wearing a brand-name polo shirt. On their way to the London Marathon, the four "lions" enjoy a boisterous sing-a-long to the 1973 hit, "Dancing in the Moonlight." And Omar, when telling his son of Jihadi exploits as a bedtime story, uses the plotline of *The Lion King*, heavily altered, of course, to do so (just as Simba killed Mufasa, so too Omar kills Osama). And in the credits, we discover that at least one of them *really* likes Maroon 5. How much do these four stooges really want to destroy the West?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.darwinawards.com/darwin/darwin1999-38.html>

<sup>2</sup> Official clip available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okGgkfy4bc>

## The Merchant of Venice on Broadway

BY JONATHAN SCHWAB

David Sullivan's Production of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* has already garnered significant press attention for the star portraying Shylock, the play's identifiable (though not eponymous) Jewish moneylender. And while Al Pacino's performance is emotionally gripping and, in a word, incredible, there are plenty of other good things to say about the show.

First of all, despite the tremendous presence of Pacino and the clear energy felt by all when he comes on stage, he does not dominate the play to the exclusion of others. Lily Rabe, playing an intelligent and prevailing Portia, reminds viewers that behind a play used as discussion on anti-Semitism is a classically Shakespearean romantic comedy. This production in fact plays largely with the difference between the comedic and the dramatic



with shifts between light and dark. At the same time the set is one large circle whose base is rotated for different scenes, reminding the audience that the two storylines overlap and are not separate.

Jesse Martin, a nine-year veteran

# The Scene

## “It Is Not Good for [Wo]Man to Be Alone”

By JINA DAVIDOVICH

Last night I went on my very first date. It was right out of the movies (not that I watch movies anymore): he opened doors, complimented my appearance with his eyes – for surely it would have been inappropriate to do so with his words. He shared with me the jewels of Torah he had so ardently gained from three years at Sha'alvim. We agreed on everything, particularly our passion for living a strictly Torah lifestyle that consisted of life in the Five Towns, not having a television, dressing modestly but living lavishly, not sending our children to co-ed camps – because I had gone there before my year at Michlalah and knew what went on. We would compromise by Pesach in Florida. We were both free on January 28<sup>th</sup>, which I knew in advance worked for all seventeen of my bridesmaids, so he pulled out the 1.75-karat, princess-cut ring he so thoughtfully planted in his pocket, sang me a parody of “Candlelight,” accompanied by the Maccabeans who magically appeared in the Starbucks on 34<sup>th</sup> and Park: “And this tremendous Rebbe, he told me you are perfect. So I, I, I believe it, and I, I, I hope you say yes, we’ll buy you a dress...” tears filled my eyes, I thanked Hashem, and said yes. Suddenly, all of my friends rushed into the coffee house and, ignoring the bankers and advertisers sipping their venti macciatos, burst into a chorus of “Od Yishama” while they directed their delightfully-jealous stares down toward my diamond-clad left

hand, then back up to check out the *bochrim* who had come parading in. When I got back to my dorm, I saw the door plastered with shimmering lavender wall paper and pictures of me and my *chasun*, which they had so thoughtfully taken through the window of the Starbucks, and a big sign reading: “Mazal tov! It’s bashert!” Three words flashed through my mind: I. AM. COMPLETE. What’s his name? Um, I think I forgot to ask. Let’s just call him Marriage. I was in love with Marriage months before I met him. From the time that my *mechanechet* – teacher – in seminary told me that my great destiny was to marry a *talmid chacham* – torah scholar – and populate the world with *banim talmidei chachamim* – scholarly sons, I just knew that Marriage was for me. And now he’s mine.

This slightly exaggerated, albeit not entirely fictional story is a reflection of the psychological weight that our society places upon young women. It is commonplace for women to feel that their sole purpose in life is to find that person with whom they are destined to grow old. In an effort to not entirely strip Hallmark-esque, romantic notions from the process of dating and marriage, I wish to point out that I do not think that society should do away with the formality of marriage nor any of the benefits that come along with relationships; however, I would like to call into question the

way that many people go about finding a significant other. I began to understand this process in a more complete way after reading an extremely psychologically and emotionally charged children’s book by Shel Silverstein, “The Missing Piece Meets the Big O.” In this charming story, the reader can clearly see the complex reality of relationships in the twenty-first century, particularly highlighted in the Orthodox Jewish community. In this book, a small, triangular missing piece wants to “roll” so it needs to find an “O” with a missing piece where she can fit in order to roll with him. (I am aware that I am assuming the genders of inanimate objects, but it’s just for the purpose of the metaphor – go with me.) After a series of failed attempts to fit into the missing part of certain Os, the missing piece encounters the Big O – a circle that has no missing piece where she can fit. The Big O encourages her to roll alone, rather than rely on finding someone with whom to roll. In the story’s climax, the missing piece struggles to lift herself up and begins to roll, ultimately smoothing her edges and becoming an O herself.

In this seemingly simplistic book, I found the answer to my question – what is the appeal in rushing to dress a naked ring-finger? It’s because, in keeping with the

metaphor, there is a need to fit into a missing part of an O in order to roll. Less enigmatically: many women feel that they cannot be complete without first finding their life partner. This milestone forces women in their early twenties to pursue with vehemence what they feel to be their “purpose.” In effect, their passion becomes marriage. Rather than cultivating passions that are intellectually or psychologically stimulating, women pour their time into the pursuit of what they feel they are missing. They become the missing piece that cannot roll.

I would like to argue for a different approach. An approach which I believe Shel Silverstein alludes to in his story: you first need to be able to roll yourself in order to ever effectively roll with another individual. Rather than feeling that there is something missing due to a lack of being acquired by a man, women should feel complete and whole as individuals, and only then should they pursue life-long commitment. Essentially, before you say “I do,” make sure there is an “I” in question – a whole person, complete with passions and interests that extend beyond white dresses and wedding cake. At that point, you have my blessing – go, find someone to have a meaningful relationship with, and get hitched. But if your boyfriend proposes in Starbucks, say no.

I have been notified that my internal clock must be off. I recently made the following comment in the Stern elevator, a grievous sin which I will never again perpetrate: “you know, the farther along I get in college, the less I am interested in getting married and having babies.” Suddenly, I heard the reverberating sound of audible gasps fill the air, wallpapered *kallah* doors in the dorms slamming in disgust, and several engagement rings attempting to blind me in protest. How can it be that a twenty-year-old girl in Stern is not rushing toward the chuppah? Don’t you feel your uterus crying out in protest that you leave it bare, month after month? Don’t you know that it is your ultimate destiny to be married and produce children? To be perfectly honest: no.

Later on in the day, in the same elevator, I could have sworn that I heard the following anecdote. The sense of joyous relief in this woman’s voice made me consider for a brief moment whether, perhaps, I should feel that something is missing. The story, found in only slight hyperbole below, clarified the problem: I am not in love with marriage. Many adolescent women fall in love with the idea of marriage prior to ever meeting a potential partner. Apparently I had slept through this day in seminary, for the idea of marriage did not bring flush to my cheeks or butterflies to my stomach. The story went as follows:

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There comes a time in every woman’s life when she realizes her diary doesn’t talk back. A time in every man’s life when he asks himself some difficult, fundamental, and unavoidable questions.

- Who am I?
- What deodorant should I buy?
- Boxers, briefs, or neither?
- Should I shave my legs?
- How long should I try to live?

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We are also having an intergalactic name contest. We’re accepting submissions for our pen names, one male, one female. Good luck!

## Miss Middot and the Introduction to Courteous Conduct

By TALIA KAUFMAN

In its premiere issue, *The Scene* caused quite the scandal. Even with its extensive length, readers were left with many questions. *Is this enlightening or kind of offensive? What’s a spinal lamp? Is it still not over yet? And wait isn’t Talia a girl’s name?* But perhaps the most common question is when we will be featuring a dating guide. That is certainly the simplest question to answer. A manual for the proper protocol of courtship is certainly long overdue and will surely appear in an upcoming *Commie* issue. It’s only fair. I spend much too much page-space knocking the social skills of my peers to not offer assistance in building them. However, perhaps one of the greatest problems among daters today is that we just love to get ahead of ourselves. Before we can work on becoming an acceptable mate, we must learn to be normal, functioning human beings.

And how exactly do we earn that title? How exactly do we evolve past the little cells, those ape people and the hoodlums? Etiquette. Etiquette is about rising above our simple our animalistic instincts. In proper etiquette we eat, approach conflict, mate and interact with other members of our species in the most respectful and dignified manners. These codes of conduct are put in place in order to guide us in respecting both others and ourselves. We follow these rules not only out of obligation, but for our own benefit as well. When we carry ourselves with an air of self-respect and grace others will inevitably reciprocate. However, most members of our generation don’t know its rules, not even its true meaning or spelling.

### et-i-quette n.

The conventional rules of personal behavior observed in the intercourse of polite society.

Granted, every community has its own rules and definition of appropriate decorum. The rules are developed based upon each culture’s need to make sure that society runs smoothly. And that goes for each subculture that makes up our own community. But it seems that many are coming to YU without internalizing the values of a concept of proper social graces. Now, I don’t claim to be an expert in the goings on of any one of the Five Towns. But where I come from, you’d be lynched if you wouldn’t hold open the door for your date, your *bubby* or even a stranger. For manners are known to be more than simple empty gestures; they are indicators of class and character. No matter what your background, as young adults and contributing members of society, it is our obligation to mankind as well as to ourselves to act with an air of grace and respect for our surroundings.

While we are undergraduate students, our peers may be forced to interact with us; however, after graduation, no one will grant us the time of day if we don’t act in a respectful

manner. We are not always going to have the security of YU guards or the feeling that we here at Yeshiva are above manners and have no need for social skills. One may avoid eye contact in the elevators until super-senior second semester but, once the bubble pops, so does the false sense of security. So it’s best we begin to brush up on your class act now. For Miss Manners, etiquette-advice columnist extraordinaire, warns, “You can deny all you want that there is etiquette, and a lot of people do in everyday life. But if you behave in a way that offends the people you’re trying to deal with, they will stop dealing with you... Etiquette doesn’t have the great sanctions that the law has. But the main sanction we do have is in not dealing with these people and isolating them because their behavior is unbearable.”

Through her iconic Miss Manners column, Miss is refining readers in over 200 newspapers worldwide. Although, even she would surely agree that 613 is a pretty big number. And it is understandable that many of us are often overwhelmed with the responsibility of mainstream *mitzvot* and the rules of etiquette. However, she would surely dispel the myth that the *halakhic* thing to do is choose Jewish law over rules of etiquette that seem to be a bit *goyish*. People often wrongly associate proper etiquette with snooty socialites and WASPS. But, etiquette is for everyone. We Jews, especially, should feel a connection to commandments that are about acting appropriately and making others feel comfortable. Our rabbis tell us to follow the rule of the land. And isn’t it one of our own decrees to treat our neighbors as we’d like to be treated? Can you honestly say that life in the Heights has hardened you so much that you like it when someone skips you in the caf line? As much as I hate to *missar* y’all on the shortcomings of Yeshiva’s undergraduate behavior (okay, maybe that’s not very much), I still must say that we need to start meeting the standard that our *kippa* sets. And so I, Miss Middot, am taking it upon myself to guide my fellow students towards *menchdom*. Throughout the Miss Middot columns I will dispel some of the etiquette myths of our world and offer my (semi-) humble opinions on how to approach the world properly. We will cover all sorts of topics such as chivalry, shuttle etiquette, elevator decorum and text message manners. For our first column, I will introduce a few topics in which many of us need a refresher course.

### The Facebook Rulebook

*Myth – Facebook is basically pritzus.com. And, if you dare to sign up, you declare yourself a stalker*

**Truth – Facebook is a fabulous tool for connecting people. However, one must use it appropriately.**

Facebook is the perfect place to start our path to poison. For it’s where many of us start our days as well as our relationships. It has given a voice to our generation (in addition to every middle schooler we know as well as many of our mothers). The website has been unprecedented in rapidly revolutionizing our means of communication. Facebook means something different to each of its 500 million users. A means for communicating and keeping up with your friends as well as your “friends,” a way for many to live vicariously through the photographs of others, and of course the perfect outlet for anyone with stalking tendencies. Facebook etiquette is changing almost as quickly as your younger cousin’s status and it’s no

### b. To Post or Not to Post?

A running theme throughout many of my articles is basically not judging others. But that doesn’t mean that you should give everyone on your network reason to judge *you*. Remember how we admitted that you are a total F-stalker? Well, so is everyone else you know. Including potential employers and mates. Once you post something on the Internet, it’s there forever. It doesn’t matter if you flip out and delete all of your non-*shomer* pictures or even your entire account. So please *don’t ever post anything that might lead your stalkers to any conclusions that you are not proud of*. You may find yourself denied a whole lot more than a friendship.

### c. Best Friending Forever

Friending. What an awkward verb. Friendship is a gradual transition and is often made unnatural when turned into a formal request. Is it too forward? Will they think that you are desperate? Is it weird that we’re not Facebook friends already? Why can’t s/he just friend me? Well the answer is that you are clearly sitting in front of a computer screen

longer a thing of shame to “F-stalk”. We all do it. And your frummy friend who claims not to? Lying. However, there are certain Facebook behaviors that should be blocked permanently. Dislike.

a. **The Status Quo**

Facebook brings out the narcissist in us. In an age when we are all hungry for attention, many become gluttonous in their aspirations for celebrity status. And so in order to update their social status, they do just that: status updates. If you want to announce your turkey sandwich lunch to people who care, join Twitter. If you would rather brood and broadcast all of the feelings that your subconscious should be keeping to itself, then hopefully your dark soul will find solace reactivating your Myspace account. That is the preferable outlet for you and those middle schoolers to post your party pics and those edgy shots that you have self-photographed with a camera in one hand and a gang sign in the other. *Please be considerate and refrain from cluttering people’s homepages with the nonsense that the people immediately around don’t care to listen to*. Just because someone agreed to accept your friendship doesn’t mean they actually care about your life. Because, honestly, if you really have an issue with the newly-updated version of Facebook, then try venting your frustrations to a close friend. Because if you need to feel important, then try adopting a small pet or perhaps seeing a therapist, not waiting by the computer for someone to like your blurb about last night’s activities. Because guess what? Nobody does.

over-thinking your virtual social life. Perhaps you might benefit from closing your laptop and attending one of those event invitations that you have been ignoring. The general rule is if you will say *hello to the person in real life, then a Facebook request is a perfectly acceptable friendly gesture*. That is what friending is truly about, a gesture of extending friendship and extending opportunities for social networking. It isn’t about stalking pictures. We’re all on the Yeshiva Network anyway.

As for friending that person whom you’d like to extend more than friendship to? (I know I promised not to cover dating; Facebook friendship is certainly several steps short of a relationship. Sorry). For many, friending can certainly be part of a gradual transition toward a relationship. In an age of emasculation and insecurities, it has replaced asking for a lady’s number. In fact, if you are interested in a female, gentlemen, please friend her first. And ladies, please note that a Facebook friendship can be just that: friendly.

### Classy in the Classroom

*Myth – Texting in class is perfectly acceptable. Everybody does it anyway.*

**Truth – You should never text message when anyone is talking to you, especially your teacher. People who text in class are rude.**

### a. Text Offender

Hopefully, you have learned enough throughout your university education to be aware that the root of the teacher is teach. This means that teachers are in the classroom for you, not for their large paychecks. Contrary to popular belief,

they have become university professors because they are pretty intelligent people and, in most cases, that involves being relatively aware of their surroundings. So please *don’t text in class*. Although it has become socially acceptable, it is arguably one of the rudest places to text. If you would like to space out, or doodle hearts with your *bashert’s* name, that is your choice, but want to know a secret? Your teacher can see you. In your backpack is not a creative hiding spot.

### Cry Babies

Another fun way to show disrespect to your professors: crying for grades. By the time you started caring about your GPA, sobbing publicly became socially unacceptable. *So suck it up and take the grade you earned*. Next time you would like to regress to adolescence, you have a nice C+ paper to wipe your tears with.

### Whose Class is it Anyway?

Want a way to lose popularity among both students and your professors? Try being *that* girl or guy. Now, I know that what you have to say is super brilliant, and I totally support speaking one’s mind and sharing ideas. But interrupting in the classroom and speaking up more than necessary is truly the quickest way to simultaneously disrupt the classroom and establish yourself as an annoying fool. *Before raising your hand, please consider if what you are saying is actually worthwhile*. Don’t get me wrong, as an English major and my own number-one fan, there is no sound I adore more than the music of my own high-pitched drawl. I totally understand the desire to use the classroom as a means of enlightening my peers. But, I know that my voice is a few decibels higher than I can hear, and there is a possibility that thoughts are a bit more brilliant in my own head. And I understand that the anecdote about that hilarious incident on your shuttle ride last night seems super-relevant in Introduction to Statistics, unless it would guide your classmates in finding the slope or your secret but kosher method for Acing the final, you should probably just let your professor drone on uninterrupted.

### Cheater, Cheater...

*Cheating is just rude*. And please don’t attempt to rationalize that you aren’t hurting anyone else. You are breaking a university policy, insulting both your professor and classmates and possibly ruining the class curve. Now I am not even arguing that you are only hurting yourself in the long run. I don’t really care about that so much.

We have now covered a few fun ways to act respectfully. Pretty soon you will be able to add *lady* or *gentleman* to your *shidduch* resume. But until then, enjoy practicing your proper behavior.

Shalom Y’all! Miss Middot



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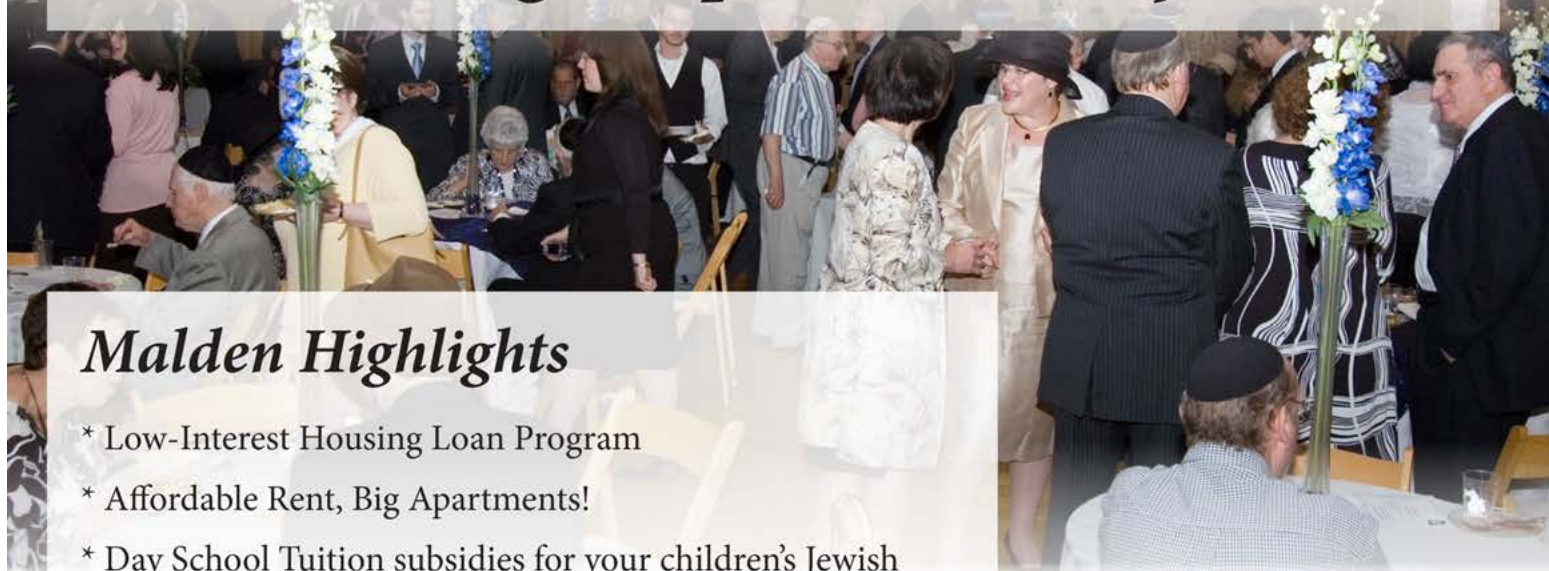
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– Rob Golder, friend of the community

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